

Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Volume I, *Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280-1808*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. xvi + 351

Less than a decade ago, Paul Coles published *The Ottoman Impact on Europe* (New York 1968), in which he termed the Ottoman Empire as "sterile", a government whose conquered peoples became "imprisoned for some centuries within a social and political system which lacked the capacity for sustained development", with "uncreative and uncritical" values (p. 117). Such Eurocentric views of the Muslim Ottomans, echoing the Crusades, biased diplomats, and angry ethnic minorities, wrenches out of proportion the true consequence of a long-lived political and social organism. The recent publication of the first volume of Stanford Shaw's well-balanced *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* goes a long way to laying to rest such persistent and superficial stereotypes.

Professor Shaw, master of Arabic, Ottoman, and modern Turkish languages, has spent nearly twenty years in Turkish archives and libraries researching the vast history of the Ottoman Turks. He analyzes the political changes from the earliest *gazi* sultans until the fall of the reforming Sultan Selim III in 1808, heavily emphasizing the political history of southeastern Europe, the lands adjacent to the Black Sea, and Persia. He presents an unabashedly pro-Ottoman perspective.

Shaw's interpretations derive from the most recent scholarship, both Turkish and non-Turkish. For more than half a century Western scholars have bisected the Ottoman system of governance into two neat but inaccurate and misleading parts: the Ruling Institution and the Religious Institution. Shaw defines the Ottoman administrative complex by using the rather broader term of "Ruling Class", which includes all who rule, regardless of status or religious background, be they the Military, the Palace, the Scribal (Men of the Pen), or the Learned (*ulema*) Institutions. The author specifies the critical problem of balance within this Ruling Class, at once the glory and the downfall of the system. The earliest Turkish aristocratic landowners provided, through traditional family lines, a series of productive, innovative, valuable leaders who had the wit to accept ideas and services from both the Christian West and the Islamic East. The aim of the conquering Sultan Mehmet II was to strike a balance between these fiercely independent free Muslim Turks and the sultan's non-Turkish slaves (the *devshirme*), men who were totally dependable but rootless. The very nature of such a balance depended upon superior leadership. Following ten wise (and sometimes very fortunate) sultans came a series of unwise and generally unfortunate leaders. This weakness at the central power source—the sultans themselves—slowly upset the balance, and the system.

Yet the ingrown loyalty of the majority of the Ruling Class supported the system so completely, and for so long, that the state weathered incredible military and economic disasters, for decade after decade, and still carried on. Just how it worked is the subject both of Chapter 5 and the shorter Chapter 8, portions which may be the most useful and long-lasting of the present volume.

Not all the issues appear as clearly in Shaw's analysis of Ottoman institutions. The overwhelming importance of the Religious Institution, though correctly stressed in every chapter, does not explain the Islamic bases for their ability to thwart needed reform, particularly in view of the willingness of the earliest Ottomans to thrive on novelty. Was it Turkish *gazi* spirit which paved the way for innovation and military success, and High Islam (or what Marshall Hodgson called "the unitary and populist orientation of the *ulema*") which frustrated needed change? Did the Ottoman Ruling Class (for whatever reasons) become so totally immersed in the "Shariah-mindedness" (again Hodgson's term) of Islam that they refused to accept,

until far too late, the clear superiority of European technology, seamanship, and mercantilist economic methods? A second limitation occurs in the author's heavy emphasis on political and economic history. The few short sketches of poets and writers, historians and political theorists whet, but do not satisfy, our appetites. He writes little about art, next to nothing about architecture. For students, the paucity of endnotes for all but two chapters forces an even greater reliance for further study on the bibliography which, alas, only superficially indicates the exact source of some of his information.

Interestingly, Shaw portrays for us no heroes. The great Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent remains a question: did he not leave more problems than he provided solutions? Few heroic qualities can be found in the grand viziers, whether Kuyucu Murat Pasha putting down the extraordinary Celâli rebellions, Köprülü Mehmet Pasha bludgeoning order in the Military Institution, or Damad Ibrahim Pasha establishing the brief cultural renaissance of the Tulip Period, so brutally ended by rebellion in 1730. If a hero exists he seems to be the lowly bureaucrat of the Scribal or Religious Institutions, toiling on despite the economic inflation, the famines and wars, the mob violence, the executions, and the occasional years when not enough money existed in the treasury to meet the pay roll.

The author has determined not to perpetuate the old bromidic fables, and for good reason. He describes no dream of Osman I presaging the coming greatness of the Empire. No cage imprisons the defeated Bayezit I after the disastrous battle against Tamurlane. No Janissary turns over a soup kettle when disgruntled, though we read many a lurid account of these angry slaves literally "tearing apart" various administrative and military officials. And no hapless Prince Mahmut hides timidly in an empty palace furnace to avoid execution in 1808, but courageously runs to safety over the roof! Here the author portrays the Empire devoid of the miraculous, the fabulous, or the inaccurately picturesque. He draws his conclusions deliberately from his reading of the contemporary documents. Though his style of writing is not sparkling, its soundness projects a sense of reliability. True, nationalist historians from the twenty-odd successor states of the Ottoman Empire may take exception to points raised, but they must all recognize that the Empire protected local customs and allowed local leadership to grow within the *millet* system. Though the Ottomans were neither peaceful in their conquests nor democratic in their governance they were no worse than Christian European, Persian, or Arab governments which they supplanted, and quite often proved, to the inhabitants, a good deal better.

In his Preface, Shaw says he aims to "balance the picture without introducing distortions which have previously characterized much of the West's view of the Ottomans". In addition to this he restores to Ottoman history a certain Turkish element, a perspective long neglected. For years various minority peoples of the former Ottoman regions, mostly Christian but also some Muslims, have castigated the excesses of the "Terrible Turk". Moreover, in its reforming zeal, the Turkish Republic of the twentieth century endeavored to cut off the imperial heritage in order to modernize and thus save what was left of the Turkish homeland after World War I. Professor Shaw, on the other hand, puts into clear view the greatness of the free Muslim Turk. He explains the Turk's political acumen and penchant for leadership. He highlights an Anatolian-based literature, both courtly and common. He underscores the Turk's religious devotion and his patience in adversity. Throughout the book, the Turk earns a certain nobility not found in most Western histories.

Western views of the Ottoman Empire must surely change with the publication of Shaw's volume. Our almost total reliance on the nineteenth century work of the Austrian von Hammer-Purgstall has been supplanted in recent years by some very important new views. Works by Halil İnalcik, Norman Itzkowitz, and the recent compilation edited by Michael A. Cook

provide valuable depth into certain elements of the Ottoman Empire. The present work, however, widens our focus to give a much broader comprehension. We see a traditional Muslim Empire conquering, absorbing, defending, and finally losing an important portion of southeastern Europe. What may formerly have appeared as a political system lacking in the capacity for sustained development is in fact a classic example of the imperial cycle. We may find astonishment that the reformers, seeking traditional answers to their contemporary questions, avoided disaster for so long.

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Milija M. Lašić-Vasojević, *Enemies On All Sides: The Fall of Yugoslavia*, Washington, D.C., North American International, 1976, pp. 286.

Milija Lašić offers the reader a glimpse into his own life as a Serbian high school teacher, soldier, war prisoner and displaced person during the war years and up to 1951. His personal, highly moving account tells of his individual decision to join the Yugoslav army of King Petar II under the command of General Draza Mihailovic at the onset of the war and the resulting consequences of that decision—a loss of family, friends and country.

Unlike other participants of the second world war for whom the decisions, to fight and on which side, were made by their respective governments, Milija Lašić was confronted with several choices and each choice brought with it a different outcome. Civil war waged in Yugoslavia within the context of the world war. Partisans, chetniks and Croatian *utasi* fought each other as Germans, Italians (although the Italians are not seen in the role of a typical occupier) and Albanians fought Yugoslavs—truly there were “enemies on all sides”. This is the story of one man’s survival against these “enemies” and others—execution, frost, exhaustion, hunger and typhus. The reader walks with Lašić and his local-defense unit through the mountains and towns of Yugoslavia. In these movements the map supplement provided in the appendix would have better served the reader if it had been included along with other detailed maps within the text. For anyone unfamiliar with the area it is difficult to follow the military movements without the assistance of a map to help locate the towns.

Lašić and others like himself fought bravely; and yet tragically, he and they were treated as enemies by their own countrymen and by the Allies. Describing the events of mid-1945 he has written: “Several months earlier all countries in Europe were enjoying the return of their sons from captivity, while we Serbians were not able to go anywhere. Fascism and Nazism had destroyed our country; the Allies had handed us over to Communists whose getting into power in Yugoslavia they had greatly helped from 1943 through 1945. This injustice was killing us”.

Milija Lašić’s story is a tragedy—one of many. It raises many questions, few of which can be answered. More inquiries of this type by all sides are needed to provide an understanding, if not an explanation, of this tragic episode in Yugoslav history.

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Carole Rogel, *The Slovenes & Yugoslavism 1890-1914*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1977, pp. vii + 167.

This small, but quite expensive study, is concerned with the pre-World War I develop-