

Carl Max Kortepeter

Did the Turks Attain Enlightenment Through Defeat in Warfare?

It is of course a truism to state that the leaders of the Ottoman Empire reacted very unevenly to the intellectual implications of the “Enlightenment” or the “Age of Reason”, the terms applied to that incredible efflorescence of new ideas generated in especially France and England during the eighteenth century. But without querying what reactions the Ottomans experienced when confronted with intellectual and physical challenges to its own unique cultural foundations, one cannot discover the extremely interesting artifices a different culture may devise to maintain its lifestyle, regardless of its effectiveness.

In order to deal in this paper with this basic comparison of two dynamic and ever changing cultural areas, one is forced to deal with each “area” in a rather conventional manner. Thus, concerning Western Europe, we are familiar with the conventional pattern taught in every college. The Reformation thinkers, Lutherans, Calvinists and others, provided a dissident Christian ideology which served to divide the West spiritually and politically. This Reformist ideology also gave a strong impetus to capitalist enterprise which largely lay in the hands of Jews and the growing middle class or bourgeoisie. Thus imperceptibly, at first, there developed, in the 17th and 18th centuries, a shift in wealth, based on capitalism, from the landed nobility and the high clergy to the middle class. In the so-called Age of the Great Kings, the 17th century, one observes a kind of rear guard action by the Stuarts of England, the Bourbons of France, notably Louis XIV, and the Habsburgs of the Empire to re-assert the concept of the “Divine Right of Kings”. The Stuarts tried to re-order the course of English history by re-instituting Catholicism and elevating the nobility but by the end of the century, parliament had become the dominant force in which the gentry and the middle class shared the power. In France, Louis XIV, frightened by the Fronde early in his reign when both the nobility and the bourgeoisie colluded against the

Crown, broke the provincial power of the nobility by concentrating them at Versailles and favoring the bourgeoisie for the high offices in his realm, thus inadvertently much strengthening their political power and ambitions. But the French nobility played one final card in the 18th century by resuming its control of the high state offices and the top posts in the army and navy. At the same time, they polarized further the rivalry between the nobility and the bourgeoisie by blocking the process by which affluent members of the bourgeoisie could virtually buy themselves a title of nobility. Meanwhile the peasantry received little relief from the exactions of the feudal system. Thus, apart from the writings of the *philosophes*, which provided the ideological underpinnings for the destruction of "Divine Right" and Biblically-based rationales for the ancient regime's power bases, the nobility undermined its own position by its own reactionary behavior. By alienating both the middle class and the peasantry and monopolizing the power of the state, the nobility produced an impasse which was resolved by the French Revolution.

Thus, the intellectual signposts of the Enlightenment were recognized as:

- a) the re-structuring of education in the direction of the social sciences and practical arts and away from purely religious or moral instruction; and to break the monopoly on education of the Church by introducing a compendium of popular knowledge, the *Encyclopedie*¹, common schools and Bible schools;
- b) the distrust of government, but particularly autocratic governments run by "divine right" kings and their supporters among the hereditary nobility and high clergy;
- c) the belief among the middle class that societal underpinnings did not depend on "divine law" but "natural law" which could be understood by rational study and discourse;
- d) the belief among many of the *philosophes* or 18th century intellectuals that the parliamentary system, modeled on England, would best approximate a liberal institution for protecting the newly-voiced rights of "life, liberty and property";
- e) the belief of the economic theorists, the Physiocrats and

1. Cf. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, New York 1979, pp. 254-302.

later Adam Smith, that if one is permitted freely to take part in economic activity (*laissez faire*) then one would work for the general good of society;

f) and also a number of sub-systems meant to re-enforce this new outlook:

i. a belief in progress, that the world was always evolving towards better systems;

ii. journalism and a new realistic literature, informing the “new men” concerning current affairs, the foibles of times past or the shortcomings of human nature;

iii. the belief in the “noble savage;” that humble or primitive people are to be emulated or studied because of their long-suffering but pure existence and their continuity with “Volk” traditions of a people;

iv. the necessity of a country maintaining a loyal, professional army to protect the new freedoms².

The problem with the comparison of social systems is that there is no “package deal”. In other words, the thinkers and doers of the 18th century were not fully aware of the directions their thoughts and actions would take; thus, one would expect a time-lag in reporting and putting into practice such major societal changes. Ottoman leaders were not waiting with baited breath for the next change coming to Istanbul from Paris, because their thoughts were elsewhere. While Europeans were thinking of undermining or overthrowing the ancient regime, the Ottomans were beginning to question how the “good old” system might be patched up.

At the end of the 17th century the Ottomans had come up abruptly against the new weapons and professionalized armies of Europe at a time when the discipline and professionalism of their own Janissary Corps and of the Sipahi provincial levies had fallen into disarray. Only the troop loyalties to Islam and to the House of Osman and the re-ordering of priorities in the Austro-Hungarian state saved the Empire from being over-

2. For general positions on the philosophes see Robert Anchor, *The Enlightenment Tradition*, New York 1967, *passim*.

run by Prince Eugene of Savoy and his Austrian forces³. As we are aware, the professionalization of the Ottoman army could not even begin until the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826.

The Treaty of Carlowitz in 1699 forced the Ottomans out of most of Hungary and the Treaty of Passarowitz of 1718 confirmed Austrian control of Belgrade and of the Hungarian Province of Temesvar. More importantly, it announced to Europe that the Ottomans no longer were invincible, and it also constituted a wake-up call in Istanbul that the old imperial formulas needed adjustment. But if one is not bleeding on the frontiers, one tends to carry-on as usual. The one difference externally was that France, an old ally, realized, even before the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, that the weakening of the Ottoman Empire would gravely hurt European and especially French interests. Hence French assistance to reform the Ottoman army loomed large in the 18th century at the same time as Russia's increasing threat to the Ottomans forced them to turn westward for assistance⁴.

The Tulip Era. A most unusual reaction to the rigors of almost constant warfare took place in Constantinople between 1719 and 1730. Historians have called this the Tulip Era because the Ottoman elite paid so much attention to nurturing the gardens of their Bosphorus villas at this time with fancy tulips. Enver Ziya Karal has probably rightly observed that there developed at the time an alternate understanding of how one might live apart from religious norms and dogmas, if one had wealth and influence. This era was also marked by close contacts between the ambassadorial entourages of European states and the Ottoman dignitaries. Karal quotes the famous couplet of the leading poet of the era, Nedim:

“Gulelim, oynıyalım; kam alalım dünyadan”

(Let us laugh, play and take all we can from the world)

3. Cf., among other sources, *Memoirs of Prince Eugene of Savoy*, tr. by Wm. Mudford, London 1811. Prince Eugene served under the Duke of Lorraine, but was promoted to field marshal in 1692 and commander-in-chief of the Austrian forces in Hungary in 1697. His greatest victory came in 1717 when his troops took the, to then, impregnable fortress of Belgrade.

4. The study by Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Montreal 1964, deals most lucidly with Ottoman preoccupations in the 18th century. Cf. here, pp. 24-25.

It would be a mistake, however, to associate this new tendency with the Enlightenment. The latter intellectual movement was not to reveal its full, secular, anti-religious aspect until the French Revolution of 1789.

What Karal and later, Niyazi Berkes imply, however, is that there was a kind of underground movement in the direction of western reforms in the military dating from the early 18th century. To gain a clearcut notion of the reformers, Berkes spends a good deal of time analysing the writings of Yirmi Sekiz Chelebi, his son, Said Mehmed, and Ibrahim Muteferrika. Chelebi Mehmed, together with his mature son, was sent by the Grand Vezir, Ibrahim Pasha, to Paris, in 1720 on a special embassy to "visit the fortresses, factories, and the works of French civilization generally and report on those which might be applicable (to the Empire)". Chelebi Mehmed's report was one of the most influential in the 18th century in charting the type of reform needed for the Empire to benefit from the West. Moreover, his son, together with Ibrahim Muteferrika, a renegade from Hungary, started the first Ottoman printing press in 1728⁵.

In spite of the reactionary Patrona Halil rebellion of 1730 involving Janissaries, Ulema, street ruffians and the *Hattat* class of calligraphers and copiers, who felt threatened by the printing press, the realities of warfare kept alive the imperative need for reforms in the armed forces. Karal makes the interesting point that the top echelons of government, including the Sultans, continued to push for western-type military schools, weapons and drill. He makes a case for a direct line of reform in the persons of the sultans: Mahmud I (1730-1754) who employed the services of the French officer, Count de Bonneval, during and after the War with Russia and Austria, 1736-1739; Mustafa III (1757-1774), son of Sultan Ahmed III, who put the expertise of the Franco-Hungarian officer, Baron de Tott, to good service just prior to the long Russian War, 1768-1774, and finally, Mustafa's son, Selim III (1789-1807), who attempted a far-reaching reform of the military at a time when Napoleon Bonaparte was on the point of invading Egypt⁶.

5. E. Z. Karal, *Osmanli Tarihi V, Nizam-i Cedit ve Tanzimat Devirleri (1789-1856)*, Istanbul, pp. 55-60; Berkes, *Secularism*, pp. 30-41.

6. Karal, *Osmanli Tarihi V*, pp. 57-59. The French ambassador, Vergennes, notes that the Ottoman populous were fond of the sons of Ahmed III, but they did not like the weakness of Mahmud I or Othman III, see Marsangy, *Chevalier de Vergennes II*, p. 41.

The reports of General Mannstein of the Russian campaign into the Crimea in 1735 and 1736 indicate how ineffectual both the Tatars of the Crimea and the Janissaries had become as fighting forces and yet how difficult it was for the Russians to project their power across the steppe into the Crimea: (quotation)

After the disturbances in Poland were quieted, Russia thought fit to begin a new war against the Turks. It was the frequent incursions which the Tartars had made into the Russian provinces, that served for a pretext to this rupture. The court of Petersburg had made reiterated complaints of them without receiving any satisfactory answer. In revenge of this, they entered into a war, which cost them immense sums, and a great number of lives, without gaining any real advantage...

(In 1735) Leontew, for this expedition, had with him twenty thousand regulars, the most part dragoons, and eight thousand Cossacks. With this army he entered the steps (sic.) the beginning of October. The first onset of this enterprise was auspicious enough. His parties found several hordes of the Nogay-Tartars, above four thousand of whom were massacred, and very few spared. They got from them a great quantity of cattle, and especially of sheep. But these advantages cost the Russians dear... The army was already in want of many necessities, and had yet ten marches to make before it could arrive at the lines of Crimea. Leontew, with the generals and head-officers of the regiments, held a council of war, in which it was resolved to return back... The regiments were in a very bad plight when they returned into the Ukraine, where they took up their winter-quarters towards the end of November. This expedition cost above nine thousand men and at least as many horses, without the Russians having obtained any advantage by it...

The arrangements which the Russians were making in the Ukraine, and the march, however unfortunate, of general Leontew, gave the Porte uneasiness. They had received another blow on the side of Persia, (Nadir Shah) and were afraid of having much the worst of it if they were attacked at

the same time by Russia...

(In 1736) The count Osterman (Andrei, foreign minister), by order of the Empress, wrote the Grand Vizier a long letter, which served at once for a manifesto and for a declaration of war... The Grand Vizier (Said Muhammad) received this letter of count Osterman just at the same time that he had advice of the siege being laid to Azoph (Azof), and that the Russian army was in full march into the Crimea. (end of quote)

The Russian army under General Munnich passed through the fortified town of Perekop at the entrance to the Crimea without any resistance from the Tatars or the Janissaries. They then proceeded to Gozlev, a leading merchant city, where they gained many supplies and thereafter turned to the sack of the Tatar Khan's capital at Bagchesaray: (quotation)

After the retreat of the enemy, Munich sent one fourth of the army into the town, to plunder it, while the rest remained under arms. All the inhabitants had quitted the town, and carried off the best of their effects into the mountains; notwithstanding which, there was still a considerable booty made.

Bachtschi-Serai signifies in English the palace of the garden and is the usual residence of the Khawn (sic.) of Crimea. It is situate (sic.) in a deep valley, and contains about two thousand houses, of which one third belongs to the Christian Greeks, who have a church there. Here is also a mission of Jesuits, but as they had been obliged to follow the Khawn their dwelling and library were as little spared as the other houses. The palace of the Khawn, which contained several spacious buildings, tolerably good and very neat, was, as well as the whole town, reduced to ashes. It had no fortification...

(Retreat) The marshal being arrived at the river Samara, took a review of all his regiments, and found those that had gone through the march with him into the Crimea terribly changed. All of them had been complete (a regt of foot was

1575 men; of dragoons, 1231) at the opening of the campaign, and now there was not one that could muster six hundred men under its colors, so that the one half of this army had perished in this one campaign: and what is the more remarkable, not two thousand men had been killed or taken by the enemy, including even the loss of the Cossacks. (That is, most died of disease, cholera, plague, bad food, etc.)⁷ (end of quote)

One may gain an idea of the temerity of the Ottoman forces from this eye-witness account. Moreover, the Ottomans had fully garrisoned Kaffa and also reportedly had stationed a fleet off the Crimean coast, but no attempt was made to defend the capital of its Tatar ally. It is true of course that the Ottomans were at the time under attack by Nadir Shah in the Caucasus and the Austrians in Bosnia, and it is for that reason that the Russians made a concerted attempt to defeat the Turks. Thanks to the intervention of the French and the Swedes, however, a peace was worked out between the Ottomans and the Austrians in 1739 which included the reversion of Belgrade to Ottoman control and of Azof to the Ottomans so long as the new fortifications, built by Austria, would be torn down and the walls of Azof razed⁸.

The Era Following the Treaty of Belgrad (1739-1774). France, which was beginning to feel the threat of Britain on the high seas and in her colonies in the New World and in India, had sought compensation for her merchants in expanding activities in the Levant. Berkes, in commenting on the difficult international position of the Ottomans before the shift in the aims of French and Austrian diplomacy, notes that the French were well repaid for their intervention. The Porte, even in a reforming era, gave up further rights of its own sovereignty by signing the new capitulation agreement with France in 1740. Henceforth French factories and trading facilities sprang up in every Levant port and the influence of

7. General Mannstein, *Memoirs of Russia, Historical, Political, and Military, from the Year 1727 to 1744*, London 1770, pp. 89-121.

8. These negotiations are most thoroughly covered in Jos. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman* 14, Paris 1839, pp. 428-470.

French Catholic propaganda spread⁹. This exaggerated capitulation of the Ottomans came about because of their poor understanding of Europe's pre-occupation with the War of Austrian Succession at the time.

Berkes gives a good account of Claude-Alexander, Comte de Bonneval (1675-1747). Bonneval is also mentioned in the Prince Eugene *Memoir* concerning his service with Austria, but as he was quarrelsome and a seer beyond his time, especially regarding the rising threat of Russia, he was expelled from French service and then the Austrian service and ended up in the Ottoman Empire in 1729 where he became a Muslim and received the rank of Pasha or General in short order. He urged thorough training and proper pay for troops, in the European style, and opened a military engineering school in Uskudar in 1734. Considerable evidence also points to his setting up a school for mortar technicians, hence he was known in Turkish as Humbaraci Ahmet Pasha. Quite obviously these reforms had little effect on the Ottoman war effort between 1736 and 1739¹⁰.

The real test of whether or not the Ottoman state would respond to the Age of Reason in the military field came in the relatively peaceful time between the Peace of Belgrade in 1739 and the Great War with Russia between 1768 and 1774. Two men arrived in Istanbul on the same vessel in 1755, the new French ambassador, the Chevalier de Vergennes, and a Hungarian agent of the French, Baron de Tott. The former, through official despatches or correspondence, and the latter, through his weighty *Memoir*, add a great deal to our knowledge of the inner workings of the Empire, but also of the prejudices and biases of Europeans viewing the Ottoman scene¹¹. De Tott was secretly in French pay to survey the French trading posts in the Levant and to measure the importance of Hungarian emigres in Ottoman relations with Austria-Hungary, but as a military expert, he was commissioned by the Ottomans to improve the military and in particular, the artillery service.

9. Berkes, *Secularism*, p. 55.

10. Berkes, *Secularism*, p. 49; Cf. also "Ahmed Pasha, Bonneval", *E.I.*² I, 291-292 (Bowen).

11. Louis Bonneville de Marsangy, *Le Chevalier de Vergennes, Son Ambassade à Constantinople*, 2 vols, Paris 1894, the definitive biography with extensive quotes from the original despatches; and de Tott, *Memoirs de Baron de Tott sur les Turcs et les Tartares*, 3 parts, Amsterdam 1785.

Thus, his account gives important information of military developments. At the same time, it is important to point out that for whatever reason, de Tott in his memoir takes a highly critical attitude towards the Turks. Berkes looks upon this memoir as typical of *philosophe* writing about the Ottoman Empire after the great defeat of the Ottoman Empire by Russia in 1774. He points out that the French became very pro-Russian because the Russians exhibited a grand receptivity to the ideas of the Enlightenment—at least this was the projected image of Catherine the Great—hence many French intellectuals, thereafter, looked upon the Ottomans as the prime example of backwardness and fanaticism, and by extension deserved their fate¹².

There is merit in the Berkes observations, but there is also a good deal of interesting material locked up in these two eye-witness accounts. One wonders if the Turks actually reneged on some promise, such as a high wage, that caused de Tott to take such a negative attitude. One must also factor in that de Tott was most likely Catholic and it had been the Protestant Hungarians who always assisted the Ottomans against the Austrian Habsburgs.

These observations and activities took place in the Sultanate of Mustafa III (1757-1774), the eldest son of Sultan Ahmed III (1703-1730), who had supported earlier reforms during the Lale Devri or Tulip Era. It is important at this point to remind ourselves that the Ottoman Empire, though a wounded lion, still had considerable bite and was therefore courted by such powers as France, Austria and Poland to gain their assistance against other European enemies. One such example of Ottoman “usefulness” is provided by the Chevalier de Vergennes in 1757 during the Seven Years War (1756-1763):

Louis XV avait plus que jamais besoin d'empêcher l'empire ottoman de se mêler activement des affaires de l'Europe et surtout de prendre part aux hostilités engagées en Allemagne. Allié qu'il était, à l'heure actuelle, des deux impératrices dont les troupes étaient aux prises avec les armées prussiennes secondées par l'Angleterre, il lui fallait à tout prix éviter qu'une démonstration militaire des Turcs, du côté des

12. Berkes, *Secularism*, pp. 65-67.

frontieres hongroises ou russes, vint obliger Marie-Therèse ou la Czarine à se retourner pour faire face à ce nouvel ennemi.

But in assessing such a request the Chevalier de Vergennes makes a subtle appraisal of the sad state of affairs in which the Empire found itself but also indicates the dangers of arousing such a force. One must not forget that the Ottomans came out so well in this war with Russia and Austria because the Ottoman troops in the Balkans also performed well against these enemies but state finances were always in arrears:

Si Mustapha se decidait à se prononcer pour la guerre, l'Empire, quant à ses ressources materielles, était en état de l'entreprendre et de la continuer longtemps... Au surplus, lorsqu'une guerre éclatait en Turquie, ce n'était pas le trésor de l'Etat, celui appele le *miri*, qui en supportait les depenses: il en eut été incapable. Déjà insuffisant en temps de paix pour assurer les services publics, ses revenus se trouvaient presque constamment escomptes plus d'un an par avance. En cas de guerre, on faisait appel au trésor du prince, c'est-à-dire aux richesses immenses que renfermait le serail, et communement évaluées à plus de 100 millions d'écus.

A ce moment, les arsenaux se trouvaient remplis d'artillerie et de munitions. La marine, par exemple, laissait à desier, ne comtant guere plus de vingt-deux vaisseaux de ligne et quelques mauvaises frégates.

Tout le monde étant soldat, et la population, principalement dans les provinces de la Turquie d'Europe, étant très dense en fort peu de temps une armée nombreuse pouvait être formée; ramassis d'hommes, il est vrai, sans cohesion, sans éducation militaire, sans expérience des armes... et surtout sans la moindre discipline, animés, toutefois, d'un besoin immodere d'agir, et n'étant que trop enclins à la lutte et au pillage.

De tels éléments sont dangereux partout; ils le deviennent d'avantage encore chez un peuple pour qui la guerre n'est pas une science de tactique comme pour les nations chrétiennes, mais un ensemble de hasards et un suite d'aventures, dont on n'attend le succes que de l'abondance des moyens, de la supe-

riorité du nombre et de la force du sabre. Aussi vit-on, dans les collisions antérieures, les hommes les moins expérimentés, se mettant résolument à la tête de ces hordes disparates, remporter de véritables victoires¹³.

From Vergennes, one gains other ideas of how the Porte operated. For example, the dragoman informed him that his majesty would receive him in audience before all other envoys, but he expected the king of France to present him with 30 slaves. Eventually the slaves arrived, in terrible condition, in 1758 at a time when the city was inundated with an epidemic of plague, and rather than deal with their rehabilitation, the Sultan had them set free. Meanwhile Vergennes complains that the “gifts” required by the court of a new ambassador were climbing to the 10,000 to 15,000 as per level¹⁴. Vergennes also points out the sudden cruelty of which Sultan Mustapha was capable. Upon his accession he not only continued the sumptuary laws regarding dress codes for non-Muslims, he also went forth at night, as had his predecessor, in a disguise. On one such excursion he felt that a certain Jew was not modestly enough dressed and had him strangled on the spot. In spite of the remonstrances of the vezirs against such arbitrary actions (they subsequently lost their posts), the Sultan once again discovered an Armenian wearing “illegal” shoes and had him executed¹⁵.

The visit in 1764 to the Ottoman court of a Neapolitan physician, Nicolas de Caro, gave the Sultan a chance to enquire about Frederick of Prussia, whom the Sultan greatly admired for the survival of his small principality when attacked by much larger powers. Sultan Mustapha was particularly flattered to receive a letter from Frederick. But when discussing the King of Prussia with Vergennes, he seemed to dismiss him adding: “Am I not a relative of the King of France?”. This query reverts back to the story, widely believed in Ottoman ruling circles, that a French princess had been placed in the harem of Sultan Selim I and that all succeeding Ottoman sultans were descended from this French princess. The Sultan also confided in the doctor saying that he considered the

13. Bonneville de Marsangy, *Chevalier de Vergennes II*, pp. 31-34.

14. *Ibid*.

15. *Vergennes*, II, pp. 52-53.

court of the Queen Empress of Austria (Maria Theresa) ... “like a cadaver vegetating thanks only to the assistance of France”.

And to this support the Sultan attributed ... “the pride this same court exhibits by holding onto territory which had belonged to his (the Sultan’s) ancestors”. The Sultan does not hesitate also to express his hostility towards France because she protects the corsairs of Malta and Monaco. Finally Vergennes discusses the interest of the Sultan in medicine and astronomy which led to the French providing him with a wax skeleton of a nine year old child complete with all the organs muscles and so forth.

Habitué aux lenteurs, aux dissimulations orientales, il (Vergennes) estime que la partie (le jeu) peut toujours être reprise avec un prince dont le caprice est la seule règle, et des ministres sans principes, depourvus d’ailleurs de toute initiative, dont les yeux sont uniquement fixés sur le moindre mouvement du maître et le cœur flotte indecis entre la cupidité et la crainte de perdre leurs places, leurs richesses, et même leur tête¹⁶.

While Vergennes emphasizes the indecisiveness of the Sultan and his entourage, he also imparts the feeling that gradually changes are taking place. It is worthy of note that Sultan Mustafa follows events in Europe during the Seven Years War and when plague strikes his capital in 1757, he takes decisive action in gaining new information from Europe regarding medical advances. Vergennes is more detached in his remarks about the Ottoman court. Not so Baron de Tott. After he left the Empire, he wrote his *Memoir* without any concern for what the Turks might think.

In his introduction, the Baron indicates his utter vexation over what he considers the naive observations and remarks about the Turks of Lady Montagu, who wrote a memoir when her husband served as British ambassador at the turn of the 18th century¹⁷. He wonders what is the origin of this fever that exalts the Turks, always discounting anything that is not Turkish which results in praising their pride and their ignorance. De

16. Vergennes, II, pp. 85-89.

17. Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu, *Letters on Turkey*, London 1763.

Tott goes on to emphasize the ignorance in comparison to what the ancients had developed:

C'est aussi dans le berceau des arts, dans la patrie de Périclès, d'Euclide et d'Homère, que les sciences n'obtiennent aujourd'hui que le sourire du mépris.

It irks de Tott that westerners tend to paint a rosy picture of the Turks:

...the sensual pleasures of the orientals, the intoxication of happiness which they profess loudly in the midst of several women, the beauty of those who occupy imaginary palaces, the galant intrigues, the courage of the Turks, the nobleness of their actions, their generosity, what errors of judgement accumulate! Even their sense of justice has been cited as a model ... But Montesquieu ... will have perceived that an ignorant nation can have no happiness because its ignorance holds to a principle that always destroys and never edifies¹⁸.

In an enlightened nation, all procure riches; one finds among an ignorant population only burdens ... finding nothing to acquire, one limits one's self to conserving with care. (but) in the class of opulent men, the happy ones are rare because it is easier to abuse than to use... one maintains sobriety to preserve good health.

If these reflections present themselves to one who can and wishes to reflect, how is it that two centuries of commerce between Europe and the Turks have produced only false notions? Here you have some of the reflections which one has worked out in the would be letter of Milady Montagu¹⁹.

De Tott holds that one can only gain false notions from a voyage unless one has mastered the local language. The Baron notes that he has lived among the Turks for 23 years and has learned the language; thus, he is properly prepared to comment on the Turks. Berkes challenges his knowledge indicating many errors in transcriptions and meanings²⁰.

18. De Tott, I, x-xvii.

19. Ibid., xv-xxii.

20. Ibid, xxiv; Berkes, *Secularism*. Cf. p. 68, fn. 20.

After attacking the notions of Lady Montagu, de Tott next discusses the evils of the harem institution of the sultans. Here paraphrasing his observations, I indicate how de Tott challenges the humanity of confining 40 females under guard in the palace. Meanwhile the young men serving the system must attach themselves to a master, but then are forced to live solely among men. The women live with each other, devoid of education and of ambition, ... sitting in steam bathes to keep their beauty ... Lady Worley describes them as voluptuous dancers, but de Tott claims they were trained by their slave masters to bring a better price ... Often the sultan must enter the harem to settle the quarreling and the jealousy (de Tott's wife visited the harem). And the chances for liaisons come when the ladies go shopping, visiting other harems and so forth, but it is the duty of the Bostancis to act as a kind of police force, guarding the ladies and also enquiring into all manner of misdemeanors around the Porte. In de Tott's words: "l'indécence a plus de succes"²¹.

Fortunately de Tott is not always trying to put someone down. There are also some amusing passages. For example, he mentioned that he arrived in Istanbul on the same ship as did Vergennes, the 21st of May, 1755. His father, "an old Turkish hand", told the cabin boy to give the port master a bottle of brandy, but the cabin boy gave him the eau de lavande by mistake. The commander of the port caravelle, not knowing the difference, waved to the bridge as he downed the lavender²².

In view of de Tott's protestations that he was an expert in the Turkish language, it is a bit surprising to read that his instructor was a Persian. Some Turkish dignitaries attended an evening party at one of the embassies and the Turks were quite surprised when the ladies and gentlemen arose to do the minuet. De Tott had great difficulty convincing the Turks that the ambassadors were not entertainers but enjoying themselves. Moreover the Turks indicated their shock when de Tott's wife moved freely through the crowd unescorted and talked to various men²³.

Shortly after Vergennes and de Tott arrived in Istanbul, the city suffered a great fire. What was shocking for the newcomers was the amount

21. De Tott, I, pp. 25, 30-37.

22. Ibid., p. 2.

23. Ibid., pp. 8-11.

of looting which could only be stopped by the highest officials who had to follow the fire's trail. In fact, de Tott noticed that looting had become such a problem that, within the bazaars and the *bezestens*, built of stone and brick, housed the most valuable treasures²⁴.

During the first two years of de Tott's sojourn Sultan Osman III's brief sultanate was coming to a close. The Ulema had grown quite bold at this time yet they were protected from execution or confiscation, but this immunity was rescinded by the Sultan. Corresponding to the accession of Mustafa III in 1757, the tough-minded Raghip Pasha received the sultan's seal appointing him Grand Vezir. De Tott supplies some rather colorful details of Raghip Pasha who was subsequently married to the Sultan's daughter. Again paraphrasing the Baron: Ragip joined with a very seductive spirit much force of character. Never had a vezir possessed more than he of the talents of his office; he knew how to corrupt with address and to intimidate the most audacious; always perfidious, always wicked, but always agile and master of himself, he considered men as little of consequence and their lives as nothing. He served as governor of Egypt before being called to the vezirate. When he was *Mektupci* or chief scribe in the grand vezir's office, according to de Tott, he helped negotiate the treaty of Belgrade. The various tactics which this minister had successively used included leaving to no person the hope of his being necessary, thus he found everyone disposed to serve his will; and one remarked that the habit of authority caused him to express it in a strangely offhand manner. Thus, while he was talking amiably to the French ambassador, he had nine persons decapitated by a simple gesture across his throat. In short Ragip used execution freely to shore up the despotism²⁵. One should not of course confuse this type of autocracy with the "enlightened despotism" of the *philosophes*.

On one occasion noted by de Tott, Raghip Pasha suffered a great humiliation at the hands of a mob of Istanbul women. It was customary for the Sultan to hold a monopoly of the Empire's grain and to store it in state granaries for sales to Istanbul bakers. The monopoly was instituted to avoid profiteering by merchants who would sell the grain abroad at a high price but leave the capital without supplies. De Tott described

24. De Tott, I, pp. 12-17.

25. Ibid., pp. 22-25.

how 70 shiploads sank in the Black Sea during a storm owing to the cupidity of the court. Evidently the vessels had sailed to the entrance of the Bosphorus but because no one had provided oil for the lighthouses, the vessels could not find their way. When it became widely known in Istanbul that there were grain shortages, the women of the city, in spite of the frightening reputation of Raghip Pasha, marched on the rice granaries and forced the Grand Vezir to distribute the reserves. De Tott rationalizes that it was these food shortages that lowered the resistance to disease of the population and brought on the plague. He further surmises that when an individual died—and some 1000 burials were taking place daily—that the disease was being spread through the distribution of the clothing of the deceased. While the Turks held public prayer and seemed resigned to their fate, the Europeans took to the countryside or to the islands to wait until winter because they could conduct their affairs outside the city. Obviously the concept of contagion was spreading²⁶.

De Tott was not averse to hobnobbing with influential Ulema. While residing outside the city in Keffeli Koy near Buyukdere, he became a close acquaintance and drinking companion with Murad Mollah of the Damatzade family, a family who by tradition were awarded high religious posts. As De Tott noted, the Efendi was born into opulence as the son of a Mufti and was destined to rise to that post²⁷.

While de Tott was on a tour of inspection of the Crimean Khanate and its dependencies in 1768, he learned that the Sultan had declared war on Russia. He hastened back to the capital in time to see the shocking and disorderly activities by which the Ottoman government raised troops for the war. After the declaration of war, a grand parade is announced. First in the procession come the craft guilds on floats depicting their various skills, then the Standard of the Prophet which becomes the focal point around which the empire rallies for war. Only the highest dignitaries may touch the sacred green flag and they rally and march with it. Moreover, no one but Muslims may view the flag. A Christian or Jew may lose his life if he but takes a glance. Following the banner assembles all the town rabble and volunteers joining the great force of inexperienced warriors. These will be led by the Grand Vezir and his entourage,

26. De Tott, I, pp. 25-30.

27. De Tott, pp. 31-34.

all of whom must take to the field. De Tott notes, in an aside, that the Sultan hesitated to give prominence to the Janissary Corps because they had overthrown his father, Sultan Ahmed III. De Tott is soon in close contact with the Sultan through the Sultan's European doctor. De Tott enjoyed a favored position with Sultan Mustafa because de Tott's father had been one of the followers of the Hungarian leader, Prince Rakoczy, who had taken refuge in the Ottoman Empire and later in France after their defeat by Austria earlier in the century. But de Tott is not blind to the danger of amassing a huge, undisciplined army:

son (of the Grand Vezir) armée, grossie journellement par l'affluence des Musulmans fanatiques, devint bientôt l'ennemi le plus dangereux de l'Empire.

This ill-conceived army is soon defeated in the field, but the folly of fighting the disciplined troops and artillery of General Suvarov with rabble and incompetent officers is apparent:

A l'ignorance orgueilleuse des Generaux se joignoit l'inepte presumption des subalterns; et les Turcs qui trainoient après eux un grand train d'artillerie, mais dont chaque pièce étoit mal montée, & tout aussi mal servie, foudroyés dans toutes les occasions par le canon de leurs ennemis, ne se vengeoient de leurs desastres qu'en accusant les Russes de mauvaise foi²⁸.

Having thus pointed out the great weakness of the army, de Tott proceeds to reveal the sad state of the navy as it had to face the Russian fleet at Cheshme on the coast of Asia Minor. The fleet, commanded by the British Admiral Elphinstone and Alexis Orloff, had sailed around Europe from the Baltic Sea, terrorized Ottoman shores and fomented rebellion in Egypt, Syria and Greece. The basic picture was the same: Ottoman officers and men basically had no training and had never gone into battle with the newly-built frigates.

Accoutumés jusqu'à lors à vexer annuellement l'Archipel avec une petite escadre, les Officiers de mer n'avoient acquis aucun principe militaire, aucune vue, aucun art, aucune expérience de ce genre.

28. De Tott, II, pp. 222-229.

After the Ottoman admiral's flagship was set fire by the Russians, the Turkish fleet of thirty frigates, which had anchored in Cheshme harbor, was abandoned and some sailors and officers set up cannon on the two promontories protecting the harbor expecting to repel any Russian attack. The Russians simply sent in two small caravelles and set fire to the whole fleet. And as de Tott reported, the port was turned into a volcano²⁹. With the destruction of the fleet, the Russians now could force their way through the Dardanelles, interdict the vessels supplying the capital with food, sack the city and force the capitulation of the Sultan. The gravity of the situation threw the capital into turmoil. It is at this point that de Tott was called in by the Sultan to take charge of the Straits defenses and later to improve the artillery corps³⁰.

De Tott noticed a marked change in attitude toward him after the fleet was destroyed in 1770 at Cheshme. The ministers of state no longer reacted with jealousy when the Sultan showed confidence in de Tott and gave him the new responsibility of setting up a corps of rapid-fire artillerymen (*Suratchis*) after he had fortified the Dardanelles. The Sultan had received reports about the effectiveness of Russian artillery and of the rapidity of their firing from de Tott and others. The Sultan was very adamant in protecting de Tott from the "loi fanatique ou l'usage absurde qui ne permet pas aux vrais Croyans d'accepter les services d'un Chrétien"³¹.

Nevertheless, there were those who used the name of the Sultan to convince de Tott to put on the uniform of an interpreter under the pretext that the ordinary people would not well receive a European involved in military affairs an activity which had, until then, been reserved to Muslims. But de Tott was persuaded that neither the Sultan had expressed this ridiculous preference nor the people after their having seen him in command of the Dardanelles.

The Sultan wished to employ me, and wished it very much, and his ministers dreaded his impatience and the opinion he had of their incapacity. ... If this fear (of de Tott's influence on the Sultan) justified the desire they had of getting rid of me, it

29. De Tott, II, pp. 239-245.

30. Ibid.

31. De Tott, III, pp. 5-6.

could offer (me) only an eventual danger, for this fear had always to give way to a more pressing danger, that of the discontent of their master: this was also supplied by this weapon which he depended on me to turn against them.

Overcoming the objections the ministers made concerning his attire, de Tott was escorted to the armory, but faced another obstacle. A number of the workers and supervisors, who worked on forges to prepare cannon and gun mounts, had died of the plague; thus, de Tott had to direct the workers himself. He also had to overcome another obstacle, the preparation of ramrods for his cannon. As he noted, the Jews always took on tasks no one else wanted to do, and he discovered that they could make ramrods for him with the brush part of the rod supplied with tough pig bristles.

Little did de Tott realize that the Turkish ministers would try to interrupt his teaching of rapid fire gunnery by challenging his use of ramrods with pig bristle brushes. (The brushes of course kept the barrels of the cannon clean by loosening the carbon and also by ramming in powder and shot). This entire incident illustrates quite well the difficulty anyone had in reforming the Ottoman military³².

The Sultan had expressed his interest in attending the instruction sessions which de Tott was giving to 50 cannoneers. Thus a day was selected and the Grand Vezir had tents set up in Kagithane, the location of the school. Instead of the Sultan, however, de Tott learned that several ministers would view his demonstration. As de Tott proceeded to the field on the appointed morning, he was greeted by a salvo of canon, prepared by the chief gunner. But as de Tott notes, this salvo, ostensibly showing him respect, was probably designed to mask the “petite trahison” which he had prepared against his master, but of which de Tott had a premonition. He was particularly suspicious when the “Grand Tresorier” (in Turkish, the *Defterdar*) entered the field. De Tott advanced to meet him and was immediately asked: “Where are the cannon which you have set up?”

“Over there”, I said, “in the middle of that crowd surrounding them”. (Some ten thousand people had come out of the city to

32. Ibid., pp. 7-9.

watch this new method of firing cannon).

"What is that there", asked the Defterdar, pointing to the ramrods equipped with brushes...

I feigned not to perceive the object of his question. "That's a ramrod", I replied.

Right away he replied, "But I ask you what is around it?"

The Baron: "That's a brush".

Treasurer: "That's not what I asked you. It seems that you have forgotten Turkish; but I shall explain myself more clearly: Of what is this brush composed?"

The Baron: "I am not able to understand you; but it seems to me that you need only your eyes to see that this is bristle".

Treasurer: "This is also what I perceive very distinctly; but I would like to know what sort of bristle?"

The Baron: "Oh! since you wish that I name it, it is *pig bristle*, the only one proper for this purpose".

Treasurer: "Precisely, this is what we can expect of you".

The Baron: "It will be necessary for you to support it; and for you to authorize it, the Fetva of the Mufti is necessary, and I charge you to obtain it".

"At this point the crowd which surrounded us had already murmured loudly, 'God preserve us'. The Treasurer grew pale, and taking me by the arm, said: "Please", in a trembling voice, "don't mention the name of the Mufti. Do you want us torn to pieces?"

De Tott, annoyed by the affrontery of the Defterdar, spoke out in a loud voice: "To what purpose is all this ridiculous uproar about pig bristles when all of your mosques are painted with them?"

Again the fanatics began to murmur, but De Tott climbed up on a gun carriage and shouted in Turkish: "Silence!". Then taking advantage of the momentary silence, called out from the crowd an old painter and asked him, "Are you a good Muslim?". When the painter confirmed this, de Tott had him agree that good Muslims are honest. He then commenced to question him before the crowd: The Baron: "Have you painted the interior of some mosques?"

The Painter: "Several, in fact, a great number".

The Baron: "What sort of tools do you use?". The Painter: "Several colors".

The Baron: "Remember, you are a Muslim and that you should do justice to the truth. Why are you shuffling around? Color is not a utensil, that is an item you put on; but you use brushes; What are they made of?"

The Painter: "They are made of white bristles. We buy them already made, we don't make them".

The Baron: "You know however which animal's bristles, and you need to tell me this".

The Treasurer: "Yes, you ought to tell the truth, it is important to know that".

The Painter: (to the Treasurer in a loud voice) "In that case, excellency, I will tell you, all of our brushes are made of pig's bristle".

De Tott then has the painter admit that some of the bristles break off from the brush and are imbedded in the walls of the mosque yet do not interfere with Muslim worship. At this point, the Defterdar regained his composure, after fearing that he would meet a sudden death by the crowd, and now addressed everyone:

"Now my friends", he said, "Let us use this new invention for the health and the glory of the true faith"³³.

Paraphrasing de Tott, the scene which had just taken place with the Defterdar, and described to the Grand Vezir and to the other ministers upon their arrival, disposed them to cheer the agility of the cannoneers, whose speed reduced the firing time in the first attempt to five shots per minute. Several Turkish spectators offered their skills to fire the weapons, but everyone blamed the twisted ramrods and believed that in simplifying this instrument, one would add to the speed of firing. This popular observation had already reached the tent of the Grand Vezir, when I betook myself there. De Tott's troop of gunners followed him there. The Defterdar, always hastening to speak, spoke his mind trying to indicate that anyone could do what de Tott's gunners were doing. But when de Tott let the Defterdar try to fire the weapon, he could not even

33. De Tott, III, pp. 10-15.

ignite the powder.

When the news of de Tott's successes reached the Sultan, he immediately ordered his ministers to purchase 50 cannon and send them with the cannoneers to Varna to face the advancing Russian army. As de Tott noted: "L'esprit de cet ordre n'étoit pas douteux, mais on se contenta d'obeir à la lettre". Fifty four-pounder cannon, poorly made, were bought from England but without gun carriages. The fifty cannoneers were sent to Varna where they left the 50 cannon, covered with sand, on the shores of the Danube without any means of moving them. As de Tott in disgust noted: "Ce fût là tout le fruit de la ponctualité des Ministres du Grand-Seigneur"³⁴.

After the failure of this enterprise, the commanding general asked the Sultan to empower de Tott to teach his men how to build pontoon bridges. The Grand Vezir then told de Tott to take the funds he needed from the treasury, but de Tott, not wishing to manage the expenses, asked the Vezir to appoint "un homme de confiance" to manage the account. The Vezir only laughed and said, "I don't know any". And the other ministers agreed, noting what a sad state of affairs then existed. De Tott finally got the pontoons built out of copper, but the officer in charge of the pontoons, upon arriving in Varna, did not know what to do with them; thus, when they were put in place, they only blocked up the harbor of Varna³⁵.

Another problem the Turks faced was that they had no field artillery because their old fashioned cannon were too cumbersome to move about. Moreover, the existing foundries were unsuitable for making field artillery because it had to be forged out of bronze, and bronze, cast in furnaces designed for iron, would calcify by the action of the bellows and cool off at the bottom of the molds as a kind of paste. But when de Tott proposed to build a new foundry, he once again faced opposition, not just from the ministers of state but also from the traditional foundry workers. But de Tott, using as sources the *Memoirs of Saint Remi* and also articles in the grand *Encyclopedie*, set up a new foundry and successfully produced the much-needed brass cannon and gun carriages³⁶.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-20.

35. De Tott, III, pp. 21-33.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-39.

De Tott was now forced to turn his attention to mortars because the Russians were decimating the Ottoman cavalry by firing across the Danube. Once again de Tott took up the task without much help from the Vezirs. Finally the demonstration was staged for the Ok Meidan, but the 20,000 people who showed up kept getting into the firing range much to their hazard. Worthy of note was that Sultan Mustafa appeared with his young son, Selim, who would eventually become the reforming Sultan Selim III. The tests went off well, and de Tott was about to be honored with a coat of ermine, but, as the new French ambassador was also present at the demonstration, Ms. Saint Priest, who was not always supportive of de Tott's efforts, de Tott asked that he be given the robe of honor (*Hil'a*) in a private audience³⁷.

In passing, de Tott mentions how he and his military escort were attacked in the street one night. Upon investigation, he learned that there was a running battle between the Janissaries and Marines over a night club dancer from which the city was disrupted for three days. De Tott does not let these various disruptions deflect him from starting a major project, the setting up of a new artillery school. He called attention to the fact that some 40,000 cannoneers or *topchus* are enrolled in the regiments, but very few took up their duties except to line up for their pay. Moreover very few had any skills. Hence, de Tott, following the good results of his previous experiment, set up a *Suratchi* artillery school with the full support of the Sultan. In order to avoid difficulties over a uniform that might arouse the animosity of the religious fanatics, he adopted the native costume of the Albanians. The school, set up on the Kagithane grounds, began with 600 recruits toward the close of the disastrous war with Russia (1768-1774). The Russians had used the bayonet with such success that de Tott wanted them to be affixed to the rifles of the cadets. Again an outcry of the ultra-religious faction rose against the practice until the Sheykh ul-Islam personally blessed the bayonet. Another interesting detail is that de Tott had recruited a number of Tatars who had previously served in the Russian forces. These men made model cadets and were even able to fire their cannons at 15 times per minute, but de Tott discouraged this because accuracy was more important than speed. De Tott also notes that there was general knowledge among the

37. De Tott, III, pp. 40-45.

Janissaries that Peter the Great of Russia had destroyed the *streltsy* after forming new troops, hence, the Janissaries were always wary of any new troop formations³⁸.

De Tott, who had enjoyed so much favor in the Sultanate of Mustafa III, in 1774 had to deal with the new Sultan Abd ul-Hamid I, brother of Mustafa, who came to power during the final negotiations for peace. He had been confined to the *Kafes* or place of confinement for crown princes within the palace ever since his father's deposition in 1730. Thus, he made the rounds of Istanbul and was particularly thrilled by the affairs of the artillery school. De Tott meantime had been assigned to supervise the building of new fortresses at the Black Sea end of the Bosphorus and forging new cannon for the ramparts. Just before the peace was signed with Russia at Kuchuk Kaynarca in 1774, de Tott had sent off to the front the first contingent of the newly-trained artillerymen³⁹.

Struck by the ignorance of officers in the navy with regard to ordinary mathematics, Sultan Mustafa sponsored the establishment of an engineering school within the naval arsenal. Once again, de Tott was called in to give his advice, and the effort was continued by the new Sultan⁴⁰.

At this point, it is important to review the many activities in which Baron de Tott was involved during the reign of Sultan Mustafa III and thereafter⁴¹. For sure, without the detailed memoir of de Tott, it would be difficult to assess the gradual advancement of the Ottoman armed forces in the late 18th century. While there is no doubt that de Tott in his *Memoir* may have exaggerated his role, he provides so much authentic detail of technical matters that it would be a mistake to belittle his contribution. He had good entree with the Turks because he derived from a Hungarian family known to Istanbul society. Also the Turks recognized in the Hungarians a particular affinity and their former "colonials".

38. De Tott, III, pp. 49-57.

39. De Tott, *ibid.*, passim and p. 101.

40. De Tott, *ibid.*, pp. 80ff.

41. According to Turkish accounts, de Tott was born in France in 1730, completed his military education there by 1755 and was sent with the French ambassador to Istanbul shortly thereafter. He occupied himself with a number of lesser jobs until 1767 and then was fully involved with high level military matters as described above through his memoirs until he left the Empire for France in 1776. For an evaluation see Midhat Sertoglu and the Editorial Committee, *Mufasssal Osmanli Tarihi*, V, Istanbul 1962, pp. 2565-2566.

Moreover, the young de Tott, contrary to the observations of Professor Berkes, must have had a reasonable command of Turkish. Finally, he entered Ottoman society having served in the French army and also appearing with the full support of the French ambassador, the Chevalier de Vergennes. And as de Tott noted, of all the European governments, the Ottomans trusted the French because they believed that French blood flowed in the veins of the Ottoman sultans.

Until the disasters experienced during the long war with Russia, the Ottomans evinced an unwarranted self-confidence because in part the leadership of the 1760s had not experienced the disasters at the hands of the Austrians and Russians in the wars prior to 1739 about which Prince Eugene of Savoy and General Von Mannstein had written so lucidly. Without the relative open-mindedness of Sultan Mustafa III (1757-1774) toward innovation, as was depicted by Baron de Tott, the Empire would have been much worse off. Nevertheless, the Sultan had many problems: he made all of his decisions with the help of astrologers and charlatans who urged war with Russia, as did the French, over the question of the Polish succession. But the best units of the Russian armies by 1768 were highly professional and it took them very little time to conquer the Crimea and to occupy the Danube principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. In fact the Russian advances were so shocking to Austria that a secret alliance was signed with the Ottoman Empire. Also, during his Sultanate he appointed eight different Grand Vezirs which would mean their time in office averaged about two years. Raghip Pasha had always pursued a peace policy with Russia—he helped negotiate the Treaty of Belgrade—but his successors, influenced by the Sultan's clamoring for war, brought disaster to the Empire⁴².

In 1767, de Tott was sent by the French to inspect the Crimea. In the following years, he was placed in charge of improving the fortifications of the Straits. By 1770 he formed the first units of the *Suratchis* and, to develop the cannons he needed, he also commanded the gun foundry in Tophane. By 1772 or 1773, he was asked to supervise the re-

42. For important details, see Sertoglu, *Mufasssal Osmanli Tarihi*, V, pp. 2563-2603, and Von Hammer, *Histoire* 16, pp. 1-400. Hammer (p. 249) mentions the amazement of the Ottomans when the Russian Baltic fleet appeared off the coasts of Greece, Asia Minor and Syria. Consequently, because of their poor knowledge of geography, the Ottomans blamed Venice for letting them through the Adriatic!

building of fortifications at the entrance to the Bosphorus from the Black Sea. Next the troops needed pontoon bridges to provide a means of attacking the Russians across the Danube. Again the task of supervising the coppersmiths fell to de Tott. At the close of the war, most military personnel recognized the need for brass, light-weight field artillery rather than the cumbersome iron cannon which were so heavy that a team of oxen could hardly pull them. Once again, defying all the local experts, de Tott returned to the foundry and produced the requisite cannon, and then opened a much larger artillery school, as previously noted. Shocked by the lack of mathematical knowledge among the younger officers, as one of his final acts, Sultan Mustafa asked de Tott to set up this time an engineering school for the navy to be housed in the Tersane or naval offices and yards in the Golden Horn. De Tott himself seemed to have two paramount tasks in his last two years in the Empire. The sultans were interested in digging a canal at Suez and asked de Tott to consider possibilities when he was in Egypt. Also, according to Berkes, de Tott reported to the French on the state of French commerce and factories in the Levant. In the 21 years of de Tott's sojourn in Istanbul, one must conclude that he made a very serious contribution to Ottoman "enlightenment" about modern military affairs. In view of events in succeeding years, one shall have to make a final assessment.

Enlightenment in the East, 1774-1836. Conventionally, western analysis has indicated that the worship of rationality during the 18th century Age of Enlightenment came under sharp scrutiny by the time of the French Revolution in 1789. It had been the impact of major scientific discoveries in the late 17th century which had stirred educated Europeans to revise radically their approach to kings claiming "divine right", an aristocracy which claimed "hereditary rights" and "social superiority", and religious leaders who insisted on "divine laws" and "atonement". But the bloodiness and disorder of the French Revolution brought about a retrenchment of conservative thought and the Restoration in France.

Leading thinkers of the middle class, however, helped to codify the bases of liberalism by demanding a rational form of government, a parliamentary system, as in England. Many of the *philosophes* made pilgrimages to England to observe the system. Montesquieu called for a balance of legislative, executive and judicial elements of government.

Rousseau wanted to be governed by a “General Will”, not public opinion, but a political force seeking the best solutions for a country. These ideas and the parliamentary system helped to broaden the middle class power base. Also, Locke’s ideas of education, the “tabula rasa”, not the Original Sin, and Locke’s liberal position regarding the sanctity of “life, liberty and property” strengthened liberalism ideologically.

Emmanuel Kant, like Rousseau, suspected the virtue of pure reason as a means of providing a moral base for mankind to be compared, say, with the Biblical record. Kant was less interested in political systems than in keeping our thinking straight about rationalism. In particular, however, he took issue with the ideas of John Locke which implied that nothing was real except what one experienced. To Kant, this approach denied our ability as humans to create ideas and to synthesize a priori knowledge without actually seeing or feeling something. Thus, Kant tempered the materialism of the Enlightenment with a return of respect for metaphysical pursuits including religious experience. In the Kantian system, duty, moral law, the categorical imperative and the training of Will all play a role in limiting the dictates of pure reason⁴³.

The feelings of alienation from formalism and materialism, the French literary models, produced in German literature in the third quarter of the 18th century the so-called *Sturm und Drang* period in which such writers as the young Goethe and Schiller gave birth to a new originality in literature through love poetry and writing on folk themes. The German middle class was, for the most part, limited in outlook and dominated by the nobility who resided and held the power in a number of petty German states; hence, *Sturm und Drang* is in part associated with anti-aristocratic ideas in the name of social reality. Schiller and his contemporaries abhorred the “Francomania” of the German aristocracy⁴⁴, but the intelligentsia, to make a living, were forced to serve in government posts as librarians, tutors and professors, because it was impossible to live by one’s writings when there was no centralized state or cosmopolitan cities as in England and France. The young Goethe (1749-1782) epitomized this movement with his spontaneity emphasizing the

43. C. M. Kortepeter, “The Age of Reason”, unpublished paper, p. 23.

44. One is reminded of the criticism of Shah Mohammad Reza’s regime as being enamored of the West in Persian, “Gharbzadegi”.

relationship between nature and *Empfindlichkeit* (Sensitivity). He, like Rousseau and Kant, did not condemn natural instincts because they might be irrational, but saw nature “as the source of human spontaneity and inventiveness”. With Goethe, Enlightenment means living the life as a humanist as best one can. But Goethe in later writing did not leave the middle class free from criticism because, as a class, it was devoted to shallow values, was subservient to the nobility and bent on making money. In a world devoid of good examples, one must build one’s own life path as depicted in Goethe’s *Bildungsromanen*⁴⁵. In attempting to depict the German middle class of the 18th century in a favorable light, Schiller and other *Sturm und Drang* writers were to fail. Even the dramas of Lessing could do little with such philistinism, servility, sentimentalism and narrowness of focus.

Goethe’s contemporary, Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781) brought German literature and philosophy into the main stream of the Enlightenment in his defense of Deism and his tolerance of other faiths, as depicted in his play in verse, *Nathan der Weise*, inspired by his close relationship to Moses Mendelssohn, one of the earliest Jewish literary figures working for Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskala*) and emancipation⁴⁶. But in spite of Lessing’s efforts to establish a national theater in Berlin, Frederick the Great (d. 1786), for example, preferred to support Voltaire and the French school of literature. One is reminded of the Biblical passage: “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and his own house”⁴⁷.

As German unification seemed an utter impossibility in the late 18th century and as fear of revolution solidified the autocratic programs of “Enlightened Despots” like Frederick the Great of Prussia, Joseph II of Austria-Hungary and Catherine the Great of Russia, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) made his greatest contribution in the field of German historical thought and consequently German nationalism. Instead of emphasizing political and military events, the details of history, he dwelt on the course of universal history, of the role of German culture, native folkways and the workaday world. He saw a people or *Volk* in history as

45. Anchor, *The Enlightenment Tradition*, pp. 120-132.

46. Kortepeter, “Age of Reason”, pp. 20-21.

47. Matthew: 13; 57.

part of a great continuum. An individual could consider his destiny “in the light of the destiny of mankind as a whole”. There was a kind of inevitability of progress through the workings of a national spirit. Obviously by attributing national and even racial characteristics to a *Volks* and dependence on a national spirit (*Geist*), it would not be difficult in the 19th century for ideologues of emerging new nationalities such as Serbians, Greeks, Turks, Iranians and Jews to follow the Herder pattern⁴⁸. Herder’s ideas encouraged the German Romanticism of the early 19th century whose writers, poets and folklorists included the Schlegel brothers (translators of Shakespeare), the Grimm brothers, Brentano, von Hoffmannsthal and Novalis.

While these important offshoots of the 18th century Enlightenment initially made very little impact on the Ottoman Islamic psyche, their combined onslaught on multi-national states like the Ottoman Empire had an overwhelming effect. Enlightenment as an Age of Reason had very little effect on the Ottoman Empire except in the field of new technology, as noted in this essay, but the major movements as ideologies, such as Conservative Thought, Liberal Institutions, especially parliamentary forms of government, Capitalism, Romanticism and Nationalism penetrated every corner and every ethnic group of the Ottoman Empire in the Nineteenth Century. Yet it was very difficult for the Ottoman elite to give up the past practices of the “ever-victorious” Empire even with the guns of a new age pointed at their heads.

When Abd ul-Hamid I became Sultan in January 1774, he was almost 49 years old and had been in palace confinement from the age of 5 when his father, Ahmed III, was overthrown in 1730. Even then, he was aware of the disastrous showing of the Ottoman forces against Russian troops. Moreover, he knew of the attempts of his brother, Mustafa III, to improve military training with the help of Baron de Tott. He may not have fully understood that his brother’s efforts largely ended up in failure because of the strength of the reactionaries, the lack of support facilities and of trained leaders who could apply, in the field, the basic changes de Tott had made in artillery production and training. As we have noted, so much in the effort to modernize depended upon the direct support of the Sultan and of Baron de Tott. Even the highest ministers of

48. Anchor, *The Enlightenment Tradition*, pp. 139-142.

state could not be trusted to foster new systems because they threatened the status quo in the short run in spite of the very real threat to the Empire which the new European technology posed in a longer time-frame.

Hamid I, after settling into the Sultanate, indicated to his ministers that he wanted to continue the reforms inaugurated by his brother and in fact speed them up. Three high officials, the Grand Vezirs, Karavezir (Silahtar) Mehmed Pasha and Halil Hamid Pasha and the Naval Minister, Kapudan Jezayirli (Algerian) Hasan Pasha lent their support to their sovereign's goals. Mehmed Pasha, who had enjoyed a good education, had moved up rapidly in the palace service to palace chief Silahtar or weapons bearer partly because his brother had been the personal kahveji (coffee server) to the Sultan. He was called to the Grand Vezirate in August, 1779, and thereafter followed closely the improvements in the forging of new cannon and the training to use them. He had also ordered iron cannon and cannon balls from a Swede by the name of Taval. Unfortunately, this dedicated Vezir died of tuberculosis in February of 1781. Soon thereafter all of the efforts to improve the artillery corps were halted due to pressure from the Janissaries, and the French instructors, under the leadership of Mssr. Obert, returned to France.

Halil Hamid Efendi at this critical time was serving as *Amedchi*, chief court scribe and secretary to the council of ministers, but when Karavezir Mehmed took ill, he was appointed deputy to the Grand Vezir. Deemed too young to become Grand Vezir—he was 45—the sultan chose Izzet Mehmed who, sensing the Sultan's closeness to Halil Hamid, had him dismissed. The Sultan, however, protected him and had him appointed to head up the *tersane* or maritime dockyard and arsenal. When Izzet Mehmed was dismissed, Halil Hamid was again appointed deputy grand vezir to Yegen (nephew) Mehmed Pasha, who lasted 4 months before he was replaced by Halil Hamid at the end of December, 1782. In spite of his interest in reform, Halil Hamid soon had to face the crisis of Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 1783. Thereafter, the Algerian head of the navy, Gazi Hasan Pasha, led a faction to unseat Halil Hamid. To this faction were attracted all those members of the government, the military and the Ulema whose positions might be changed by modernization of the armed forces. Finally, Halil Hamid was accused of plotting to put young Selim, the son of Sultan Mustafa III, on the throne. Thus, the doddering Hamid I, not knowing whom to trust,

had Hamid Halil dismissed at the end of March 1785, just before the waning Empire faced another crisis with Russia. He was eventually executed by followers of Gazi Hasan in April, 1788. One of the negative rumors circulated against this reforming Vezir was that he intended to have the French *Encyclopedie* translated into Turkish. It is true that he re-opened the Muteferrika Press before his dismissal. In his final years, Sultan Hamid did not wish to be involved in a war with Russia but gave his consent upon the insistence of his last Grand Vezir, Koja Yusuf Pasha, described by Sertoglu as an incompetent, subservient Georgian protégé of Gazi Hasan, who claimed that he could wrest back the Crimea from the Russians⁴⁹.

Noel Barber in his popular, but often inaccurate, book on the inner workings of the palace, has written an interesting chapter entitled, "The French Sultana", in which he discusses the important influence on later events of Aimée Dubucq de Rivery, the mother of Mahmud II, a French captive who was presented to Sultan Hamid I about 1780 and became his favorite. Barber indicates the possible influences of this palace favorite on the reforms in the sultanates of both Selim III and Mahmud II⁵⁰.

Before his accession Prince Selim had had a great deal of exposure to Western technology because his father, Sultan Mustafa III, had taken his son wherever Baron de Tott was training troops. Upon his father's death in 1774, Prince Selim was indeed confined to his palace quarters, but his uncle, Sultan Hamid I, allowed him considerable freedom to exchange letters with such exalted rulers as Frederick the Great of Prussia and King Louis XVI in France. These letters in general included declarations on the part of Selim that when he came to power he wanted the friendship and support of France and Prussia and that, on his part, he intended to return the Ottoman Empire to its ancient position of respect and glory. Meanwhile, while confined to the palace, he sent out some of his boon companions to consult with ambassadors from England, France, Austria and Russia to gather information about new developments in Europe. Perhaps the most active of his friends was Ishak Aga, who had been trained as an officer by de Tott, had survived the naval disaster at

49. Sertoglu, *Mufasssal Osmanli Tarihi*, V, pp. 2624-2625, 2648-2650, 2659, 2800.

50. Noel Barber, *The Sultans*, New York 1973, pp. 115-137.

Cheshme and got on well in his visits to France. In his letters to the young prince, he informed him of all the new technology and other developments taking place in Europe⁵¹.

When Sultan Selim III ascended the throne in April of 1789, he was 27 years old and completely dedicated to reforming his decrepit empire. At the beginning of his Sultanate, he was simultaneously at war with Russia and Austria-Hungary. Facing a financial crisis to pay for the war, the young Sultan called for the strict payment of all *iltizam* (tax farm) debts owed to the state. He also melted down the gold and silver in the palace and demanded that all of the high dignitaries do the same with their gold and silver possessions. At the end of his reign he was again involved in warfare with Britain and Russia. He also faced rebellion in Egypt, then its occupation by Napoleon in 1798. Meanwhile the Russians occupied the Georgian kingdom in 1801 and also gained control of the northern Caucasus when an Ottoman general defected. With Russian encouragement and assistance, Serbia also rebelled against Ottoman rule, and Sultan Selim had to fight his own provincial leaders (*Derebeys*) and notably Ali Pasha of Janina. The Ottomans made peace with Austria at Sistova in 1791 because the new emperor, Leopold II, was facing a major rebellion in Hungary. The Treaty of Jassy was signed with Catherine II's government in 1792. The French Revolution of 1789 had cast a spell over these reactionary regimes; hence, all governments had agreed, generally speaking, to the status quo ante bellum. This meant that Russia, in spite of her occupation of the Romanian principalities, would recall her troops. She felt her borders were threatened by Prussia which had recently signed a treaty with the Porte. Moreover, even though her forces had once again taken the key Danube fortress of Belgrad and had occupied Serb territory, the Austrians would also pull back their forces. Essentially on all fronts the Ottoman troops had not stood fast, had poorly obeyed their commanders and were defeated. The

51. Shaw considers that Ishak was of little use, having lived a life of dissipation in France. E. Z. Karal and Midhat Sertoglu appear to put much more importance on the information that Ishak Aga supplied to the young prince. Cf. Stanford Shaw, *Between Old and New*, Harvard 1971, p. 13; Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanli Tarihi*, V, *Nizam-i Cedit ve Tanzimat Devirleri (1789-1856)*, p. 60; and M. Sertoglu, ed., *Mufasssal Osmanli Tarihi*, V, pp. 2679-2680.

Ottoman navy did not fare any better⁵².

When one considers the amount of internal and external interference with which Selim III had to deal during his Sultanate, it is surprising that he has gone down in recent historical writing as one of the first true modernizers of the late Ottoman state. One must give him his due. He was dedicated to reform, was steadfast and upright and took many risks to improve Ottoman society and eventually was assassinated by the usual reactionary forces. E. Z. Karal tries to clear up, in his study, the question of why Sultan Selim could not “be” like Peter the Great of Russia. He points out the obvious that Peter of Russia borrowed western technology and institutions, but the models were Christian models and the experts coming from the West were also Christian. Thus, even though there were differences between Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Reformist ceremonies and beliefs, much of the vocabulary and the expectations of believers were similar. Even in the Russia of the 18th century it is doubtful that various Christians could have lived in harmony without fear of the knout or execution by Peter the Great or Catherine.

By contrast, every reforming Sultan in the 18th century was reminded of the recent superiority of the “ever-victorious Islamic army” and the impossibility of giving equal status to Christian experts or trusting their teachings. How could a good Muslim substitute Christian structures for Muslim ones? The idea of “tolerance of all belief systems”, though written into the constitutions of some modern Middle Eastern countries, still survives precariously. Moreover, while the related concept of a “secular society”, so important as an offshoot of the Age of Reason, has been touted as “fully accepted” in most post-Ottoman nations of the Middle East and the Balkans, yet virtually no nation there gives equal status to followers of communities (*Millet*s) of religious minorities. Thus, if Sultan Mustafa III had not personally guaranteed the safety of Baron de Tott, he could have accomplished nothing. In the time of the Sultanate of Selim III, the power of the Sultanate, after two major defeats by Russia, was weakened even further. Peter the Great forced through his reforms; Selim III did not have that kind of power. Peter had built up separate western-style regiments when he and his mother were

52. See in particular, the detailed account of Sertoglu, *ibid.*, pp. 2683-2741. These pages contain detailed summaries of the battles and the treaties.

exiled from the court to the village of Preobrazhenskoe by the regent, Sophia; hence he was able to destroy the obsolete Streltsi guards. Under Selim III, the Janissaries and the reactionary Ulema, mindful of what Peter had done, were ever watchful so that Selim could not build up a countervailing force⁵³.

In spite of the difficulties here noted, the story of the Nizam-i Jedid or "the New Order" of Selim III is worth telling because Selim almost succeeded in defeating his own reactionary forces: the Janissaries, the Ulema, entrenched bureaucrats, disloyal vezirs and the general street rabble. At the close of the war with Russia, Sultan Selim took the opportunity to seek reports from the Empire's elite. Twenty-two papers were submitted along with one from the Grand Vezir, Koja Yusuf Pasha. The conservatives suggested that the Empire return to the discipline and institutions of the Age of Suleiman (mid-16th century). The reformers called for the improvement of the Janissaries, if possible, but also they recognized the need to establish a new European-style force, trained in the latest techniques of war.

The Sultan and the palace staff quickly set to work. For the Janissaries, a new table of orders was drawn up covering such items as favoritism, promotion, non-marriage, drills, engineering and firing practice. To start the new European-style regiments, Koja Yusuf called back from the front all the western officers he could spare, set up a Ministry of Military Instruction and brought in young recruits separate from the Janissaries. These units were attached to the Bostanji rifle battalion which protected the Sultan. The biggest task was to come up with some plausible reason for the new force so that the Janissaries and the reactionary townspeople might remain neutral. For example, a rumor was circulated that the Russians threatened the Istanbul water supplies and the new troops or Nizamis were to aid in their protection. Also reforms were projected for Tophane (cannon foundries), the Tersane (the naval dockyards), the Baruthane (gunpowder works) and the Muhendishane (the engineering school). In the latter establishment, for example, a military library of 400 volumes was set up which included a copy of the French *Encyclopedie*. The mortar school and the artillery school also

53. See Karal, *Osmanli Tarihi*, V, pp. 60ff. and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford 1977³, pp. 235-244.

were reopened. Most of the instruction was in the hands of French tutors. Ironically, the most success was seen in two areas, the Ottoman navy and in the office of the Reis ul-Kuttab. The navy had always been considered a sort of non-official establishment; hence, it was not so closely scrutinized by the reactionaries. Likewise, many of the young men who were sent abroad to serve as junior secretaries in newly-opened Ottoman embassies in England, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia learned a great deal about the host countries and eventually could lend their support to overall Ottoman reform. Also the Muteferrika Press now turned out a number of dictionaries and military manuals. There was a definite turning away from the former Arab and Persian literary models and poetry⁵⁴.

But reform of this scope could not begin with words or even the formation of new structures, someone had to pay the new instructors, the troops, the suppliers, etc. The Sultan next promulgated a *kanunname* or decree, for the *Irād-i Jedid Hazinesi*. To secure this "New Treasury" 200,000 purses of akche had to be generated each year from taxes on tobacco, wine, kahve, Morean grapes (*istafilina*), wool and cattle. In addition, Selim III tried to improve the administration by calling for a new disciplined mentality. The Sultanate was wracked with bribery, simony, *akrabalik*, abuses of taxfarming at every level. He also tried to check the outflow of hard currency by controls on imports of cloth and the export of grain which had to be used to provision the cities. One of the growing problems were the activities, largely of merchants belonging to various Ottoman *millet*s who were issued *berats* or rights to trade under the protection and the laws of European states which had obtained *imtiyaz* or "capitulation" rights. In effect, this was the privilege of dual citizenship whereby a *beratli* could select which laws governed his activities and taxes, that of a foreign state or of the "bribed" Ottoman bureaucracy. Here we have the beginning of the accumulation of large fortunes among the merchant classes. Reforms in this area basically failed, but gradually some officials began to see the need of controlling abuses⁵⁵.

This major reform effort lasted much longer than had any previous measures, virtually from the accession of Selim III in 1789 to 1807

54. Karal, *ibid.*, pp. 65 ff.; Shaw, *Between Old and New*, pp. 73-90.

55. See the article "Imtiyazat", *E.I.* III, 1178b (Inalcik).

when he was removed from power, a period of 18 years. During that time, many young men and also members of the Ulema opened their eyes to the need for reform, but the residual power of the armed reactionaries, the Janissaries, most of the Ulema, the bureaucrats and the street rabble still could tip the balance against the Sultan. The demise of the Sultan is a lesson in high treason: The Grand Vezir, Ismail Pasha, failed to use the Nizamis to fight the Serb rebellion of 1807; Köse Musa Pasha, the Qaimakam or Deputy to the Grand Vezir, plotted with the Sheykh ul-Islam, Topal Ataullah Efendi, to block the Janissaries from wearing the new Nizami uniforms; hence they rebelled and chose Kabakchi (Squash-seller) Mustafa to lead them; meanwhile Köse Mustafa ordered the Nizamis to remain in their barracks; then the cannoneers and the armourers joined the rebels. Clearly the Sultan had no support and not wishing to harm his subjects with civil strife, he issued a decree canceling the Nizam-i Jedid. But this did not satisfy the blood lust of the rebels. They tortured and killed eleven high officials, and the Mufti issued a Fetva for the removal of the Sultan. He was executed shortly thereafter. The rebels and their leaders filled their pockets with the money set aside for the Nizam and got themselves appointed to high offices. Officers of the Nizamis and other known reformists either took refuge in Ruschuk with the powerful vezir Bayraktar Mustafa Pasha or fled to the ranks of Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt where their skills were put to use reforming Egypt. The Nizami troops were disbanded and distributed among the untrained units around the Empire⁵⁶.

As Sultan Selim III had been treated generously by his uncle, Abd ul-Hamid I, Selim likewise treated his cousins, Mustafa and Mahmud kindly. Observing the ability of Mahmud, he showered a great deal of attention on his education. Selim himself was a gifted musician and expert in artistic writing (*Hattatlik*) and personally taught Mahmud⁵⁷. After Selim III was overthrown in May of 1807, he was imprisoned in the palace until he was murdered on 28 July, 1808. The capital remained in the hands of rebel Janissaries, street rabble and a number of their vezirial supporters throughout the brief sultanate of Mustafa IV. He had early been noted for

56. Karal, loc.cit., pp. 77ff.; Sertoglu, *Mufasssal Osmanli Tarihi*, V, pp. 2818-2834.

57. Sertoglu, V, p. 2681. Cf. also Barber, loc.cit., regarding the influence of the French queen mother.

his feeble-mindedness which was easily taken advantage of when he came to the throne at the age of 38 (1807). Even though the Ottomans, once again involved in war with Russia, were driven out of the Romanian principalities, an armistice was in effect about the time that the reformers, led by Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, decided to leave the Danubian front and march on the capital to rescue Selim III and put him back on the throne. The ruse they used to gain the Grand Vezir's permission to enter the capital was to claim they would clean the rabble off the streets and discipline the Janissaries. After completing this task, Alemdar Mustafa and a group of his close associates entered the palace and asked the eunuchs to release Selim III to them, but supporters of Mustafa IV had the door of the inner courtyard (*Dar us-Saadet*) closed and barred and ran to the harem to execute Selim III and the Sultan's brother, Mahmud. Alemdar Mustafa and his followers started hacking down the door with axes, but they entered the 3rd courtyard too late to save Selim III. Fortunately, Mahmud's tutor (*Jala*) realized the danger and fled with the prince over the Topkapi saray rooftops to safety—not an auspicious beginning of the important sultanate of Mahmud II. He was elevated to the throne on the same day, 28 July 1808, at the age of 23. Alemdar Mustafa, for his trouble, was appointed Grand Vezir⁵⁸.

According to Shanizade (*Tarih* I, 21-24), as recorded by Sertoglu, officials, imperial guards (Bostanjis), court eunuchs including the Chief harem eunuch and even women from the harem, all those involved in the murder of Sultan Selim III, were caught, tried and executed. Some of the big ringleaders such as the Sheykh ul-Islam and the Qaimmakam Köse Musa also were found and executed.

This initial housecleaning was followed by new attempts on the part of a very small palace entourage, headed by the Grand Vezir, to modernize the military. He proposed a "Sekban-i Cedid" or new regiment, known as "dogwarders" with their own horsetail, drums and sanjak financial support. Also an attempt was made to eliminate from the Janissary Corps non-active members who still collected pay because they had inherited or bought *esame* rights to regular quarterly pay. These efforts ended with an attack on Grand Vezir Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's resi-

58. Sertoglu, *ibid.*, in which he often cites the *Tarih-i Cevdet Pasha* VIII, pp. 300ff. and the *Asim Tarihi* II, pp. 201ff.

dence. He chose to resist the rabble Janissaries even chastising them verbally as the very instruments of destruction of the Empire. Slowly the rebels dug under the walls of his palace, but upon the point of their entering, the Pasha emptied his pistols on the firstcomers then blew himself and the rest of the rabble up when he ignited some barrels of gunpowder stashed away in his villa⁵⁹.

The eighteenth century was a troubled century for the Ottoman Empire and only recently has scholarship begun to clarify key issues. Obviously the history of an empire so complex as the Ottoman Empire cannot be discussed simply in the framework of how quickly and how well the Ottomans adopted western ideologies or technology. Haim Gerber, by studying the agricultural structure of the Empire, has shown that those areas of the Empire, notably in modern Turkey, where the small landowner living in villages predominated, conditions were better for the emergence of a progressive or democratic regime than in most Arab lands where large landowners predominated. The reason for this was that the army officers, often of lower middle class origins, did not assume that their primary duty in the Empire was to protect the holdings of large landowners⁶⁰. This argument may of course be used to explain how difficult it was initially to train Ottoman troops with western drills and technology. Less sophisticated troops presumably would be more susceptible to religious conservatism and would resist the adoption of new technology. It took most of the nineteenth century to accomplish the acceptance by the Ottoman officers of western-style military professionalization. Eventually, the Germans succeeded where the French had failed⁶¹.

The economy is another important sector of the Ottoman Empire about which there have been few systematic studies until the recent work of Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert. Because of their detailed analysis of internal and external commerce —Inalcik in earlier centuries and

59. See Karal, V, pp. 145ff. and Sertoglu, V, p. 2839.

60. Haim Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East*, Boulder 1987, pp. 179-185.

61. Cf., C. M. Kortepeter, "Ottoman Military Reform During the Late Tanzimat: The Prussian General Colmar von der Goltz and the Ottoman Army" in Kortepeter, *The Ottoman Turks: Nomad Kingdom to World Empire*, Istanbul 1991.

Quataert in the 17th to the 19th centuries— the researcher, for the first time, is able to gain detailed information of wealth creation and the amount of tax revenues the central government could draw upon to make necessary reforms. In general, the picture is one of declining revenues within the Empire and the destruction of many productive processes as foreign governments and *beratli* merchants used their privileges to penetrate and disrupt traditional markets⁶².

It would be a great error, however, to hold foreign countries or Ottoman subject peoples (*Dhimmi*) solely responsible for the financial state of the Empire. Helmut von Moltke, the Prussian staff officer heading up the German mission from 1835 to 1839, devoted a chapter of his report, *Unter dem Halbmond* to the subject of “Die politisch-militärische Lage des osmanischen Reiches im Jahre 1836” in which he details the destructive taxes, dues and bribes exacted from the people. But these collections were largely squandered by the administration leaving very little to feed the 70,000 man army or to finance military reforms. There were indirect taxes on slaughterhouses and mills. Fishermen paid a tax of 20% on their catch. Weights and measures had to be checked and stamped each year for a fee. Weavers, silversmiths and cobblers all had to pay. But these fees were swallowed by the collectors. The government further collected death duties, confiscated the properties of high dignitaries, sold public offices to the highest bidder including the customs houses, and functionaries expected large gifts before any business could be transacted. Moreover, the government lowered the gold and silver content of its coinage, causing the Spanish silver “taler” to rise in value from 7 kurush to 21 kurush in a period of 12 years. Only a few pashaliks, as von Moltke noted, were beginning to be better managed, but the government continued to foster forced sales of grain at a fixed government price leaving no profits for the producer. As a result, the govern-

62. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Cambridge 1994; for additional information about large capital accumulation by *Beratli* and other privileged *commercants*, see C. M. Kortepeter, “Jew and Turk in Algiers in 1800”, in Avigdor Levy, ed., *A History of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton 1994, pp. 327-352 and the art. “Imtiyazat”, *E.I.*² III, (Inalcik). Cf. also the interesting study of M. Mitchell Serels, *A History of the Jews of Tangier in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, New York 1991, *passim* which indicates some patterns of commerce followed by *beratlis*.

ment had to provision the capital from grain purchases in Odessa because peasants left large land tracts idle only an hour's journey from the capital. Fuad Pasha, a Tanzimat reforming vezir, is supposed to have said that the Ottoman Empire is the strongest one in the world because both external enemies and we, ourselves, are attempting to destroy it but it still survives⁶³.

Serious reform efforts only got underway again in the last two decades of Sultan Mahmud's long sultanate (1808-1839). The fundamental issue all reforming sultans and vezirs had to face was that only a thin veneer of the elite saw the state crumbling before their eyes and had risked their lives to urge reform. This attitude changed for two high-profile reasons: the success Muhammad Ali seemed to have in reforming Egypt and the audacity of the Greek Revolt supported strongly by Russia and latterly by other European powers. Rather than rally around the Banner of the Prophet, the Janissaries used the opportunity of the Greek Revolt to harass and pillage the peoples of Istanbul and other cities. Hence, the corporate strength of the Ulema, which had heretofore generally supported the Janissaries and political reaction in general, began to support drastic changes in the Janissary Corps or even their elimination by the year 1826. This time-frame also corresponds to the formation of the Bektashi circle of intellectuals, including progressive Ulema, who had begun to study western science in *earnest*.

Aga Huseyin Pasha, commander of the Straits fortifications, supported the Sultan's decree establishing an educated military force to be known as the *Eshkinjis*. The Pasha further recommended that the leading members of the Janissary Corps be bribed to support the new measures. The chief reformers met on 25 May 1826 and drafted a set of principles. Moreover the Sheykh ul-Islam, supported by the high Ulema, issued a fetva in support of the new force. But when word of the new force filtrated down to the coffee houses, a revolt of the rank and file Janissaries began in the usual way. Cooking pots on 15 June were turned over in the At Meydan (Sultan Ahmet Square) and the rabble of the city were again invited to destroy the leaders of reform. This time, however, the Sultan unfurled the Banner of the Prophet, asking all true Muslims to join in the

63. Helmut Karl Bernhard von Moltke, *Unter dem Halbmond, Erlebnisse in der alten Tuerkei*, Munich 1964, pp. 88-96.

destruction of the Janissaries, while his generals led the artillery corps, the bombardiers, the sappers and the marines up the side streets and decimated the Janissaries with grape shot and the sword. This time the entire city of Istanbul rejoiced at their destruction which became known in history as the “Blessed Event (Vak’a-yi Hayriye)”⁶⁴.

While this event is significant in the history of Ottoman military reform, and to be sure, the gradual turning of the Ottoman state toward ideas associated with the European Enlightenment, even Sultan Mahmud II was unable to turn immediately to reform because of the exigencies of another war with Russia and also the dire threat of having the Empire eliminated altogether by the military successes of Muhammad Ali’s son, Ibrahim Pasha, in Syria and Anatolia. To the end of his Sultanate, no strong reforming party had taken hold. Thus, the Sultan was forced to rely for the enactment of any reform upon the good offices of traditional leaders, such as his Grand Vezir, Khusrev Pasha.

The aforementioned Helmuth von Moltke, who later rose to become the chief of the Prussian General Staff, recognized that Khursev Pasha lent his support to western military reform largely to retain the favor of the Sultan, to control his incredible power base and the opportunity to weaken all others whom the Sultan favored. As a case in point, Khusrev Pasha was the first high dignitary, after the destruction of the Janissaries, to foster and present to the Sultan, a regiment of troops dressed in western military garb and trained by western instructors. Meanwhile, however, he was able to block the marriage of Mustafa Reshid Pasha, a known reformer, the Ottoman ambassador to Britain and later the “father of the Tanzimat”, to the Sultan’s eldest daughter and then have him banished to the pashalik of Edirne, even though he was a favorite of Sultan Mahmud⁶⁵.

In this essay we have examined the impact of the Enlightenment, associated with the intellectual movements of the Eighteenth Century in Western Europe, on the Ottoman (mostly Muslim) society between the

64. Karal, V, pp. 146ff; Sertoglu, V, pp. 2886-2897. This passage also contains important details about the early stages of forming a new Ottoman army, the *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediyye*, roughly, “the Victorious Troops of Muhammad”, and the opening of the modern military academy, the Harbiye.

65. Von Moltke, *Unter dem Halbmond*, pp. 73-76.

years 1718 and 1839. One recurring problem is that there developed no universally applicable set of ideas, no “package deal”, from this intellectual ferment until the time of the French Revolution in 1789. Then it became absolutely clear that the ideologies and institutions of the French ancient regime, the divine-right monarchy and a privileged religious and aristocratic hierarchy had to share its power with the newly-risen bourgeois classes of merchants and professionals and in the name of the secularization of government institutions. This aspect of the Enlightenment, secularization, did not find fertile ground in the Muslim majority of the Ottoman Empire until the eve of the 20th century as has been noted by Sharif Mardin and others.

In this essay, another aspect of the Enlightenment, the rationality of the Ottoman Muslim elite in adopting military technology and drills from the West, gradually received acceptance by the beginning of the 19th century, even though we have recorded many setbacks. What we have indicated, time and again, is the tenacity of reactionary forces, but also the courage displayed by reforming sultans and a handful of courageous and farsighted vezirs. As word of the struggle of such heroic vezirs as Alemdar Mustafa Pasha against the completely degenerate Janissaries circulated through the streets of Istanbul, there is no question that the death knell of this completely useless military anachronism had been tolled.