

CHAPTER III

THE HEART OF THE WAR

The conflict of the old world and the new is as wide as the world. But the heart of the war was the Mediterranean. Here the European Powers come into most direct collision. Here England, France, Germany, and Russia have been strengthening their outposts for a generation. They have been struggling for territory, for concessions, for privileges of all kinds. The archives of Europe are filled with treaties and conventions bearing upon this territory, while the chancelleries have never lost sight of the great trade routes from Europe to the Orient and the territory round about the Mediterranean Sea, which was the capital prize in the struggle.

Let us visualize this neglected area. It extends from the Straits of Gibraltar to India, and from Austria-Hungary to the Indian Ocean. Round about it are twenty states and nearly 350,000,000 people who are dependent upon it for access to the outside world.

The struggle for the Mediterranean was responsible for the Crimean War in 1853. It explains the conflicts over Turkey. It led to the occupation of Egypt in 1882, the understanding with France in 1904, the Morocco incident in 1911, the partition of Persia in 1912, the activities of diplomacy in the Balkans, and the pressure for the control of Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, which are the only missing links in the British Empire from the English Channel to India.

British financiers have investments of great value in railroads, banks, and other enterprises in this part of the world. Over \$375,000,000 is invested in Egypt alone. Her financiers have large interests in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Persia. But the paramount interest of Great Britain is the sea route to the East. This transcends all other British interests in any part of the world. For the Mediterranean links England with India, Australia, East Africa, and her Far Eastern possessions. It is the route of shipping, of which England controls nearly 40 per cent. of the world's tonnage. Even the industrial life of Great Britain, which employs one-half of her

population, is dependent upon the Mediterranean remaining in friendly hands. Bismarck termed the Suez Canal "the spinal cord" of the British Empire.

The other Powers are also involved. Russia has been ambitious for the Dardanelles since the time of Peter the Great. She has long cast covetous eyes on Persia and northern Asia Minor, as well as on ports upon the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Moreover, if Russia is to be an industrial state she must have access to the warm seas, unimpeded by any other Power.

France has territorial possessions in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis. She is the favored nation in Syria and the Balkan states. She has colonies in the Far East. Her people have invested billions of dollars in the securities of Russia, Turkey, and the Balkans; in railroads and other privileges in western Asia.

Italy controls Tripoli. She seeks control of the littoral lands on the Adriatic Sea and in Asiatic Turkey. Austria-Hungary wants an outlet to the sea. She desires Adriatic ports and Salonika. Germany is ambitious for economic and political power in this part of the

world. And Germany has challenged the status quo.

The Balkan states lie athwart the railroad routes from central Europe to the Mediterranean. They are Roumania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and the little states of Herzegovina, Bosnia, and Albania. For years these states have been rent by wars. They have been sacrificed by the intrigues of the greater Powers interested in imperialistic or financial advantages, and particularly in preventing or securing concessions or treaties which will close or open the corridors from Germany and Austria to the Dardanelles and the Mediterranean.

Little Serbia blocked German-Austrian advance into Turkey, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia. She was a barrier between Mitteleuropa and the Mediterranean. With the other Balkan states she protects Russia, France, and England from attack from the north. This is why Serbia is so important. This is why she was crushed by Germany and Austria.

Across the Bosphorus from Constantinople is western Asia. It includes Asia Minor, Armenia, and the whole of the Mesopotamia region. It extends to the Caucasus Mountains and Russia

on the north, and to the Persian Gulf on the south. Here are great stretches of land available for the cultivation of cotton and wheat. Here are minerals of all kinds, lumber, and oil. Farther on is Persia, which touches British India on the east and the Persian Gulf on the west and south. Asia Minor alone has an area but little less than the area of Germany.

Along the southern shore of the Mediterranean are Egypt, Tripoli, Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco.¹ These states are scarcely more

¹ The population of the nations and dependencies about the Mediterranean basin and their foreign commerce, 1914, is as follows:

COUNTRIES	POPULATION	FOREIGN COMMERCE
Egypt.....	11,190,000	£45,816,400
Persia.....	9,500,000	20,054,000
Tunis.....	1,870,000	9,564,500
Algeria.....	5,564,000	35,948,000
Morocco.....	4,500,000	10,873,000
Tripoli.....	525,000	1,158,000
Bosnia and Herzegovina.....	1,962,000
Roumania.....	5,956,000	49,428,000
Serbia.....	2,911,000	7,612,500
Turkey (in Europe and Asia) ..	21,273,000	67,472,000
Bulgaria.....	4,432,000	14,679,800
Greece.....	2,765,000	11,690,800
Italy.....	36,120,000	205,350,000
Russia.....	108,568,000	£479,647,000
	180,000,000	206,000,000

than names to most of us. But to the Foreign Offices and concession seekers they represent opportunities for economic gain. These backward peoples are but little given to industry. They have no banks or credit facilities of their own. They have no capitalistic class. They are, however, able to work. And they work at a very low wage. They also consume. They furnish a market for the mills, factories, and workshops of Europe.

The states about the Mediterranean contain 108,000,000 people in complete or partial dependence upon the greater Powers. Of these at least 75,000,000 are in a state of subjection. And the privileged classes of the greater Powers find it advantageous to control these states. They find it profitable to keep other Powers out. They can make loans and investments on their own terms. And colossal sums at high rates of interest have been advanced to the rulers of these backward countries. They can control the wealth which these countries produce, and charge what they will for the products of their own factories. The loans and investments of the greater Powers to Russia and the Mediterranean states amount to thousands of millions of dollars.

The long ascendancy of Great Britain in the Mediterranean, as well as the political and economic interests of Russia and France, has been challenged by the German "Drive to the East." Germany has upset the equilibrium of Europe. For the eastern Mediterranean is the most vulnerable spot of the Allied Powers. The economic life as well as the political affiliation of Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy have been placed in peril by the Bagdad Railway project and German ascendancy in Turkey.

German penetration into the Near East began in the eighties. And for thirty-five years German diplomacy, German finance, and German industrial agents have been stealthily burrowing into the eastern Mediterranean region. They have made their way into every country. They have built railroads in Turkey and Asia Minor. They have appropriated the banking and trade of a half-dozen states. With scientific thoroughness Germany has placed a great part of the Near East from Bukharest to Bagdad under economic and political vassalage to Berlin. Turkey has become a vassal state. Asia Minor was being networked with German influence. Ottoman armies are

commanded by German officers. Turkish foreign affairs were directed from Wilhelmstrasse. The Balkan states have been honeycombed by German intrigue. Economic penetration was fast becoming political conquest. By 1914 the Pan-German dream of empire was approaching a reality. It challenged the status quo. It unsettled the balance of power. It menaced British control of the Mediterranean basin from India to Gibraltar, and with it the water route to India, Australia, and the British possessions in Asia and Africa. It menaced Russia, France, and Italy as well. The entire structure of Europe was in danger. The "Drang nach Osten" was an adventure in trade, in commerce, in high finance, in diplomacy. Most important of all, it was an adventure in empire-building on a scale comparable to that of ancient Rome, with an empire in view extending from the North Sea to the Indian Ocean, with a population of 200,000,000 people. Mitteleuropa and the control of the Mediterranean was the most colossal project of political and economic conquest in the history of the world.