

## THE RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK OF THE TURKISH REVOLUTION

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It may sound "blasphemous" to ascribe religious consciousness to a historic event, to a revolutionary movement which "dethroned" classical forms of religion to invest social, political, cultural, or religious life<sup>1</sup> with a secular outlook. It would, however, be absurd to study a process of historical development in a void and in disregard of the idea of historical continuity. A historic event, however unique and however revolutionary in its creativity, grows up in a particular milieu, and, in the course of its evolution, absorbs certain elements of tradition. Naturally, thus, it acquires a background of its own before it begins to expand and unfold its true character. Historical past plays a positive role, even if seemingly obscure and consciously ignored, in the emergence of events. Indeed events draw on their historical legacy in the course of their maturing. The heritage of the past, in spite of the denial of its role in the present, does leave an impact on the revolutionary process.

Historically, the Turkish revolution did not begin as an ideological movement. Nor did it renounce its ideological inheritance in its early phase.<sup>2</sup> Rather it succeeded to a rich tradition of thought and mani-

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<sup>1</sup> The Turkish revolution, while in search of ways to free religion from mystical rites and mythological accretions, tended to secularize religion or invest it with a more earthy outlook.

<sup>2</sup> The Declaration of the Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisinin Beyannamesi*) of 18 November 1920, also known as the Declaration of Populism (*Halkçılık Beyannamesi*), was one of the earliest documents to reflect the thinking of the new regime in Ankara. It provided hints of a socio-economic and political programme without much ideological rhetoric. It resolved to free

fested many characteristics of that tradition. The legacy of the Ottomans, the founders of a State and society formally patterned on the teaching of Islam, was stamped with a compelling religious image. And no wonder; for Ottoman institutions had evolved through an express conformity with or explicit approval of the authority of religion. Consequently the impact of the legacy of the Ottomans broadly signified the impact of its essential element, viz Islam. However, the legacy lost its initial dynamism in course of time and acquired a rigid formalism that tended to discourage or inhibit initiative in religious matters. Eventually it managed to shake off its formalism and started assimilating elements that enabled it to respond to change. A new consciousness converging on the decline of Ottoman power, the custodian of religious ideology, brought about a change in the traditional formalism and sought to check the onset of decay through a return to the ideological or, more precisely, the Islamic bases of the Ottoman order. Islam, the religion of the Ottoman Turks, represented the State ideology as well.

With the emergence of the idea of a return to the truly Islamic bases of society there began a process or review or reappraisal of the real constituents of Islam both as a religion and as a way of life. But then the initiative lay no more with the classical religious elite reared in the tradition of the *medrese*; it had passed on to a new elite brought up in the atmosphere of the *mektep* but well versed in classical learning. No doubt the rise of the new group, more outward-looking and less dogmatic, enriched intellectual life, but the stratification of the religious elite fostered two distinct approaches to religion, one marked by an emphasis on adherence to the literal meaning of religious teachings and the other concerned with a search for the spirit of those

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the Turkish people from the "domination and tyranny" of "imperialism and capitalism" and set the "prosperity and happiness" of the people as its main goal. It went on to add: "...the Grand National Assembly would strive to bring forth changes and institutions according to the needs of the people making social brotherhood and co-operation a dominant factor in spheres of land [reforms], education, judiciary, finance, economy and (religious) trusts, and other matters." Thus it purported to draw its political and social principles from the spirit of the nation and to respect the inclinations and traditions (*temayülât ve ananat*) of the nation in the application of those principles. It wisely evaded the line of argument that might have identified it with the contemporary ideologies. Instead it reaffirmed its faith in its ideological inheritance and pledged respect to the nation's inclinations and traditions. The reformist trend pervaded the Declaration. A facsimile of the Declaration in Ottoman Turkish is given in Tarik Z. Tunaya, *Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük* (Istanbul, 1964), p. 104.

teachings. This implied a duality of meaning of religious doctrine and stimulated the revivalist trend. Indeed the entire course of evolution of religious thought up to the time of inception of the national liberation movement bore the stamp of these two approaches to religion; the two approaches conspicuously worked as parallel trends despite their basic common features. The religious outlook of the Turkish revolution seems to have been closer to the approach of looking for the spirit than to the approach of keeping close to the literal meaning of religious teachings; for it was marked by elements of revivalism and evinced an anxiety to search for the true meaning of Islam and to order national life in conformity with that meaning. The origins of the recurrent outbreaks of religious obscurantism calling the very basis of the Turkish revolution into question go back on the other hand to the rise of a religious consciousness which, even if false, derived its inspiration from a literal or legalistic interpretation of religion. Religious dogma tends to inspire obscurantist tendencies if seen in isolation from the idea of change and the process of historical development. In substance, the Turkish religious scene, reflects even today one or the other of these two approaches. Religious consciousness follows a course of gradual and often imperceptible change.

Within the broad framework of the ideological inheritance of the Turkish revolution two stages appear especially distinct as aspects of the process of review of Islam. The first stage was reached with the Young Ottoman movement. The second stage, an ideological continuation of the first, found expression in the Young Turk movement, the ideological predecessor of the Turkish revolution. The religious as well as the political consciousness of the New Ottomans owed a good deal to the heritage of Islam, which revived interest in the scientific and cultural achievements of the past and served to mitigate the agony of political decline. Thus, the idea of revival was initially meant to inculcate an outlook that could, in accordance with the essence of Islam, reactivate scientific curiosity, not to afford a refuge in the past from the realities of the present. It was harnessed to the task of reviving faith and a sense of pride in the cultural heritage so as to set the stage for a new awakening. Inherently, the idea of revival, religious or otherwise, relates the past to the vision of a future no less bright and glorious. But the New Ottomans in their zeal for the past came up with an innovation (*bid'at*): they introduced a new element in religious consciousness, viz an awareness of ethnicity, however indistinguishable from the composite entity of the Islamic community (*ümmet*). Also, they imparted a special emphasis to the essential

harmony between Islam and science.<sup>3</sup> This trend in religious perspective rested on the cultural heritage of the Turks, particularly its scientific aspect. It also represented some sort of an apologia, an attempt to defend Islam and to underscore its significance as a philosophy of life and as a basis of social order.

The religious outlook of the Young Turks matured under the stimulus of different historical conditions which gave rise to diverse socio-political forces and ideological trends. It turned out to be a complex phenomenon on account of the complexity of the historical conditions which had stimulated its growth. A sharp and vivid sense of Ottoman decay, political as well as social, played a decisive role in giving it shape. The Young Turks responded, in their own way, to the challenge of Ottoman decline by proposing to reinforce or return to the bases of the greatness of their ancestors; they furthered the process of religious revival to check the decline. The fact of decline also accounts for the emergence of such movements of the era as Pan-Islamism, Turanism, or Pan-Turkism. The revivalist trend pervaded the religious outlook of the Young Turks. The genesis of the revivalist trend itself goes back to an approach initiated by the New Ottomans and adopted by the Young Turks, an approach which sought above all a true understanding of the spirit of Islam. The revival of the tenets of Islam was, therefore, meant to promote a rational and objective outlook through a restatement of the progressive bearings of Islam. However, the idea of revival lost its initial meaning in the process of its historical development. The political forces which supported the cause of religious revival, particularly during the early years of the Turkish revolution, decided its form and role in society. The political expression of religious revival, usually termed fanatical or reactionary, determined the attitude of the Turkish revolution to the popular upsurge of religious feeling. Nevertheless religious revival afforded a handy means of protest to the conservative forces. Religious feeling, perhaps the most eloquent means for unrolling the political consciousness of the impoverished but fickle masses, failed to reflect their real situation and became a plaything in the hands of the political forces.

Besides the heritage of the past, which provided historical continuity, there was another, and perhaps more important, element

<sup>3</sup> Namık Kemal, *Renan Müdâfaanâmesi (İslâmiyet ve Maârif)* M. Fuad Köprülü, ed. (Ankara, 1962), *passim*. The treatise is a refutation of the views of the French academic Ernest Renan as elaborated by him in a lecture that portrayed Islam as destructive of progress and spread of (scientific) knowledge.

shaping the religious outlook of the Turkish revolution. The role of personality,<sup>4</sup> notwithstanding the play of socio-economic or political forces, is generally significant in movements characterized by amorphous beginnings in an ideological sense. In fact, the religious outlook of the Turkish revolution derived its form and substance from the outlook of the Turkish intelligentsia; and the mind of the intelligentsia, in its turn reflected the thinking of their "helmsman". The religious outlook of Mustafa Kemal can, therefore, be said to have formed the heart of the religious outlook of the Turkish revolution and to have inspired the stirrings in the religious domain.<sup>5</sup> As for the religious sensitivity of the mass of the people, it was, as always in a society marked by differentiation, an entity that conspicuously lay apart.

Mustafa Kemal's religious sensitivity formed, in a way, the most remarkable factor in his attitude to religion. Although he was born in a fairly religious family and breathed an atmosphere of religiousness in his childhood, the religious sentiment did not seep so far into his subconscious as to become a driving force in his life.<sup>6</sup> It was probably the circumstances and manner of his early (religious) education, in particular the ignorance and sadistic behaviour of the *hocas* he encountered, which sowed in him the seeds of the stern aversion he betrayed later in his adult life to men of religion and whatever they stood for. Nevertheless he distinguished between the real *ulema*, "the pride of nation", and the hypocrites who went about in the garb of learned men of religion (*hocas*) and who were in fact ignorant and "far from the reality of learning". He felt that :

...the evils that destroyed, enslaved, [and] devastated ...[our] nation invariably came from heresy and malice (**Küfür ve melanet**) under the garb of religion. They ["infamous hypocrites"] confuse every sort of activity with religion... We no more need

<sup>4</sup> In a moment of self-consciousness, Mustafa Kemal, the architect of the Turkish revolution and expounder of its ideological bases, thus articulated the decisive role of personality in national liberation: "History has irrefutably proved that the presence of a leader of unshakeable ability and power is needed for the success of great causes." *Nutuk* (Ankara, 1927), p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Once Mustafa Kemal remarked: "The line of action I followed is merely the product of my own thought". See Emil Ludwig, "Türkiye Reiscumhuru Gazi Mustafa Kemal Hazretleriyle Mülakat", *Ayin Tarihi*, vol. 22, no. 71, April 1930, p. 8051.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Tek Adam Mustafa Kemal*, (Istanbul, 1966), edn. 2, vol. 3, pp. 495 ff.

a lesson or advice from this or that [person] to learn the commands of our religion.<sup>7</sup>

Not that he was at any time irreligious. On the contrary there are accounts which vouch for his having been religious, though not in an orthodox or formal sense, in his early youth. It is said that on his visits as a youth to Salonika during the vacations, he was in the habit of frequenting the *tekkes* and participating in their rituals, which usually climaxed in a state of ecstasy in the performer. He is also said to have participated in the recitation of *mevlut* at home and to have cultivated intimacy with *hocas* and dervishes.<sup>8</sup> However, it would seem that these were mere flickerings of a dying flame. The preoccupation with religion proved to be but a passing phase and not a permanent passion of his life. The choice of a military career further alienated him from all sentimentalism of a religious kind. His interest in religion undoubtedly outlived his youth, but the expression of it varied from time and from phase to phase.

In any event there was in the development of Mustafa Kemal's personality no emotional assimilation of religious beliefs to promote an innate religiousness and a lasting religious humour. He however, evinced keen interest in religious literature, and perhaps it was this interest which contributed to his religious outlook. He had his own views, clear and definite, on the various aspects of religion.<sup>9</sup> He came

<sup>7</sup> Atatürk'ün *Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Ankara, 1959), edn. 2, vol. 2, pp. 144 and 127. Mustafa Kemal mentioned the criterion "our religion provides to everyone" to assess whether or not a thing accorded with religion. "Whatever accords with reason, logic [and] the interest of the people is consistent with our religion." *Ibid.*, p. 127. The view, thus minimized the role of intermediaries, whether institutions or persons, in understanding Islam and so paved the way for Kemalist reforms. Mustafa Kemal "recognized no place in civilized society of Turkey for those who were so primitive as to seek material and spiritual happiness in the guidance of a Şeyh". He ruled out the possibility of the "Turkish republic ever turning [into] a country of Şeyhs, dervishes, [their] disciples, [and] proteges". *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> See Falih Rifki, Atay, *Çankaya* (Dünya yayınları, n.d.) vol. I, p. 269.

<sup>9</sup> Numerous sources speak of Mustafa Kemal's interests in the history of Islam. His speeches also convey the extent of his knowledge and the views he evolved on Islam and Islamic history. Even metaphysics absorbed his mind. See Aydemir, *Tek Adam*, op. cit., pp. 498 ff. Also see Şükrü Tezer, *Atatürk'ün Hatıra Defteri* (Ankara, 1972), p. 83. Mustafa Kemal noted that he had finished reading *Allahi Inkar Mümkün Mü* [dür], a monograph written in refutation of atheism or in proof of the existence of God by Şehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi (Istanbul, 1327). The monograph also bore the subtitle *Huzur-i Fende Mesaliki Küfr*. Mustafa Kemal found the style of Muslim luminaries like Gazali, İbn-i

to conceive of his religion, viz Islam in terms which indicated that he cared as much for the religious aspect as for other aspects of life. Indeed his interest in Islam formed part of a broader perspective, one that presented life in its entirety and with Islam as its important element. He sought relevance or significance, like a true utilitarian, in religious institutions, or the institutions defined as such, for the scheme of things he had set before him. It was characteristic of him to assess the importance of all social and political institutions, including those commonly regarded as religious, in terms of their relevance and not in terms of their historical or popular image. At the same time he was inclined to find the rationale for his evaluation in religion itself, which illustrates his interest in and good grasp of religious literature.<sup>10</sup> And yet he would not allow any theological or metaphysical argument to dissuade him from doing away with or transforming an institution once he felt convinced of its inefficacy or obsolescence. This approach armed him with the much-needed audacity and spared him those hesitations which characterise the contemplations of the reformer and the dialectics of the theologian. He had the mind of a practical man and a soldier. This helped him steer clear of the delicate theorizing of the religious dialectician (*müctehid*). The pragmatic in him overshadowed the idealist or the visionary if at all there was one in him.

We may, in the same vein, refer to another point to facilitate understanding of the religious outlook of the Turkish revolution. How far does a dogmatic or doctrinaire approach to religion inspire religious reform? In other words, is it the dogmatism or fanaticism of a religious reformer that brings about the urge for reform?<sup>11</sup> This

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Sina and Ibn-i Ruşd allegorical or symbolic. He also noted the evasiveness of religious thinkers in interpreting the Şariat. However, he might have found the preface of the book (*Kariin ile bir Hasbihal*) more interesting as it tinted at some issues and themes such as the idea of reform (*teceddüt*), the *ulema*, fanaticism, and the extent of borrowing (*taklid*) which in the years that followed, engaged the attention of Kemal himself. Hilmi observed that even the spiritualities (*maneviyât*), the quintessence of our society, needed reform as to their interpretation and suggestion though they were above reform as far as the essential purity of the fundamental beliefs was concerned.

<sup>10</sup> Even so there is no reason to subscribe to the views of a writer who says that Atatürk "who saved religion, was the greatest Muslim of many epochs". Falih Rıfki Atay, *Atatürkçlük Nedir?* (Istanbul, 1966), p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Aydemir in his characteristically lively and forceful style, argues that Atatürk did not become a religious reformer; "for he was not a dogmatic... Dogmatism is fanaticism and a dogmatic... a fanatic, ...Atatürk is not a fanatic." See his *Tek Adam*, op. cit., p. 501. Such an interpretation of an important aspect of

point obviously needs to be considered in relation to the personality of Kemal Atatürk; for it seems to hold the key to a proper understanding of the outlook of the Turkish revolution inasmuch as the revolution itself followed the life-style or preceptions of Atatürk. In reality, a sense of discontent stemming from a realization that something has been lacking in religious experience engenders revolt against the prevalent view of religion and fosters the reformative instinct. However, even a feeling or revolt suggests or presupposes a phase of devotion to religious experience. Religious reform, therefore, originates neither in a dogmatic or doctrinaire outlook nor in fanaticism though it calls for a thorough grasp of the religious sciences. Perhaps we should look for less abstract and more tangible factors than mere academic arguments to grasp the idea of religious reform in Turkey.

After he had fulfilled his mission on the battle front in 1922, Atatürk emerged as a statesman in search of new bases of State and society; and the other aspects of his personality and their various expressions appeared to subordinate themselves to the will of the statesman. The religious aspect of his personality should, therefore, be viewed within the world of the statesman — a world that was apparently limitless but which always centred on the deliberations and calculations of the statesman. Atatürk could not play the religious reformer; for he was ill equipped for such a role. He lacked the bias that springs from an emotional assimilation of religious lore. He seemed to be interested rather in some very obvious and formal aspects of Islam — aspects which he did not regard as inherent in Islam — so far as the reformative aspect of his personality was concerned. And he keenly felt about, and thought over, the way the various social and political forces were tending and chose his path carefully, his revolutionary fervour notwithstanding. As a statesman, he recognized his

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Atatürk's character with such far-reaching implications seems to be tendentious even if seemingly convincing. The rationale underlying Atatürk's reluctance or disinclination to put across religious reform is to be looked for elsewhere, not simply in some characteristics of his temperament. In his attempt to establish that Atatürk was not a man after some dogma or doctrine that might help explain his unorthodox approach and the nonideological character of the Turkish revolution, Aydemir tends to promote a fallacy. Maybe, Atatürk was not a doctrinaire in the literal sense of the term. But he did hold some views as definite and coherent as any doctrine put in an ideological framework during his life-time. Moreover, he had the conviction to pursue his beliefs uncompromisingly. Further, even if it is not possible to categorize precisely the mode or modes of thought he pursued, yet it is plain that they reveal a pattern of thinking.



limits in the field of religion, particularly in the subtle aspects of religion. Moreover, reformation in the Christian sense of the term hardly harmonized with the character of the Turkish revolution, which was, to start with, a political revolution, not a religious movement. Indeed reformation of the Christian variety was impossible in Islam, with its singular character as a faith and as a philosophy of life. Islam was capable of responding to changes in its own way without going for a Christian-style reformation. The Turks today, notwithstanding their secularism and their cultural reorientation, are still Muslims: they have not constituted themselves into a new sect or church. Not only does this fact testify to the resilience of Islam as a religion, but it also intimates the character of Turkish secularism as a parallel movement. Turkish secularism today, in spite of a history of apparent conflict with religious institutions, is the handiwork of a statesman, not of a reformer or ideologue, and it lies outside the framework of religious evolution. Atatürk as an objective observer of religious experience also appreciated the institutional differences between Islam and other religions. In contrast with the structural bases of Christianity, he believed that there was no special class in Islam like the clergy enjoying special rights or prerogatives. Islam rejects priesthood or asceticism (*ruhbanîyet*)<sup>12</sup>, which is an essential element of organized Christianity. And reformation in Christianity cannot be separated from the institution of priesthood in the religion.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ataürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, vol. 2, pp. 90, 144. There is a lurking wish for an Islamic renaissance in his views on the real ulema who could study and teach "the philosophical realities of our religion". *Ibid.*, p.90. A contemporary scholar made the distinction as follows: "There is no sainthood as to the human beings in Islam. There is no spiritualism namely theocracy (*hukümeti ruhaniye*) in Islam like in Christianity. Likewise, there is neither religious nor administrative organization in (peculiar to) Islam." See Seyyit Bey, *Hilafetin Mahiyet-i Şeriyesi* (Ankara, 1924), p. 32. The monograph is the published speech of Seyyit Bey, the Minister of Justice, given at the second sitting of the Grand National Assembly on 3 March, 1924, the day of the abolition of the Caliphate. Also see Falih Rifki Atay, *Ataürkçülük Nedir?* *op. cit.*, p. 30. In the spirit of the Turkish revolution Atay defined "religion as a matter of conscience", and observes: "There is no sainthood in Islam". For the concept of a religious functionary, see p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> A committee appointed by the faculty of divinity and headed by Professor Fuad Köprülü in its report suggested extreme changes in religious rites, including worship and manner of worship. The fate of the report of this committee reminds us that the Turkish revolution was quite conscious of its limits in the religious domain. The committee's suggestions were conveniently forgotten; for they were in tune neither with the character of the Turkish revolution nor with the "inclinations and traditions of the nation". The report appeared on 20 June 1928 in the daily Press.

Religious outlook, like any process of historical development, evolves in phases and over a period of time. The evolution of the religious outlook of the Turkish revolution too is characterized by several phases, coinciding, more or less, with the various stages of the historical development of that revolution. These phases, though distinct in character, formed part of a single process, viz the process of development of the Turkish revolution, and acquired their characteristic attributes from the realities of the time. The political development of the republican regime determined a good deal its choice of ideas. Inherently, the domain of religion signifies the domain of ideas. As the religious outlook of the Turkish revolution bore the stamp, and followed the course, of its political development, it unfolded in phases.

The first phase, broadly spread over the days of national liberation (1919-22), thrived in an intellectual climate that essentially subscribed to the ideological inheritance of the Ottoman past. In the absence of an alternative, Islam served as the ideological basis of the national liberation movement and the emerging political order. As regards the nascent Turkish nationalism as an ideological alternative, it seemed, in its political and cultural context, to be too inhibitive or narrow to provide —within the framework of the Turkish Muslim identity— the kind of broad, cohesive, and universal ideological pattern needed for the liberation movement. Thus Islam served national liberation in its hazy days as a faith and as a philosophy of life that restored the self-confidence and emotional equilibrium of the people and saved them from despondency.<sup>14</sup> The religious elite appears to have been more sensitive to the designs of incipient imperialism even though it failed to relate the phenomenon to the emerging patterns of world politics and its ideological overtones. The political consciousness of the religious elite rested essentially on a sense of history that views the colonial domination of Turkey as a conflict between Islam and Christ-

<sup>14</sup> The view that the national liberation movement was the saviour not merely of Turkey, but also, and perhaps mainly, of Islam and the Muslims against the designs of Europe and America was prominently projected in contemporary writings. Cf. M. Şemseddin (Günaltay), *Maziden Atiye* (Istanbul, 1923), p. 4. The use of terms like *istihlas mücahadesi* for the liberation movement or *itila mücahadesi* for the period that followed also conveyed a religious emphasis. As the liberation movement needed religious devotion to succeed, so did national reconstruction need religious dedication. This was what the terms appeared to suggest. *Ibid.*, p. 6. Mustafa Kemal himself used the term "holy struggle" (*mücahedati mukaddese*) in the context. *Atatürkün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri IV.* (Ankara 1964), p. 259.

ianity. It failed to discern the characteristics of the new version of Christianity.

The political structure of the national liberation movement conformed to the traditional set-up and the legacy of the past, but the Turkish intellectual, in his search for new ideological horizons, saw Islam in a different role and sought to present what he regarded as the true image of his religion. His outlook on life, essentially an outcome of political developments, seemed to condition his religious outlook as well. He combined in his approach the revivalism of the New Ottomans and the rationalism of the Young Turks. The political developments of the past decade which had completely changed the complexion of the country and inaugurated a new era, an era of rethinking, in the intellectual outlook of the Turks, also determined the approach of the Turkish intelligentsia. It may be recalled that religious consciousness in Islam, in line with its ideological character, has always fostered a certain political outlook. The religious outlook of the liberation movement too reflected in some measure the imperatives of the political scene. The close relationship between politics and religious consciousness, however, generated contradictions that tended to disturb the coherence of the religious pattern. In retrospect, the religious outlook of the liberation period appears to have been out of tune with that of the period that followed. But then each phase of a process manifests characteristics of its own derived from its own peculiar setting. And yet the various phases of a process, if considered as a whole, present a measure of coherence. As the Turkish revolution progressed and unfolded its potentialities, its view of religion also underwent change, but it always remembered to underline its loyalty to Islam. In fact it entered upon an entirely new phase after the struggle for liberation was over. A struggle for supremacy within the ruling elite<sup>15</sup> and a chain of reforms marked the new phase. The revolution even departed from some of the basic concepts of the phase of liberation. Though it continued to move along the path charted out for it, it yet endeavoured to find a mean between the various currents. Thus the transition to the new phase fostered a situation that altered the perspectives and so the religious outlook of the ruling elite. Not that the Turkish ruling elite had used Islam earlier merely as a shield with which to save the liberation movement from internal disruption or external threats. There is no evidence in the writings of those days to support any

<sup>15</sup> A phase of this struggle (within the ruling party) apparently came to a close when Rauf Bey (Orbay) declared himself a partisan of the Republic and an opponent of the Sultanate and constitutionalism. See "Halk Firkasında Mühim bir Müzakere", *Ayin Tarihi*, vol. 1, no. 3, November, 1929. pp. 419ff.

presumption of a transitory role for Islam. Indeed the image of Islam to be found in literature of those days conforms to the ideological outlook of the Turkish ruling elite: Islam still formed the essential element of that outlook.<sup>16</sup>

In brief, the view that emerged in the first phase represented Islam as a religion that was in conformity with nature, reason, progress, and enlightenment — all attributes that the liberation movement itself wished to exemplify.<sup>17</sup> The idea of unity (with a new emphasis), which formed, along with the idea of progress, the basis of the philosophy of the Young Turks, also figures in the terminology of the liberation movement. Islam was to serve as the vehicle for those ideas; for it was thought that the people would understand those ideas better if conveyed through the language they understood most, viz the language of their religion. The whole idea was to buttress the image of the emerging regime vis-a-vis the conservative regime in Istanbul and the forces of reaction in Anatolia. To keep up its struggle against the *ancien regime* and to underline its own totally different character the liberation movement needed to exemplify the attributes that distinguished Islam. And it was not so much to convince the masses as to win over the ambivalent intelligentsia to the cause of liberation that the leaders of the movement emphasized those attributes. At the international level, too, the liberation movement invoked the symbols of the old regime. Besides, the liberation movement still cherished such Islamic ideological concepts as the concept of universal brotherhood, which gave it a pan-Islamic hue.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Those who see Mustafa Kemal in the role of a great tactician using Islam in a revolutionary manner during the days of national liberation consider his approach to Islam in isolation from his religious outlook. It was not as though it was something momentary and not part of a coherent and consistent pattern. See for example, Taner Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası 1919-1946*, (Ankara, 1971), p. 38. Indeed, Kemal's religious outlook underlay even the initiatives which he took in the domain of religion following the phase of liberation.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Mohammad Sadiq, "Intellectual Origins of the Turkish National Liberation Movement", *International Studies*, (New Delhi), October-December, 1976, pp. 209-29.

<sup>18</sup> *Atatürk'ün Tamim ve Telgraf...*, *op. cit.*, p. 259. It is believed that the occupation of Istanbul would revive the same feelings among "all Muslim brethren tied (in a bond of) holy fraternity." See also, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Ankara, 1961), edn. 2, vol. 3, p. 15. Kemal Atatürk said: "...we are also relying on the support of the world of Islam". However, the bond of fraternity seems to have lost its charm when, later on, the Turks reviewed the course of the liberation movement and found that the world of Islam had extended little support. Cf. Seyyit Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

The view of Islam that emerged during the first phase brought about a perceptible change in the religious outlook of the ruling elite; it altered its perspective on the Ottoman heritage, particularly the institutional aspects of that heritage. In fact, apart from the logic of the revolution, the view provided a rationale to the changes introduced during the second phase, which corresponded to the second phase in the evolution of religious outlook. A host of reforms — too familiar to need enumeration here — distinguish the second and the most active phase of the revolution. The first and the most important change was the abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate to establish the supremacy of the idea of sovereignty of the people. This provoked a controversy over the nature of the Caliphate. Besides, even as it did away with one inconsistency the abolition of the Sultanate created another — in the political situation. Interestingly, the political changes of the phase tended to convey the image of religious reform because of the politico-religious character of the institutions that the revolution inherited and, in due course, abolished. However, Islam as religion (*Din*) continued to play its role; the attributes of Islam emphasized in the first phase continued to receive enthusiastic endorsement in the second phase too in the speeches and writings of the intellectual elite. The reforms merely swept away the social and political institutions and those aspects of religious expression that contradicted the religious outlook of the ruling elite.<sup>19</sup> The traditional institutions, sanctified as religious in the popular view, were now seen in an entirely different context. They were regarded, not as part of religious experience, but as forms of socio-political development and, more importantly, as impedimenta blocking the natural flow of religion and hampering its assimilation by the people. However, the ruling elite, in attempting to depoliticize religion and secularize politics, tended not quite unwittingly, to affiliate religion to politics, or to the State, the supreme symbol of political power. The process of religious development seems to have followed, thenceforth, the course of development of the State;

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<sup>19</sup> The shifting attitude towards the institution of tekkes (convents of the order of dervishes), once the sanctuaries of popular enlightenment, illustrates the point. At an early stage of the liberation movement, Mustafa Kemal appreciated the historical role of the tekkes and spoke of them as the *irfan-i Muhammedi ocağı*. A few years later however, he found them to be hearth of decadence and a haven for reactionary forces. The tekkes no more played the enlightening role they had initially done and even failed to help the revolution strike roots. Their incompatibility with the emerging order seemed obvious. They even posed a threat to the revolution and so were closed down. Cf. also Aydemir, *Tek Adam-3*, pp. 237, 497.

and the revolution, rather unconsciously, seems to have strengthened the very process it was intent on reversing, viz the process of interaction between religion and politics. It seems to have sought for an outlook that would view a social phenomenon like religion apart from its social context. It seems to have ignored the fact that a purely personal view of religion would be like an image without a subject.

The reforms in the second phase generated a gap between the religious outlook and the political consciousness of the ruling elite. They were meant to inculcate the doctrine that the religious and political aspects of social life were mutually exclusive and called for no interaction. This doctrine was apparently the logical culmination of a "personal view" of religion which regarded religion as an "affair of conscience." An important consequence of the adoption of this doctrine was that it deprived political life of its moral basis. And as morality was as yet inseparable from religion, the elimination of the moral basis created a vacuum which for want of an alternative to the moral basis provided by Islam, the political elite hastened to fill by a return to Islam in the late 1940s. A secular concept of morality marks the culmination, not the beginning, of a secular process. Whether religion governs politics or politics conditions religion, the concept of religion as an affair of conscience is meaningless and hence irrelevant. At all events the gap between the two important aspects, religious and political, that the Turkish revolution intended to condition in disregard of its own approach to traditional institutions at the time of liberation widened as time passed.<sup>20</sup> The forces of conservatism readily

<sup>20</sup> This found expression in the approach of the Turkish revolution to the institution of Caliphate. In a statement addressed to the world of Islam at the time of occupation of Istanbul by the Allied forces the liberation movement emphasized the "holy" character of the Caliphate of Islam (*Hilafeti mukaddesi İslamiye*), implying its religious nature. The occupation was regarded more as an aggression against the world of Islam than as an aggression just against the Ottoman Empire. Cf. Atatürkün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri IV, op. cit., pp. 258-9. But when it came to abolishing the Caliphate, it was considered more a mundane (*dünyevi*) than a religious (*dini*) issue. See Seyyit Bey, *Hilafetin Mahiyet-i Şeriyesi*, op. cit., p. 4. Atatürk himself expressed his appreciation of Seyyit Bey's speech as scholarly (*ilmi*) and convincing (*mukni*). Nutuk, op. cit., p. 514. Mustafa Kemal remarked: "...in fact, there is no meaning and *raison d'etre* (*hikmeti mevcudiyeti*) of the Caliph and the office of the Caliph either religiously or politically." Ibid., pp. 512-13. However, article-1 of the law abolishing the Caliphate conveys an Islamic sense. The clause reads as under: "The Caliph has been dethroned. As the government and the republic essentially embody the meaning and concept of Caliphate, the Caliphate stands abolished". Tarik Z. Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyanı*, (Istanbul, 1962), p. 167. Also Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*, (Istanbul, 1969), pp. 156 ff.

espoused the cause of the old order in the name of sacred symbols (*mukaddesat*) whereas the forces of change refused to accept the religious sanctity of those symbols. The view that had prevailed in the first phase as regards the institutional aspects of Islam seemed to have undergone a change. For some time politics reflected the dominance of these two trends over even the socio-economic process. This did not, however, mark a change in the ideological perspective of the Turkish revolution: the revolution was as yet loyal to the ideological framework of the liberation movement. The dominance of the ruling group and its control over the strings of power left little scope for a wider and more candid discussion of the ideological complexion of the revolution. Although this undoubtedly helped the revolution in presenting a portrait of stability, it made the ideological scene rather colourless and monotonous.<sup>21</sup> The religious outlook in this phase, accordingly, reflected the thinking of the ruling group whose main concern was consolidation of power.

Mustafa Kemal was in the first instance an enemy of the old polity, which stood in the way of emergence of the new order based on the concept of sovereignty of the nation and republicanism. As for the secular concept polity, it grew out of the process of political change, and it was subsequently adopted as one of the basic principles of the State. While dismantling the old order, Mustafa Kemal faced resistance from the conservative forces which found in religion a ready means to safeguard their interests. Though it would be far from reality to assert that the ruling group was being altruistic and was heedless of its own political future in presenting a progressive image of religion which conflicted with that presented by the conservatives. Mustafa Kemal very well realized the moving power of religion and appreciated the danger for the revolution that a religious upsurge might pose; for politics at the mass base still reflected a religious outlook and political democratization had the potential to whip up a religious frenzy that might restore the old political order. Perhaps the failure of the Progressive Republican Party and the Free Republican Party — two short-lived experiments with liberal politics — may be explained better in

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<sup>21</sup> The *Kadro* movement, however, tried to change the tone and widen the scope of the ideological debate. However, in its enthusiasm for evolving a unique ideological pattern for the Turkish revolution, it began to interpret the ideological perspectives of the ruling elite somewhat wilfully and so deviated from the origins of the revolution. The movement collapsed as the ruling elite or a powerful segment of it withdrew its support, signifying that the movement failed to serve as the ideological spokesman of the ruling elite.

terms of the religious upsurge that they stimulated, consciously or otherwise. Mustafa Kemal, therefore, attacked the institutions that could breed or serve, even if remotely, the conservative forces. However, his prescription to check the outbreak of those forces was confined to the political plane: to strike at the socio-economic roots of conservatism seemed to be outside the range of the revolution. Mustafa Kemal depicted those institutions as archaic and incompatible with the needs of time. His concept of the new Turkey, modern and civilized, provided him with the necessary rationale to clear the debris of the old.

If the religious outlook in the second phase of the Turkish revolution appeared to conform to the political transformation that came about, it followed the new cultural perspective introduced in its third phase. The revolution in the third phase, coinciding broadly with the last decade of Atatürk's life slowed down on the political front and preoccupied itself with other matters, which absorbed its momentum. Atatürk must have felt that the process of political change could be left to work itself out without any danger of restoration of the old order; he had succeeded in nursing a generation of youth that could "preserve and defend for ever the Turkish revolution [and] the Turkish republic."<sup>22</sup> He shifted the emphasis to the task of evolving a new cultural outlook rooted in a new concept of history or prehistory and language. Religious evolution as such ceased to be an active process; it became rather a part of the cultural transformation which emphasized the use of Turkish even in religious services so as to bring religion closer to the people.<sup>23</sup>

The substitution of the Turkish for the Arabic *ezan* seems to have been the most notable change of this phase. On 30 January 1932 for the first time, the *ezan* resounded in Turkish from the minarets of the Fatih Mosque in Istanbul.<sup>24</sup> The rendering of the *ezan* in Turkish had been preceded on 22 January 1932 by the recitation of the *Quran*

<sup>22</sup> Nutuk, p. 543.

<sup>23</sup> See Yunus Nadi, "Hayatta tekamül: Dinde milliyet", *Cumhuriyet*, 22 January 1932, p. 1. He writes that a non-national religion cannot be thought of. He further remarks: "... at least we can desire the religious books and worship to be in the national language in order to make the social virtues of (our) religion more extensive." See also Kiliçoğlu Hakkı, "Dil Türkçe Din Türkçe", *Cumhuriyet*, 2 January 1933, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> See *Cumhuriyet*, 31 January 1932. For the Turkish version of the *ezan*, see *Cumhuriyet*, 23 November 1932.



in Turkish in the Yerebatan Mosque in Istanbul.<sup>25</sup> The idea of making Turkish the language of prayer in the place of Arabic was, however, abandoned in the face of the emotional excitement it provoked. The rendering of the *ezan* in Turkish<sup>26</sup> continued till the Democrats restored the original Arabic *ezan* in 1950. However, the change provoked resistance among the people. There were several incidents — as, for example, the demonstration held in Bursa on February 1, 1933 in favour of the Arabic *ezan*. These made it necessary for Mustafa Kemal to intervene personally.<sup>27</sup> Of course he dismissed the incident as one of minor significance,<sup>28</sup> and observed that it was language, not religion, which lay behind it. Even then the seriousness of the incident cannot be underestimated. In brief, the religious outlook in this phase echoed the nationalist outlook but failed to convert the masses to the idea of “national religion”.

The religious outlook of the Turkish revolution continued to grow and absorb new elements as the historical development of Turkey made further headway. In particular, it assumed new features, diverse and colourful, after the party of Atatürk, the Republican People's Party, lost power in 1950. A new epoch began that added new perspectives to the religious outlook. These new perspectives indeed lie at the core of the ideological conflict that Turkey has witnessed in the past thirty years. They can of course be studied still as part of the process of revolution, but they belong properly to other phases and call for a separate study.

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<sup>25</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 23 January 1932. The paper in its issue of 26 January 1932 reported that the recitation of the *Quran* in Turkish brought the people to a state of ecstasy. An old woman prayed for the long life of the Gazi; for he taught her the meaning of the Holy Book.

<sup>26</sup> It was made an offence to give the *ezan* in Arabic in 1933.

<sup>27</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 6 February, 1933.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 February, 1933.