

CHAPTER VI

BERLIN TO BAGDAD

The railway is the modern agency of economic conquest. America was laced into a nation in the years which followed the Civil War by the railroads. Cecil Rhodes planned the Cape to Cairo Railway as a means of conquest of eastern Africa. China has fallen under the control of the various Powers by concessions for railroads. England, France, and Russia were building railroads in Turkey, Asia Minor, and Persia for a generation before Germany developed the Berlin-Bagdad project.

The Bagdad Railway as projected was to be an agency of economic conquest. It would serve a variety of purposes among which were the following:

One. It was a "Bridge from Hamburg to the Orient," uniting the whole of central Europe with the Balkan states and the Ottoman Empire. It opened up a great territory to German industry.

Two. The railway, with its connecting railroads, rivers, and canals in Austria and Germany, would divert the trade, the commerce, the exchanging of goods and the banking incident to such exchanging into German hands. It would reopen the mediæval trade routes from India to the North Sea.

Three. It gave Germany a highway of her own to the outside world, unmenaced by any other Power, and free from British control of the North Sea, Gibraltar, and the Suez Canal.

The industrial position of Germany and her desire for a highway of her own to the outside world has been described by Mr. Evans Lewin, an Englishman, in a recently published book on the Bagdad Railway. He shows how the policy of expansion toward the East was dictated by the impossibility of free western expansion so long as Great Britain held a dominating position on the sea. The whole of Germany's sea commerce, he says, comes out of the small triangle, of which Heligoland forms the centre, or through the narrow waters between Denmark and Norway, which, as has been seen during the present war, can be blocked by the

British fleet. Ninety-five per cent. of this traffic passes through the English Channel, whilst even the northern passage, 200 miles broad, between the Orkney Islands and Norway can be successfully held by British sea power. Even should these outlets be passed, the Mediterranean can be blocked at Gibraltar, and only at the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus does British naval power cease. The Bagdad Railway was to become the avenue of German commerce. It was the "strategic key to German schemes of aggression against the maritime powers of western Europe."¹ /

Mr. Lewin quotes Doctor Gerhardt Schott, a well-known German author, who says:

"The geographical importance of these straits [Dardanelles and Bosphorus] to Germany consists not only in their quality as a fortified highway, but also in the fact that they are a joint bridge-head in the great transcontinental world-traffic route of the future, Berlin-Vienna-Constantinople-Bagdad-Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean, a route independent of Great Britain and controlled by the Central Powers. Here is our future. Here even in time of war we shall have a way open to the important oceans of the

¹ *German Road to the East*, Evans Lewin, p. 44.

world. Its maintenance is a question of life for the Central Powers."¹

The same necessity is expressed by other German writers. Professor Haller, in a book entitled *Germany and the East*, expressed the demand of Germany for complete industrial and commercial freedom. He says:

"Germany needs, like every other land which desires to live in freedom and independence, access to the sea. She had that in the north so long as Germany and Brittany were at peace, but lost it when the latter became her enemy, and placed a huge padlock on the door of the German house by blockading the North Sea. Hence, unless we wish to die a death of economic suffocation, nothing remains but to force our way through in the opposite direction—a route already indicated by the course of our greatest natural thoroughfare, the Danube. . . ."²

The Bagdad Railway was to be the German equivalent of command of the seas. It was to be the agency of economic penetration to the East. It would open up southern Europe, western Asia, and the Far East to German in-

¹ *Idem.*

² *Germany and the East*, Professor Haller, Tübingen, 1915.

dustry, kultur, and military power. It would link this whole territory from Hamburg to Persia into a single world state. The railroad was the pioneer of economic penetration and of political conquest as well.

This project has been the subject of wide discussion since the outbreak of the war. One German writer has described the purpose of the Bagdad Railway as follows:

"The Bagdad Railway," he says, "will produce economic, political and cultural results, the extent of which cannot now be imagined. In a very short time direct communication by rail will be established between Constantinople and Bagdad; while during the next generation towns and villages will spring up along the lines, and along the lesser railways which will be built to complete the network. These will provide for the agricultural and industrial development of that ancient city of culture to the mutual profit of Turkey and Germany. . . .

"The sword had to decide the fate of the Near East, and the decision has fallen, unless unforeseen events intervene. Germany will not be limited to the sphere of influence formerly allotted to her, but in future she will devote her energies to Armenia, Syria, and Mesopotamia in the interests of German capitalists and merchants. In this manner the way will be kept open which the war indicated, and which, to-

gether with our Allies, we have fought for and won—the way that leads from Berlin via Vienna-Sofia-Constantinople-Bagdad to the Persian Gulf and has become the vital nerve in our Economic life and our policy.”¹

¹ Von Hans Rohde, *Deutschland in Vorderasien*, Berlin, 1916.