



**BOOK REVIEW: “THE YOUNG TURKS AND
ISTANBUL IN 1911-1912 THROUGH THE
EYES OF A RUSSIAN JOURNALİST”**

***“Bir Rus Gazetecinin Gözünden Jön Türkler
ve İstanbul (1911–1912)”***

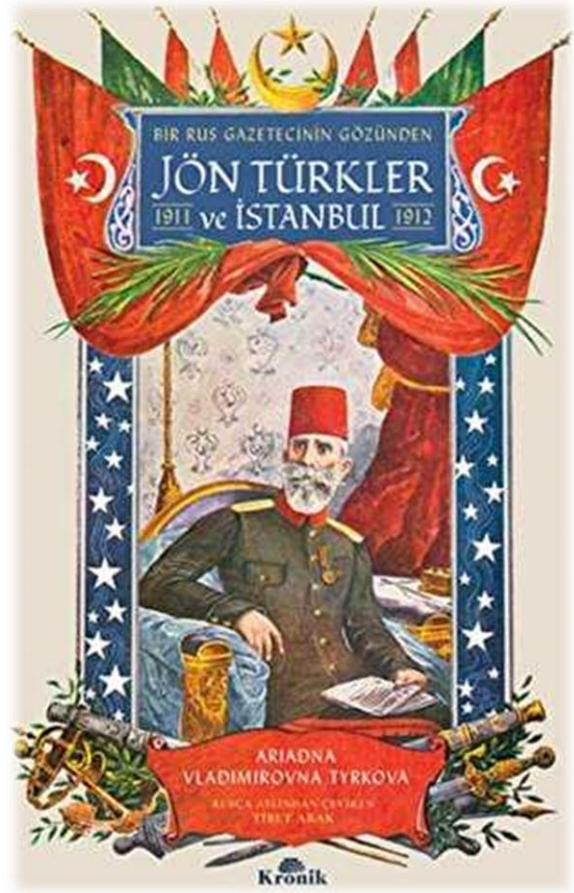
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This book is based on the autobiographical memoirs written by Ariadna Vladimirovna Tyrkova, a journalist from Russia. She was born in Petersburg in 1869. Her oldest brother, attempted to assassinate Tsar II. Aleksandr.¹ This context explained us her family's political view. When we consider Tyrkova personal life at this context, we seen it quite tempestuous. The revolutionary spirit she inherited from her family manifested itself through her anti-Tsarist activities. She was punished by jail for his activities. After her punishment she was released on bail and went to Paris. When the 1905 Revolution started she returned to Russia. She joined Kadetler. She was the only woman be involved in party's center committee. From 1905 to 1917, she wrote articles for popular publications in Russia. In this book she never tell why she was in Turkey. But her experiences in Turkey and the detail she shared, are quite significant.



This book has 7 chapter. The first chapter was written under the title Jon Turk "Kalabalığı" (pp.15-44). Tyrkova, went to Belgrad from İstanbul used by train. On the train she met people who had witnessed the Turco-Italian war. She felt guilty for these people. Because everyone saw the European and Christian Word as having instigated this war. Along the way she talked with Bulgarians on the train about the Ottoman Empire and listened carefully to their observations about the empire. When she arrived in İstanbul firstly she wrote about İstanbul who had a cosmopolitan city. She described how Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Albanian, Arab and Jewish people lived and what kind of clothes they wore. She wrote about newspaper in İstanbul and their circulation because of she was a journalist. She wrote the newspaper in İstanbul had a low circulation and added Turkish political read is not undeveloped. She mentioned that Tanin was the most common as well as the Armenian owned Sabah newspaper which was published in Turkish. But she said these newspaper only read İstanbul and closed era. Because local press was undeveloped. Tyrkova discussed the Ittihat ve Terakki and its political views, she also wrote about the political murders

¹ Ekaterina Aygun, *The Ottoman Empire in 1908-1913 and Ottoman Women as Seen Through the Eyes of Two Journalists, Russian Ariadna Tyrkova -Williams and British Grace Ellison*, İstanbul Bilgi University Institute of Graduate Programs History Master's Degree Program, İstanbul 2019, p. 9

that occurred during the Ittihat Terakki's era. She also discussed about reforms, specially reform of Ottoman army.

The second chapter was written under the title *Seçimler ve Meclisin Açılması* (pp. 44-58). This chapter explain us The Jon Turks won the election, parliamentary election and public events. She found election prosedure remarkable. She also added that voters had to write down their chosen candidate on paper particularly in era with a low literacy rate. The election continued for four day so voters Cloud bring their election papers the next day. Hence she did not the find the process democratic. But all this is not strange because Ottoman Empire was only just begining the constitutional life. At this time, Tyrkova testified opening the Parlimentary. She mentioned that the surrounding just like a festival. She found remarkable Sultan, member of parliament, shaykh al-islam clothes. She told us sultan was very tried but he also felt pleasure because of his burden was lightened by the members of parliement. She shared the information us the Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil was the Sultan's first correspondent. She mentioned in the Sultan's speech contained as statement indicating that the parliament's legislative program was not yet in place, and only constitutional laws needed to reviewed. She told us because she thinks parliament's legislative program insufficient. Also Tyrkova found remarkable, grandvizier loyalty for Sultan Mehmet Reşad of V. She commeted that Said Pasha must have regarded Sultan Abdulhamid, to whom he had served as grandvizer many years, with same loyalty. But she couldnt find it twofaced. Its a loyalty for empire and cult of the state.

The third chapter was written under the title *Boğazlar ve Rusya* (pp.59-72). At this chapter writer discussed Russia's expectation from Ottoman Empire. She expressed her ideas for the peace of Turco-Italian war. She talked to French scholar who had living Turkey. His ideas very interesting. He said if the Greece were to regain authority in these lands a peaceful environment could be established. And he even said it would be more preferable for a German Kaizer to ascend to the as a prince. Tyrkova refferenced to Tsar Nikola I, and said its a fantastic idea for "sick" Ottoman Empire. Tyrkova, meet Huseyin Cahid Yalçın who was a writer of Tanin and they had a long conversation about Turco-Italian war. Constitutional regime throughout the four years helped the Turkish government establish a strong and disciplined army with the asistance of German instructors. They changed old guns with new ones. They bought mauser and gun at the Germany factory. Germany generally transferred military information and science. Ottoman military officers went to Germany for education. Military education was very important to Ottoman Empire's situation. For this reason, Ottoman Empire tried every move for reform the army. Huseyin Cahid, refferenced to Ottoman Empire situation and said empire was alone and shouldn't rely on anyone for its salvation. For the Tyrkova, Ottoman Empire should trust to England. Because England has no purpose to gain of Ottoman Empire's land. Firstly Germany was an ally to the Ottoman Empire but then Germany played both sides during the Turco-Italian war and this caused to trust to decrease.

The fourth chapter was written under the title *Ermeniler* (pp.73-90). She wrote about Armenian question. Its not a coincidence that she wrote it. Russian was close to Armenia and this the first caused to she wrote. For this reason Tyrkova, placed Armenians in a different position within the Ottoman Empire. Armenians lived together to Ottoman Empire although the they experienced negative events like the event of 1896 and events in Adana. She indicated that despite having a population of two million, they held significant power within the Ottoman Empire. Armenians were educated in their native language. But they were unlucky to land issues. Kurdish people were dispossessing the lands of Armenians in the provinces where Armenians predominantly lived. Tyrkova had to chance to talking Armenian members of parliamentary. She asked to him is he considered the Ittihat ve Terakki trustworthy. He answered that the Jon Turk had to the make reforms due to the empire's situation but looking back many promises made to them had not been kept. Tyrkova was shocked that Pastirmaciyan who had once bombed the Ottoman bank was now in parliament. She noted that he was now defending the people's request and demands with words in parliament rather than with bombs. While in Istanbul, Tyrkova visited the editorial Office of Azatamart, the official publication of the Tasnaksutyun Party. She was welcomed very well there and they were talked to her Russian and asked about the question related Russia. However, the most significant reason for their warm behavior her being Russian. We have no information about whether they knew Tyrkova was a member of the Cadets. Negative comments about the Cadets made in front of Tyrkova disturbed her. She defended herself and Cadets. However she felt like she was in Russia. They serviced her tea and baranka. Armenians working at Azatamart were born in Russia. For this reason they had blended with Russian culture. They found themselves in arguments with Turkish Armenians who did not speak Turkish and this is all understandable. Vramyan who had the editor of Azatamart was born in Van and went to Paris for education. He was defending Jon Turk as an ally of the Armenians. He admitted that the Ittihat had made many mistakes. However what legitimized them was the situation they inherited from the Hamidian regime. Armenians viewed Jon Turks as the protectors of the Kanun-i Esasi. Considering the situation the Armenians had experienced to the past, there was no guarantee that it wouldn't happen again. Nevertheless, Vramyan regarded these incidents as remnants of the ancien regime and expressed their hope would not be repeated. There was a 200.000 Armenians in Constantinople. Their lives were quite colorful. The Ottoman Armenians had rights to build a school and organized political meetings and established cooperatives. The government did not interfere with them. However, Armenians were quite unsettled about the Kurds involvement in murders in Van and Muş provinces. Armenians had lost their belief that reforms would come with the help of Christians. In the end, Jon Turks did not keep their promises to the Armenians, they ignored the voting procedures and put whoever they wanted into parliamentary. Her interpretation of this situation was that Talat Bey whom Vramyan viewed as one of the most honest and clear JonTurks as the executioner of the Armenian people.

The fifth chapter was written under the title *Askeri İsyân ve Jön Türklerin Başarısızlığı* (pp. 91-118). This chapter discusses the failure of the Jon Turks. This failure nearly brought about a rebellion supporters of Abdulhamid II. Especially in the Macedonia things were out of control. In Albania banditry increased. Before the constitutional period people at least had hope that things were good. But it did not work out that way. Tyrkova indicated that the Jon Turks who were in power for four years failed in almost every issues. They failed to connect with non-Turkish nations They made mistakes in Albania, they expended so much effort fighting their rivals that they had no energy left to the reforms. However they made good things too. They had successes such as the compulsory military service, regulating tax collection, arranging the budget, dealing with the education of the people, the appointment administrators who were compatible with the reforms. According to Tyrkova they taught the Ottoman Empire the early skills of party politics. Its quite important.

The sixth chapter was written under the title *Liderler* (pp. 119-135). This chapter about the Talat, Huseyin Cahid and Cavid Bey. Tyrkova were interested in Huseyin Cahid Bey. Huseyin Cahid Bey decribed himself as a Jon Turk but he admired those who made a miskates a lot. But the reason for these mistakes was their current situation. Although Tyrkova described Huseyin Cahid as an “educated Muslim”, his views capital punishment reveal that an Eastern mentality dominates his way of thinking. Tyrkova was also aware of this situation.

Cavid Bey’s father was a Turkish bureaucrat. He was a minister of finance. He went for Paris for the credit. They asked to him what guaranteed for credit. This questions offended him as a minister of finance. Talat Bey worked at a post office before the revolution. Tyrkova observed Talat Bey as more staided in her impressions of these three individuals. She assessed Huseyin Cahid as thoughtful, Cavid Bey as intelligent and tricky and found Talat Bey difficult to understand. Even tough Tyrkova legitimized to Huseyin Cahid as a patriot she found him ignorant. He did not know the rules of his own country. Tyrkova had sharp ideas about Talat Bey. She saw him as a destroyer of Armenians and believed this was tarnishing the Jon Turks name.

The seventh chapter was written under the title *Sonuç Yerine* (pp.136-149). This chapter is about Tyrkova’s experiences in Istanbul. Especially she wrote life in Istanbul, people’s clothes, cafes and she even praised Turks. She was critizing Jon Turks but also appreciated them thanks to the proper work they did. She shared about the idea of education, commentary about woman’s clothes. Jon Turks also prioritized to women’s education especially by supporting Halide Hanım’s ideas. But Tyrkova realized that at it was impossible for Turks to establish a European-style state under these condition. But she was wrong.

The book finished here. But she also shared her ideas about the country little titles. *Küçük Dokumacılar* (pp. 150-157), *Narodnik Öğrenci* (pp.158-164), *Halide Hanım* (pp. 165-177), *Türk Edebiyatçı* (pp.178-185). She testified that little girls were carpet weaving at the factory. She had met a boy who was studying medicine. She listened to

Halide Hanım's ideas about the Turkish women, and visited girls school where Halide Hanım both taught and served as its director. She chatted with Ahmet Hikmet about literature and his books. Ahmet Hikmet thought that salvation lay in European culture. She finished her book here.

Tyrkova had strong observation skill. Her observations about the Ottoman Empire were very important. She had a political identity for this reason she talked to the politicians. She was a feminist which is why she was interested in Turkish women and defended their rights. Her direct communication with the political figures of that era sheds light for those studying the Ittihat ve Terakki.