

A REASSESSMENT: THE YOUNG TURKS, THEIR POLITICS AND  
ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE

INTRODUCTION

The *Jeunes Turcs* or *Young Turks* were a heterogeneous body of intellectuals with conflicting interests and ideologies. However, their common goal was opposition to Hamidian absolutism.

Although the Young Turks were the heirs of the New Ottoman political tradition of constitutionalism and freedom—which were believed to be the final words in modernization by both factions—they did not come from the elite bureaucratic circles of the New Ottomans<sup>1</sup>.

The Young Turks were the products of the modern secular, military or civilian professional schools. They

«belonged to the newly emerging professional classes: lecturers in the recently founded government colleges, lawyers trained in western law, journalists, minor clerks in the bureaucracy, and junior officers trained in western-style war colleges. Most of them were half-educated and products of the state (high) schools. The well-educated ones had no experience of administration and little idea about running a government. There was not a single experienced statesman amongst them»<sup>2</sup>.

The historical evidence at hand suggests that the great majority of the Young Turk cadres was recruited primarily from among the children of the petty-bourgeoisie. Most of the prominent Young Turk statesmen came from such marginal middle-class families. For example, Talat Paşa (Prime Minister) was a small postal clerk in Salonica with only a junior high-school education

1. The best socio-historical account of the social origins, ideologies and biographies of the Young Turks and their most important organization *İttihat ve Terakki* or Society of Union and Progress members may be found in Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Makedonya'dan Orta Asya'ya: Enver Paşa*, 3 vols, Istanbul, Remzi Kitabevi, 1970-1973; Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, *İnkılap Tarihimiz ve İttihat ve Terakki*, Istanbul, 1948; İbrahim Temo, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyetinin Teşekkülü ve Hizmeti Vataniye ve İnkılabi Milliyeye Dair Hatıralarım*, Mecidiye, 1939; Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969; Ernest E. Ramsaur, *The Young Turks, Prelude to the Revolution of 1908*, New Jersey, Princeton Univ. Press, 1957.

2. Feroz Ahmad, *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

before he joined the «Union and Progress». The father of Enver Paşa (Commander in Chief and Minister of War at the age of 34) was a public prosecutor of a small Rumeli (European Turkey) town; Cavit Bey (Minister of Finance) was a teacher and a small bank official. The father of Mustafa Kemal Paşa (First President of the Republic) was a small civil servant turned lumber merchant before he died. Ziya Gökalp, theoretician of the Young Turk movement, was a small-town student from Diyar-behir, an east Anatolian town<sup>1</sup>.

The Young Turk movement developed in two forms; as an amorphous intellectual movement of opposition and constitutionalism on the one hand, and a collection of highly organized societies on the other. The representatives of the first faction operated primarily in European centers, especially Paris, in order to escape the Hamidian secret police. The more militant and secret organizations intent on overthrowing the Hamidian regime grew out of the *Mekteb-i Tıbbiyye-i Askeriye* or Military Medical School in Istanbul, and soon spread to the Military Academy (*Mekteb-i Harbiye*), the Veterinary School (*Mekteb-i Baytariye*), the School of Administration (*Mekteb-i Mülkiye*), the Naval Academy (*Mekteb-i Bahriye*), and the Artillery and Engineering School (*Topçu ve Mühendishane Mekteb-i*)<sup>2</sup>. It was in these modern professional schools that the children of the Turkish petty-bourgeoisie sought a better world than could be provided by the disintegrating Empire.

The Young Turk movement can be divided in two broad historical periods: «liberal» or «conventional reformist» (1908-1913) and «bourgeois revolutionary» (1913-1918). In the first period the Young Turks and their best organized association, Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), had not yet come to power. This was neither allowed by the established Ottoman bureaucracy and the *ulema* (religious elite), nor dared by the Young Turks themselves. Composed of junior officers, bureaucrats and professionals, CUP members did not yet deem themselves powerful enough and apparently accepted the popular view that they were not equipped with the skills and experience necessary to run an Empire.

Between 1908 and 1913, although the political arena was dominated by the Young Turks, the cabinet was still largely recruited from among the traditional Ottoman bureaucracy. Until 1913, when the CUP came to full power, the Young Turks ruled indirectly through control of Parliament, armed forces and occasional ministers whom they contributed to the Cabinet.

1. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Talat Paşa*, Istanbul, 1943, p. 14 ff.; Ş . S. Aydemir, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, 2; F. Ahmad, *ibid.*, appendix.

2. Niyazi, *Hatirat-i Niyazi*, Istanbul, 1326 A.H., pp. 13-16, 21ff.; Kazım Nami Duru, *İtihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım*, Istanbul, 1957, p. 6ff.; E. E. Ramsaur, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

In the first or «reformist» period of the Young Turk regime, the CUP was primarily interested in the adoption of legal reforms and Western institutions in order to modernize the backward Ottoman society. In the economic field they naïvely believed that through negotiations with the Western powers they could bring an end to the capitulatory regime. They believed that capitulations were obstacles to capitalist development and, following the free trade doctrine of the period, both the Empire and the West would profit from the development of the Empire. The optimism of the Young Turks proved to be unfounded for reasons which will be discussed later.

The Great Balkan defeat was a turning point in Ottoman history as well as the Young Turk movement. Taking advantage of the popular disillusionment with the performance of the commanders and administrators of the old bureaucracy in the Balkan War, the CUP struck against the Ottoman bureaucracy in the bloody Bab-i Ali<sup>1</sup> Coup in 1913. Firmly settled in power in 1913 the Young Turks began to introduce revolutionary changes in the Ottoman social and economic structure. It was in this period that the Unionists learned that national sovereignty and political power was meaningless without economic sovereignty and power. This realization led to a struggle against Western imperialism and the domestic compradore capitalist classes. The struggle started with administrative measures and economic boycotts against foreign and minority products and services in the «reformist» period. It ended with armed confrontation, and finally World War I. Now let us follow the development of Young Turk politics through these stages.

#### THE «REFORMIST» PERIOD

The «Reformist» period of the Young Turk regime began in 1908 when two young army officers Niyazi Bey and Enver Bey marched their troops into the mountains and pledged their lives to *hürriyet* or freedom. Almost overnight the European armies, the *Rumeli* armies, followed. The revolt was quickly taken over by the «Committee of Union and Progress» (*Ittihat ve Terakki Komitesi*)—the most effective and popular of the Young Turks' secret organizations<sup>2</sup>. Ultimatums were sent to the Sultan demanding the restitution of the abrogated Constitution of 1876. These ultimatums also

1. *Bab-i Ali*, or «Sublime Porte» literally means «high» gate. It was the office of the early Grand Vezirs. Later it came to mean the meeting place of the Ottoman Cabinet under the supervision of the Grand Vezir.

2. Doğu Ergil and Robert I. Rhodes, «The Impact of the World Capitalist System on Ottoman Society», *Islamic Culture*, XLVIII, No. 2 (April, 1974), 91.

threatened that if the Sultan failed to obey their demands the *Rumeli* (European Turkey) armies and peoples would march on the capital and depose him<sup>1</sup>.

Finally Abdül Hamid gave way and on July 23, 1908, announced that the 1876 Constitution would be activated once again. The despotism of the notorious Sultan was over.

This event was received with great joy throughout the Empire.

For some days Macedonia (the heart of rebellion) seemed to have become Utopia. Enver Bey exclaimed that «arbitrary government» had «disappeared». «Henceforth», cried this enthusiastic leader of the revolution, «we are all brothers. There are no longer Bulgars, Greeks, Roumans, Jews, Mussulmans; under the same blue sky we are all equal, we glory in being Ottomans». At Serres the president of the Bulgarian Committee embraced the Greek Archbishop; at Drama the revolutionary officers imprisoned a Turk for insulting a Christian; in an Armenian cemetery a procession of Turks and Armenians listened to prayers, offered up by their respective priests, for the victims of the Armenian massacres; at Samsun the Turks saluted the beard of a Greek prelate; at Tripoli Turks and Arabs joined in thanksgiving services. The Bulgarian bands surrendered, and the brigand Sandanski was received like the prodigal son»<sup>2</sup>.

It looked like freedom and brotherhood of all Ottoman peoples at long last had been achieved.

Immediately after the elections which brought a clear majority of Young Turks to the Parliament, two political and ideological tendencies divided the Young Turks. The «liberal wing» favored decentralization and autonomy for religious and national minorities of the Empire. The leader of this wing and ideology was Sabaheddin Bey. On the other side, a more authoritarian group organized within the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) favored central authority and Turkish domination in government<sup>3</sup>.

In an atmosphere of unprecedented freedom and deliberations between

1. Sir E. Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople*, London 1916, pp. 231-234; Ismail Hakki Uzun Çarşili, «1908 Yilinda İkinci Meşrutiyetin ne Surette Ilan Edildigine Dair Vesikalar», *Bellekten* 67 (1956), 103-174; Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, 3 vols., İstanbul 1940, I, p. 435 ff.

2. William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors, 1801-1927*, Cambridge 1936, p. 476.

3. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1968, p. 213.

diverse groups in the Parliament, at first liberal views and policies seemed to prevail. The liberal-Westernist deputies were organized in a series of ephemeral parties, the most important being *Ahrar*. They remained outside of CUP<sup>1</sup>, but never became as powerful or as organized as the former.

The CUP not only had a wide following in the army, but soon extended its organization to smaller administrative units throughout the country. The *Ahrar* Party on the whole retained its links with the traditional Ottoman bureaucracy (which staffed the Cabinet until CUP came to full power in 1913) and the compradore commercial strata of Istanbul and Izmir.

Unfortunately the liberal and moderate phase of the second constitutional era (*İkinci Meşrutiyet*) was short-lived. Immediately after the proclamation of constitutional rule in 1908, Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece annexed Crete, and Bulgaria declared her independence. These events and defeats that followed were recognized by the Young Turks as acts of aggression carried out by the European powers, and as acts of betrayal by some of the peoples of the Ottoman Empire.

The first, they believed, ought to be protested and the second repressed. This evaluation greatly strengthened the hand of the centralist and authoritarian CUP.

On February 13, 1909, the Committee accomplished the replacement of Grand Vezir Kamil Paşa with Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa. Both were survivors of the *ancien regime*, but the latter was more sympathetic to the Young Turk policies.

This change widened the breach between the Sultan, liberals, and conservatives on the one hand and the CUP on the other. One month after the fall of Kamil Paşa a reactionary mutiny incited by the so-called Muhammedan Union—an extremist religious organization intent on restoring the powers of Sultan Abdul Hamid—took place<sup>2</sup>. The mutiny, which is commonly referred to as the «31st of March Incident» was quickly dominated by the soldiers—mainly Albanian—of the First Army Corps stationed in Istanbul (April 12, 1909). The mutineers were joined by soldiers from other units, *medrese* students and other religious groups whose position in the social hierarchy was increasingly undermined by Parliamentary politics and the new bureaucracy. Their motto was «the restoration of *Seriat*» (holy law). For them the disor-

1. T. Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler, 1859-1952*, Istanbul 1952, p. 186 ff.; B. Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 220.

2. E. Pears, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-275; Francis McCullagh, *The Fall of Abd-ul-Hamid*, London 1910, pp. 74-75.

dered state of the Empire was due «to deviation from the word and spirit of the holy Koran»<sup>1</sup>.

The reaction soon spread across Anatolia and took the form of massacre. Armenians in the South-east had been demanding independence and self-rule. Acutely embarrassed and frustrated by these events, the CUP acted swiftly. An «Action Army» (*Hareket Ordusu*) under Mahmut Şevket Paşa reached Istanbul on April 23 from Salonika.

*Hareket Ordusu* suppressed the rebellion in a short time and executed its leaders. «The liberals had supported the mutiny, and shared its defeat»<sup>2</sup>. Abdul Hamid, the symbol behind the reaction was deposed and sent into exile in Salonika. *Hareket Ordusu* declared martial law in the capital and it remained in effect for two years. The Commander of the Army, Mahmud Şevket Paşa became the Inspector-General of the first three Army Corps. Through Mahmud Şevket Paşa's extraordinary powers the CUP was able to eliminate Sultan Hamid's men in the court and cabinet and installed CUP officials in their place. Mehmet Reşat, the new Sultan, became a figurehead in the new administration which was dominated by the CUP<sup>3</sup>.

On April 12, 1909 the CUP declared that it was no longer a secret organization, but had become a political party. However, its Central Committee (*Merkez-i Umumi*) remained as a secret party to the end. After the CUP became a political party, it was organized as a General Assembly (*Meclis-i Umumi*) consisting of twenty members and chaired by the President (*Reis-i Umumi*); a Central Committee (*Merkez-i Umumi*) of ten members under the General Secretary (*Katib-i Umumi*); and a General Secretariat (*Kalem-i Umumi*) of about 5-6 members headed by the Vice-President (*Vekil-i Umumi*). «The function of the General Assembly was to co-ordinate the work of the Central Committee, which dealt with all the Unionists' organizations outside Parliament, and the General Secretariat, which handled the Unionists in Parliament»<sup>4</sup>. Within this organizational structure, the CUP divided power between the Central Committee and the Cabinet. To preserve the unity of the inner circle, and discipline in the organization, members of the supposedly secret Central Committee did not hold public office<sup>5</sup>.

1. E. Pears, *ibid.*, p. 257 ff.; W. M. Ramsay, *The Revolution in Constantinople and Turkey*, London 1909, p. 11 ff.; Ali Fuat Türkgeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, Ankara 1951, p. 25 ff.; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Montreal, McGill, 1964, pp. 340-343.

2. B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

3. Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, 3 vols., Istanbul 1940, I, p. 12 ff.; B. Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 217.

4. F. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

5. T. Z. Tunaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 192, 214-225; F. Ahmad, *ibid.*, p. 160.

What kind of persons were the members of the Committee or Society of Union and Progress? Prof. Niyazi Berkes answers this question as follows:

«The Society became the expression of the changing part of the (new) Turkish social organization; it did not encompass the peasantry . . . it did not gain the allegiance of the conservative generations and classes . . . The mass basis of the Society was amorphous and evolving; this was reflected in the shapelessness of its ideology. Its class basis gradually shifted . . . to the *esnaf* (artisans) and the *tüccar* (merchants) of the towns — the class out of which the Party of Union and Progress sought to forge a Turkish bourgeoisie. Most of the leaders . . . were uprooted Turks, or Turks who had broken with tradition through education, or non-Turkish Muslims who had been Turkified by modern education. Army officers, doctors and teachers were prominent among them. By Hamidian standards, they were all *dehri*s (innovators in religious matters) in their politico-religious views; they were firm believers in progress»<sup>1</sup>.

In essence the Young Turk movement as represented by the Union and Progress Committee remained primarily urban. However in seeking a national identity and representation it gradually penetrated the countryside through the administrative machinery and through its alliance with the landowning class.

Because the landed class was not only the strongest Muslim class of the time, but it also controlled the countryside, this alliance seemed inevitable. By «delegating» power to the local landlords, the CUP was assured of noninterference in decisions on urban and foreign policy and was assured that the peasantry would be recruited for the Balkan and World War that followed. In theory, the landed class served as the link between the CUP and the peasantry. In actuality, this strategy guaranteed the landed class had the power to veto any decisions at the national level that might threaten their interests. These interests were closely protected by a group of powerful CUP deputies who came from prominent landed families. For example, these deputies included Halil Menteşe (Speaker of the Parliament), Ali Cenani (later Minister of Commerce in the Ankara Government) and Mustafa Rahmi Evrenos<sup>2</sup>.

1. N. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, p. 329.

2. Feroz Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Ş. S. Aydemir, *Enver Paşa, op. cit.*, have extensive information about the CUP's members and leaders, and their social backgrounds.

In inevitable consequence of this implicit understanding was the continued isolation of the peasantry and the ever-present possibility that the peasants could be mobilized against the national elite. As we shall see, this expedient «alliance» was continued after the national liberation struggle and eventually led to the failure of Turkish development.

However, a distinction must be made between the political attitudes of the semi-feudal pre-capitalist landlords of central and eastern Anatolia and the capitalist landlords of western and southern regions who mainly produced for foreign markets. No overt conflict arose between the first group and the CUP. First, because their role as rural administrators in the interior was not challenged by the CUP's centralist administration. This was because communication and transportation facilities were so poor in Turkey at that time that the interference of CUP officials with the affairs of country notables was virtually impossible. Second, the pre-capitalist landlords were not in any way affected by the CUP's ambitious program for the elimination of the foreign and minority capitalists who controlled foreign trade. For the great majority of the Turkish landlords owned large estates on which peasants worked for subsistence rather than commodity production. These landlords did not make their wealth so much by the sale of the annual produce in the domestic market as by the rent (in kind) they exacted from the peasants working on their lands and their service as usurers. Thus the pre-capitalistic landlords were not dependent on, or in alliance with, either the foreign or the minority bourgeoisie to market their produce abroad.

On the other hand, the capitalist farmers of the west and the south opposed the CUP and its radical politics. The little systematic information that we have shows that the capitalist farmers lent their support to the liberal *Ahrar* Party and its successor the Liberal Union (*Hürriyet ve Itilaf*) after 1911<sup>1</sup>.

We believe that there are two reasons for this political preference. First, the CUP significantly affected, in fact ruptured, established commercial relations and the balance of power in the rich, economically developed, sections of the country. The CUP was intent on eliminating the foreign and minority compradore bourgeoisie from the national economy. But the Turkish capitalist farmers were dependent on these compradore elements for the marketing of their products and the importation of luxury items which the CUP wanted to restrict.

The Young Turks' program to develop the national economy not only

1. Evidence on this issue has been gathered from the results of the by-election of December 11, 1911, and of the general election held in January 1912, although the latter's results were greatly altered by the CUP. Also see T. Z. Tunaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 186 ff. and 322.



disrupted the close relationship between the Turkish landed and foreign minority commercial bourgeoisie, but also challenged their power through statist measures in the urban centers and more developed rural areas which were more easily accessible by the existing railroads and sea transportation. We will see later that the landed bourgeoisie of the Turkish west and south opposed the nascent national liberation movement in 1919 and sought a peaceful existence with the minority capitalist classes under foreign occupation.

But the most ardent supporters of the CUP came from the nascent Turkish middle-class composed of junior officers, lower bureaucrats and professionals (lawyers, teachers, doctors and journalists) —all products of modern schools— on the one hand, and the petty-bourgeoisie (retail traders, artisans, and craftsmen) of the Anatolian towns who were pushed into insignificance by the minority mercantile classes. The latter had exclusive control over wholesale commerce, import-export and transportation<sup>1</sup>.

#### YOUNG TURK POLITICS IN THE «REFORMIST» PERIOD: 1908-1913

At first the Young Turks had no intention of altering the basic state structure. They merely wanted the implementation of Constitutional rule which would guarantee the administration of the country by competent cabinets rather than according to the whim of an absolute monarch. Arbitrary rule, they naively believed, was the main reason for Ottoman underdevelopment and disintegration<sup>2</sup>. If, they believed, a regime of justice and equality before law and political representation in a parliament could be established, the diverse nationalities of the Empire would not pursue separationist ends. Constitutional Monarchy would produce a basis of a quasi-federative system, in which, although it was not explicitly admitted, the Turkish element would predominate because of its numerical weight (12.5/24 million in 1911)<sup>3</sup>.

Indeed, representation was given to all peoples of the Empire. Out of 288 deputies elected in 1908 for the Ottoman Parliament, there were 147 Turks, 60 Arabs, 27 Albanians, 26 Greeks, 14 Armenians, 10 Slavs, and 4 Jews<sup>4</sup>.

1. Doğu Ergil and Robert I. Rhodes, «Western Capitalism and the Disintegration of the Ottoman Empire» *Economy and History* 18 (January, 1975 forthcoming); N. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, pp. 271-276.

2. E. E. Ramsaur, *op. cit.*, p. 44; N. Berkes, *ibid.*, p. 309 ff.; Prince Sabahaddin, *Türkiye Nasıl Kurtarılabilir*, Istanbul, Elif Yayinlari, 1965, *passim*.

3. These figures are taken from the *New International Yearbook 1908*, New York 1909, p. 703. Figures are rounded.

4. T. Z. Tunaya, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

But as we shall see Ottomanism, the quasi-federation of the Ottoman nationalities, proved to be powerless in the face of secessionist nationalist movements among the non-Muslim Ottoman peoples who soon realized that Ottomanism meant Turkish dominance. Moreover, Russian provocation (among the Slavs) and French and English provocation (among Greeks, Armenians and Arabs) contributed to the disintegration of the Ottoman domain.

The Young Turks' response to these nationalist and separatist movements can be summed up in Talat Bey's (later Paşa and Grand Vezir) words uttered in 1910 at a Party convention in Salonika:

«We have made unsuccessful attempts to convert the non-Muslim into a loyal Ottoman, and all such efforts must inevitably fail, as long as the small independent States in the Balkan Peninsula remain in a position to propagate ideas of separatism among the inhabitants of Macedonia. There can therefore be no question of equality, until we have succeeded in our task of Ottomanizing the Empire — a long and laborious task, in which I venture to predict that we shall succeed after we have at last put an end to the agitation and propaganda of the Balkan States»<sup>1</sup>.

In line with these sentiments two laws, the «Law of Associations», and «Law for the Prevention of Brigandage and Sedition» were passed in late 1909<sup>2</sup>. The «Law of Associations» prohibited the formation of political associations based on or bearing the name of national or ethnic communities. Following the proclamation of the Law, all national and ethnic organizations and political associations were banned. The «Law for the Prevention of Brigandage and Sedition» facilitated the repression of Balkan nationalist movements<sup>3</sup> which had already embarked on guerilla warfare<sup>4</sup>.

After guaranteeing their firm control over the State through martial law and other repressive legislative measures, the Young Turks started to reform the state machinery. A new provincial and local administration was created which extended the control of the central government to towns and smaller administrative units. A new national police force was established

1. Quoted in B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

2. H. Bayur, *op. cit.*, I, p. 306.

3. It is through these struggles which the Turkish Government sought to suppress that most of the Unionist officers learned both guerilla tactics and the pride of national struggle. This experience proved to be very valuable in the Turks' own national struggle following the World War.

4. *Ibid.* p. 306 ff.; B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-218.

in their Ministry of the Interior<sup>1</sup>.

The 1909 reaction provided a convenient excuse to dismiss many of the old reactionary bureaucrats who manned the government offices. They were replaced by younger men who had been educated in modern secular schools. By the end of 1910 most of the Government bureaucracy had been restructured<sup>2</sup>.

One of the most important accomplishments of the Young Turks was their creation of a new system of secular primary and secondary schools. These were followed by teachers' training colleges. Education was secularized and for the first time teachers became an important social group distinguishable from army officers, civil servants, clericals and liberal professions<sup>3</sup>. With the rise of secular schools and secular teachers, the importance and strength of the *medreses* and *ulema* declined.

These developments in education extended educational opportunities to girls who were previously virtually excluded from these advantages. After the reorganization of Istanbul University (the only University in the country) girls were admitted but were required to sit behind curtains<sup>4</sup>. Women's education prepared the way for their entry into the professions and into public life<sup>5</sup>.

In the first years these reforms were carried out in a rather haphazard manner because the Young Turks had neither a coherent ideology nor a program. Nevertheless they did formulate some concrete policies in their quest to save the *Devlet* (State) which was also their *ekmek kapisi*<sup>6</sup> or *means of livelihood*.

Their movement turned into an elite revolution when they realized that only by utilizing the power of the State could a radical program be implemented to develop a national economy and create a national bourgeois class with which they would merge.

The first step in the creation of this class was a series of legislative acts that removed the remaining legal and cultural obstacles in Ottoman laws and customs to the spread of capitalist relations. The Land Laws of March 1911 and February 1913, the Law of Inheritance (adopted from German Civil Code), and legislation legalizing the employment of women in business-

1. Osman Nuri, *Mecelle-i Umur-i Belediye*, Istanbul 1922, vol. I, p. 960 ff.

2. *Levant Herald*, August 10, 1908; F. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

3. N. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, p. 405.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 401-410.

5. Halide Edip Adivar, *Turkey Faces West*, New Haven 1930, pp. 130-131; B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230.

6. Literally, «door of bread».

ses and industry (especially during the war) were among these measures.

Similarly a uniform legal code was written to eliminate the differences and special privileges —especially economic— between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of the Empire. It was hoped these laws would mark the end of the *millet* system<sup>1</sup> as all ethnic groups would be equal partners before the law and make «Ottomanism» a reality.

But, because each *millet* and the privileged groups within them had vested interests in the continuation of the *status quo*, the reformist programs of the Young Turks alienated both Muslims and non-Muslims<sup>2</sup>. The non-Muslims had come to enjoy all the extra-territorial privileges of European citizens, through which they established their economic domination over the Muslims. And, neither the Muslim clergy (*ulema*) nor the Muslim lower classes wanted to relinquish the privilege of belonging to the ruling ethno-religious group. This was particularly important for the most indigent group in the Empire: the Turkish-Muslim peasant. In the absence of a nationalist movement, even among the Young Turks until after 1910, the only link that tied the Turkish peasantry to the ruling group was their common religion<sup>3</sup>. The impoverished Turkish peasant also saw religion as a symbol that separated him from the more affluent non-Muslim ethnic groups. In this sense, religious conservatism among the Turkish agrarian masses and the local petty-bourgeoisie became a substitute for nationalism.

Despite religious opposition from Muslim and non-Muslim alike, the Young Turks carried out their legal reform. They were determined to end the special privileges of the foreign and compradore minority which were guaranteed by the capitulations<sup>4</sup>.

They tried to accomplish this through two forms of activities: (1) adopting or enacting civil and commercial laws and regulations, and, (2) negotiations with Western powers to abrogate the stifling capitulations. Despite some

1. Millet system was an aspect of the Ottoman socio-political system. «Ottoman subjects were organized vertically into social estates according to occupations, and horizontally into *millets* according to their religious affiliations» (Karpas, *op. cit.*, p. 113). Each *millet* had the right to manage its own affairs in religion, family and individual matters like marriage, inheritance, divorce, intra-communal disputes, etc. In this system there was no nationality, but only religious communities. Turks were a part of the Muslim *millet*.

2. R. E. Ward and D. A. Rustow (eds.), *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, New Jersey, Princeton, 1964, pp. 3-4.

3. Even today when you ask a Turkish peasant who he is, it is not unlikely that the answer will be «Thank God I am a Muslim».

4. Doğan Avcioğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi*, 3 vols., Istanbul 1974, III, pp. 921-928, 1056-1058.

successful overtures in the first area, none of the goals were completely realized before 1913 due to internal and external opposition.

After a series of legal reforms the Young Turks invited the Western powers, who had claimed that the *raison d'être* for the capitulations was the heterogeneity of the Ottoman legal system, to enter into negotiations for the abolition of the capitulations in 1913. Neither this request, nor the request that customs duties be raised by 4 percent, and that certain taxes be applied to foreigners was honoured by the Western powers<sup>1</sup>.

Even a loan request from European economic sources in 1910 to finance the much needed reform projects was denied, even on the old exploitative terms (pledge of the custom receipts of Istanbul was offered)<sup>2</sup>.

After these bitter lessons, the Young Turks' admiration of the Western benevolence and «civilization» underwent a drastic change. These changes and the nature of the struggle waged against Western imperialism and minority compradore capitalism will be discussed in the «revolutionary» period.

The Young Turks' most powerful, and, after the repression of the liberal wing, its unrivaled organization, «Union and Progress», played a crucial role in the last decade of the Ottoman Empire. The «Union and Progress» was the first political organization in the Empire that was based on more than a tiny political clique. It established the basis of «bourgeois populist» politics. In their protests against Western annexations of Ottoman territories or internal problems created by minority insurrections,

«the Unionists used the urban crowd with consummate skill in their political manoeuvres. They held mass meetings and brought about the crowd on their behalf whenever necessary»<sup>3</sup>.

However, the phase of «liberal reformism» and constitutionalism would not live long. The continued disintegration of the Empire increased foreign borrowing necessary to carry out desired reforms, and finally the humiliating defeat suffered in the Balkan War<sup>4</sup> (1912-1913) ended the first phase of Unionist rule — the «reformist» period of 1908-1913.

1. F. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

2. Mahmoud Moukhtar Pacha, *La Turquie, l'Allemagne et l'Europe depuis le Traité de Berlin*, Paris 1924, p. 106; H. Bayur, *op. cit.*, I, p. 323. It was after this generosity of the Germans that the Turco-German friendship quickly developed into an alliance. In this sense the mistake of her rivals served as an excellent opportunity by Germany to expand her influence towards the East.

3. F. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

4. Balkan War was the last Turkish war before the World War, to follow one year later. In a series of wars between 1911 and 1913, the Ottoman government lost 424,000 square miles of land out of a total of about 1,153,000 square miles, including the birthplaces of

## YOUNG TURK IDEOLOGY IN THE LIBERAL REFORMIST PERIOD

A brief study of the ideology and activities of the Young Turks during the «reformist» period reveals the shallowness and limitations of this last and most significant Ottoman political movement — the so-called Young Turk Revolution.

There seem to be three distinguishable ideologies of the period: Westernism, Ottomanism and Islamism. Let us briefly analyze these ideological trends.

*Westernism.* From the beginning of the 19th century, Westernism became the constant concern and ambition of all Turkish reforms and reformers. The form or cost of adopting Western institutions and technology was not even seriously considered. The publications of the late 19th century and early 20th century were filled with praises of Western institutions and way of life. Constitutionalism, parliamentarism, and private enterprise were the magic words of the time. It was believed that when these products of the Western Civilization were in the native «soil», Western capitalism would increasingly flourish in this dependent society.

Neither the New Ottomans nor the Young Turks understood the material roots and the historical evolution of either their own or Western cultured society<sup>1</sup>. Until the very end of the Empire the Ottoman intellectuals advocated the adoption of Western cultural patterns and technology in order to make their country as advanced and as prosperous as a European nation. But they failed to see the structural limits that would prevent their dependent economy from successfully copying the West.

They believed that their sincere reformism would be hailed in the West and the Western powers would stop interfering in the internal affairs of the Empire on behalf of non-Muslim nationalities. They even believed that once constitutional monarchy was established the Europeans would look upon the Ottoman Empire as an equal State and revoke the capitulations through negotiations<sup>2</sup>.

It was with these feelings that people rejoicing in the streets of Istanbul a day after the declaration of Constitutional rule in 1908, cut loose the

many CUP members, and approximately 5 million souls from a population of about 26 million (Feroz Ahmad, *ibid.*, p. 152).

1. N. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, pp. 348-366; Ismail Cem, *op. cit.*, pp. 355-360.

2. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın in *Tanin* September 9, 1909 expresses this view. Also, Lowter (Gerald Augustus, British Ambassador at Istanbul, 1908-1913) to Grey (Edward, British Foreign Secretary, 1900-1916), no. 434, June 27, 1910, British Foreign Office (BFO) 371/993/23945 at the Public Record Office (PRO) London.

horses from the carriage of the British Ambassador, Sir G. Lowther, and drew it themselves to show their appreciation of his wonderful country<sup>1</sup>.

But the British Government did not act like an exemplary nation. In a reaction to recent events, Sir Edward Grey, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote to his Ambassador in Istanbul complaining that if the Ottoman constitutionalism really did work and the Turks did build a strong administration it would have unfortunate consequences in Egypt and even India<sup>2</sup>.

Westernization in the context of Western imperialism could only take the form of an urban-cultural transformation that rendered the urban populations more dependent on Western products to perpetuate their new Western life styles. Moreover, the gap between an urban population, economically and culturally dependent on Europe, and the much larger agrarian masses living in a basically subsistence economy greatly increased the cultural and economic distance between city and countryside. The gap between city and countryside already existed before Westernization. Now it took on a new character.

The Young Turks soon realized that legal reforms would not save the Empire from further disintegration, and the «civilized» West had no intention of relinquishing its colonial privileges in the Ottoman domain.

Moreover, Western annexations of Ottoman lands and Western support of separationist movements among non-Turkish Ottoman peoples changed the Unionists' naive faith in the Western states, if not Western institutions. Each secession of a non-Turkish national group from the Ottoman Empire rendered an additional blow to the abstract concept of multi-ethnic «Ottomanism».

*Ottomanism.* The word Ottoman or Otman is a Western derivative of Osman, a vassal prince (Bey) of the Selçuk-Turkish state, and the founder of the *Osmanlı* or Ottoman dynasty which came to rule a huge multinational state.

The Ottoman State ceased to be a national polity soon after it began to incorporate large areas in which non-Turkish populations lived. Although the dynasty remained Turkish, the State was composed of a variety of ethnic and religious groups.

Ottoman administrative structure was not based on nationality. The foundation of the *millet* system which assigned every social group a definite

1. *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, No. 263, PRO, London.

2. Grey to Lowther, quoted in Tevfik Çavdar, «Cumhuriyet Dönemi Başlıkların Türkiye Ekonomisinin Görünümü ve Yapısal Kökenleri» in *Türkiye Ekonomisinin 50 Yılı Semineri*, Istanbul, Sermet Matbaası, 1973, p. 115.

status and a set of privileges and obligations was religion<sup>1</sup>.

The Young Turks administration inherited the disintegrating Empire during the final demise of this cosmopolitan system. They made the preservation of the Empire a holy crusade, and for this reason, they clung to the concept of «Ottomanism».

The Young Turks hoped that the establishment of constitutional rule would attract all nationalities into a genuinely representative Parliamentary system and thus preserve the State<sup>2</sup>. They did not tolerate secessionist-nationalist movements.

Turkish nationalism was not an issue in the conventional reformist phase of the Young Turk regime. What was new in the cosmopolitan concept of Ottomanism was its Western appearance. The Young Turks envisaged a quasi-federative Parliament, a Constitution and political parties.

*Islamism.* The Young Turks were a product of a social environment in which religious affiliation (a legacy of the *millet* system) still had prominence over national identity. One of the most important characteristics that distinguished the Ottoman Turks from the rest of the Ottoman peoples was their Muslimness. The second was their language: Turkish. However, even Turkish was not the common language of all Turkish social classes. The language of the *ulema* was Arabic and the *medrese* education was also in Arabic. Moreover, the ruling Ottoman bureaucracy had traditionally used a hybrid language called *Osmanlica* or Ottoman<sup>4</sup>. *Osmanlica* was a mixture of Arabic, Persian and Turkish. In this sense, the communication barrier between an educated urban Turk and a rural Turk was even greater than that which separated a Turk and non-Turk living in the Anatolian countryside. This situation remained unchanged until, under the influence of nationalist currents, Ottoman minorities re-learned their ancestral languages in the second half of the 19th century.

1 The Ottoman rulers considered Turks to be merely illiterate peasants that constituted the source of manpower for their wars<sup>3</sup>. Turkish, Arab, and Albanian ethnic groups made up the Islamic *ümmet* (spiritual brotherhood of international Islamic community). What united these *millets* and *ümmets* was their *Osmanlilik* or Ottomanism. As long as this system operated, nationalism and national consciousness did not emerge among these ethnic groups.

2. H. Bayur, *op. cit.*, p. 245 ff.; Lowter to Grey, no. 296, October, 1908, BFO 371/555/34666; B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-219.

3. Arnold J. Toynbee and Kenneth P. Kirkwood, *Turkey*, New York 1927, p. 35; Kemal Karpat, «An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: From Social Estates to Classes, From Millets to Nations», Research Monograph No. 39, Princeton University, 1973, pp. 19-27.

4. N. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, p. 414.



So the link that tied the rural masses of Turkish origin to the ruling elite was Islam not nationality. Conversion to Islam for any non-Muslim individual had traditionally been enough for that person to rise to the highest ranks of the imperial bureaucracy.

As the religion of the ruling elite and the basis of temporal law (*Şeriat*: Kuranic law), Islam had always been one of the principal strands in the ideological and cultural foundations of the Ottoman Empire, and the Turks were deeply attached to their religion.

But the idea of pan-Islamism became important as a component of the Young Turk ideology of Ottomanism, Islamism and Westernism only after the loss of European provinces with their Christian population. Now the Turks had become numerically the most important ethnic group within the Ottoman Empire. Arabs made up the second largest group. The natural link between the two ethnic groups was Islam. But Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism were anachronistic ideologies in a period when nationalist movements were threatening the very foundations of the Ottoman Empire.

*The Limits of Islamism*, Both the conservatism of the Hamidian era and the bloody 31st of March reaction (1909, *31 Mart Vakası*) against Westernism and modern ideas led the progressive Young Turks to question the Islamic foundation of their polity. The reaction once again had revealed the wide gap between the people, ignorant and poverty-ridden as they were, and the Westernist modern bureaucrats or officers, some of whom had been killed during the reaction simply because they were graduates of a modern school (*mektepli*)<sup>1</sup>. In the mind of the people who were led by the *ulema*, the religious literate and the students of the *medreses* (scholastic or religious schools which raised the Muslim clergy and specialists of kuranic law — *Şeriat*), all the evils which they confronted were due to the infidel influence of the West. The most conspicuous Western institutions were the modern secular schools that undermined the *ulema's* place in the traditional political structure. With the influence of the *ulema* and *medrese* students (*softas*), the *mektepli* (graduate of modern schools) became a target of public hostility and even aggression among the lower Muslim Ottoman classes.

These events led the Young Turks to undertake the dangerous task of secularization and to attempt the separation of Church and State. They knew

1. Before the sweeping changes made in the military after 1913, there were two kinds of officers in the Ottoman army: (1) men who had started as enlisted men with no or very little education (often illiterate) and risen in the military hierarchy throughout the years, and, (2) graduates of modern military schools and the War academy. The first were called *Alayli*, and the second, *Mektepli*. Naturally the first were conservative and much more congenial to the popular conservative elements outside the army.

that only by these reforms could the rival power of the *ulema* be reduced or abolished. But although they controlled the army, the Young Turks did not attempt to launch their decisive secularization campaign until after they came to full power in 1913.

Nevertheless, the biggest blow to the pan-Islamic ideology of the Young Turks came with the Albanian and Arab separationist movements in 1912. Arab nationalism was especially instrumental in shattering *ümmet*—the concept of an international Islamic polity. Although Islamism declined as a popular ideology among the educated strata, the Young Turks still remained characteristically Islamic in many respects.

With the waning of Ottomanist and pan-Islamist ideologies because they had no more practical value, there remained two basic ideologies still attractive to the young Turkish intelligentsia: Westernism and Turkism. We will try to analyze the evolution of these ideologies and their impact on the fate of the Empire in the next section.

#### THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD: 1913-1918

The second phase of the history and politics of the CUP starts with the April 1912 elections. Frustrated by unsatisfactory compromises with the palace bureaucracy and other political opponents who had gathered under the banner of the «Liberal Alliance», the CUP diligently prepared for the 1912 general elections. It was determined to form its own Government.

In this carefully manipulated, famous *Sopali Seçim* or «big stick election», the opposition groups were able to elect only six of 275 members to the Parliament<sup>1</sup>. But due to the resistance of the Palace, the «Liberal Alliance» whose opposition had now shifted outside the Parliament, and some army officers who opposed the army's role in politics, the new Cabinet which was formed by the new Grand Vezir, Kamil Paşa, a well-known Anglophile, to a great extent resembled the former ones in its composition<sup>2</sup>. But the life of this cabinet was shortlived. The Balkan War that started in the same year (1912) ended with a humiliating defeat and a terrible loss of human life in 1913<sup>3</sup>.

All European provinces except a small portion of Eastern Thrace were

1. T. Z. Tunaya, *op. cit.*, p. 222; B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

2. H. Bayur, *Sadrâzam Kamil Paşa, Siyasi Hayati*, Ankara 1954, pp. 307-312; Lewis, *ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

3. Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İnkılap Hareketleri ve Milli Mücadele*, İstanbul 1959, pp. 573-585; Reginald Rankin, *The Inner History of the Balkan War*, London 1914.

lost to the small Balkan states. Soon hundreds of thousands of bewildered Turkish immigrants from lost provinces<sup>1</sup> began to pour into Istanbul from these lost areas.

The war was administered by the old Ottoman Paşas with incredible inefficiency<sup>2</sup>. Choosing the optimum time when the public resentment of the government was at its height, the young Unionist officers headed by Enver Bey (later Paşa) planned and executed the famous *Bab-i Ali* coup on January 23, 1913. The Union and Progress was now firmly seated in power.

Before going into the discussion of the revolutionary changes accomplished by the Young Turks let us see how the recent internal and external problems affected the ideological composition of the Young Turks in the era starting in 1913.

#### FROM OTTOMANISM AND PAN-ISLAMISM TOWARD TURKISH NATIONALISM

As has been discussed earlier, Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism were the predominant aspects of the Young Turk ideology in the earlier years. Behind the concept of Ottomanism lay the ideology of a multi-national (or ethnic) federation undivided by national and religious differences. For such a system to function relatively smoothly one of two conditions must exist: either (1) the dominant ethnic (or religious) group or the central authority, often controlled by the former, must be relatively strong, or (2) the national consciousness of constituent ethnic or religious groups must be relatively low. Generally these two phenomena are interdependent.

By the middle of the 19th century the second condition no longer existed. On the one hand, non-Muslim minority groups had gained greater economic prominence and affluence than the Muslim-Turkish population through the capitulatory system. But, on the other hand, they were still treated as cultural and political inferiors.

Economic differentiation, political repression, and the continual intervention of Russia in favor of Slavs, and of England and France in favor of Greeks, Armenians and other nationalities created a fertile environment within which secessionist movements tore the Ottoman Empire apart.

After Albanian independence in 1912 the Arabs demanded autonomy. Neither the religious leadership of the Ottoman ruler nor their own Muslim-

1. *Ibid.*; Ş. S. Aydemir, *op. cit.*, II, passim, Doğan Avcioğlu, *loc. cit.*, III, pp. 1104-1124; A. J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, New York 1970, p. 138 ff.

2. Ş. S. Aydemir, *ibid.*, pp. 248-288; Selanikli Bahri, *Balkan Harbinde Garp Ordusu*, İstanbul 1915.

ness was enough to induce the Muslim minorities of the Ottoman Empire to live as subject peoples under the guise of Pan-Islamism<sup>1</sup>. Also, the Ottoman central authority was not strong enough to curb the rise of nationalism among the subject peoples of the State.

Moreover, many nationalities of the Ottoman Empire were promised independence by the European powers whose interests in the Mediterranean area were blocked by the Ottoman Empire. Control over small Balkan states would give Russia the much needed «open door» to the warm seas; control of Egypt would provide the British with the security of her supremacy over

1. Arab opposition to the CUP became manifest with the increasing bias of the new regime to establish a centralist administration under Turkish dominance. Arab deputies in the new Ottoman Parliament were the first of the Ottoman Muslim millets to raise their voices for autonomy within the imperial system under the spiritual leadership of the Caliph. (For a similar evaluation consult: Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Handbooks Prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office: The Pan-Islamic Movement*, No. 96 C & D, p. 21 ff.).

Despite the initial honeymoon between the Young Turks and the leaders of the Arab world on the issues of equality of both races and the urgency of social reforms in the Arab lands, this intimacy did not last long for three reasons:

1) The Young Turks refused de-centralization and self-determination for non-Turkish nationalities of the Empire.

2) Unlike the Arabs who emphasized the glories of Islam and the virtues of their religion, the Young Turks made conscious efforts toward national regeneration on «pure Turkish» lines. They sought to return to their pre-Islamic institutions (which would provide a basis for cooperation with other Turkish-speaking peoples outside the Empire), and emphasized the use of Turkish over other languages (especially Arabic) throughout the Empire. These policies alienated the Arabs. «One can rightly say that the seeds of an Arab separatist movement began to sprout from the soil of Turkish nationalism from 1909 onwards», (Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, New York, Caravan Books, 1973, p. 79).

3) Agitation of Western powers among the Arabs to win them to their camp should Turkey side with Germany in the approaching grand clash in the Middle East. (Harold W. V. Temperley, *The History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, London 1924, 6, p. 178; David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, London 1933-1936, 4, p. 1802 ff.

As the Arab demands for decentralization (or better a confederacy type of Government) and serious social and economic reforms were unheeded by the Young Turk Government, a number of societies and political parties were formed by Arab intellectuals and nationalists to defend the Arab cause. The most important of these associations were al-Jamiyyah al-Arabiyyah al-Fatat (The Young Arab Society, founded in 1909 in Paris) and Hizb al-Lamarkaziyyah al-Idariyyah al-Uthmani (The Ottoman Administrative Decentralization Party founded in 1912 in Cairo). (See George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1938, pp. 107-121).

When the activities of these nationalist/secessionist associations were supplemented by the British strategy to «attack the Turkish Empire through its subjects» (Temperley, *op. cit.*, 6, p. 178) the ground for the Arab revolt was prepared.

the water-way to India; and small states like Greece, Armenia, Syria would not only facilitate military domination by Britain and France in the whole Mediterranean basin, but also open doors to wider markets in the Eastern European, North African and Asian regions.

When the imperialist schemes of the major Western powers and nationalist insurrections converged on the Ottoman Empire —the «Sick Man of Europe»— Ottoman internationalism and Pan-Islamism increasingly became Turkish nationalism.

#### TURKISM: AN IDEOLOGICAL CONFUSION

Following the loss of the European provinces, Libya (to Italy) and Egypt (which became autonomous and fell victim to British imperialism), the Turks finally became conscious of their own existence as the most important group in the Empire<sup>1</sup>. The second phase of Young Turk politics (1913-1918) reflects these changes as the surge of Turkish nationalism rapidly replaced the idea of «Ottomanism». The triple ideological formula of the Young Turk regime now became Westernism, Islamism and Turkism.

Turkism first took the form of Pan-Turkism or *Turanism* (a reference to the imaginary homeland of pre-Islamic Turks in central Asia). «Pan-Turanism was sufficiently vague to be easily reconciled with Pan-Islam . . .»<sup>2</sup> partly because Turkish peoples in Asia were predominantly Muslims, and partly because the Young Turks still wanted to keep the Arabic lands within the national state<sup>3</sup>.

Moreover, Turanism, like Pan-Islam, was an expansionist ideology which sustained national pride in the face of the humiliating Ottoman defeats received on the Western front. The Young Turks' grandiose scheme of national liberation from Western colonialism encompassed the liberation, within the same policy, of other Turkish people from the Russian yoke and other Muslims, namely, Arabs from the thongs of European imperialism and uniting them in one Turkish-Muslim empire<sup>4</sup>. It was only after the final disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that Turkish nationhood and Anatolian (Asia minor)

1. F. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

2. B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

3. Niyazi Berkes, «Introduction» in Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, ed. and tr. by *idem*, New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1959, p. 20; F. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.

4. N. Berkes, *The Development . . .*, p. 317; Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar, XIX. *Asir Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, Istanbul 1956, I, p. 204 ff.; B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-347.

Turkish nationalism became a possibility. Let us examine the transformation of Turkism through the years.

Turkism was instilled in the Young Turk generation from three sources:

1. Most of the young army officers of the Young Turk Era (1900-1918) started their military training fighting with Balkan nationalist guerillas of Albanian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian and Greek origin. These young and idealistic officers came to respect the noble cause of their enemy. It was the secret revolutionary organizations of these officers which toppled the Absolutist monarchy and launched the Turkish nationalist struggle.

2. Scientific studies of Turcologists in Germany, Russia, Finland, Hungary and Denmark had contributed valuable works on the origins, empires and cultures of pre-Islamic Turks going back to their origin in Central Asia. Influenced by these works, two native Turcologists, Mustafa Celaleddin Paşa (a Polish convert, formerly Constantin Berjinsky) and Ahmet Vefik Paşa (grandson of a Greek convert), published influential works: *Les Turcs Anciens et Modernes* (1869) and *Lehçe i Osmani*, respectively. Other writers like Necip Asim, Ali Suavi and Süleyman Paşa also wrote on the unspoken origins and the role of the Turk in the Ottoman Empire<sup>1</sup>.

These scientific and literary works opened the eyes of the Turks to their unknown pre-Islamic origins and glories. In fact, boasts of this glorious past (which erroneously included Jenghiz Khan and Attila the Hun among the Turkish celebrities) served as an escape from the misery of the day.

3. A group of modern Turkish writers, poets and intellectuals (mostly professionals) after vacillating for some time between a commitment to a nationalist movement «to the people» and a more grandiose scheme of reviving pre-Islamic Turkism by uniting all the Turks of Asia and Mesopotamia, chose the latter. They argued that, the illiterate, backward, and poverty stricken Turks who inhabited the thousands of Anatolian villages could not be the foundation of conscious Turkish nationalism.

With the despair and humiliation of military defeat by the four small and once subject Balkan nations of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece in 1913, pan-Turkism or Turanism became a burning desire.

This strategy was, however, as unrealistic as Ottomanism because it required a unity with the unknown Turks of alien lands, rather than the revitalization of the real Turkish people of the Empire.

Turanism was a racist and expansionist program which was glorified by both the Turkish youth of the time and the revolutionary Young Turk

1. Berkes, *ibid.*, p. 428.

organization of the Committee of Union and Progress. It became government policy when the CUP came to power as a political party.

«The collapse, too, of Pan-Islamism through Arab uprising against the Ottoman Empire to Pan-Turkism. Increasingly the literary figures of Turkism turned from the discomforting reality of the Turkish people to the pre-Islamic Turkish mythology and epic»<sup>1</sup>.

This movement also gave birth to «. . . a romantic literature devoid of any connection with the people — neither reflecting them nor even reaching them»<sup>2</sup>. In the final assessment, this escapist nationalism wasted the revolutionary potential of an entire generation.

This foolish ideology greatly affected both the politics of the Young Turks after they came to power and the fate of the Empire which they ruled. Now let us turn to Young Turk politics between 1913 and 1918.

#### POLITICS OF THE YOUNG TURKS IN THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD: BREAKING THE POWER OF THE ULEMA AND THE PALACE BUREAUCRACY

Young Turks saw themselves as the representatives of the whole nation, but the CUP regime never intended to broaden «the power structure to include or even serve the urban workers and peasants»<sup>3</sup>. The Young Turks were not interested in equality and fraternity between persons who were not social equals or in freedom of expression for those who wished to organize workers and peasants in support of their class interests. Class conflict was denied in social theory and practice.

Their philosophy of modernization was «reform from above». They were elitists in their political program, and believed in a vanguard cadre or a (middle-) class that would realize the modernization of the backward Empire. As a revolutionary cadre, the CUP undertook the creation of a modern entrepreneurial class. But first they needed a loyal and efficient State apparatus, and unchallenged authority to implement their radical program. Two traditional social classes stood in their way: the *ulema* and the fossilized Ottoman bureaucracy. They simultaneously attacked both.

One of the first measures which the Young Turks took when they came

1. *Ibid.*

2. F. Ahmad., *op. cit.*, p. 162.

3. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, pp. 415-416.

to power in 1913 was the secularization of the State machinery. They eliminated the *Seyh-ül Islam* from the Cabinet in 1916. The *Şeriat* courts were transferred from the jurisdiction of the *Seyh-ül Islam* to that of the Ministry of Justice. Similarly, the *medreses* were transferred from the jurisdiction of the *Seyh-ül Islam* to the Ministry of Education. But the final blow came to the economic independence of the *ulema* and other men of religion when the *evkaf* administration (pious foundations or religious endowments whose income sustained institutions like mosques and *medreses*, and their personnel) was transferred from the jurisdiction of the *Seyh-ül Islam* to that of the new Ministry of *Evkaf*<sup>1</sup>.

Two additional laws were passed in 1917 which were intended to sever religious authority from legislation. The first of these was the Law of *Şeriat* Court procedure. It was an important step towards the unification of the judicial procedure. The second was the Law of Family Rights<sup>2</sup>. These Laws were important steps toward the secularization of the legal system.

After undermining the power of the *ulema*, the Young Turks turned their attention to the traditional Ottoman bureaucracy. Reformation of the top-heavy civilian bureaucracy which had started in the earlier period was continued with forced retirements of redundant and corrupt officials<sup>3</sup>.

But the largest purge came later in 1913, after the defeat in the Balkans of the troops under the command of old Ottoman *Paşas*. The Minister of War, Izzet Paşa, was forced to resign. Lt. Colonel Enver Bey was advanced two ranks to Brigadier General and appointed Minister of War. On January 4, 1914 Generalissimo Enver Paşa eliminated all officers who were not graduates of the recently created modern War Academies. Shortly thereafter he purged all Ottoman generals over the age of 55<sup>4</sup> and a high level German military mission was invited to carry out a new program of military training and re-organization<sup>5</sup>.

These administrative reforms and the rejuvenation of the State appar-

1. J. N. D. Anderson, *Islamic Law in the Modern World*, New York 1959, pp. 26-27; L. Bouvat, «Le code familial Ottoman de 1917», *Revue de Monde Musulman* XLIII (1921), 5-26.

2. Annual Report of the British Embassy in Istanbul, 1908, from Lowter to Grey no. 105, February 17, 1909, BFO 371/768/7053, PRO, London.

3. Halil Menteşe, *Cumhuriyet*, November 3, 1946; H. Bayur, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 316-317.

4. Liman von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, Annapolis 1927. Von Sanders was the General in command of the German Military Mission. He remained throughout the war in Turkey. His memoirs are a valuable source of historical information.

5. *Stamboul* (a Levantine newspaper published in Istanbul), March 17, 1914; Mallet to Grey, no. 47, January 25, 1914, BFO 371/2128/4586, PRO, London.



atus and army were coupled with a set of regulations prepared by the CUP on the conduct of the Royal family. The members of the Royal family were no longer permitted to take part in politics or even to take political positions<sup>1</sup>.

By 1914 the Young Turks were firmly in power. They had either eliminated or repressed their political rivals. A series of successful social reforms had given them the hope that the State could be saved after all. But the most necessary achievement for the salvation of the Empire, economic independence, was yet unaccomplished.

Seeking ways to consolidate their political power with economic security, the Young Turks did not vacillate much in finding a *nokta-i istinat* or fulcrum on which economic nationalism would be based<sup>2</sup>. A national bourgeois class would be created to accomplish national development. The Young Turks apparently saw themselves as the vanguard of this nascent class. They did not clearly realize the difficulties of creating a national bourgeoisie in a neo-colonial context; at the same time they did not try to mobilize the largest class of the nation, the peasantry. The vast rural masses (roughly 90 percent of the population)<sup>3</sup> were left in their squalor and isolation from national politics.

The peasantry was perpetually squeezed by the tax-farmers, usurers and semi-feudal landlords (*ağas*). Although it was the peasantry whose labor created more than half of the GNP (between 1907 and 1914)<sup>4</sup> and paid for the incessant loans borrowed from abroad, they received very little in return. It was the peasantry who died on the battlefields. Despite all these services they were still punished and imprisoned when they failed to pay (or resisted) the exorbitant taxes imposed on them.

They were the victims of the arbitrary and sudden conscriptions to carry on the incessant wars of the Empire<sup>5</sup>. There are many historical accounts of raids on the villages by the Government to augment the decimated Ottoman

1. Yusuf Akçura, *Türk Yurdu*, No. 63, April 3, 1330 A. H.; also, *idem*, *Türk Yurdu*, No. 140, August 12, 1333 A.H., pp. 2521-2522; Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, New Haven 1930, p. 114.

2. Kemal Karpat, «An Inquiry . . .», p. 107 fn. 138.

3. Tefik Çavdar, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

4. Mustafa Kemal to Enver and Talat Paşas, quoted in Doğan Avcioğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 952.

5 Turkey, from 1450 to 1900, was at war for an average of 30.5 of every 50 years. Since the late 15th century, she has only been at peace for more than 15 years four times. In the 20th century Turks fought not only internally against the nationalist movements of the Ottoman Empire, but with Italy in 1911-1912, with the Balkan States in 1912-1913, in the World War of 1914-1918, and finally for their national liberation following the World War : 1919-1922.

armies on the wide battle fronts of the First World War. Since they refused to join the military for wars in unknown lands stretching from Yemen to Rumania for an indefinite number of years (for there was no definite period of service under the extraordinary conditions of the last decade of Ottoman history), many peasants were collected through government raids on the villages. Handcuffed and lined up like prisoners, several generations (men between 17-55)<sup>1</sup> left their villages for the Balkan, Arab (Yemen and Libya) and World Wars.

Almost nothing was given back to the villages in return for this economic and human loss. Illiteracy was more than 90 percent and public works rarely extended beyond a few major cities<sup>2</sup>. The health of the Anatolian population was left to breath healers and agriculture was left in the hands of those who would pray for rain. The peasants' cynicism and justifiable contempt for authority were the result of long centuries of exploitation and repression.

Given their ignorance of peasant life and their contempt for peasants themselves, the Young Turks' cadres easily abandoned their brief populism (represented by the young Ziya Gökalp in the form of cultural Turkism that sought the roots of Turkish culture in village life) and instead developed two different programs consonant with their Westernist and pan-Turkist ideology.

First they hoped to create the social class from which the Young Turk cadre would derive its political support. This class would be the vanguard of Turkish economic and political nationalism. Since the social equivalent of such a class in the West was the bourgeoisie, the Young Turk cadre, throughout the period they remained in power, sought ways to create and sustain a national bourgeoisie of which they would be a part.

This policy finds its best interpretation in the words of Kara Kemal Bey, one of the most influential leaders of the Union and Progress:

«Governments in Europe rely either on the working or the bourgeois classes. They enjoy a social support which they can draw on in difficult moments. Which class shall we rely on? . . . Is there such a powerful class in Turkey? . . . Since there is none, why shouldn't we create one?»<sup>3</sup>

Such a policy was in perfect harmony with the Westernist outlook of the new Turkish intelligentsia who believed that the new entrepreneurial class

1. T. Çavdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105; H. Reşit Tankut, *Köylerimiz*, Ankara 1939, No. 31.

2. Osman Nuri, *op. cit.*, I, p, 721.

3. Grey to Lowter (Grey Papers) London, November 13, 1908 BFO 800/185 A; also, Lowter to Grey No. 546, September 6, 1908, BFO 371/559/31790, PRO, London.

that would be created by the State would be the motor force behind independent capitalist economic growth. This strategy they believed would make Turkey a major world power once again. There is evidence that the Young Turks wanted to see the Ottoman Empire «as the Japan of the West» and even considered inviting Japanese experts to help them in their program for modernization. But this idea was found very «resentful» by the British Foreign Office<sup>1</sup>.

The doctrine of modernization from above, utilizing State power to enhance capitalist development, was reinforced with the news that rich Turkish capitalists prospered in Azerbaijan, on the banks of the Caspian Sea, Crimea and other Russian territories inhabited by Turks. The bearers of this news were a group of migrant Turkish intellectuals who had emigrated from Russia during the period of Russian expansion into the Caucasus and south Asia, which gained momentum at the turn of the century. They joined the ranks of the Young Turks at a time when the latter were looking for a way to save the Empire from its desperate economic and social condition.

These migrants became the major exponents of pan-Turkist ideology<sup>2</sup>. Their aim was to liberate all other Turks suffering under foreign yoke. However, pan-Turkists were neither Anatolian nationalists nor populists. «For them nationality meant race»<sup>3</sup>, or Turanism: incorporation of all Asiatic Turks into one transcontinental state. This ideal contradicted neither Westernism nor Islamism, but rather added an attractive imperialist color to the Young Turk ideology. Turanians were also, and very conveniently, firm believers in private enterprise, and the responsibility of the State to support the emergent entrepreneurial classes<sup>4</sup>.

The grandiose scheme to rebuild the Empire through the incorporation of Muslim Turks of rich Asiatic lands (Turan), in other words to cure a decaying empire that had fallen victim to superior imperialist powers with a new imperialism, inevitably led the Young Turks to clash with the dominant imperialist powers of the time.

Due to the fact that the majority of Turkic people under Russian domination were Muslims, pan-Islamism never completely ceased to be a part of the

1. The most prominent among these Turkists were Yusuf Akçura, Ahmed Agayev (Ağaoğlu) and Halim Sabit. It has been claimed that Yusuf Akçura's writings have «played a role similar to that of the Communist Manifesto of 1848 for the Marxists». Charles W. Hostler, *Turkism and the Soviets*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1957, p. 145.

2. N. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, p. 345.

3. Yusuf Akçura, *op. cit.*, No. 63, pp. 2102-2103; *idem*, *Siyaset ve İktisat*, İstanbul 1923, p. 140 ff.; N. Berkes, *ibid.* pp. 424-427.

4. Sir Reader Bullard, *Britain and the Middle East*, London 1951, pp. 48-80.

Young Turk ideology. From its inception in the heyday of economic imperialism this utopian and anachronistic imperialist policy based on race and religion was doomed to failure. Nevertheless, it was supported and even financed by Germany, Turkey's ally in the World War, because pan-Turkism was anti-Russian, and pan-Islamism anti-British, in character. As is well-known, the two deadliest enemies of Germany and her expansionist policy toward the Asiatic markets and the rich petroleum resources of the Middle East were Russia and Britain<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to devising utopian schemes to save the State, the Unionist government also took some more meaningful steps toward economic independence. Now let us see how the Young Turks' economic development program evolved through time.

#### FROM LIBERALISM TO STATISM: THE EVOLUTION OF YOUNG TURK ECONOMIC THOUGHT

The Young Turks' economic program underwent a dramatic change parallel to their political program. At first, in their liberal-reformist period, the various factions and ideologues had no real understanding of the difference between the economies and social structures of the industrialized and agrarian countries<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, they did not understand the development of their own society. In this respect, the intellectual evolution of one of the most influential Young Turk leaders (leader of the European section of the CUP in exile), Ahmed Riza Bey, is a good example.

Ahmed Riza was an agronomist by profession. He chose this discipline to aid in the development of the stagnant Turkish agriculture, and raise the standard of rural Turkey<sup>3</sup>. He received his education in France and returned home to join the Ministry of Agriculture in the last decade of the Hamidian regime. Unable to do anything positive in this Ministry, Ahmed Riza reached the conclusion that «the ignorance of the peasantry was an obstacle to their understanding the need for the application of modern agricultural methods»; he shifted to the Ministry of Education because, «education was the best way to enlighten people's mind's. It was while he was a director of education that

1. Mehmed Cavit, «Neşriyat ve Vekayi-i İktisadiye», *Ulum-u İctimaiye ve İktisadiye Mecmuası*, II, No. 5 (May 1909); and later writings in Nos. 6, 7, 8 and 9 clearly reveal that even the Minister of Finance of the Young Turk Government was no different from other Turkish intellectuals of the time in recognizing the roots of Turkish underdevelopment.

2. His ideas on this issue are written in his *Layihalarım*, lithographed in London in 1859. He sent these writings to Sultan Abdul Hamid.

3. N. Berkes, *loc. cit.*, p. 306.

Riza resigned in *disgust*. »<sup>1</sup> with the inefficiency of the Hamidian educational system and went to Paris.

Ahmed Riza was not alone in his optimistic formulas for economic recovery. All Young Turks before and even for some time after the 1908 revolution believed that the loss of financial and political independence was due to the past despotism of the Ottoman polity. The remedy for this was presented by Sabahaddin Bey: economic liberalism, private enterprise and political decentralization. These institutions would put an end to any form of collective activity or organization surviving as the legacy of the classical Ottoman political economy<sup>2</sup>.

Sabahaddin Bey and many other Young Turks who supported economic liberalism were against the capitulatory regime not only because it was detrimental to the creation of an independent national economy, but also because it was completely contrary to *laissez faire* liberal capitalism. Since the major Western powers glorified *laissez faire*, they naively believed these powers would, if properly approached, be willing to revoke the capitulations voluntarily and also finance a development program which, through free trade, would lead to the mutual enrichment of all the nations involved.

In this respect Cavit Bey, the future Minister of Finance of the Union and Progress government, wrote in 1909:

«... in my opinion, we must accept foreigners in such enterprises for the sake of establishing a skill, that of management and rationalization, which we lack so badly. As to important public works, these can be done only with foreign capital... All countries in a state of opening themselves to civilization will inevitably stumble and fall in their new path *if they seek to advance by their own forces*... All new countries have been able to advance only with the help of foreign capital»<sup>3</sup>.

But Cavit Bey's own solicitations in England and France as a Minister were turned down by Western financiers and Governments in 1911<sup>4</sup>. Through these experiences the Young Turks finally came to understand that European statesmen and bankers were not in reality the disciples of Adam Smith and

1. Prince Sabahaddin, *op. cit.*

2. Mehmed Cavit, «Neşriyat ve Vekay-i İktisadiye», *Ulum-u İçtimaiye ve İktisadiye Mecmuası*, II, No. 5 (May 1909), 129-30.

3. N. Berkes, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

4. Only the Germans, who had their own plans in the Near and Middle East, extended this credit on November 7, 1911. This marked the beginning of a Turco-German friendship that would continue until the end of World War I.

J. B. Say. The world powers refused to alter the capitulations, and refused to lend a penny to the Turkish government without first receiving concessions and further privileges<sup>1</sup>.

Only through bitter experience did Young Turks abandon their naive ideas about national development. When, after the summer of 1913, another Young Turk request to raise custom dues and for alterations in the capitulatory regime was turned down by the Europeans<sup>2</sup>, Young Turk liberalism turned into statism and the polite solicitations to European powers for economic favors were rejected in favor of a diplomatic struggle which culminated in the Ottoman Empire's entry into the World War against the Allied Powers.

Still, the Young Turks' firm belief in capitalist development and the need to create a national bourgeois class and their own roots within this class, limited the extent to which they could transform the social structure of Turkish society. Their reform program did not affect the peasantry and the tiny industrial working class (75,411 in 1922)<sup>3</sup>. Instead, in their radical period, much of the Young Turk liberalism gave way to statism and to the ideals of solidarity and national unity<sup>4</sup>.

As implied in the name of the Party in power (Union and Progress) they were against any deviation from their corporatist program, and the goals of their centralist rule. For only through these political institutions could they remain as the new ruling class of the Empire. For this reason, the fourth emerging ideology of the time, Socialism, (in contrast to Islamism, Westernism, and Turanism) was repressed both in action and publication. Let us briefly look at the Unionist policy vis à vis the emergent leftist ideology and organizations.

The first Socialist organization in Turkish history appeared in the relatively political atmosphere of the second Constitutional period before the Young Turk regime acquired its authoritarian character. The «Ottoman Socialist Party» (*Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası*) was founded in September 1910. «It was the first party in Turkey which had a doctrine of class struggle among sundry other political parties with different programs»<sup>5</sup>.

1. F. Ahmad, pp. 140-141.

2. Turkish State Institute of Statistics, *Türkiye'de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişmenin 50 Yılı*, Ankara 1973, p. 41.

3. This issue is raised by Akçura in *Türk Yurdu*, No. 140 (August 12, 1333 A. H.), p. 2521 ff.

4. F. Hüsrev Tökin, *Türk Tarihinde Siyasal Partiler*, İstanbul 1965, p. 48; Muzaffer Sencer, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partilerin Sosyal Temelleri*, İstanbul 1971, p. 57.

5. M. Sencer, *ibid.*; Tunaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-306.

The founders of the Party advocated the nationalization of all means of production, banks, railroads and insurance companies; abolition of monopolies; a progressive taxation system; freedom of speech and publication; abolition of capital punishment; annulment of all laws and regulations forbidding the right of strike and unionization of workers. It demanded an eight-hour working day and *one day off per week* for workers; free education for all social classes, and the creation of a Ministry of Labor which would protect workers' rights and their syndicates<sup>1</sup>.

The Party's press organs were newspapers like *İştirak*, *Sosyalist*, *Muhade* and *İnsaniyet*. Each of these journals was closed by the Young Turk government after a brief period of publication. The Party had no members in the Parliament which was thoroughly controlled by the Union and Progress, but some left-leaning Christian deputies did introduce their ideas to the Parliament.

The Party's active role in workers' strikes of Istanbul, Turkey's most important city, led to the prosecution and later deportation of its leaders—Hüseyin Hilmi, İsmail Faik, and Hamid Suphi—in 1911, one year after its establishment<sup>2</sup>.

Another center for leftist organizations at this time was Salonica. We have no evidence of a direct relationship between the Balkan leftist organizations and their Istanbul counterpart, but it seems that the leftist front in Rumeli (European Turkey) was stronger and better organized. The close contact of Rumeli cities with other Balkan centers and leftist movements like the Bulgarian and Roumanian socialist movements may explain this fact<sup>3</sup>.

The workers' activities organized by leftist elements in Salonika were soon recognized by a hostile government which issued the order quoted below to the Governor of Salonica on November 1, 1911:

«It has been recognized that workers of Salonika are organizing in syndicates (unions) . . . The establishment of Socialist ideas and practices will gradually destroy the local commerce. . . For this reason not only is the issuance of more permits (for the formation of new unions) a matter of hesitance. . .

1. Aclan Sayilgan, *Türkiye'de Sol Hareketler (1871-1972)*, İstanbul 1972, p. 71; Fethi Tevetioğlu, *Türkiye'de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faaliyetleri, 1910-1966*, Ankara, 1967, p. 18.

2. Walter Z. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957, p. 207; Oya Sencer, *Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı*, İstanbul 1969, p. 169.

3. *The Levant Herald*, İstanbul, June 29, 1912; T. Z. Tunaya, *op. cit.*, p. 306 fn. 10.

(but also) the necessity of annulment of established syndicates is considered»<sup>1</sup>.

After 1910 the government moved to close down all Socialist clubs, organizations and Parties.

The hostile attitude held by the Young Turk government toward the workers and peasants was not even altered by the writings of Alexander Helphand alias Parvus. Parvus was a Russian Marxist revolutionary who had served in the Petersburg Soviet with Trotsky and later escaped to Istanbul from Siberia where he had been banished by the Tsarist regime<sup>2</sup>. He was a prolific writer and theoretician. It was he who introduced Young Turks to the Leninist theory of imperialism. He called for the abolition of the capitulatory regime as the first step in the destruction of Western imperialism in Turkey. Only in this way could a Turkish bourgeois class be provided with a milieu protected by the State from European economic penetration.

In accordance with the Marxist view of the time, however, he did not believe that Turkey could create a socialist system by «skipping stages». The precondition for socialism was capitalism. Only after the establishment of a national capitalist system would the inevitable contradictions of class conflict emerge<sup>3</sup>.

Parvus' ideas on imperialism and his competent description of how the Westerners exploited Turkish economic resources were indeed educational for the Young Turks, few of whom had any substantial knowledge of economics. Although it is hard to assess Parvus' impact on the Young Turk economic policies, many of his ideas can be readily detected in the Party programs of Union and Progress. We believe that the 1913 Party program is the most conspicuous example of Parvus' influence on the later period of Young Turk thought.

The political program drawn up in the 1913 Party (of Union and Progress) Congress included provisions for the financing of long-term, low-interest capital loans for Turkish agriculture and industry. Aid to farmers «who owned land» was the primary goal of Article 18 of the Program. For this purpose

1. Max Beer, *Fifty Years of International Socialism*, London 1935, p. 195; G. H. D. Cole, *The Second International, 1889-1914: A History of Socialist Thought*, London 1956, III, pp. 489, 492, 501, 956-958.

2. Parvus, *Türkiye'nin Can Damari*, Istanbul, 1330 A. H., is the most comprehensive of his writings where he employs the Leninist theory of imperialism to the Turkish case, and analyzes the history of Turkish underdevelopment.

3. T. Z. Tunaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205; Kemal Karpaz, *Turkey's Politics*, New Jersey, Princeton Univ. Press, 1959, p. 83.



a National Credit Bank was opened in January 1917. Under the auspices of the bank, other enterprises were begun. First, two insurance companies were opened<sup>1</sup>. These were followed by other companies founded with private capital. For their unrestricted development, Article 19 called for a «freer» milieu within which the commercial bourgeoisie would flourish. The abolition of archaic and harmful laws that restricted free market forces was proposed. Article 30 envisaged the codification of a «Law of Industrial Incentives» that would encourage private enterprise. Most of these proposals were carried out with at least some success.

A complementary policy encouraged consumers' co-operatives. A «Society for National Consumption» was founded as early as 1913. The Society launched a large-scale campaign to encourage the consumption of home-produced instead of imported goods<sup>2</sup>. Many consumers' co-operatives appeared in the capital and functioned successfully until the end of the World War.

The Unionist Government was also instrumental in organizing the Turkish commercial bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie into a number of import-export companies, producer co-operatives, and credit institutions. All were created through the contribution of national capital<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, various branches of traditional arts and crafts were organized within a modernized guild-system in the hope that they would devote themselves to the complementary production of raw and finished goods. The architect of this program was Kara Kemal Bey.

These organizational efforts were supported by local branches of the Union and Progress throughout the country. But the Unionists recognized that these measures would be insufficient if the capitulatory regime were to remain intact and the minority and foreign compradore bourgeoisie were to preserve their superiority in the national economy. Consequently, foreign companies were required to have a certain number of Ottoman subjects on their boards of directors, and concessionary companies were required to keep their books and administer business transactions in Turkish<sup>4</sup>. This, and similar legislation, had little practical impact on Ottoman economic dependence.

The decisive blow against foreign and minority economic superiority in the Ottoman domain would be delivered, the Young Turks hoped, with the

1. Haluk Cillov, «Les Recensements industriels en Turquie», *Istanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Dergisi* XIII (1951-1952), 163 ff.; B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

2. F. H. Tökin, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

3. B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

4. K. Karpat, *op. cit.*, p. 83; Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 459.

abolition of capitulation in 1914. The second article of the 1913 Party Program deemed it «a sacred duty of utmost importance to abolish the totality of capitulations». A last attempt in 1913-1914 to abolish the capitulations through negotiations with Europeans came to nothing<sup>1</sup>. The Ottoman Government unilaterally abrogated all economic and legal restrictions and entered the World War on the side of Imperial Germany which supported the Young Turks' radical move. Now let us follow more closely the dramatic evolution of the Young Turk Government's policies toward economic independence.

BREAKING THE POWER OF THE FOREIGN AND  
MINORITY COMPRADORE BOURGEOISIE:  
ARMENIAN AND GREEK OPERATIONS OF THE UNION AND PROGRESS

*The Armenian Case.* The British, French and Russian pressures on Turkey throughout the 19th century to protect the rights of Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire were aimed mainly at protecting a Levantine class whose economic role was as the middlemen of the West. This stratum functioned as the representatives of European manufacturers in the Anatolian hinterland, Iran, and the interior of Asia<sup>2</sup>, and also directed the flow of raw materials from the Empire and Levant back to Europe. Another aim of the Western activities on behalf of the Christian minorities was to encourage secessionist movements among the diverse nationalities of the Empire. Because of these movements, many small and dependent nations would be much easier to control. Moreover, the British Foreign Office believed that an autonomous but small Armenia, dependent on England for protection, would act as a buffer zone between the Russian and Turkish Empires, blocking their expansion toward the Middle Eastern oil fields and trade routes. On the other hand, Russia also saw Armenia «as a barrier between possible Turkish 'Pan-Turanism' ambitions and the oil fields of Baku»<sup>3</sup>.

After the realization of a Turco-German alliance between 1913 and 1914, Armenian independence took on a different meaning for the British and

1. Ömer Celal Sarç, «Tanzimat ve Sanayiimiz», *Tanzimat*, Istanbul 1940, p. 423 ff.; Doğan Avcioğlu, *Türkiye'nin Düzeni*, Ankara 1968, pp. 52-56; G. Bie Ravndal, *The Origin of the Capitulations and the Consular Institutions* 67th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Doc. No. 34, Washington 1921, p. 34 ff.

2. A. Toynbee, *The Western ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

3. Henry Woodhouse, «American Oil Claims in Turkey», *The New York Times Current History* XV, No. 6, March 1922, pp. 953-959; Z. Y. Herslag, *Introduction To The Modern Economic History of The Middle East*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1964, pp. 51, 167, Appendix 31.

French. They hoped it would help to block German expansion toward the East (*Drang nach Osten*). Western imperialist policies in Turkey (mainly British) reached their climax with the building of the Berlin-Baghdad railway by the Germans. The United States, which had recently recognized the rich economic potential of the area was also in favor of this policy<sup>1</sup>.

With foreign (mainly British) aid and American missionary support, two nationalist-revolutionary organizations, the Dashnak and the more radical Honchak, began their secessionist campaign towards the turn of the century<sup>2</sup>.

Turco-Armenian confrontations began in 1890 in Erzurum, an Eastern Turkey town, and quickly spread to other regions. The immediate aim of the rebellion was to invite foreign intervention against the Turkish «oppressors»<sup>3</sup>. But, Sultan Abdul Hamid quickly organized the nomadic Kurdish tribes into cavalry regiments (*Hamidiye Alaylari*) based on the Russian Cossack example and suppressed the first major wave of Armenian rebellions.

During the Young Turk administration, the Armenian Rebellion took the form of widespread inter-ethnic warfare between the Turkish and Armenian populations, first in Eastern Anatolia, later in the South-east. An enormous number of men died in these struggles. The relations between the local Turkish and Armenian populations deteriorated with each passing year.

During the Turco-Russian struggles in the World War, Turkish armies suffered considerably from Armenian support of the Russian forces. They deserted the Turkish armies, joined the Russian forces, or engaged in fifth-column activities behind the battle lines<sup>4</sup>.

In vain, Commander in Chief Enver Paşa, repeatedly asked the Armenian Patriarch to halt the Armenian hostilities toward the Turks. Finally, in frustration, the Unionist Government on May 14, 1915 issued the famous Deportation Law (*Tehcir Kanunu*). The plan to deport hundreds of thousands of Armenians to Mesopotamia «to clear the battle-ground» was written and carried out largely by the secret revolutionary «Special Organization» (*Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*) of the Union and Progress. According to the European sources,

1. Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918*, Los Angeles 1967; *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, Documents presented by Viscount Bryce to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London 1916.

2. Bryce to Grey, *ibid.*, passim; Ş. S. Aydemir, *Enver Paşa, op. cit.*, III, pp. 119-156.

3. Bryce, *ibid.*, Aydemir, *ibid.*; Kazim Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz*, İstanbul 1960, p. 281 ff.; Sahattin Selek, *Anadolu İhtilali*, İstanbul 1973, p. 20; Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, Ankara 1950, p. 71 ff.:

4. Bryce to Grey, *op. cit.*, p. 664; *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1926*, 2 vols., Washington, 1941, II, pp. 986-990.

between 800,000 and 1,200,000 people were deported or killed in this operation<sup>1</sup>.

Talat Paşa (the last Unionist Prime Minister) justified this drastic policy in discussion with U.S. Ambassador Morgenthau by pointing out that conflict between the Turks and Armenians was inevitable for three reasons. First, Armenians, aided by foreign nations, had prospered at the expense of the Turkish people. Second, the Armenians were determined to dominate Turks in areas even where they were not a majority by establishing an independent state. Third, throughout the Turco-Russian conflict in the first years of the World War, they had aided the Russians on the Eastern front and played a crucial role in the Turkish defeat at the Sarikamış battles in 1915. Thus their power had to be broken<sup>2</sup>.

However, the Turco-Armenian strife continued after 1915, passing through three dramatic stages: the Russian-Armenian invasion of Eastern and North-Eastern Turkey and Armenian revenge in 1916; their withdrawal in 1917 following the Bolshevik Revolution; and finally, following the World War and Turkey's occupation by Allied forces.

«The French Government made use of the Armenians in a different way. They promised to erect an autonomous Armenian State, under their aegis, in the Cilician Part of their Anatolian Zone, and the promise brought them several thousand Armenian volunteers, most of whom were enrolled in the *Legion d'Orient* and served for the rest of the war»<sup>3</sup>.

We will elaborate on these events later.

*The Greek Case.* Another drastic move against the anti-national compradore minority was directed towards the Greeks — especially of Western Anatolia, where they were most concentrated. The Young Turks' conflict with Greece started as part of a series of international crises, right after their successful *coup d'état* in 1908. On November 5, 1908 Bulgaria declared her independence under Russian protection. The next day Austria-Hungary declared her annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the same day Greece annexed the island of Crete, violating the provisions of the Congress of Berlin (1878). The Ottoman protests to the signatory powers of the Congress went unheeded and these countries retained their gains.

The hostile attitude of Westerners was most conspicuous in the British

1. H. Bayur, *op. cit.*, II, Part III, p. 87; D. Avcioglu, *Milli. . .*, III, pp. 1131-1153; Andrei Nikolaevich Mandelstam, *Le Sort de l'Empire ottoman*, Lausanne 1917, pp. 240, 248.

2. A. Toynbee, *loc. cit.*, p. 51.

3. *Ibid.*

case. Great Britain backed «Greece against Turkey because an aggrandised Greece dependent on British support»<sup>1</sup> would give her pre-eminence over her rivals in the Near East.

«These hostile acts aroused great indignation throughout the Ottoman Empire»<sup>2</sup>. Unprepared and unable to answer these encroachments through military action, the Young Turks (under the auspices of the local committees of the Union and Progress) skillfully channeled this surge of resentment into an effective and organized boycott of Austrian and Greek products and services<sup>3</sup>. The main victims of the economic boycott soon became the Greek merchants, producers and transporters who controlled most of Turkey's import-export commerce and maritime transport. With a systematic program the Young Turks tried to push them into bankruptcy.

The pressure on the Christian, especially Greek, minorities, worsened after Greece annexed Mytilini and Khios in 1909 and Western Thrace at the end of the Balkan War (1912-1913). The popular feeling already aroused by the boycott against Greeks was re-enforced by the stories of atrocities against, and pitiful conditions of, the Turkish migrants from the Balkans.

«... The arrival of the Rumelian (European Turkish) refugees from the end of 1912 onward produced an unexampled feeling of tension in Anatolia and a desire for revenge... Their numbers were so great<sup>4</sup> that they appreciably affected the population... The hundreds of thousands of refugees who arrived at Constantinople, and kept arriving after the conclusion of peace, were destitute and terror-stricken»<sup>5</sup>.

Following these events the boycott against Anatolian Greeks took on the character of an open economic and para-military warfare between the two peoples. While the economic boycott was being carried out with great vigor, para-military bands were enrolled from among the *Rumeli* refugees and local citizens who had long been envious of Greek prosperity in the region<sup>6</sup>. Inter-ethnic struggle and economic boycott continued throughout

1. F. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

2. Ali Fuad Türkeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, Ankara 1951, p. 10.

3. The extent of human suffering and population dislocations in the Balkan War can be found in *Report of the International Commission to inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan War*, Washington D. C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914, p. 71 ff.

4. A. Toynbee, *loc. cit.*, pp. 138, 139.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

6. Henry Morgenthau (American Ambassador to Turkey), *Secrets of the Bosphorus 1913-1916*, London, Hutchinson, 3rd ed. 1921, p. 42 ff.

the period 1914 to 1916.

This was not all. The Unionist government asked all foreign firms of Izmir (then the biggest city of Anatolia after Istanbul) to fire their Greek employees and hire Turks instead. Even the U.S. Ambassador's pleas to exempt the Singer Company from this purge were unsuccessful<sup>1</sup>. Muslim preachers supported the boycott through their daily sermons in the mosques. French commerce conducted mainly through the mediation of the Greeks began to suffer in the East Mediterranean. Consequently, the French Foreign Minister Pichon protested against the Turkish boycott and threatened the Young Turk government with Western intervention<sup>2</sup>.

Under the leadership of Enver Paşa (the most aggressive member of the ruling cadre) a more drastic plan was formulated by the «Special Organisation» of the Party against the Greeks. Composed of skilled guerilla fighters, able staff officers, public orators and politicians, the «Special Organization» moved in complete secrecy (even from the majority of the cabinet members) to implement two basic strategies:

1. establishment of national banks, corporations, credit unions, and wide-scale organization of Turkish local artisan groups of the Aegean region in producers' cooperatives;

2. intimidation and force against the rich Greeks of the region to leave the area and migrate to Greece<sup>3</sup>.

For the first task, Celal Bayar Bey (later the Third President of the Republic: 1950-1960) was appointed General Secretary of the Party of Union and Progress in Izmir. For the second task, the young military and civilian revolutionaries of the «Special Organization» were assigned the duty of intimidating the Greek population of Western Turkey as clandestinely as possible<sup>4</sup>.

The popular aim of the operation was the «nationalization of the Infidel Izmir»<sup>5</sup>. According to plan, approximately 130,000 Greeks were forced to leave for Greece or the Aegean islands in 1914 from Bergama, Çeşme, Dikili, Foça, Karaburun and Menemen— rich subdivisions of Izmir<sup>6</sup>. A government was fighting against its own citizens for survival!

1. D. Avcioglu, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1117-1118.

2. Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdim*, Istanbul 1969, vol. IV, p. 1584; Avcioglu, *loc.cit.*, pp. 1114-1122.

3. *Ibid.*, (both sources).

4. These are the words of Eşref Kuşçubaşı, the leader of the «Special Organization» (*Teşkilatı Mahsusa*) which carried out the operation. Quoted in Celal Bayar's *Ben de Yazdim*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1584-1585.

5. Arnold Toynbee, *The Western . . .*, pp. 143-144; C. Bayar, *ibid.*, p. 1585 ff.

6. C. Bayar, *ibid.*; D. Avcioglu, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1115.

What was the outcome of this displacement policy? First, the strength of the economically dominant minority compradore bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie was severely shaken. Some European businessmen living in Turkey (Levantines) were also hurt<sup>1</sup>. Second, ousted Turkish migrants flowing in from the lost territories of the Empire in Europe were settled on the properties and businesses of the exiled or displaced minorities. A number of landless peasants also occupied some of this untenanted land.

Third, untenanted workshops and businesses of the displaced Christians were to some extent taken over by the Turks. This phenomenon was in accordance with the Unionist desire to create a «national bourgeoisie». But, there is no indication that the «instant» Turkish capitalists, or rather proprietors were capable of developing a dynamic industrial economy. The destruction of commercial relationships with foreign merchants and the insufficiency of the domestic market doomed many of these workshops, mills and «factories» to idleness or severely restricted their productive capacity. Evidence from studies conducted decades later show that, for example, flour mills left over from the Greeks were rented out to peasants by their owners, and the operator received the due of his service in kind rather than money<sup>2</sup>. This way relations of production continued to be as backward as they were earlier.

Fourth, some of the (best) lands and property left behind by the minorities were confiscated by either local influential figures or powerful middle level members of the Party<sup>3</sup>. Large tracts of land remained concentrated in the hands of individuals, unavailable to the peasantry. Some of the formerly property-less influentials (bureaucrats and politicians) of the time became part of a new landed elite. This newly propertied group pushed the politics of the Unionists, during their direct rule and the Republican era, in a conservative direction.

Fifth, the necessity of settling over 400,000 migrants<sup>4</sup>, and land occupations by landless peasants, further fragmented the land or preserved its subsistence character. This factor delayed the capitalist development of Turkish agriculture in later years.

1. Cavit Orhan Tütengil, «A Study of the Village of Keçiler», *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 1955-1956, (Istanbul 1956).

2. A. Toynbee, *loc. cit.*, p. 138.

3 Today it is a well-known fact that the leading Young Turk triumvirate consisting of Talat, Cemal and Enver Paşas, had only a very modest amount of money in their pockets when they left the country in October 1918 in order to escape Allied prosecution. The same can be said of the Minister of Finance Cavit Bey who had access to millions<sup>4</sup>. They had not profited from these events.

4. Ş. S. Aydemir, *Enver Paşa*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 494 ff.; Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Talat Paşa*, Istanbul 1943, pp. 48-56.

Sixth, in the plunder of Christian property left behind, by the local *eşraf* (notables) and rural populations, lay the basis of a keen interracial or inter-communal conflict when the Armenians and Greeks of Anatolia started returning after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. Throughout 1919, the Armenians returned under French uniform as a part of the French occupying force. They were followed by Anatolian Greeks who returned under the protection of Allied fleets and Greek armies. The story of the ensuing struggle will be later elaborated in the section entitled, «The National Liberation Movement».

The Young Turk Government was aware of the fact that as long as the capitulatory regime existed, any measure to establish a sound basis for economic independence was doomed to failure. So the next step had to be the abolition of the capitulations. If the Turks wanted to survive as an independent nation they had no other choice, and the Young Turks were bold enough to fulfil this historical mission.

#### ABOLITION OF CAPITULATIONS AND ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST WESTERN CAPITALISM

The Young Turks have often been condemned for their identification with Imperial Germany and for leading Turkey into World War I on the German side, but Turkey's turn towards Germany (and then the Soviet Union after the First World War) can best be understood as an attempt to regain its autonomy as an independent nation. Unfortunately, its effort to break away from the Western Imperialist orbit through dependence on another imperial power, Germany, proved fatal and the Ottoman State collapsed in the Armageddon of world capitalism (1918). Now let us see how the course of events took place.

The Young Turk government made several attempts to obtain the consent of each of the Powers concerned for the abrogation of the capitulatory system. Their efforts were, however, futile, partly due to the difficulty caused by the claims made by the chief powers for compensation<sup>2</sup>.

In October 1913 the Turkish Government formed a commission consisting of Turkish and Foreign delegates to examine and propose changes in the capitulatory system. Nothing came out of the Commissions proceedings.

1. Nasim Sousa, *The Capitulatory Regime of Turkey*, Baltimore, John Hopkins U. Press, 1933, p. 186; from (Sir L.) Mallet to Grey (telegram) August 20, 1914, in *The Times*, London, *Documentary History of the War*, IX, «Diplomatic», part 3, pp. 101-102.

2. Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, ed. Behçet Cemal, Istanbul 1959, p. 121 ff.; Ş. S. Aydemir, *loc. cit.*, II, pp. 503-509.



The Unionist Government increasingly felt unprepared as Turkey was just recuperating from the wounds of the 1912-1913 Balkan War disaster and isolated with the threat of more war on the horizon. The Turkish government opened up negotiations with Russia, England and France<sup>1</sup> to increase the security of the country. But, as the secret documents of the Russian Imperial Government released by the Bolshevik administration in 1917 revealed, these countries had other plans. The partition of the Ottoman Empire was already decided by secret talks between the Entente Powers<sup>2</sup>.

Increasingly worried about the security of the nation, the Young Turk Government signed a secret treaty of alliance with Germany of August 2, 1914, the day after Germany declared war against Russia. This treaty offered equal terms to Turkey which no other government wanted to grant at that time.

The efforts of the Ottoman government to win back her economic autonomy have already been discussed. Before entering the War, the Ottoman Prime Minister Sait Halim Paşa for the last time declared that «the abolition of the capitulations was imperative to avoid the involvement of Turkey in the War»<sup>3</sup>. But nobody listened. Even the United States Government showed a grim determination to preserve the Turkish Capitulatory regime<sup>4</sup>.

Talat Paşa, the last Prime Minister of the Unionist Government clearly expressed this point in the dramatic last meeting of the Party of Union and

1. On November 22, 1917 Trotsky declared the Soviet Government's intention of publishing the secret treaties of the Tsarist Government and its allies. The secret treaties were released shortly afterwards. Among these documents there were many hints as to ongoing negotiations for new agreements that crystallized in the future years in four secret treaties: 1) The «Constantinople Agreement» signed between Britain, France and Russia on March 18, 1915. The text of this agreement can be found in the January 18, 1918 issue of the *Manchester Guardian*. 2) The «Secret Pact of London», signed between Italy, France, Britain and Russia on April 26, 1915. The text of this treaty can be found in the January 18, 1918 issue of the *Manchester Guardian*, and in *British White Paper*, Cmd. 671 (Miscellaneous No. 7), London 1920. 3) The «Sykes-Picot Agreement», signed between Britain, France and Russia on May 16, 1916. The text of this treaty can be found in the January 8, 1920 issue of the *Manchester Guardian*, and the May 22, 1919 issue of *Le Temps*. 4) The «St. Jean de Maurienne Agreement», signed between Britain, France and Italy on April 17, 1917. The text of this agreement is in the January 9, 1920 issue of the *Manchester Guardian* and the February 9, 1920 issue of the *Chicago Daily News*.

2. Nasim Sousa, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192; *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914*, Washington 1922, pp. 1092-1093; Roger R. Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914-1939*, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971, pp. 19-27.

4. Quoted in Ş. S. Aydemir, *loc. cit.*, III, p. 480.

Progress before it abolished itself on October 1, 1918, and its leaders left the country:

«We were pursuing a policy of allying ourself with a powerful European nation. We had contacted the British and the French and got negative results.

One day Prime Minister Sait Halim Paşa called Enver Paşa, Halil Bey, and myself to his residence. He told us that the German ambassador was offering a peace treaty on equal terms. He asked for our opinion.

For the security and development of the country all three of us converged on the opinion that such an alliance was necessary. We gave a positive answer . . .

The proposal of a powerful country for a treaty with the Ottoman Empire was a sign of a close war. We were not late in realizing this. However, we could not guess that it would be a general war. We thought we would save the country from all kinds of dangers by entering into such an alliance . . .»<sup>1</sup>.

The price which the Ottoman Government had to pay for «equal» terms was «entering the War on the side of Germany if Germany entered the War» (Article 2 of the treaty)<sup>2</sup>.

It is ironic that in the excitement of signing the secret treaty, the three Young Turk officials had forgotten to include the clause for the abrogation of the capitulatory regime in the text of the treaty. Under pressure from other top Party members they asked Baron von Wangenheim, the German ambassador and signatory to the original treaty to add a number of new clauses to the treaty. Of special concern was a clause that would abrogate the capitulations. Instead, to satisfy the Unionist leaders, Wangenheim hastily wrote a guarantee letter without authorization from his government<sup>3</sup>.

Encouraged by this flimsy guarantee and «the state of War between European Powers (the Turkish Government) formally notified all the embassies in Constantinople that it would abrogate the capitulations beginning

1. *Treaty Series* No. 11 (1920). Treaty of Peace with Turkey. Signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920, Cmd. 964, London.

2. Ş. S. Aydemir, *loc. cit.*, II, pp. 516-520; H. C. Yalçın (ed.), *Talat Paşanın Hatıraları*, Istanbul 1946, pp. 124-128.

3. N. Sousa, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

October 1, 1914»<sup>1</sup>. The message also informed the powers that the government was intent on abolishing (foreign) restrictions imposed on the sovereign rights of Turkey to determine the taxing rates within its own borders.

Beginning October 1, customs duties were raised to 14 and 15 percent, and luxury items like first class clothing material and liquor were subject to duties of 100 percent. Similarly on the same date foreign post offices which operated outside the control of the Ottoman Government were closed. The actions of the Ottoman Government were immediately protested by the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Russia, Austria, and *even* Germany<sup>2</sup>.

Cavit Bey, the Young Turk Finance Minister, relates in his personal diary how Baron von Wangenheim (German ambassador) came and threatened him although he had previously signed a letter of guarantee in his government's name accepting the abrogation of the capitulations.

«Sept. 10, 1914, Wednesday:

Wangenheim came. He looked unnatural, almost insane . . . He was unable to talk, but was making sounds like barking. Our discussion lasted approximately two hours . . . I wish our German-lovers could see these scenes . . . Wangenheim was protesting because we made this decision (on the capitulations) unilaterally. He was shouting that we couldn't do such a thing without their consent. He said that if tomorrow the British and French declare war against us (the Ottomans) and start forcing the Straits, they would in no circumstance aid us . . .

Today in the afternoon he said, all the (foreign) ambassadors will meet and render a mutual note of protest to the Turkish government, and perhaps even Germany and Russia could agree on a truce against Turkey»<sup>3</sup>.

Despite the fact that they were at each other's throats on the battle field

1. For this united opposition see *L'Europe Nouvelle, sources et documents*, August 17, 1929, Paris, p. xxv; From Grey to Mallet, *The Times*, London, *Documentary History of the War*, IX, pp. 104-105.

2. Mehmet Cavit, «Meşrutiyet Devrine Ait Cavit Beyin Hatıraları» serialized memoirs, in *Tanin*, August 3, 1943 - December 22, 1946. Fourteen handwritten notebooks of Cavit Bey are in the Turkish History Society archives.

3. L. E. Thayer, «The Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire and the Question of their abrogation as it affects the United States», *A. J. I. L. XVII*, April 1923, 207-233; N. Sousa, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

this protest indeed took place with the full cooperation of all Western ambassadors in Istanbul on September 10, 1914<sup>1</sup>.

However, shortly thereafter the German and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors withdrew their protest<sup>2</sup>. In the midst of World War they did not wish to lose their Turkish ally over such trivial matters as capitulations.

The Ottoman Empire entered her last war on the side of the Central powers. Was she ready to enter this disastrous war? The opinion of all authorities is negative. There were only 92,000 golden Ottoman liras in the treasury<sup>3</sup>. Although the armies and the leadership were much improved from the conditions that existed before 1913, the troops lacked any kind of modern equipment and weaponry.

Germany undertook to supply these as Turkey mobilized approximately 2,850,000 troops during the Great War. When the Armistice of Mudros was signed in October 30, 1918, there were still 580,000 men under arms<sup>4</sup>. Why did the Ottomans enter the war then? We believe it would be better to ask if the Ottomans had any choice.

It is our contention that they did not. There were already secret negotiations between the Entente Powers (Russia included) calling for the partition of Turkey<sup>5</sup>. The fact that despite the refusal of their own armies to fight a new war after the 1914-1918 debacle, the Entente Governments used such sub-imperialist nations as Greece and dispossessed Armenians is evidence in support of this assertion. Moreover, the Turks had finally understood that liberation from economic bondage to the West could not be solved at conference tables, but would be fought for on the battlefield.

The position of the Turkish Government can best be illustrated by the following passage that reflects the tone of the special report presented by the Committee of Union and Progress to the General Congress of the Party in September 1916:

«Thinking that the moment had come to deliver ourselves from the international guardianship inflicted upon our great country like a pitiless scouge, we entered the general war in October, 1914,

1. L. E. Thayer, *ibid.*, p. 214; Sousa, *ibid.*, p. 193, fn. 6.

2. Hikmet Bayur, *op. cit.*, III, p. 186 ff.

3. Commandant M. Larcher, *La guerre turque dans la guerre mondiale*. Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1926, p. 602; Avcioglu, *loc. cit.*, III, p. 929; Aydemir, *op. cit.*, III, p. 104.

4. These secret negotiations were confirmed in a series of treaties already mentioned in footnote 1, page 66.

5. *World Peace Foundation Pamphlets*, 1924, VII, No. 10, 570; N. Sousa, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

through an alliance with Germany and Austro-Hungary which is destined to safeguard the national prestige and honour»<sup>1</sup>.

#### THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE END OF AN ILLUSION

The Turks entered the War on several fronts at once. The war equipment was supplied by the Germans, the manpower on the «eastern front» by the Turks. In the first two years of the War there was mutual accord and significant victories. But it did not take long for the Turks to understand that the War plans were tailored to fit the needs of Germany's war effort. Between the utopian schemes of the Young Turks to march to Turan, and kindle revolutions in every oppressed Islamic country (often these two schemes were intermingled which made it more confusing), and to satisfy the German needs by dispatching armies to God-forsaken places, the Ottoman armies began to melt away. Enver Paşa sent divisions (120,000) to Poland and Roumania in support of the German operations on the western front<sup>2</sup>. At the same time Turkish armies fought in Russia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Palestine. The battles of Dardanelles alone took a toll of a quarter-million Turkish men.

The utopian crusade to open the way to central Asia was broken on the icy outskirts of the Caucasus with a loss of 78,000 men. This operation was supported by the Germans because it pinned down a part of the Russian army in the East, and thus helped to relieve the Western front<sup>3</sup>.

The Germans wanted a «Canal (Suez) Operation» to halt the transportation of more men from the British colonies to the Western front. The Canal Operation had another aim. German General Baron Kress von Kressenstein (then a Lt. Colonel and a participant) writes that the operation was designed to sever Turco-British relations completely. The Germans were suspicious that the Turks would sign a separate peace treaty with the British and withdraw from the War<sup>4</sup>.

1. Liman von Sanders, *op. cit.*, Turkish ed., p. 148; Bayur, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 298-303; Avcioglu, *op. cit.*, pp. 940-945.

2. Larcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 114, 409 ff.; Avcioglu, *ibid.*, pp. 946-949.

3. Lieutenant General Baron Kress von Kressenstein, *Türklerle Beraber Süveyş Kanalına (To the Suez Canal With the Turks)*, tr. from German original by Cap. Mazhar B. Özalpsan, Ankara, General Staff Pub., 1943, *passim*.

4. One of the most remarkable organizations of the Young Turk regime was the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* or the Special Organization. Celal Bayar, a young Unionist and later Prime Minister and third President of the Republic gives an insider's description of the Special Organization (SO). According to Bayar, the SO was the crystallization of a revolutionary cadre that was created to cultivate revolution in the Islamic world. However,

Another Turkish army captured Baghdad. The forces of Ali İhsan Paşa entered Iran and fought battles with the British and Russian forces in the area. In cooperation with local nationalist organizations, guerilla groups from the «Special Organization» also operated in many countries of Asia and Africa<sup>1</sup>.

In the final analysis, the Turkish participation in the Great War was a

the SO was also utilized for many domestic purposes such as the intimidation of the minorities and the opponents of the Union and Progress. The Organization was composed of the most dynamic officers of the army, and the intellectuals of the Islamic countries. It was a center of political action and intellectual intercourse. But more than anything, it was a planning bureau of anti-colonial struggle.

The head of the SO was Süleyman Askeri Bey, one of the star officers of the Union and Progress. S. Askeri Bey was the master-brain behind the scheme of recapturing Western Thrace through guerilla warfare and instituting an independent Turkish State after the Balkan defeat. The majority of the SO members were well trained guerilla fighters, and leaders, as well as ardent nationalists. However, their nationalism was built on the supremacy of Turkey over the nations and nationalities of the Middle East. It is this factor that has led Unionist nationalism often to border on imperialism rather than accept the co-existence of nations under one banner as equals.

The Organization grew and became more experienced through domestic and international activities. WWI gave the SO a chance to expand its membership to the revolutionary nationalist leaders of other Muslim countries. At the beginning of the War the division of labor and zones of struggle were arranged among the SO officers and Muslim revolutionaries as follows: 1) Eşref Kuşçubaşı, Inspector General and the leader of revolutionary operations in Iraq and Iran. 2) Sami Bey, in charge of revolutionary activities in Turkestan and other parts of northeast Asia inhabited by Turkish and Muslim populations. 3) Activities in Egypt were left to Egyptian revolutionaries like Abdul Aziz Caviş, Dr. Ahmad Fuad, Ibrahim Ratip, Yusuf, Mustafa Sait and Ferit Beys. 4) Tunis operations were led by Sheikh Salih-es-Şerif, Ali Başhampa, Cemagi, and Sheikh Cafer Hasan. 5) India, the most strategic country for the Young Turks in terms of toppling British imperialism and opening the way to Turan, was represented in the SO by Indian Muslims like Muhammad Ali, Şevket Ali, Sheikh Mevlana, Mahmud Huseyin, Muderris Huseyin, Dr. Nasir, and Dr. Hadiyal. 6) Algeria was represented by the sons of Sheikh Abdul Kader, and other nationalists. 7) African Sahara and Libya were represented by the powerful Sanusis.

The grandiose scheme of initiating nationalist revolutions throughout the Islamic world against British and French imperialism did not evolve the way the Unionists had dreamed. But SO inspired revolts in Libya (led by the Sanusis), Sudan (led by Ali Dinar, Sultan of Darfur), British Somalia (led by Mollah Muhammad) became a threat to the Western powers as long as these operations could be sustained with little funds, supplies, and men. Other SO guerilla forces fought in Iran, Iraq, and went as far as Afghanistan.

The data presented above is obtained from four sources: 1) Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazım*, op. cit., IV, p. 1569 ff.; 2) Ş. S. Aydemir, *Enver Paşa*, op. cit., III, pp. 192, 538-539; 3) Avcıoğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi*, I, pp. 59-95, and *Rauf Orbay'ın Hatıraları, Yakın Tarihimiz*, I, p. 18 ff., quoted in Avcıoğlu.

1. Aydemir, *ibid.*, p. 36.

desperate effort of a bureaucratic nationalist cadre that hoped to save their country from partition and bondage. But their hopes were linked with new imperialistic dreams of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, and doomed to failure.

The endless and costly battles, the poor supply systems, and frequent epidemics rapidly depleted the economic and human resources of Anatolia. By the beginning of 1917, the Government began to draft even 17 year old children. In the absence of men, women started tending the fields and gardens. Hunger, even in rich agricultural sections of the country like Sivas, induced women to rise in rebellion<sup>1</sup>.

Finally in 1918, Mustafa Kemal Paşa, a respected Turkish General, raised his voice to protest the way the war was being conducted. He was ignored. Taking the responsibility on himself, he collected the survivors of the Ottoman armies in Aleppo and withdrew this force behind a safe line in the north (a line which later became part of the present Turkish border) and organized a line of defense. The enemy did not pass this line.

The Armistice of Mudros ended the hostilities with the Ottoman State, now reduced to the size of Anatolia, on October 30, 1918. The Union and Progress abolished itself in the last Party congress on the 19th of October and the leaders left the country «to return at a time when they can be judged objectively and in dignity».

The state of the country when the Armistice was signed was indeed pitiful. Anatolian mountains were full of armed deserters (300,000) who often preyed on villages<sup>2</sup>. Villages and fields were left desolate, unattended. Not only were all of the men drafted, but most of whatever was raised by the women and the disabled had been seized. While the poorest strata were dying in the battlefields and paying the financial bill of the war, the rich were given exemptions from military service for 30 golden liras by the government, which was suffering under grave financial crises.

The almost universal misery of the countryside, the obviously discriminatory policies, and increasing corruption in government services toward the end of the war, further widened the already existing hiatus between the people and their government.

It was these poverty-ridden, tired, reluctant, suspicious and authority-hating people that the nationalists organizing under Mustafa Kemal Paşa would attempt to mobilize in the desperate struggle for national liberation.

1. Larcher, *op. cit.*, p. 602; Avcioglu, *loc. cit.*, p. 929.

2. H. Bayur, *op. cit.*, III, p. 241; Avcioglu, *ibid.*, p. 926.