

DARDANELLES, BUT NO GALLIPOLI

Turkey's Strength And Strategy Assured To Allies

TO any who have felt something of the temper of modern Turkey, the recent news of a big round-up of German nationals in Istanbul, with the arrest of some and the expulsion of others, can have occasioned no surprise. Even the report that Turkey was demanding the recall of Von Papan, German Ambassador, because of his intrigues with Russia, deserves respect.

For Turkey to-day, individually and as a nation, has the coolest of feelings towards the Third Reich and its citizens, a dislike matched, in the heart of the average Turk, only by the ready warmth of his friendship and admiration for the English.

Nazi Policy Suspected

The strength of anti-German feeling was one of the surprising realisations of a visit to Turkey last summer. I found there, as indeed in every one of the Balkan states, that while every transcontinental express brought more Germans seeking trade expansion or more propaganda fields to conquer, there was no real welcome for them in popular sympathy, no great enthusiasm for them in official attitudes. Vows of peaceful intent were still going at two a penny, but the motives of Nazi policy were generally deeply suspect.

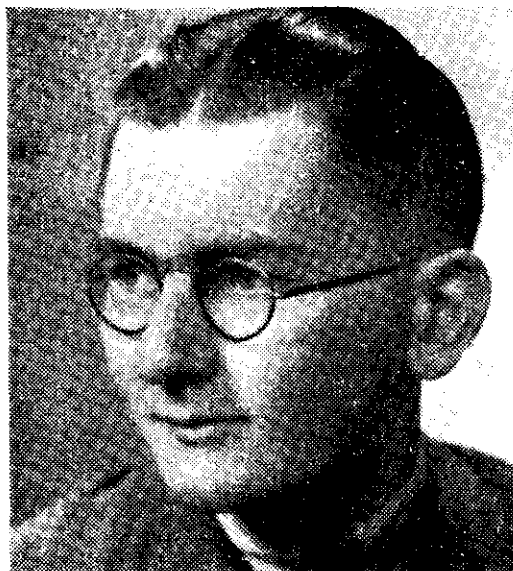
That was in the middle of last year, when every special correspondent who could convince his editor, every freelance journalist in London who could jingle a train fare together from his last commission, was filling his passport with visas in the neighbourhood of Belgrave Square and scurrying off to watch Europe getting ready for her greatest tragedy—the war we could all see coming and which only one man could have prevented after the bitterness of spring.

And so it came about that, after touring bristling frontiers of Holland and Belgium, travelling through Southern Germany (in Nuremberg they were preparing for the great September Party Congress, with peace as its theme, which was never held), and diagnosing, as best one could, the nervous aspirations of Hungary and Rumania, I found myself in Constanza, Rumania's thriving oil port, embarking on the most modern of steamers for the overnight run across a corner of the Black Sea to Istanbul. It is worth remembering that Constanza, Rumania's vital link with her allies in case of aggression, is only a few hours away from Istanbul, as one reckons naval speeds. On the steamer, it was an overnight trip of twelve hours, strongly reminiscent of that on the express ferry between Wellington and Lyttelton.

Race Against Britain and France

It was in conversation with a Turkish business man on board that ship, returning from a trip to Bucharest, that I first heard what I was later to confirm and substantiate in Istanbul concerning the fevered efforts made by Germany early last year to arrest growing Turkish friendship for France and Britain.

He described how, in the three months following the signing of the Anglo-Turkish trade pact, which



THE AUTHOR: H. LESLIE VERRY, whose photograph appears above, and who is author of this article, is a New Zealand journalist who has spent the last two years travelling in Europe. The "Tairoa," last victim of the "Graf Spee," carried him to England early in 1938. He freelanced in London for a while, then branched out into the unknown of Central Europe.

His pen and his journalist's curiosity took him to the Balkans: Turkey, Rumania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary. He travelled through Ruthenia. No legendary kingdom this, but the pawn in the game Hungary played during negotiations for the Munich agreement. Hungary secured it from the dismembered Czechoslovakia.

From Germany, Holland, and Belgium, he returned to London and stayed there during two war-time months.

His crossing of the Atlantic on the way home was enlivened by 24 hours with a convoy and a destroyer's attack with depth-charges on a submarine.

Von Papen tried desperately to prevent, Istanbul became crowded with German commercial representatives, all bent on minimising the benefits which would result to Britain. It is more than likely that some of these agents, finding that attempts to expand German trade in Turkey left them with time on their hands, have since turned to other ways of serving the Reich and have thus incurred the displeasure of the Turkish Government.

That Turkey, the strongest Power in the Balkans should have returned and adhered so decisively in recent years to her traditional policy of

accepting British and French support against all possible comers across the Black Sea, is above all the work of Kemal Ataturk, the dictator-builder of the modern nation, for whom I saw men as well as women unashamedly weep when, nearly a year after his death, his image was flashed on the screen during a documentary film in an Istanbul cinema. Ataturk had no cause to love Britain for her actions in the post-war years when he was struggling for power; it is the measure of his statesmanship that when he attained supremacy he deliberately cultivated British friendship.

That friendship is a cardinal fact to-day; no offers, however tempting, have wooed President Inonu, Ataturk's old colleague, away from his predecessor's policy. Even the alternation of Russian "pressure" and blandishment was without effect. In London, just before I sailed for home at the end of October, a journalist of repute just returned from Moscow was the authority for a report that the long Russo-Turkish negotiations broke down finally because Turkey refused to abandon her understanding with Iraq and Iran—a step which would have been a blow to Britain.

Relations with Russia

This is significant. Friendship with Russia was a cornerstone on which Ataturk fashioned his Republic. It preceded rapprochement with Downing Street by several years. But it was friendship with a benevolent, non-expansionist Russia.

Of Turkish strength there is no doubt. History has shown the impregnability of the Dardanelles. Russia has no considerable fleet on the Black Sea. Turkey has an efficiently trained army of about thirty divisions, boasting good equipment. She has, moreover, two priceless weapons; absolute unity of purpose, and good heart. My impression of the Turks, their demeanour, their industry, their sense of their country's responsibility, was most favourable.

At no stage since the war began was knowledge of Turkish solidity so reassuring. Many neutral observers, particularly American military men, believe that Germany, stalemated in the West, will attempt a Balkan diversion. Millions of people fear Russian aggression southward. It is at least possible that this year or next may see, either in concert or in competitive haste, the two dictatorships striving to throw their shadow over the Balkans.

History Cannot Repeat Itself

If that happens, it will be a shadow with limitations. I remember how, as a later steamer bore me away from the pageantry of Istanbul, and we sailed across the Sea of Marmora to enter Gallipoli Strait and thread those Narrows at Chanak Kale which Byron swam and the Anzacs fought for, I made friends with a member of the German colony in Bagdad, travelling leisurely home with his young wife. Their one fear was a repetition of the World War, which we discussed as we slid down that historic waterway; they had so many true friends in the English colony at Bagdad whom they hoped to rejoin before Christmas.

For them, the tragedy has happened. They would still be in Germany on September 3. But in another sense, the history we relived that night cannot repeat itself. Between ourselves and the Turks there is no more enmity.

If the fate of war should carry a second generation of Anzacs up the blue reaches of the Dardanelles, flags of welcome, and not another Gallipoli campaign will open the way for them.