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TWOPENCE

Who Burnt Smyrna?

By J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

DESPITE Lloyd George's statement at Manchester that he has succeeded in keeping the peace in the Near East, the crisis has shown itself to be by no means at an end.

Students of international affairs, anxious to get a grasp of the Eastern question, would do well to get (whether by purchase or at the local libraries), Mr. Arnold Toynbee's remarkable book, "The Western Question in Turkey and Greece."

The author is Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Literature and History at London University, and has had a distinguished career as an adviser on the Near East to the Foreign Office. He came to the nearer observation of the relations between the Greeks and the Angora Turks, as he admits, with a prejudice in favour of the former, but, having seen things upon the spot and Mr. Lloyd George's woman raping friends the Greek army and mountain irregulars at their task of building a greater Hellas at Smyrna and in Anatolia, he has dared to change his opinion and to describe things as he actually found them.

As a statement of recent events in the Ionian territories, of the miserable intrigue by which Lloyd George and Clemenceau got the Greeks into Asia Minor, and the dangerous game that the combatant forces have been playing on behalf of their cynical and unscrupulous seconds, the Governments of Britain and France, and as a portrayal of the historic background to the break-up of the Ottoman Empire in Asia and the ascendancy of Greek Imperialism, Mr. Toynbee's work is a most valuable contribution to the literature of the Eastern Question.

Any Marxist will be able without difficulty to bring into sharper relief the class character of the struggle and to accentuate from his own understanding of the forces behind such problems as these factors to which the author himself is by no means blind.

Atrocities

Nothing better than his analysis has probably ever been penned on the question of atrocities both Greek and Turkish. His indictment of the Greeks and, for that matter, of the British Government's responsibility for the policy of massacre, is particularly drastic. Describing the atrocities that occurred immediately the Greeks landed at Smyrna, when the Greek officers and soldiers bayoneted disarmed Turkish prisoners who would not shout "Long live Venizelos," he says in a foot-note:—

British naval officers and seamen on board warships moored to the quay had to witness these atrocities at a few yards'

distance. They clamoured for shore leave in order to interfere, but leave was refused. The Admiral had instructions from higher quarters to leave the Greeks a free hand when once their disembarkation had taken place. It is not, of course, suggested that the authors of these instructions foresaw how the Greeks would use their licence. Yet it required little foresight to do so! (p. 272).

That is pretty damning in view of his ascription to Lloyd George of the primary responsibility for the presence of the Greeks at Smyrna, when he recounts how they came under escort of the British Fleet and when one recalls the insolent statement of this prejudiced little bourgeois bagman at the Reform Club, Manchester, that the Turks had massacred 500,000 Greeks since 1914 "without any provocation at all."

He gives chapter and verse partly from unimpeachable and official sources and partly from his own personal observation for atrocity after atrocity committed by Greek army officers. For instance:—

"The (Inter-Allied) Mission came to the conclusion that for the last two months elements of the Greek Army of Occupation have been employed in the extermination of the Moslem population of the (Galova-Gemlik) peninsula . . . No cases have come to our knowledge in which these misdeeds have been prevented or punished by the military command." (p. 285).

"On the 29th June, 1921, my wife and I personally witnessed Greek troops in uniform committing arson without provocation . . . among the ruins we found . . . one old Turkish woman named Khadija, who had been violated and beaten with rifle-butts." (p. 287-288).

"In the Aidin district the deportees' houses were sometimes looted and their women-folk violated after their removal by Greek officers and non-commissioned officers." (p. 291).

"A woman named Enime, seventy years old, who refused to put him (2nd lieutenant) on the tracks of her granddaughter, was so cruelly beaten by this hero and his men that she could not move for several days. When the Inter-Allied Commission visited Armudlu on the 17th May, she tried to show them her wounds, but before she could get into touch with them she was driven back into her house by Greek soldiers with fixed bayonets. From first to last many women were violated, for the officer took a different one each night." (p. 296).

What Does He Care?

But what does Lloyd George care? The Greek Army got the women, the Greek corn

merchants and piece goods hucksters were to possess the land and make money and the notoriously bankrupt Coalition Liberal war chest was to be replenished for the General Election by his "Greek friends."

That, comrades, is the real explanation of the little Welshman's passion for the Greeks.

But to the larger issue of atrocities as such, Mr. Toynbee says:—

"If the history of Oriental atrocities is ever scientifically investigated, it will be found, I believe, that they have been worst during the last dozen years that during the rest of the last century and worse again during that century than between the years 1461 and 1821 . . . The two curves of atrocities and Westernization would practically coincide and the true diagnosis of the atrocities might be that they were a prolonged epidemic to which the Near and Middle Eastern societies were subject from the time when they lost their indigenous civilizations until they became acclimatised to the intrusive influences of the West."

Manchester Materialism

In other words, as anyone who has read any articles on the Near East in the "Communist Review" and the "Labour Monthly" will easily grasp, the atrocities have been due to the infringement of the civilisation of the currant and corn hucksters and piece-goods merchants upon the civilisation of a landed proprietor and peasant folk. The intrusion of Manchester materialism and morality thereon ensuing have brought a sword where previously there was peace. "The Christians" in Anatolia were "much wealthier than the Moslems per head of the population," and this was pretty generally so throughout the Ottoman Empire. "Classes in Anatolia," says Toynbee, "are equivalent to the nationalities," and when he tells us that under the Arab Caliphate "Conversion or a super-tax not conversion or the sword (as is often believed in the West) was the alternative offered them, i.e., the Christians, we can understand how and why the peasantry and the landed classes got into the frame of mind, quite apart from the intrigues of Russian spies, to knife the beatific little bourgeois who so gladly (don't you believe it!) came to pay his super-tax and cheated the Government every time he could.

This book is an eye-opener and, even if you cannot buy it yourself, see to it that you write its name, name and qualifications of its author and where it can be got in the suggestion book of the local library in your town, club and institute or non-conformist chapel. It will let in the light into many a darkened Christian mind!

"The Western Question in Turkey and Greece." Arnold Toynbee. Constable & Co., London. 18s.