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THE  
BALKAN COMMITTEE.

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SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
FOR  
THE YEAR 1910.

Presented and Adopted  
at the  
Annual Meeting on July 4th, 1911.

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REPORT OF THE  
 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
 FOR THE YEAR 1910.

In the Reports presented both last year and the year before your Committee referred to the revolution that had taken place in the affairs of Turkey in terms of considerable confidence, and in view of the obvious difficulties with which the new administration was confronted, they appealed for a patient and generous criticism of the efforts that they believed were being made by the Young Turks to establish a régime which would command respect and confidence abroad, as well as secure peace and prosperity at home. In the light of events which have occurred since the latter Report was drafted, it may be thought that the views of your Committee were too sanguine, and that the information on which they based their judgment was biassed and imperfect. But they did not look for the immediate establishment of constitutional government, nor did they expect that the new régime would at once and for ever abandon the old methods of administration. They recognised that both the revolution of 1908 and the counter revolution of 1909, though on the whole remarkably free from bloodshed, were in their essence military, and that as the army had taken so prominent a part in their achievement, the leaders would be compelled to rely mainly on it

for its maintenance, and that until law and order, and respect for law and order, had been firmly established, the *ultima ratio* of the new government must necessarily be force. They cherished no illusions as to any rapid disappearance of the ingrained habits of centuries before a spirit of modern constitutionalism, though they fully hoped that the subversion of the old brutal and corrupt Hamidian despotism would be followed at no long interval of time by a complete abandonment of the grosser forms of oppression and cruelty which had made the Government of the Porte at once a disgrace and a danger to Europe. Above all, they believed that the Young Turks—several of whom they knew to be inspired with genuinely liberal opinions—ought to have an ample chance of showing whether they were capable of governing, and whether they would be able to carry out the reforms which they had promised to make in the administration of affairs. They knew that among the leaders of the revolution were educated men who, during their long domicile in Western Europe, had not only imbibed the spirit of constitutionalism, but had become sensitive to foreign criticism, and realised the never-absent danger of foreign intervention if public opinion in England, France and Russia should be outraged by a repetition of former cruelties. They also took into account the consequences of the only alternative policy, that of discrediting the new Government—which would have meant war—war, primarily, between Turkey and Bulgaria, but involving probably other Balkan States, if not the Great Powers as well. They saw that the defeat of Turkey would not settle the problem; the Christian States would not be in a position to agree as to the disposition of the severed territory, and it was not unlikely that they would be robbed of the fruits of their success by the refusal of the Powers to

acquiesce in it. On the other hand, there was the possibility of a Turkish victory, which would have established a still more martial Turkish Government, with a still firmer hold on European Turkey.

While still holding the views expressed in the former Reports, your Committee have no wish to minimise or condone the barbarities which have attended the policy of disarmament in several provinces of the Turkish Empire, and they regard with apprehension the Chauvinist spirit which has of late seemed to dominate the government at Constantinople. The chief blame for this recrudescence of violence lies, in their opinion, not on the shoulders of the Committee of Union and Progress, but on the military clubs of Monastir and Uskub, who pressed on the Government the policy of disarmament as the only means of putting down the "Bands," which on their part forbade the people to give up their arms on pain of death. The execution of some of the Band leaders led to reprisals by the murder of innocent Turks, and the methods adopted for suppressing the Bands, and crushing the revolutionary propaganda amongst the villages and smaller towns, have borne such a sinister resemblance to the methods employed under Abdul Hamid, that it is not to be wondered at that the unfortunate people complain that their condition is no whit the better for the change of government which followed the revolution.

With the view of learning on the spot the real position of affairs, the Chairman and his brother went to Turkey in the early part of this year, and the opinion they formed was embodied in a Report published last February. From the evidence there gained they came to the conclusion that great cruelties had been practised (1) in the repression of

the Albanians early in 1910, and (2) in the disarmament and the proceedings under the "Bands Law," with the resulting reprisals during the summer and autumn of 1910; that there had undoubtedly been a militarist reaction, and that still there existed a deep distrust between Turks and Christians. On the other hand, they saw that while the revolution had not done away with this ill-feeling, it had led to a very remarkable drawing together of the different sections of the Christian community, and they thought that perhaps the most creditable action of the Young Turks was that they had not tried to keep open the old sore caused by the hatred between the different sections of the Christians, as had Abdul Hamid, whose policy it was to stimulate divisions among his subjects and to govern them by dividing them. Again, though the army was by no means fully reformed, the work of reorganising it showed at least energy and wisdom. But the most hopeful feature was that the Parliament actually existed as a Parliament, and served as a safety-valve for the expression of grievances. Observers found signs of more friendly relations between Armenians and Turks, and it was encouraging to find a newspaper existing in Armenia, conducted by an eminent Armenian, which freely criticised the Turkish Government. There was, too, a movement for spreading education among all sections of the population, and the Turkish Government had taken the remarkable step of sending some selected pupils, both boys and girls, to the American colleges, and had in other ways made attempts to improve education. To this educational movement your Committee attach so much importance that they have already sent a first contribution of £50 to the American College towards its promotion, and a special fund for the establishment of a bursary for the education of girls,

without distinction of race or religion, has been started by Miss Isabel Fry.

Your Committee cannot conclude this Report better than by quoting the views so admirably expressed by Mr. C. R. Buxton in a letter written at Constantinople last January and published in the *Nation* on February 18th, 1911:—

"The question before us is not whether the present Turkish Government is all that was hoped for by the optimists; not whether it is a truly constitutional Government; not even whether it is the best that the circumstances of the Ottoman Empire admit of. We might answer all these questions in the negative, and still prefer it. The question is whether it is preferable to any alternative which is, at the present time, possible.

"To think it is so preferable, is not to think that it should be exempt from criticism. On the contrary, such criticism is desired by the best elements in Turkey—even in Government circles, and still more outside them—and so long as it is not conceived in a purely hostile spirit, it tends to strengthen the hands of those who are working for real progress.

"On the other hand, we should treat Turkey as a self-respecting State. It should be understood that we express our opinions, not because we wish to interfere in her internal affairs for interference's sake, but because Turkey herself aims at bringing her Government into accord with Liberal opinion in Europe, and wants to know what that opinion is, and because we have responsibilities under the Treaty of Berlin towards the Christian subjects of the Porte. These facts justify us in following more closely the course of affairs in Turkey

than in other foreign States. While criticising, we should at the same time support and help the Young Turks in their efforts towards progress, and not fail to give them full credit for the advance they have already made. This attitude of respect, tempered with vigilance, is not a simple and easy one to take up, and our Foreign Office does not seem to have succeeded in assuming it. But we are faced with a more complicated and difficult situation than in the old days, and to that situation our policy must adapt itself."

### ORGANISATION AND FINANCE.

From the statements made in this Report it is hoped that members of the Balkan Committee will recognise the vital need of closely watching events in Turkey, and of showing to the party of reform in that country, as occasions arise, the views held by interested British observers of the policy and action adopted by them. It is of great importance, too, that the subject races should feel that there are those in this country who anxiously look for the amelioration of their conditions of life, and for the establishment amongst them of the rights and liberties to which the subjects of every constitutionally-governed people are entitled.

This is the work for the performance of which the Balkan Committee was founded, and to this work your Executive has devoted and will devote its best energies. But it cannot be done effectively without organisation and without support. With the view of securing the former, your Committee last February asked Mr. Arthur G. Symonds to act as their Secretary. He has for many years been a member of the General Committee, and his devotion

to the cause of justice and liberty was conspicuously shown in the active support he gave, both by voice and pen, to the great agitation led by Mr. Gladstone at the time of the "Bulgarian Atrocities," and that which at a later date roused public opinion in this country on behalf of the Armenians. Since the retirement of Mr. Moore, Mr. Symonds has done the secretarial work, and your Committee desire to place on record their gratitude for his past voluntary services, and their gratification at having now persuaded him to accept the post of Secretary.

To enable your Executive adequately to fulfil the functions for which the Balkan Committee was established, to make its influence felt in Turkey and appreciated in Great Britain and on the Continent, it is essential that they should have a larger revenue at their disposal. They therefore appeal to all members to subscribe to the funds, contributions to which have latterly been supplied by a very small number of those whom they believe to be interested in Balkan affairs.

## THE BALKAN COMMITTEE.

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**Income and Expenditure for the year ending December 31st, 1910.**

*Dr.*

*Cr.*

|   | £    | s. | d. |   | £    | s. | d. |
|---|------|----|----|---|------|----|----|
| To Balance on December 31st,<br>1909 ... .. | 53   | 0  | 3  | By Rent ... ..                          | 10   | 0  | 0  |
| „ Subscriptions, Donations, &c.             | 50   | 10 | 0  | „ Office Expenses ... ..                | 10   | 15 | 4  |
|   |      |    |    | „ Luncheon to Enver Bey ...             | 26   | 10 | 9  |
|   |      |    |    | „ Balance December 31st,<br>1910 ... .. | 56   | 4  | 2  |
|   |      |    |    |   |      |    |    |
|   | £103 | 10 | 3  |   | £103 | 10 | 3  |

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Examined and found correct this 3rd day of July, 1911.

CHARLES L. CRIBB, 14 Corfton Road, Ealing, W.