

# ADDITIONS, INTEGRATIONS, CORRECTIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARNOLD JOSEPH TOYNBEE\*

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\* *A Bibliography of Arnold J. Toynbee*, compiled by S. Fiona Morton, with a Foreword by Veronica M. Toynbee, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.

THE TURKS' POINT OF VIEW  
WHAT THEY ASK OF THE WESTERN NATIONS  
TO BE TREATED AS AN EQUAL

by Arnold J. Toynbee

I am anxious to put the Turkish point of view before the readers of the «Manchester Guardian». It is not easy to do, because the Turks are habitually more reserved than the other Near Eastern peoples, and especially so at this time, in Constantinople, towards Englishmen. The British contingent looms largest in the Allied Army of Occupation; Turkish notables whose presence was not desired by the military authorities are, or have been till recently, interned in Malta; and last summer the British forces co-operated with the Greeks more conspicuously than others in the military operations, undertaken with the approval of the Allied Governments, which resulted in the Greek occupation of Smyrna and Thrace. It is therefore natural that an Englishman who tries now to get into touch with Turks should find barriers that are difficult to overcome, and I must be pardoned for offering bricks with little straw in them. But I do not think they are seriously out of shape, and, at any rate, they are better than no bricks at all.

The point of view of the Turks (who when it comes to the point are all Nationalists) needs to be put in England. The Greek case has had many able advocates, and has found a sympathetic public brought up on the tradition of the Greek War of Independence. But the «bloody tyranny of the Turk»<sup>1</sup> is not a formula that fits a situation in which Greek armies are invading Turkish territory and Turkish towns and villages are getting burnt. The less widespread pro-Turk tradition seems to me also to be behind the times. It too is an old tradition which took shape about the period of the Crimean War and has not kept pace with recent changes. About a year ago I heard a distinguished British soldier, speaking in England about the outlook in the Middle East, remark that «we must buttress the British Empire on

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<sup>1</sup> From the Joint Note of the Allied Governments in answer to President Wilson, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1917, T.T.

the support of two friendly Moslem Powers, Turkey and Afghanistan». I do not know how the Afghans feel, but I am sure that this officer, if he found himself in Constantinople, would be startled to discover how little the Turks reciprocate the feeling he entertains for them. There is an idea, rather prevalent in the British Army, that the Turk is like the Gurkha or the Pathan – a simple soul with a primitive psychology, fierce when provoked, but easy to manage when well treated and humoured. I suppose this comes from handling Turkish peasants as kavasses or gendarmes, but it is certainly not true of the Turkish educated and governing class. For good or ill, they are not at all unsophisticated, and at present they certainly do not love us. Why should they? Before the war we made an *entente* with their most formidable enemy, Russia. During the war we destroyed their Asiatic Empire by detaching the Arabs from them and beating their army. And since the Armistice we have till recently supported the Greeks. Their present hostility is really inevitable; yet it has been a shock to me to realise, since my arrival in Constantinople, how intense it is. Though always polite, they keep one at a distance, in marked contrast to the Turks in Smyrna. I imagine the reason for the difference is that in Smyrna the military occupation is by another nation, while here it is by ourselves. The foreign military occupation of a large and overcrowded city inevitably creates ill-feeling. There are many personal complaints about the system of requisitioning houses, there are the deportations to Malta, and there is wounded national pride. For all these reasons it is both difficult for English people to learn the Turkish point of view and important for them to understand it.

### **The Governing Class's Aspirations**

The principal points in the Nationalist programme are all, I think, expressions of one fundamental motive – the desire to be on an equality with Western nations. Equality does not mean identity. The Turkish nation has certain traditions that are better than those of many other nations, and, like every nation, it does not underestimate the number of its special virtues. Mere imitation of the West has led the Turks into many pitfalls already. But I think the Turkish consciousness is feeling its way towards something better than that. It aspires to a moral equality supplemented by the common ground of custom necessary for

international relationships. If I am right in this diagnosis, then the present attitude of the Turkish governing class, however violent and intransigent some of its manifestations may be, is at least profoundly different from the attitude of its predecessors, who simply regarded Moslems as inherently superior to Christians and thought it right to assert this superiority by force. No doubt this old prejudice still has a strong hold on the Turkish mind, probably a stronger hold than the complementary prejudice about Christian superiority has upon our own. Nevertheless, it is a hopeful sign if the dominant party in Turkey are basing their policy on a new ideal which, if genuinely accepted and translated into practice, would make satisfactory relations between Christian and Moslem peoples possible for the first time in history. At any rate, it seems worth trying to meet the Turks on such ground by attempting to work towards this ideal from our side.

I know that skepticism will be expressed on account of Moslem fanaticism, yet I do not find the Turks more fanatical than their Christian neighbours. I met quite recently a Christian Pharisee and a Moslem publican. The Pharisee, who was the librarian of a distinguished educational institution and who had not been disturbed during the war, argued to me that the rival nation was uncivilized and that the uncivilized have no rights. The publican was an old reserve officer who had fought against us at the Dardanelles and is now living with his wife in a garret after losing four successive homes through the vicissitudes of war. Yet when I told him that I was English he embraced me and exclaimed that all men are brothers. Such individual instances are, of course, no grounds for generalisations, but they do disprove generalisations in the opposite sense.

The actual claims of the Nationalist Government at Angora are widely, almost universally, approved by the politically-conscious part of the Turkish nation. I will leave the discussion of them to another article, and will merely state my opinion here that there is nothing fanatical about them, though on a number of points there may have to be accommodation between Turkey and her neighbours. Of course there are difficulties in the programme. There is the general difficulty that the Turks are claiming the full sovereign powers enjoyed by a Western country before they have proved that they can or will act up to Western standards. No doubt during the war the Ottoman Government did abuse the four years' licence it secured through the breakdown of the Concert of Europe, but on this there are two things

to be said: First, what Western nation would like to be sentenced on its war record; and, secondly, granting that the Turks have given little proof that they would use full sovereignty well, how can they ever expected to do so unless they are given, not so much the physical opportunity, but the confidence and respect of other nations that the giving of it would imply? There is an interesting parallel in the modern history of Japan. In Japan, as in Turkey, the national revival first manifested itself in a desire to shake off the shackles of foreign control; the foreign Powers insisted on their treaty rights and enforced them by naval operations; the Japanese populace in reprisal assaulted foreign subjects, and the Powers drew the moral that the capitulations must be enforced more rigidly than ever. There seemed no issue from the vicious circle until finally the Western nations changed their policy and decided to safeguard their interests in Japan by methods of trust instead of suspicion. In this case trust has worked wonders. May not the issue from the present *impasse* in Turkey lie this way? Of course there are special difficulties here. Turkey is not, like Japan, a country with a homogeneous population lying off the main route of international traffic. The experiment in equality of treatment would risk other interests besides those of the Turkish nation, and there would have to be some compromises over the non-Turkish minorities and the Straits. But these concrete questions, important though they are, are not nearly so important as the general spirit of the relationship between Turkey and the Western peoples, and if that spirit could be improved I believe that political problems which at present seem insoluble might become capable of being settled by agreement.

### **A Sincere Movement**

The last point I want to make about the Turkish national movement is that it is sincere. None of the Turks with whom I have spoken are light-hearted about the present war, nor do they regard it as an investment that will bring in a return or as a satisfaction to their national vanity. They are all war-weary. They know quite well that their treasury is bankrupt, that half Stambul is burnt down, that the only provinces untouched by the Great War are being ravaged by this one, and that the courtyard of every mosque is crowded with refugees. They do not disguise from themselves that this war after ten years of war is a disaster for their

nation, yet, rightly or wrongly, they do believe that they have no choice but to wage it. I have found this spirit among reserve officers who had all been from four to six years on active service, and several of whom now found themselves prisoners for the second time. «We want peace», they said with unmistakable conviction, «but the war cannot stop so long as Greece occupies Smyrna». I have heard the same feeling expressed in other forms; for instance, «We accept the consequences of defeat up to a point, but not when they are a death sentence». But the most characteristic expression of the Turkish attitude seems to me to be the following: «You must either exterminate us or treat us as equals». Clearly we do not intend the first of these alternatives, but in that case is not the only reasonable policy to choose the other?