

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

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Works by Arnold J. Toynbee

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[Arnold Joseph Toynbee?], *From the Turkish Point of View*, in «The Nation and the Athenaeum», XXXI, 25, September 16, 1922, pp. 788-789. Signed T.

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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.

## FROM THE TURKISH POINT OF VIEW

by Arnold J. Toynbee [?]

Our Western statesmen of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would probably have had a better eye for the present crisis in the Near East than the statesmen of to-day (at any rate, than those of them who at this moment are responsible for the Eastern policy of the British Empire). Certainly they would have started with the knowledge that the Turks themselves are a factor which cannot be left out of account in handling the Turkish problem. This truism (as it obviously is, when baldly stated) has never ceased to be true at any time, and disregard of it is one of the reasons why the Eastern Question has never yet been handled by Western statesmanship with success. Still, during the last two centuries there has been some excuse for the error. The Turk has been defeated in war, outclassed in culture, and pushed to the wall, not only by his Western neighbors, but by his Eastern Christian subjects, until we have almost lost the power of thinking of him in anything but a passive *rôle*. He has been the "Sick Man" to be resuscitated; the dragon to be slain when there was a princess to be rescued; the rich fool to be fleeced; or the bear whose skin was to be divided among the hunters. Suddenly his passivity (which, even at its extreme, was by no means the same thing as non-existence) has changed into something very active indeed, and our statesmen appear to be nonplussed by the metamorphosis.

Certainly, there are few things so difficult as sudden readjustments of outlook; but, on the other hand, there are few qualities so essential as this for competent statecraft, and the semi-official hints of policy which His Majesty's Government have been vouchsafing during the Greek retreat are far from promising. They appear to have been writing to M. Poincaré that any armistice convention between Turkey and Greece must be purely local in its scope, that no political issues respecting European territories must be raised, and that Thrace «cannot be suffered to become an object of bargaining». This language, if correctly reported, shows a strange misapprehension concerning the extent of our power to intervene in what is happening. It is an axiom of prudent and dignified diplomacy that one's words should only be a very little bigger than one's power to give effect to them. Yet the Allied Governments

abdicated their power to settle the Near East more than three years ago, when they sent the Greek Army to Smyrna. From May, 1919, onwards, the fate of this part of the world has been depending, not on the disagreements between Allied statesmen, but on a war in Anatolia between a Greek and a Turkish army. This week, that war (after a long approximation to stalemate) has suddenly been decided with a completeness and finality comparable (if one may compare a small thing to a great one) to the knock-out blow delivered in France in the autumn of 1918. The Greek army has ceased to exist as a fighting force, and the Turkish army (with its opponent's entire transport, artillery, and munitions in its pocket) remains master of the field.

But even this does not give the full measure of the situation, for the Turkish army, triumphant over the Greeks, finds itself at the same time (the first time for more than two centuries) without any other local counterweight. Military power is a relative quantity, and it is a sober fact, not a rhetorical figure, that the relative military power of Turkey is greater at this moment than it has ever been since the failure of the second siege of Vienna in 1683. The mightier military powers of the Hapsburg and Romanov Monarchies, which overshadowed Turkey and held her paralyzed from that memorable date until August, 1914, have both vanished like smoke. Greece she has just disposed of; Bulgaria has been thrown, by common enemies, into her arms; Jugo-Slavia and Roumania are too distant, and too pre-occupied elsewhere, to be desirous of crossing her path; and the three Western Powers are at cross-purposes – the French Government rejoicing at Turkey's success; the Italian Government sitting on the fence; the British Government sulking at having backed a loser, and hardly in a position to ask the British taxpayers for war-credits on their own account. The external military pressure, which for several centuries was the Turk's most acute sensation, has at last been removed, and besides this we have relieved the patient (by expensive surgical operations, for which we are unlikely to receive our fee) of the internal ulcers which used to devour him – Mesopotamia, for example, and some of the most awkward parts of Kurdistan, and the Hejaz, which used to bleed the Turk (and now bleeds us) of gold, and the Yemen, which used to bleed him (and may now bleed India) of men. Indeed, the boot has got on to the other foot.

Thus the once struggling and vulnerable Ottoman Empire has been cut down and consolidated into a Turkish national State, which retains all the richest provinces, and possesses a Turkish majority in its population, a majority which has shown its determination not to become subject to any other State, and which fights for the maintenance of Turkish sovereignty instead of conspiring against it (as the Balkan Christians and the Arabs used to do). Above all, this continental Anatolian Turkey is a particularly difficult nut for sea-power to crack, as Lord Salisbury knew very well when he excused his inability to protect the Armenians by pointing out that British battleships could not traverse the Taurus. On the other hand, the British Empire, which before the war could snap its fingers at Turkish military power from behind the wonderful physical barriers of the North-East frontier of Egypt and the North-West frontier of India, is now occupying, with ridiculously inadequate forces, two positions, Mesopotamia and the Straits, in which the Turks can attack us, in the present circumstances, with all the advantages on their side. They are positions, moreover, which we prize, or from which we cannot, at any rate, be driven by force of arms without losing more prestige and dignity than we can afford to sacrifice. In the immediate future, therefore, we have before us the choice between a new war in the East (on two fronts, and without Allies), or making terms with a Power which our Government still refuses to admit as a factor in its calculations. If the British Government will not abandon its ostrich-posture, the British Press and people, at least, would be well advised to study the Turkish state of mind. If once they come to grips with it themselves and make up their own minds what they mean to do about it, they can always put another Government into power, to give their national will in this matter effect.

One thing is certain: the Turks will now insist on every jot and tittle of their celebrated "National Pact". This laconic document deals in six articles with the territory which the Turks claim for their State, and with the sovereignty which they claim for their national Government within these limits. Some sections of frontier had already been fixed, to the Turks' satisfaction, before their offensive against the Greeks began – the frontier towards Armenia, for instance, by treaty with the Erivan Republic and with Soviet Russia, and the frontier towards Syria by the "Franklin-Bouillon Agreement" with France. The frontier in the region of Smyrna has now been carried, by the course of military events, to the coastline of the

Aegean Sea. The two principal zones that remain debatable are Thrace and Kurdistan. In the former, the Turks claim the restoration of their full sovereignty up to the line of the River Maritsa (including Adrianople), and autonomy for Western Thrace beyond – a point that interests Bulgaria, who may incidentally secure her promised outlet to the open sea. The case of Kurdistan is covered by the first article of the Pact, which renounces the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, but not territories inhabited by a non-Arab Moslem majority. In this direction, the claims staked out by the Nationalist leaders are at this moment being put into practical effect by the Turkish irregulars and Kurdish insurgents, who have caused us to evacuate Ruwanduz and Suleymaniyah.

As regards the question of sovereignty, the Turks are prepared to grant the non-Turkish minorities in their country (on condition of reciprocity for Turkish minorities elsewhere) the whole status, and nothing but the status, secured to minorities in defeated or newly created or enlarged States in Europe by the recent treaties of peace. They also propose to assimilate themselves still further to the European model by abolishing the Capitulations, under the special protection of which foreign nationals have resided in Turkey hitherto. The Turks attach just as much importance to these questions of sovereignty as to their territorial programme.

Finally, there is the freedom of the Straits – which His Majesty's Government might have had from Fethi Bey, on the sound basis of demilitarization, when he came to London to seek an understanding, a few weeks ago. The Government, in their wisdom, sent Fethi empty away, and in the meantime the Greek *débâcle* has followed. Will the offer, so contemptuously rejected, be made again? That depends on the Turks, and it is to be hoped, for their sake as well as ours, that they will show wisdom and moderation in their hour of triumph, and will not be demoralized by the sudden turn of the wheel. All depends on this, and this depends on them. If their rulers are to rise to the occasion, they must be greater statesmen and greater men than our rulers proved themselves to be at the Peace Conference at Paris. For observers whose faith in human nature does not run to this length, the Near Eastern outlook is dark.