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The Crisis in Turkey

EVEN Mr Menderes can no longer pretend, as he started off by doing, that the riots and demonstrations which have, taken place in recent weeks in Istanbul and Ankara were the work "merely of a handful of student agitators". It is not that the Turkish Prime Minister has made any admission in so many words; but his actions speak quite unmistakably for themselves. The main cities are under martial law; round-the-clock curfews have been in force; gatherings of more than five persons are prohibited; the press has been brought under even greater restraint than before; and an unknown number of arrests has been made. All this would be too elaborate a way of dealing with "merely a handful of student agitators".

The plain fact is that discontent against the Government's policies has been mounting up steadily over the past few years, and that it has now reached boiling point. Two factors seem to have helped to bring things to a head. The first is the growing disaffection in the army. This has been coming to the surface in recent months in the shape of several resignations, as also in the form of pro-Opposition statements made by soldiers. It is, of course, well known that Mr Ismal Inonu's prestige in the army has always been high; and whether or not Mr Menderes is right in suspecting that the veteran Opposition leader (who is now 75) has actually been plotting with the army to overthrow the Government, it is clear that the army's discontent is to the advantage of the Opposition alone. Mr Inonu may not have sown the seeds; but the harvest can only go to him.

Not unnaturally the situation caused the Prime Minister a good deal of alarm—and this, apparently, led him to precipitate the second factor which lies behind the current unrest. He appointed a special Commission to investigate signs of "subversion" in the Opposition party, and equipped this Commission with powers which can only be described as extraordinary. Indeed it is even doubtful if these powers are constitutional. This acted as a signal for an eruption. So, on the 28th of last month, students came out in front of the Istanbul University and shouted such slogans as "Menderes Resign" and "Freedom". The police not only tried to arrest these demonstrators but entered the university and arrested some students and their professors there. This caused widespread resentment and the unrest became more, intense as well as more general.

Mr Menderes's strong-arm measures reflect his determination to avoid the fate of Syngman Rhee; but he forgets that these measures were precisely what spell the Korean President's downfall. In any event, the Turkish Prime Minister is at present in a particularly weak and vulnerable position. What is more, he knows it. That is why he has gone out of his way to promise not only that the general elections will take place in September 1961 as scheduled, but also that they will be 'fair'—an admission by implication that the last ones were not. The position of the Prime Minister is weakened by three factors. First, the country has suddenly plunged into a state of considerable confusion. The Government,

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