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# CHANGING TURKEY

The People are Restless for New Advances

I SUPPOSE there was never a revolution more complete than that by which Mustafa Kemal modernised Turkey. The overthrow of the Sultan was not half of it; out went the scarlet fez and

the Arabic alphabet; out went many of the old religious observances. There are many Turks still living who must

have been shocked to the limit of their shockability. And yet these same people turn on their radio to-day and hear their next-door neighbours describing them as reactionaries. If there is a moral in this, you can draw it as easily as I can.

The westerner who goes into Turkey for the first time may not realise how revolutionary some things are. For instance, when I visited the Halkevi, or People's Institute, in Ankara, I found an operatic rehearsal going on in the theatre. I should not have thought any more about it, but I happened to run into Carl Ebert, the silver-haired master-producer whom Kemal long ago summoned from Germany to start a national opera in Turkey. Ebert said: "Kemal told me to go round the school and pick my own pupils. I still remember how some of the children burst into tears when I chose them, because the notion of opera singing as a career seemed so strange." I did not ask Ebert, but I suppose the Turkish child of to-day is as pleased and excited to be chosen for the opera school as a western schoolgirl invited to Hollywood.

## Western Week-ends

An Englishman sees nothing extraordinary about Sundays in Turkey, except perhaps that all the cinemas open without causing anyone any pangs of conscience. Yet the Turks are by tradition Moslems, and the Moslem holy day is Friday. Kemal swept away the Friday day of rest, along with every other item of Moslem ritual which he thought would handicap the Turks in competing with the workers of Europe; and now the Turks shut up their offices on Saturday and go home for the week-end. But—if this can count as reaction—I was told there is now a revival of religion in Turkey. I met the university professor who had raised in Parliament the question of religious instruction in schools; and the Government were considering it very sympathetically. I visited a newly-built mosque in Ankara, leaving my shoes at the door in accordance with the immemorial custom. I would not like to swear that all the worshippers were there out of pure piety, because there was a great coal stove in the middle

of the floor and a blizzard raging outside. But I was assured that at all the regular hours of prayer the mosque was full.

Turkey now follows mainly the western pattern of life, but vestiges of the old customs crop up everywhere. I was surprised when I saw a politician take out of his pocket notes written in the forbidden Arabic script. He told me

apologetically: "We old people use Arabic as a kind of shorthand; it still comes easier to us, and it is quicker because it misses the vowels out." Then, Kemal has insisted that the Turks should wear western dress. Out in the wild eastern provinces, many people fulfil the spirit of this injunction by wearing a cloth cap or a tattered tweed jacket with all the rest of their old tribal costume. Nobody wears a fez any more; but you don't have to go outside the capital to see women in the old-style, bright-coloured, baggy Turkish trousers. The younger generation seem to have skipped skirts altogether; the little girls go to school in ski-ing trousers.

## Growth of Two-Party Politics

The principles of Kemal's revolution could be summed up, not unfairly, as being Turkey for the Turks, and a modern industrial civilisation as soon as possible. These principles still stand, mellowing a little as they come nearer achievement. In this distracted world, the Turks are lucky in having their revolution 25 years behind them. There is neither right wing nor left wing in Turkish politics. The foreigner has to strain his eyes to detect any difference between the Government programme



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