

WESTERNIZATION MOVEMENTS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

ESİN CANTEZ

Istanbul University, Turkey.

Abstract

This paper will deal with the period starting with the beginning of the eighteenth century when the Ottoman armies were forced to abandon the siege of Vienna which resulted in the decline of the Empire. This started two hundred years' of attempts to reform and renovate the Empire by the Sultans, the viziers and the learned élite. Two very important acts that brought about great changes in Turkey were, firstly Sultan Selim the Third's attempt to establish a new army independent of the Janissaries in 1793 and, secondly, Sultan Mahmut the Second's abolition of the Corps of Janissaries in 1826. Compulsory primary education, establishment of the military academy and the school of medicine, the introduction of a modern police system and postal service were all begun during this time paving the routes for further developments. The reforms were continued and in 1839 Sultan Abdülmecit proclaimed the beginning of a new regime, Tanzimat (Regulation) by a charter where he abdicated a portion of his authority in favour of the Council of Judicial Ordinances that had the power to make laws. This was followed by another great change, the promulgation of the Constitution in 1876 which created a Parliament consisting of an Upper House and a Chamber of Deputies which opened in 1877. Even though Parliament was suspended by the Sultan after the Ottoman defeat in the Russian war, it was opened again in 1908. Many Secondary Schools, many Teacher's Training Colleges were opened after the promulgation of the Constitution and many young Turkish students were sent to study at the Universities in Europe, and brought back new western science and technologies.

Introduction

Although the generally accepted view is that the real and conscious attempts towards reform and reorganization began after the Turkish military defeat in 1774, and the first period of marked development and thorough going changes took place with the reign of Selim III (1789-1808), there is, however, historical evidence that cultural contact and consequent changes took place at a much earlier period. The date in Ottoman history which marks the beginnings of contact with Western techniques is perhaps 1716, when there was a tentative attempt to renew the Turkish Army. To meet the requirements of this reform, modern mathematics was introduced into the curriculum of the Military Engineering School. In 1728, the great Turkish editor and printer, Ibrahim Müteferrika, founded the first printing press and began to publish works written or edited by him, dealing with western science and culture (Adivar, 1947).

Deliberate attempts at westernization in Turkey are generally divided into three periods. The first is from the beginning of the realm of Selim III until the beginning of Abdülhamid II's reign (1789-1880). The second period begins with the reopening of the Parliament in 1908 and continues till the end of the First World War. The third period extends from the War of Turkish Independence in 1919-1922 until the present day.

The First Period (1789-1880)

This period begins with the reign of Selim III, who opened new schools to train officers, raised a new army and built barracks, docks and factories under the pressure of constant military defeat, and the influence and pressure of the Great European Powers. But it is his successor, Mahmud II, who is more truly representative of the period. He came to power after Selim III. He not only carried on where Selim III left off, but in spite of many obstacles and difficulties, overcame all the independent forces which might have resisted him and, what was most important, abolished the Janisaries. He created a modern army, equipped with European weapons and new uniforms, he opened high schools and built hospitals, organised a civil service who wore new clothes modelled on the

European pattern, abolished the symbolic head dress, the turban, and also introduced wine at official banquets.

This is the time of political revival leading especially to changes in social organisation, law and political ideas. Under the direct pressure of the Great Powers on the one hand, and on the other hand the general influence of the French Revolution, European ideals, values, ideas and spiritual movements began to exercise an influence upon Turkish life. It could indeed be reasonably maintained that most spiritual change in modern Turkey originated in this period of reform and reorganization, known in Turkish as *Tanzimat-ı Hayriye*. (Turhan, 1954).

The background of this period is twofold; firstly, the realization of the weakness of Turkey, made clear by heavy military defeat was an internal stimulus towards reform which would strengthen the state, secondly, the interference of other European powers in the internal affairs of Turkey had started to be felt as well. It was in order to satisfy this external, as well as the internal demand for reform that the programme of *Tanzimat* was carried through. One important result of this programme was that the Ottoman state and society further centralized state administration, and brought about increased state participation in Ottoman society between 1839 and 1876. Its antecedents lay in the passion for «ordering» (*nizam*) that had guided the efforts of Gazi Hasan Pasha and Halil Hamit Pasha during the reign of Abdülhamit I (1774-1789) as well as those of Selim III and Mahmut II. It was the latter who made the *Tanzimat* possible by extending the scope of Ottoman government far beyond its traditional bounds to include the right and even the duty to regulate all aspects of life and changing the concept of Ottoman reform from the traditional one of attempting to preserve and restore the old institutions to a modern one of replacing them with new ones. Leading the *Tanzimat* were Mahmud's sons, Abdülmecit I (1839-1861) and Abdülaziz (1861-1876), whose reigns encompassed the entire period and who provided the context in which the *Tanzimat* bureaucrats could and did proceed at their work. *Tanzimat* certainly started a political and democratic movement which marked the second phase of this era.

The cultural development was sustained when Sultan Ahdilhamit II brought German specialists, such as officers, physicians, scientists to Turkey. Schools were opened in hundreds, railways, factories and hospitals were built. So they prepared the way for the second period which was very productive in the westernization of Turkey.

The Second Period (1908-1918)

The second period started in 1908 with the opening of the Parliament again. It was dominated by the Young Turks abroad and in Salonica, and lasted until the end of the First World War. In spite of its political origin and its aim to restore democracy to the country, this period is perhaps more productive and more constructive than all its predecessors from the cultural point of view. It aimed at the beginning to renew the Tanzimat ideals but later it went much further than that. Thanks to freedom of thought and of the Press, every single item which was accepted later (that is in the present period) was discussed freely (Turhan, 1954). Because of the long tradition of cultural changes, the new ideals and tendencies were directed into their main currents. Under the influence of free discussion during this period, a new national literature emerged which started an idealistic movement indicating a mental renaissance. In spite of many wars this period lasted successfully until the end of the First World War. In other directions too, such as economy, jurisprudence and military affairs, everything was reorganized or new elements had been introduced. From the point of view of westernization, the present period might well be taken as the continuation of the two preceding periods.

REFERENCES

- Adivar, A.A. (1947). Islamic and western thought in Turkey. *The Middle East Journal*. I. 86-87.
- Turhan, M. (1969). *Kültür değişimleri* (Cultural changes). İstanbul : Milli Eğitim Basımevi.