

THE OTTOMAN TURKEY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EASTERN POLICY OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE IN 90'S OF THE XIX CENTURY

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The author considers the relations between great states, in particular England, France, Russia and Germany at the end of XIX - the beginning of XX century, as well as the place of the Egyptian question in the relations of great states in conditions of colonial struggle and regrouping of forces in Europe. The main stages of the England-France rivalry for influence in Egypt; determination of a role of Germany, Russia and Turkey in the development of the Egyptian issue in 1880s – the beginning of the 90s; determination of the extent of interference of the Egyptian issue and regrouping of forces in Europe at the end of the 1880s – the first half of the 1890s; consideration of development of the military, economic and financial relations of Germany and Turkey.

Keywords: Triple alliance, political role of Germany in Ottoman Turkey, colonial policy of Germany, German railroad construction plan, Egyptian issue, English-Turkish negotiations.

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Visit of Vilhelm II to Turkey caused a lot of disturbance mainly in the Russian Court. Alexander III arrived in Berlin in October 11-13, 1889. During the long conversation with Bismark the Tsar showed his interest in the visit of Vilhelm II to Constantinople and wanted to find out whether Turkey was really eager to join the Triple Alliance. Bismark dispelled Tsar's doubts putting down Vilhelm's visit to only interests of youth. Because of Bismark he decided to visit Constantinople and then go back to his motherland, as to reach Athens and not to see Constantinople seemed unreasonable to him. The Chancellor assured the Tsar that Germany did not have any political interests in Turkey¹. Actually, visit of Vilhelm II to Constantinople had serious political and economic aims, as the construction of the railway chain was arranged². Using it Germany was going to reach political and economic domination over Asia Minor. Therefore, in 1890 a German-Turkish commercial agreement was signed and as a result Germany got control over the Turkish customs³. The most remarkable thing was that still in December 1890, when the above mentioned agreement was being discussed at Raikhstag, Simens had a special speech. The head

of German bank announced that times when the German production in Turkey remained in shadow because of English and French entrepreneurs' policy were over. He added that it was time to act independently in that country. At the end, representing the German policy towards Ottoman Turkey, Simens announced that they are interested only in setting up new customs offices at the Bosphorus and Dardanelles⁴.

So, it seemed like the colonial policy of Kaiser Germany towards Ottoman Turkey was growing, and the main factors of the process were the purchase of concessions connected with Berlin-Baghdad from Turkey in 1888, the visit of Vilhelm II to Ottoman Turkey, German-Turkish commercial agreement etc.

Thus, getting large economic prevalence over Turkey Kaiser Germany was aspiring to transfer it into politics and achieve political dominance as well. And the Sultan, taking into consideration the hard international position of Turkey, and trying to get Germany's support in the sphere of international diplomacy, started to satisfy Germany's ambitions and inclinations in building of the railway without noting that this would make Turkey's international diplomacy

more complicated and would cause breakdown of Turkey.

In 1891 the representative of "German Bank" Kaulla, arrived to Constantinople. He was to negotiate with Sultan on matters of stretching the railway up to Baghdad. Following the advice of the Ambassador of Germany in Constantinople, Kaulla offered Sultan first to explore the route of the future railway and afterwards to allocate lands for its construction. Abdul Hamid II agreed and promised to support the project financially, as well as organizationally⁵. But financial difficulties and the skepticism in Turkish promises made Germany temporarily delay the construction of the railway and keep cautious policy especially towards the railway being built in Persian Gulf and Baghdad territory. Receiving the report from Kaulla about the financial situation of Turkey, Simens held a conference in Berlin in May, 1892, where it was decided that it would be more convenient to get concessions for the construction of Ankara-Kaisir railway before starting the construction of the way up to Baghdad, and to build Eskishekkir-Konia part in the South⁶. The results of the conference were immediately transferred to the Ministry of Foreign

1 Die Grosse Politik Europäische Kabinete 1871-1914. Sammlung«der diplomatischen Akten des auswärtigen Amtes», Berlin 1922, B. 6, dok №1358.

2 Die Grosse Politik Europäische Kabinete 1871-1914. Sammlung«der diplomatischen Akten des auswärtigen Amtes», Berlin 1922, B. 6, dok №1358.

3 E. Reventlov, Von Potsdam nach Doorn, Berlin 1940, S. 298.

4 Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reiches, Berlin 1890, B.2, S.888-889.

5 «Die Grosse Politik Europäische Kabinete 1871-1914. Sammlung«der diplomatischen Akten des auswärtigen Amtes», Berlin 1923, B. 14, dok 3961.

6 Helfferich K., Georg von Siemens, B.3, Berlin 1923, p. 62.

Affairs and Germany betook the special policy for getting concessions to build Eskishehir-Konia railway. It is worth mentioning that German bank took into consideration also those ways which had important military function, and the railways were especially constructed in those directions. From this point, the concession regarding Saloniki-Monastir which was gained in 1890, was very important⁷. And the province of Konia was significant for its riches, where not only German entrepreneurs acting in the territory of Turkey, but also English and French entrepreneurs were eager to have industrial centers. That was the reason why the above mentioned organizations were trying to fail Germans' attempts and firmly resisted German bank penetrations. For this reason Kambon, the French Ambassador in Constantinople was trying to gain concessions for the construction of Smirna-Kassabu railway, which was the main part of Eskishehir-Konia railway. In 1892, he reminded Sultan that not giving concessions for the construction of the above mentioned railway will be considered as "an irreverent treatment towards France"⁸. Nevertheless, Sultan refused that demand under the reassurances of Germany⁹.

Little by little, the situation between Turkey and English and French ambitions was getting anxious. They were trying to prevent Germany's active foreign policy in Turkey. This time English Ambassador Ford had a speech in Constantinople. On January 5, 1893 he told Sultan that his government was strictly against the decision to devolve the construction of Eskishehir-Konia railway to Germany¹⁰. He assured that it was a destroying blow to the interests of Great Britain. This menace was accompanied by the activation of naval forces of England.

The Russian Ambassador was also against the above mentioned decision,

emphasizing that the fund of Konia was the main mechanism to cover the debt of Turkey towards Russia, though they cannot let Germany control those territories. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs rebutted under the pressure of "German Bank", and as a result on January 7, 1893, Marshal, the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the ambassador of Germany in London that he was going to annul the announcement of English ambassador, directly meant to attack Germany, which would exacerbate the interrelations of Germany and England¹¹.

To inhibit the English pressure on Germany and to enlarge the German plan of construction of the railway in Ottoman Turkey, Kaiser Germany used the Egyptian issue. In many problems connected with Egypt, Germany had always been on the English side, bearing in mind that this way the relations between England and Germany may be exacerbated. For this purpose, after Ford's speech, on January 6, 1893, Germany gave the contrary opinion on the problem to which he had given a positive reply before. This was about the intension of England to increase its armed forces in Egypt. This time, the English side longed for the support of Germany, as Russia and France were against its objectives. For this reason English Ambassador in Cairo immediately sent a telegram to the Prime Minister Rozbery asking him to solve the problems with Germany connected with Turkey, in order to reacquire Germany's support for his plans in Egypt¹². London authorities changed their previous policy towards Germany. Rozbery announced that he himself did not have anything against Germany's economic activities in Turkey. Negotiations between German Ambassador Radolin and English Ambassador Ford, which took place

in Constantinople, settled the small but very important problem. This was gainful for both of them¹³.

However German diplomacy was not only struggling to overcome English obstacles, it was also against English-Turkey confidential negotiations. Ambassador Radolin told about it in details in his notes written between December 23, 1892 and January 9, 1893. Just since his first letter Radolin has presented the actions and structure of Ottoman government, as well as using German methods of diplomacy in Turkey¹⁴. From these letters one can notice that Sultan was negotiating with Kaula and Radolin about concessions without Turkish Great Vezir Kyamil pasha (the English were trying to fail German plans with the help of vizier). That's why when the negotiations have already successfully finished, they met a strong opposition from Kyamal pasha, because the Great Vizier was not aware of lots of issues which were considered to have been already solved. Radolin realized this very well and he informed the Embassy staff about Sultan's independent actions, due to which Sultan had always had confidential and private negotiations, meanwhile introducing his actions as acts of representatives of Turkish Diplomatic Institutions.

In the note dated January 9, 1893 Radolin explained in details the last stage of providing concessions. He emphasized that not only England, France and Russia were against the German plans but also "the Turkish society, which was displeased with the fact that Sultan was giving everything to Germany"¹⁵. The Great Vizier who had a great reputation, following the advice of the English, introduced a special batch of documents, revealing all the counterfeits of Germany, the colonial policy of Germany in Turkey, and exhorted Abdul Hamid II not to

7 Ibid, p. 49-50; See also A. Cheradame, *La question d Orient La Macedonie, Le chemin de fer de Bagdad*, Paris 1903, p. 19-20.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 «Die Grosse Politik Europäische Kabinete 1871-1914. Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des auswärtigen Amtes», Berlin 1923, B.

14, dok № 3965.

11 Ibid, dok № 3966.

12 Ibid, dok № 3967.

13 Ibid, dok № 3969, № 3970, № 3971, № 3972, № 3973.

14 Ibid, dok № 3963.

15 Ibid, dok № 3970.

provide concessions to the Germans. Vizier was trying to persuade that all the financial investments of Germany had thrown Turkey into temptation and confusion. A special committee in which the Great Vizier, lawyers and public figures were included was organized for the consideration of documents produced by Kyamil. While the committee was making a decision, Sultan decided to stop providing concessions to Germany and informed Radolin about it asking him to wait a little bit¹⁶. The latter switched to real actions and on January 7, 1893 and getting instructions from Berlin, started new activities. Radolin informed Abdul Hamid II about the Kaizer's solicitude related to the fact that Kaizer had believed Sultan's promises and had always thought, that finally Sultan would bring into life the plan which had so vital importance for both countries. And the German Ambassador added that Sultan will get rid of difficulties as soon as he makes a positive decision. On January 9, Rajib bey visited Radolin and informed him that after the long conversation with Sultan, the latter had called the Great Vizier and ordered him to quicken the process of providing concessions to Germany¹⁷.

Thus, German-Turkish relations were brought to practice. Getting the construction of the important Berlin-Baghdad railway, Turkey and Germany got firmly economically connected. Germany not only protected Turkey but also represented itself as the confederate of Turkey, so that each procedure would be exercised based on legal point of view. Germany also tried to make plans of the Great Powers to separate the Turkish territory perish and positioned itself as the protector of Turkey.

In the late 90s of XIX century Germany already had rather firm basis in Turkey. Ottoman Turkey's role and significance was growing up

for Germany. That's why the political mission of Germany in Turkey was strengthened. In autumn 1897 Marshal Fon Biebershteine, the German Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, was appointed the Ambassador of Germany in Constantinople¹⁸. During his mission Marshal did everything for his good prestige and surprised Ottoman governing circles with his cunning.

Yet on March 5, 1898 in his first letter directed to Reich chancellor Hohenloeine, Marshal first glorified the Eastern policy of Vilhelm II, and then presented all the means and directions which would promote the German fund investments. He was assuring that they must use all the possible means to entirely involve Turkey into their plans. Marshal was excluding even the smallest rebates to their opponents. He mentioned in his letter that Germany might be rigor in each part of Turkey in order not to let it be available for anyone else. He believed that Berlin-Baghdad railway with all its sectors must be constructed by Germans. Due to it they would domain the valleys of Euphrates and Tigris, as well as the Persian Gulf. At the end Marshal especially mentioned that they had to be sure that no one would surpass Germany in that territory¹⁹.

Special activities were organized by political circles. German financial investments in Turkey were increased, and yielding to Marshal's reassurances the quantity of German military forces was also increased. He attained his goal and a special military delegation arrived in Turkey. These people prepared many Turkish officers and sent them to Germany to be trained and deepen their knowledge. These measures could increase the role of Germany in Turkey.

In his report dated March 5, 1898 Marshal wrote about the results reached by the delegation led by Fon der Holts, showed the strengthening position of Germany in Turkey and assured that

if they could send one more general to Turkey endowed with Holts's talent, the German policy in Turkey could be considered to be fully successful²⁰. In May 1898, Marshal informed the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he had persuaded the Sultan to order 250 000 rifles in German factories. Besides, the Sultan had agreed to order by his own means 200 million bullets instead of 100 million, which came to 25 million marks²¹. Thus, due to Marshal's policy German ammunition producing factories, named "Mauser", "Lyove" etc, got great profits in a very short time.

In the first half of 1898 due to cooperation between Marshal and Morgan one more group of Turkish officers was sent to Germany²². In the telegram Marshal was explaining the advantages and the useful points of his own diplomacy for Germany. From his point of view, it was very important to make the Turks believe that the strengthening German psychology in the Turkish army was first of all within the scopes of interest of Turkey itself. Though, he was mentioning, that they must not show the interest of Germany in it all that. "Nevertheless, the Turks must be sure that Germany is the offering party and Turkey is the consumer"²³.

In his letter dated April 9, 1898, Marshal demanded Reich Chancellor Hohenloeine to keep more active foreign policy and to get the construction of the railway up to Baghdad start. He thought that the whole Middle East would be connected to Germany after that, and that they would be able to use those achievements for their own interests. Marshal was exhorting all the German entrepreneurs and companies to quicken the activities connected with the construction of the railway. He believed that they should act quickly and invest as much as possible, as other interested countries were managing a sly diplomacy trying to persuade the Sultan to give them concessions.

16 Kemal Bey Ismail, *The Memoirs*, London 1920, p. 241-243.

17 «Die Grosse Politik Europäische Kabinete 1871-1914. Sammlung «der diplomatischen Akten des auswärtigen Amtes», Berlin 1924, B. 14, dok № 3970.

18 Б. Бюлов, *Воспоминания*, Москва 1935, с. 132.

19 *Ibid*, dok № 3339..

20 *Ibid*, dok № 3339.

21 *Ibid*, dok № 3340.

22 *Ibid*, dok № 3341.

23 *Ibid*.

But making big financial investments Germany would solve these problems at once. Besides, Marshal offered to make arrangements for economical adoption of the Euphrates and Tigris and for organizing the navigation in these two rivers. In this message Marshal introduced the contracts with the Anatolian major engineer Cander which led to lengthening of the railway to Baghdad²⁴.

After conversation with Marshal Cander arrived in Berlin and leaning upon Morgan's information about Wilhelm II, being very much interested in building, the railway network, he with Simens offered to involve "Zeehandlung" (a Prussian financial company that was very much interested in the matter) in building the railroad system. But then there was a conflict connected with Cander's acting of his own, which made the Minister of Foreign Affairs B. Bryulov angry. He believed that everything happened because of self-willingness of Marshal, who hadn't informed Berlin about it. But Bryulov gave in, as the problem was connected with Germany's foreign interests. He didn't turn down "Zeehandlung", but German Bank was given the right to control that company. At the same time Bryulov gave special instructions to Marshal and demanded to support Cander and the German Bank²⁵.

Morgan, the Military Attaché and Consultant of German troops in Turkey began his activities in Constantinople. In one of his reports Morgan described the state of Turkish military forces and especially pointed out the readiness of Turkish troops in those parts of Channels. The Military Attaché paid special attention to the fact that Turkey had reinforced the control over Bosphorus and Dardanelles, which was especially directed against the Great Powers. All that let Morgan act from positions of active policy in Near East and announce the following: "We have all the reasons to insist on the necessity to keep the completeness of Ottoman Turkey providing us with huge economic

achievements, and in future it will provide military reinforcement as well. That's why we should enlarge military fortifications. Only experienced German officers can support Sultan in it; with their help we can keep our achievements, and undertake new ones"²⁶.






This dispatch gave birth to protest of German diplomat Rihtgofen, who was temporarily leading the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Rihtgofen informed Bryulov about it and noted that Morgan's varied activity in Constantinople caused outrage of the Great Powers and particularly Russia. It certainly had bad influence on Russia-Germany relations. Rihtgofen thought that militarization of Turkey will be certainly noticed by other countries, and it would lead to worsening of relations between all sides. Rihtgofen's worries didn't last long as Wilhelm II considered them impracticable and exhorted Morgan to be calm²⁷. But it didn't limit Morgan's activity in Constantinople. After the official visit of Wilhelm II Morgan undertook more active diplomatic and military activity.

Thus, Eastern policy of Kaiser Germany in the Middle East represented by Ottoman Turkey, had a stable basis. Ottoman Turkey was connected with Kaiser Germany through military, economic and financial ties. There were all suitable conditions for colonial policy in the Middle East. For that purpose the official visit of Wilhelm II to Ottoman Empire was organized and fulfilled.

The most important step to conquer Asia Minor was taken in 1888, when the agreement between "German Bank" and Ottoman Turkey related to the construction of Berlin-Baghdad railroad system was reached. After the railroad was built the position of Kaiser Germany in the Middle East became stronger. Cooperation between Germany and Turkey in the political, military and economic fields became more practical.

The first visit of Wilhelm II to Constantinople laid the foundation for new era in the relations between Germany and Turkey.

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²⁴ Ibid, dok № 3375.

²⁵ Ibid, dok № 3376.

²⁶ Ibid, dok № 3342.

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