PAN-TURANIANISM. Only a few years before the outbreak of the World War in 1914, a new political movement came into prominence in Constantinople. The awakening of a Turkish national consciousness began to aim at the purification of the Turkish language by the expulsion of all foreign elements, especially Persian and Arabic, and the establishment of a civilization based entirely on old Turkish traditions. In this movement Ziya Bey, Shinassi Bey, and Namik Kemal Bey were particularly active. The researches of the Academy of Turkish Science, established after the Young Turk revolution, dealing with the original home and the pre-Mahommedan history of the Turks, were then artificially utilized greatly to widen the scope of the Turkish national movement. The goal was now the formation of a powerful and independent union of all the peoples of the world kindred to the Osmanli Turks and alleged to embrace a population of 50,000,000 (about double the actual number of those speaking Turkish dialects). For the national designation “Turk” was now to be substituted the more comprehensive “Turanian,” and the Mahommedan crescent was to be abandoned for the pre-Mahommedan Turkish wolf as a racial emblem. Turkish writers began to speak of their ideal fatherland, their Turania, the cradle of their nation, and the home of their race. The poet Ziya Gök Alp, called by a countryman “the great Apostle of Turanianism,” celebrates Attila, Jenghiz and Oghuz Khan as heroic figures that stand for the proud fame of his race, and describes the fatherland of the Turks not as Turkey or Turkestan, but as the “broad eternal land of Turania.” This wider movement involves a policy of Irredentism which aspires not only to stimulate by moral and intellectual propaganda a feeling of racial unity among the kindred peoples, but under favourable circumstances to free those peoples from foreign rule. Curiously enough, the circumstances since the conclusion of the war seem to be more favourable to the realization of this ideal than they were before its outbreak. It is an ideal that is not likely to disappear, for its fulfilment is the only remaining prospect for Turkey of expansion as compensation for the great territorial losses that empire has sustained in recent times.

It now becomes necessary to inquire what possibilities this somewhat vague term Pan-Turanianism implies. The earliest form of the name “Turanian” occurs perhaps about 800 B.C. in the Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism, as Tura, to designate a country which was contiguous to Iran (Persia) and the inhabitants of which were in constant conflict with the Iranians. It is met with again about A.D. 1000 in the Shahname or Book of Kings, of the Persian poet Firdusi as Turan\*, the country beyond the Oxus (now the Amu Darya). Persian sources show that the ancient Turan (Turania) corresponded roughly to the Russian Turkestan of to-day. In the second half of the 19th century “Turanian” came to be used as a loose designation of Asiatic languages that were neither Aryan nor Semitic, and to be similarly applied in a racial sense to the nomadic peoples speaking those languages, as opposed to the agricultural Aryans. The term has more recently become synonymous with “Altaic” or “Ural-Altaic.” “Turanian” is here treated in this definite sense.

Having spread in prehistoric times from the Altai mountains in the centre of Asia, this ethnic family at the present day occupies a broad belt of territory extending from Thrace across Asia to the sea of Japan and reaching from about 35° N. lat. to the coast of the Arctic Ocean. It consists of five main branches, the Samoyeds, the Finno-Ugrians and the Tunguses constituting the northern, and the Mongols and the Turks the southern division. The countries inhabited by the Turanians are Siberia, Mongolia, Manchuria, Chinese and Russian Turkestan, Asia Minor, parts of Persia and Afghanistan, the Caucasus, the Crimea, the Volga and Pechora regions of eastern Russia, Lapland, Finland, Hungary, and portions of the Balkans.

Down to the outbreak of the World War all the Turanian peoples were subject to foreign (Russian, Chinese, Persian, Afghan) domination except the Magyars and the Osmanli Turks. Only those sections of the Turanians that have come into close contact with the Aryans of Europe have succeeded in rising from their primitive state to a comparatively advanced degree of civilization: the Finns, the Magyars and the Osmanli Turks.

The Turanians in Europe number in round figures 22,000,000: 10,000,000 Magyars; 6,000,000 Samoyeds and Finns; and 6,000,000 Turks. In Asia there are 26,000,000: 115,000 Finns, Samoyeds, and Tunguses, all in Siberia; 6,000,000 Manchus, Mongols and Turks, all until recently under Chinese rule; 8,200,000 Turks in Asiatic Russia; 3,500,000 in Persia and Afghanistan; and 8,000,000 Osmanli Turks in Asia Minor. The Turks in Russia are usually called Tatars, and those elsewhere outside the Turkish Empire, Turco-Tatars. Their language is the most characteristic feature of the Turanians. As contrasted with the highly inflexional Indo-European and Semitic linguistic families on the one hand, and the monosyllabic Chinese on the other, the Turanian languages are typical examples of the agglutinative form of speech. Here unchangeable roots are combined with suffixes by means of what is called progressive vowel harmony, in such a way that the vowels of the endings are assimilated to that of the root. Thus the infinitive element mak, which appears in Osmanli Turkish yaz-mak, “to write,” becomes mek in sev-mek, “to love.”

The Mongolians best represent the Turanian physical type. They have broad faces, small, slanting eyes, high cheek-bones, broad, flat noses, thick lips and low foreheads; their complexion is yellowish brown, their hair straight, and their beards scanty. The various branches of the Turanians have intermingled to a considerable extent, but it was only on their western confines that they mixed much with aliens, especially Slavs. Thus many Finnish tribes have been absorbed by the surrounding Russians; the Magyars and the Osmanli Turks, though they have retained their Turanian speech, have lost most of their physical Turanian characteristics; while the Volga Bulgars have no trace of their original Turanian language and physique left, their name alone having survived among the Bulgarians of to-day.

The primitive religion of the Turanians is called Shamanism because its distinctive feature is the agency of the Shaman, a wizard priest, whose services are required to influence the supernatural powers. Witchcraft predominates in this religion, it being the function of the Shaman to master all that in nature is hostile to man, to curb the elements, to conjure spirits, to produce health or disease, fortune or misfortune. The Shamanist operates mainly against demons, but he also believes in higher gods, whom he calls to his aid by means of prayer and sacrifice. Ancestor worship is, moreover, a characteristic feature of Shamanism. An important instrument in the rites of the Shaman is the drum, by means of which he can summon spirits, and compel them to give active assistance. Shamanism is still found in all the Asiatic branches of the Turanian family. But it is only general among the Tunguses, all the tribes of whom (except the Manchus) are devoted to their old faith. The Samoyeds, too, are still largely Shamanists. Among the Mongols, the Buryats on Lake Baikal are the only tribe in which Shamanism prevails. Among the Turks, the old religion survives only in the tribes that remained behind in the Altai range. From the rest of the Turkish peoples it has been extirpated by Islam, though single tribes of Turkish nomads show clear traces of their original beliefs. On the other hand, the Magyars and the Finns adopted Christianity many centuries ago.

The very primitive stage of civilization which the Turanians had attained when they first appear in history, has remained on much the same level, with the few exceptions caused by European contact, down to the present day. As the cultivable soil of the ancient world had already been occupied by the Chinese, the Aryans and the Semites, the Turanians, when driven by the expansion of population to migrate from their ancient homes in the Altai mountains, were compelled to wander in barren steppes in order to maintain themselves. Their civilization thus acquired the stamp of nomadism, in which the isolation of small communities caused by their mode of life prevented the patriarchal system of government from advancing to any higher stage of political organization. The struggle for existence naturally brought them constantly into predatory conflict with their settled and more prosperous neighbours, while boundary disputes tended to perpetual internal strife. The unsettled habits thus produced have, since the adoption of Islam by the Turkish branch, made that branch for many centuries the main cause of unrest in the history of the world, because the directing force of fanaticism has been added to their unorganized restlessness.

The above account of the various branches of the Turanians will supply the material on the basis of which the prospects of Pan-Turanianism may be judged. The movement in its wider aspect having in the years preceding the war been the product of the German-educated Intelligentsia of Constantinople, was, after Turkey joined the Central Powers, much used in support of the alliance between Turkey and Hungary on the strength of racial kinship, and as a lure for the Tatars of the Russian Empire. In the summer of 1918, Halil Pasha, an uncle of Enver Pasha, had an interview, reported in a Berlin journal in 1920, with a German commanding officer in Anatolia, to whom he expounded the aims of the Pan-Turanian movement. Placing the national policy in the foreground, he said it was necessary to unite all Turkish-speaking peoples. The beginning must be made with the conquest of Turkestan, the cradle of the Turkish Empire. The next step would be to establish a connexion with the Siberian Yakuts, the farthest outpost of the Turkish Turanians in the north-east of Asia. After that, the Tatars of the Caucasus were to be included. This nationally exclusive Turkish Empire must, he continued, as a Mahommedan supreme power, have a great attraction for the Turks of Afghanistan and Persia. The incorporation of Azerbaijan, the richest Persian province, might thus be hoped for in the near future. When, on the conclusion of the war, Constantinople had been occupied by the Entente Powers, Halil Pasha was thrown into prison there by them, but, managing to escape, he continued his activities in favour of a Pan-Turkish Empire. Enver Pasha had previously been emphasizing the Pan-Islamic policy and been using Arabs as Turcophil propagandists in the Caucasus. The general plan of this double procedure was by fusing the religious movement of Pan-Islamism with the racial movement of Pan-Turanianism to establish a great Turkish Empire, with Constantinople as the centre of both.

Pan-Turanianism, from the point of view of practical politicians, does not go beyond the ideal of a Turkish Empire comprising all the divisions of the Turkish race, the numbers of which do not really exceed about 26,000,000. As the Ottoman Empire contains no more than 10,000,000 Turks within its present limits, the Irredentism of the Pan-Turanian movement embraces a population of 16,000,000. Before the war, 12,000,000 of these were under Russian and 4,000,000 under Chinese, Persian and Afghan rule. At that period Russia could scarcely be regarded as a very promising field for Pan-Turanian propaganda; for generally speaking the Russian Mahommedans had been loyal, conservative, and somewhat narrow in their political outlook. Had Russia emerged intact from the conflict, her Turkish territory could have been wrested from her only at the price of another war, which the Ottoman Empire would hardly have been willing to face. But the whole situation has been transformed by the Russian Revolution and the consequent break-up of Russia. The Irredentist ambitions of Pan-Turanianism have now been brought appreciably nearer the possibility of realization. A warmer sympathy has been developed among the Russian Mahommedans with the Mahommedans abroad. Russian Turkestan and the two Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara have asserted their independence; the Tatars of the Caucasus have become republics. These new conditions might render the voluntary incorporation of all these outside Turkish populations in the Ottoman Empire not unlikely. For the important unifying elements of general identity of language, religion, and civilization, besides contiguity of territory, are all present. The speech of the Turkish branch of the Turanians has changed so comparatively little that all the divisions may be said to speak one single language, Turkish, differing only to the extent of dialects. Islam is the religion of all the divisions of the Turkish branch, which, though it only adopted this religion, has been its main protagonist. The Turkish-speaking peoples, again, have a common civilization which, based on their primitive nomadism, has as its superstructure the ethics and the culture of the Koran. Finally, with the exception of the Yakuts in the north-east of Siberia, the Turkish peoples are practically in continuous geographical contact from Thrace eastward to the frontier of Mongolia and northward into south-eastern Russia. The connexion of eastern Asia Minor, by way of the Caucasus with Central Asia, which was closed by Tsarist Russia, is now open for the union of the Turks. This road to the East is of great importance both on political and economic grounds.

If the spirit of independence among the Turks of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Azerbaijan could be overcome by the unifying power of common language, race, religion, and culture, Turkey might become a formidable political power based on the combined moral force of the Caliphate and of Turkish nationalism.

Pan-Turanianism, however, if pushed to extremes, is an artificial and a retrograde movement, and would then come into irreconcilable conflict with Pan-Islamism. Thus the attempt to carry out the proposal of some of the Turks of Constantinople to renounce the religion of Mahomet, or even to substitute Turkish for the sacred language of the Koran, would incense the fanatical Moslem. Again, the Turkish peoples outside the Ottoman Empire do not form coherent populations, containing as they do large nomadic elements. On the other hand, the Ottoman Turks, indolent by nature, have never displayed any ability or energy in state-building. It is therefore not likely that they will develop enough statecraft and driving-power to succeed in welding together the different Turkish peoples into a single strong united empire containing perhaps 25,000,000 of the Turkish race. The extension of Pan-Turanianism so as to include other branches of the Turanians can only be pronounced to be a purely visionary idea. The only connecting link between them and the Turks at the present day is the descent of their various languages from a single parent speech that existed in remote antiquity; but Lapp and Manchu are to-day farther apart than English and Sanskrit. The other four branches now differ from the Turks in religion and civilization, besides being separated from them by great and often immense distances. The Samoyeds are nominally Christians, but really Shamanists. The Tunguses, who inhabit a vast tract of north-eastern Asia as Shamanists and reindeer nomads, are slowly dying-out in Siberia while their most prominent tribe, the Manchus, are being entirely absorbed by Chinese civilization. The Mongols, who are the eastern neighbours of Turkish tribes, and were many centuries ago politically associated with the Turks as warlike invaders of the West, are nomads and for the most part adherents of Buddhism, which has transformed them into a peaceful and unenterprising people that at the present day has hardly anything in common with the Turks. The Finno-Ugrian branch, for the most part separated by long distances from the Turks, have with very slight exceptions been thoroughly Europeanized and Christianized for many centuries. The Magyars, conquered by the Turks in the 16th and 17th centuries, fought on the side of the Turks during the World War owing to the pressure of the German alliance; but there seems to be no permanent prospect of political association between these two racially and linguistically related races. It thus seems clear that at least 20,000,000 Turanians will never have the slightest inherent tendency to be drawn into union with the Islamic religion and civilization of the Turkish Empire.

Authorities.—Sarron, La Jeune Turquie et la Revolution (1912); Tekin Alp, The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal (1916); La Turquie et la Guerre (1916); “Islam and the War,” Quarterly Review (April 1918); Macdonell, Turanians and Pan-Turanianism (1918); Eurasian Routes (1920); Berliner Tageblatt (Jan. 24 and 28 1920).

source:

<https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1922_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Pan-Turanianism>