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HALİL ŞERİF PAŞA, OTTOMAN DIPLOMAT AND STATESMAN

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In the 1860s and 1870s Halil Şerif was one of the most prominent Ottoman diplomats. He served as minister in Athens and in St. Petersburg, then as ambassador in Vienna and in Paris. For a brief period he was foreign minister. He was well known in Europe and in international circles, both for his diplomatic and for his social and cultural activities. One Balkan diplomat even thought of him as a leader of a «school» of political thought and action - an «unsettled and restless school» he called it, to which Midhat Paşa also belonged¹. Despite his prominence, there seems to be no biography of Halil Şerif, and not even a full biographical sketch in one of the standard reference works². The following pages represent a first attempt to provide such a sketch, although many details remain yet unknown and several dates are uncertain.

Halil Şerif was the son of Mehmed Şerif Paşa, sometimes referred to as Büyük Şerif Paşa, who was one of the «princes» of Egypt³. Mehmed Şerif Paşa was a well-known figure, related to the family of Mehmet Ali, the governor of Egypt. He was referred to in 1856 as «a member of the council of ministers,» although it is

1 Vacarescu, Romanian agent in Serbia, in his despatch of 21 November 1872, in Nicolas Jorga, ed., *Correspondance diplomatique roumaine sous le roi Charles I^{er} (1866-1880)* (Paris, 1923), no. 231.

2 Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî* (İstanbul, 1308-15), II, 309, has one paragraph and is slightly fuller than İ. A. Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurları* (İstanbul, 1946), pp. 165-66. 165-66. *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* and *Encyclopaedia of Islam* have nothing.

3 İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrîâzamlar* (İstanbul, 1940-1953), p. 434, n. 2. *Sicill-i Osmanî*, II, 309, calls Şerif Paşa «Büyük».

not clear whether this was the Egyptian or the Ottoman council⁴. In any case, it is obvious that Halil Şerif was a member of a leading family, a family which presumably was wealthy. He must have been born in Egypt some time in the 1820s.

According to his own account, Halil Şerif was educated in France, where his studies were principally in the realm of political science⁵. On his return to Egypt, he was for a short time the second secretary of Abbas Paşa, the governor (1848-1854), and a member of the council of justice (ahkâm-ı mısriye) there. Thereafter he was for five years —approximately 1850 to 1855— director of the office of translation and of the bureau of correspondence in the Egyptian foreign affairs administration. Said Paşa (1854-1863), the successor of Abbas as governor of Egypt, then appointed Halil Şerif to be commissioner in charge of Egyptian exhibits sent to Paris for the international exposition of 1855. Halil Şerif must have stayed in Paris for about a year. He was still there in February and March, 1856, when the Congress of Paris met to make peace after the Crimean War. The Ottoman Empire was represented at that Congress by its grand vezir, Mehmed Emin Âli Paşa.

On March 13, 1856, while the Congress was meeting, Halil Şerif wrote a letter to Âli Paşa, in French, in his own handwriting⁶. The letter, now preserved in the Başbakanlık Arşivi, gives the information about Halil Şerif's career which is contained in the preceding paragraph. The purpose of the letter was to apply for a job in Ottoman state service. He wanted to shift from Egyptian to Ottoman service, said Halil Bey, because he had weak eyes. He suffered from frequent eye inflammations, and the most famous physicians in Paris had told him that, if he lived in Egypt, he would be threatened with the loss of his vision. Since I must live outside Egypt, Halil continued in his letter, I want to be useful to «my fatherland,» and not to spend my youth in idleness. Therefore I offer my services to the Ottoman government, «the more so because

4 Başbakanlık Arşivi, İstanbul (hereafter BA), İrade, 1272, Hariciye, no. 6953, lef 1, Grand Vezir Âli Paşa (Paris), letter of 15 Receb 1272/22 March 1856.

5 BA, İrade, 1272, Hariciye, no. 6593, lef 2, Khalil letter to Âli Paşa, 13 March 1856.

6 *ibid.*

our most precious claim to glory in Egypt is to be the servants of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan.» My «feeble knowledge» could best be used in diplomacy, said Halil.

This letter is a strange one. Inflammation of the eyes is not a usual reason for seeking a diplomatic post. Halil Şerif's education and experience, however, did qualify him for such a position, especially in the Tanzimat period when French-speaking diplomats were in demand. Possibly Halil Şerif had already met and talked with Âli Paşa, who had been in Paris for three weeks by the time the letter was written. Probably Halil Şerif also knew Mehmed Cemil Bey, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, who served also as Âli Paşa's second plenipotentiary at the Paris Congress. In any case, his request for employment was warmly received by Âli Paşa.

On March 22, 1856, Âli Paşa sent Halil Şerif's letter on to Istanbul with a covering letter to Kıbrıslı Mehmed Paşa, the acting grand vezir, and Fuad Paşa, the foreign minister⁷. Âli's letter recommended that Halil Bey be employed in the Foreign Ministry or in the Sultan's suite. Halil Bey has knowledge and ability, said Âli, and knows French well; the letter is his own composition in his own handwriting. Âli Paşa's letter in Turkish and Halil Bey's letter in French were forwarded to the Sultan on April 8 with a recommendation that Halil be employed in the Foreign Ministry. The next day Sultan Abdülmeccid gave his approval⁸. An irade stating that Halil Şerif would be employed in the ministry was issued on April 20. By the time this news arrived in Paris, the Congress had concluded its work and Âli Paşa was visiting London. So Halil Bey was informed by Mehmed Cemil Bey, the ambassador, some time early in May that his application for employment had been accepted. Halil Bey prepared to leave Paris for Istanbul⁹.

It is not certain exactly when Halil Şerif arrived in Istanbul. Nor is it certain what his first position with the Foreign Ministry was. Perhaps he was immediately appointed to be Ottoman minister (orta elçi) in Athens, for the official yearbook of the Foreign Mi-

7 Dated 15 Receb 1272. See note 4, above.

8 BA, İrade, 1272, Hariciye, no. 6593, arz tezkeresi of 2 Şaban 1272.

9 BA, İrade, 1272, Hariciye, no. 6708, lef 7, Mehmed Cemil letter of 9 Ramazan 1272/14 May 1856.

nistry lists his appointment to that capital as occurring on September 5, 1856¹⁰. If this date is correct, it indicates that Halil Bey started his career at the top of the diplomatic ladder. In *Sicill-i Osmani*, however, Halil Bey's appointment to Athens is dated as 1275/1858-59¹¹. If this is correct, he must have had an earlier position within the Foreign Ministry. He probably remained in Athens until early in 1861¹².

Halil Bey must have been competent as minister in Athens, for his reputation grew among European diplomats. The British ambassador in Istanbul is reported to have favored Halil's appointment as foreign minister, as early as 1860¹³. But Halil Bey was, instead, transferred to St. Petersburg as minister (orta elçi). His appointment was dated 2 rebiülevvel 1278/7 September 1861, when Âli Paşa was again grand vezir, two and a half months after Abdülaziz became Sultan¹⁴. The position of envoy to Russia was new — it had become a regular Ottoman diplomatic post only in 1857, after the Crimean War. When Halil Bey succeeded Derviş Paşa as minister in St. Petersburg, in 1861, various Balkan questions in which Russia favored local nationalist aims, against Ottoman interests, were current, especially the questions of whether an Ottoman presence should remain in the autonomous principality of Serbia, and of whether the autonomous principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (Eflak ve Boğdan) should be allowed a closer union. Judging by some of his despatches from St. Petersburg, Halil Şerif reported intelligently on the views of Gorchakov, the Russian foreign minister. Halil Bey also defended vigorously the Ottoman position, warning Gorchakov about the dangers of espousing the principle of nationality. At times, perhaps, Halil Bey was so vigorous as to be undiplomatic¹⁵.

10 *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye* (Kostantiniyye, 1302), p. 193, appointment dated 5 Muharrem 1273.

11 *Sicill-i Osmani*, II, 309.

12 His successor in Athens, Yanko Photiades Paşa, was appointed orta elçi on 16 Ramazan 1277/23 Maroh 1861 : *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 193.

13 İnal, *Son Sadrâzamlar*, pp. 94-95.

14 *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 188.

15 For example, see his despatches on the Serbian question : Dışışleri Bakanlığı Hazine-i Evrak, İstanbul (hereafter DBHE), Siyasî Karton 40

While Halil Bey was in St. Petersburg, an article on Egyptian history which he had written appeared in the *Mecmua-i Fünun*, the journal of the newly founded Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye, which began its publication in 1862. «Kudema-i Müllük-i Mısriye Tarihi» (History of the Ancient Egyptian Kings) was published serially in volumes 1 and 2. Later the articles were published by Ebüzziya's press as a book¹⁶. These articles also brought Halil Bey to the notice of Europeans¹⁷.

It is not certain how long Halil Bey remained in St. Petersburg. He was not officially replaced as minister there until October 15, 1868, when Komnenos Bey was appointed chargé d'affaires (maslahatgüzar)¹⁸. Long before that, however, Komnenos had been acting as chargé. Even while Halil was minister, Komnenos had done much reporting, presumably when Halil was on vacation. But from June 1865 on, Halil Şerif's name does not appear on despatches from St. Petersburg, and Komnenos steadily represents the Porte there.

Apparently Halil Şerif left Russia for Paris. It would be interesting to know why. He had, of course, a long familiarity with Paris from his student days, and from his period as Egyptian commissioner. In 1865 he probably took up residence in the French capital, as a private citizen¹⁹. Our knowledge of his life there comes from European sources²⁰. He acquired a reputation as a bon vivant, a drinker, a gambler who lost considerable sums without visible

(hereafter S. 40), dosya 17 (hereafter d. 17), Halil to Âli no. 103/35, 18/30 June 1862, and no. 113/40, 2,14 July 1862.

16 *Mecmua-i Fünun*, I (1279/1862-63), 34-36, 75-78, 144-46, 434-41; II (1280/1863-64), 300-06, 321-29, 467-74. Perhaps there are additional parts; I have not seen volumes III and IV. Mehmed Cemil Paşa is listed with Halil Bey as co-author; I am not sure why. The book was published after Halil's death: Halil Şerif Paşa, *Kudema-i Müllük-i Mısriye Tarihi*, 1-2 cüz (İstanbul, 1304/1886-87).

17 «Schreiben des Hrn. Dr. Busch an Prof. Brockhaus, Pera, März, 1863», *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 17 (1863), 711.

18 27 Cemazielâhır 1285: *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 188.

19 Frédéric Loliée, *Les femmes du second Empire: La fête impériale* (Paris, 1926), pp. 81-86, places Halil Şerif in Paris about 1865. The statement by another European, Amand von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, *Serail und Hohe Pforte* (Vienna, 1879), p. 49, that Halil Şerif was Ottoman ambassador in Paris at about this time is an error. Mehmed Cemil Paşa was again the ambassador there.

distress. His dinners were said to be the meeting place of the high society of gambling circles. He was known to gamble in Nice also. He also gained a reputation as a lover of literature and of good art. He knew Sainte-Beuve, the author and literary critic, Villemessant, the journalist of *Le Figaro*, Courbet, the realist painter, and undoubtedly many others in the intellectual and social world. One of Halil Bey's purchases from Courbet, the large painting of two female nudes called «Sleep,» has become famous; Halil paid 20,000 francs (about \$4,000 at that time) for it in Paris in 1866. At this time, said Villemessant, Halil Bey looked exactly like Adam Adolphe, the composer (who had died in 1856): «He is short of stature, wears a full beard, rather short and very black; he has eyeglasses... (and) lively eyes.»²¹

In 1867 Halil Şerif wrote a political tract which indicates that he was in the avant-garde of liberal thinking of his day, among Ottoman public figures. The memorandum was dated February 12. It apparently was never published; it may have circulated in manuscript, or perhaps it was something that Halil Bey sent to a few statesmen and diplomats. It is known to us only through quotation of part of it by Edouard Engelhardt, who probably got a copy when he was serving as French consul in Belgrade²². In this memorandum Halil advocated a constitutional regime for the Ottoman Empire, with a guarantee of the equality of Christians and Muslims, both politically and socially. The consequent revival of political and social life in Turkey would at once increase the devotion of its people

20 Loliée, *Fête impériale*, pp. 81-86; Schreiger-Lerchenfeld, *Serail*, pp. 53-54; H. de Villemessant, *Mémoires d'un journaliste, 6ème série, Mes voyages et mes prisons* (Paris, 1878), pp. 95-104; Genét, «Letter from Paris, January 19, 1955», *The New Yorker* (29 January 1955), p. 61.

21 Villemessant, *Mes voyages*, p. 98. See the photographs in Mitat Cemal Kuntay, *Namık Kemal* (İstanbul, 1944-1956), I, 329 and 334.

22 Edouard Engelhardt, *La Turquie et la Tanzimat* (Paris, 1882-84), I, 231. The memorandum is also referred to in Bernhard Stern, *Jungtürken und Verschwörer*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1901), pp. 120-21, and Soubhy Noury, *Le régime représentatif en Turquie* (Paris, 1914), pp. 62-63. Two other works, more recent, refer to the same memorandum, apparently relying on the three preceding works: IU. A. Petrosian, «*Novye Osmany' i borba zã konstitutsiiu 1876 g. v Turtsii* (Moscow, 1958), p. 43, and Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi VI: İslahat Fermanı Devri, 1856-1861* (Ankara, 1954), p. 27.

to working, and would enrich the state, he said. The constitutional and egalitarian regime would thwart Russia's designs to give autonomy to Christians in the Empire, said Halil Bey. It is obvious that Halil Şerif wrote this under the impact of the rebellion in Crete in 1866-69. Russia hoped to use this as an occasion for dividing the Ottoman Empire in Europe into autonomous states under Christian control. Perhaps Halil Bey was influenced in his thinking by Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, the Egyptian prince who was brother of the governor, İsmail Paşa (1863-1879), and heir to the Egyptian governorship until he was cut out of the succession by the ferman of May 27, 1866. By that time Mustafa Fazıl was living in Paris, in semi-exile from Istanbul. There he began to think and to write along the lines of constitutional government for the Ottoman Empire²³. Halil Şerif must have been in touch with him then, in Paris, and evidently shared Mustafa Fazıl's viewpoint.

Halil Şerif's liberal inclinations and his probable contact with Mustafa Fazıl are doubtless responsible for his being in touch with members of the Yeni Osmanlılar group who, in 1867, were fleeing arrest in Istanbul and gathering in Paris. *Le Monde* in the spring of that year associated Halil Bey with Mustafa Fazıl and Şinasi and said that the group would be joined by Ziya, Namık Kemal, and Ali Suavi who were newly from Istanbul²⁴. Ali Suavi called on Halil Şerif in the latter's house in Paris in June, 1867²⁵. Halil Şerif then and probably later also furnished the Yeni Osmanlılar with needed funds. It does not appear that Halil Şerif was ever so close to them as Mustafa Fazıl, nor was he formally a member of the group; rather he was sympathetic and supportive²⁶. İsmail Paşa, who trave-

23 On Mustafa Fazıl see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, 1962), pp. 197-205; Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, 1962), index.

24 Eugène Taconet, editor, in *Le Monde*, 12 June 1867, quoted by M. Kaya Bilgegil, *Yakın Çağ Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatı üzerinde Araştırmalar, I: Yeni Osmanlılar* (Ankara, 1976), pp. 283-84.

25 Kuntay, *Namık Kemal*, I, 330, n. 4, letter of Ali Suavi to Halil Şerif, 17 Cemazielâhîr 1287/14 September 1870.

26 G. Douin, *Histoire du règne du Khédive Ismail* (Rome, 1933-34), II, 314, says that Halil was in «controlled flirtation» with Jeune Turquie. Engelhardt, *La Turquie*, I, 233, says that «Halil Paşa was Jeune Turquie», but he speaks of his memorandum, not of his organizational connections.

led to Europe in 1867, tried to recruit Halil Şerif for his own service. Presumably he wanted to use Halil Bey's abilities and to break up the group formed around his opponent, Mustafa Fazıl. In any case, Halil Bey refused to join İsmail²⁷.

At some point in 1868 Halil Şerif evidently returned from Paris to Istanbul. Despite his flirtation with the Yeni Osmanlılar, who bitterly opposed Âli Paşa, Halil had managed to stay on good terms with Âli. Âli Paşa in 1868 was faced, as grand vezir, with heavy burdens not only in matters of domestic reform, but in foreign affairs. These burdens were increased when Fuad Paşa, the foreign minister and Âli's close associate of many years, became ill in the late summer or early fall of 1868. Âli Paşa then called upon Halil Şerif to help him, and persuaded Sultan Abdülaziz, who did not much like Halil Bey, to agree²⁸. Halil Şerif was appointed Undersecretary (Müstesar) in the Foreign Ministry in Cemazielâhir 1285/September-October 1868²⁹, while Safvet Paşa became Foreign Minister ad interim³⁰. When Fuad Paşa died, in Nice, in February 1869, Âli Paşa himself took over the post and title of Minister of Foreign Affairs, while keeping also the position of grand vezir. Halil Şerif continued to be the Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry, but because of Âli Paşa's dual role was now often called the «müstesar of the Grand Vezir.»³¹

During this period Halil Bey was feared by the Khedive Ismail, owing to Halil's influential position and, undoubtedly, his friendliness to Mustafa Fazıl³². He was also an object of suspicion and of

27 Douin, *Khédive Ismail*, II, 313.

28 *ibid.*

29 *Sicill-i Osmanî* II, 309.

30 I do not know the date of Safvet's appointment. But despatches to him in October 1868 are addressed to the «foreign minister ad interim», as for example DBHE, S4, d.10, Photiades (Athens) to Safvet no. 04431/315, 14 October 1868. The American minister in Istanbul, Morris, even addressed Safvet simply as «minister», (which he was not, for Fuad Paşa kept the title until his death): United States National Archives, State Department Records, Turkey 20, Morris to Seward no. 291, 24 January 1869.

31 As by Elliot, British ambassador: Public Record Office, London (hereafter PRO), FO 78/2124, Elliot to Granville no. 139, Therapia, 7 August 1870.

32 Douin, *Khédive Ismail*, II, 314.

attack by some of the Yeni Osmanlılar, undoubtedly because of his close association with Âli's policies³³. At about this time Halil Şerif is said to have been the author of a brochure on the capitulations³⁴. It is probably also in this period when Halil Şerif allowed Charles Mismser to use his library. Mismser, a Frenchman who was close to Âli Paşa and was the editor of the newspaper *la Turquie* in Istanbul, used the library of Halil Bey in writing his book entitled *Soirées de Constantinople*³⁵.

Halil Şerif's tenure as Undersecretary came to an end some time in the late spring or early summer of 1870. The reason was an open break with Ismail Paşa, the Khedive of Egypt. The story of this break which follows is taken from a despatch of Sir Henry Elliot, the British ambassador in Istanbul³⁶. It may not be completely true, yet it has a ring of truth, and Elliot may have learned it from Âli and from Halil Şerif directly. It seems that when Ismail visited Istanbul, he refused to see Halil Şerif, who had come to call on him. Ismail refused to apologize for the insult, despite Âli Paşa's efforts to obtain a conciliatory gesture from Ismail. Halil Bey then proposed to resign, and to write an insulting letter to Ismail, but Âli Paşa refused the resignation. Halil Bey nevertheless sent the letter to Ismail and also published it. The angry Ismail then took the letter to Âli Paşa, who now accepted Halil's resignation to satisfy the Khedive.

Not long after this incident, however, Halil Şerif was appointed to be ambassador (büyük elçi) in Vienna and then promoted to the rank of vezir, becoming Halil Şerif Paşa. The appointment to the ambassadorship came on 15 Cemazievvel 1287/13 August 1870³⁷. The promotion in rank to paşa came apparently a year later,

33 Kuntay, *Namık Kemal*, I, 330-31, and the quotation there from *Hürriyet* no. 51, 14 Haziran 1869.

34 Douin, *Khedive Ismail*, II, 314.

35 Mismser reports this in his *Souvenirs du monde musulman* (Paris, 1892), p. 149. *Soirées de Constantinople* was published in Paris in 1870, but I have not seen a copy.

36 PRO, FO 78/2124, Elliot to Granville, no. 139, Theragia, 7 August 1870.

37 *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 170. *Sicill-i Osmani* says 16 Cemazievvel.

on 24 Cemazievvel 1288/11 August 1871³⁸. Obviously Halil Şerif was not in disgrace with his patron, Âli Paşa. Elliot told Âli that such an appointment and such a promotion seemed insulting to Ismail. Ali, however, replied that he thought Ismail would be pleased to have Halil Şerif out of the Foreign Ministry and removed from Istanbul³⁹. Elliot was not displeased with the appointment in itself. He characterized Halil Şerif as «a man of great intelligence.»⁴⁰

Halil Bey soon arrived in Vienna to take the place of Hayder Efendi, who was transferred to Istanbul. It was a time of tension in Europe. The Franco-Prussian war was raging. The Ottoman policy was to maintain a strict neutrality. At the same time, the Porte was wary of a possible Russian move to overturn the Paris peace treaty of 1856 which neutralized the Black Sea. Âli Paşa's instructions to Halil Bey were explicit on these and other issues⁴¹. In his dealings with Count Beust, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, and with Count Andrassy, the Hungarian minister-president, Halil Şerif ably upheld the Ottoman position. After the Russians did take the step of denouncing the Black Sea neutralization, Halil vigorously urged Beust to remain firm against Russia⁴². But Vienna was not the center of diplomatic activity on this question, which was settled in 1871 by a conference of the powers, including the Ottomans, in London. Halil Şerif continued to report the Austrian news and views, apparently quite effectively. While he was in Vienna he also saw the beginnings of the formation of the Three Emperors' League, linking Austria, Germany, and Russia⁴³.

It may have been Halil Şerif's experience in St. Petersburg in the 1860s, or it may have been the shock of Russia's unilateral coup in overturning the international treaty provision against armament

38 *Sicill-i Osmani*, II, 309. Possibly the year is in error here, and the correct year is possibly 1287; the appointment would then be 22 August 1870.

39 PRO, FO 78/2124, Elliot to Granville no. 139, Therapia, 7 August 1870.

40 PRO, FO 78/2124, Elliot to Granville no. 142, Therapia, 9 August 1870.

41 DBHE, S19, d.4, Âli to Halil, very confidential, no. 28582/193, 16 September 1870.

42 DBHE, S19, d.4 and d.5, contain a good deal of Halil Şerif's reporting during this period. See especially his telegram to Âli, no. 3285/371, 16 November 1870, in d.5.

43 DBHE, d.452, Halil (Istanbul) to Musurus (London), no date, in reply to Musurus' letter of 18 October 1872.

on the Black Sea, or it may have been other experiences of Halil in Vienna that made him quite anti-Russian. He was most suspicious of Russian and pan-Slav activities in the Balkan peninsula. This led him to continue, what his predecessor Haydar Efendi had begun, the support of agents who provided him with secret reports on Russian activities, and with copies of documents to prove them⁴⁴. His zeal may have led him to accept fraudulent reports and false documents⁴⁵. He was, nevertheless, a strong defender of the Ottoman Empire against Russian designs.

In Vienna Halil Şerif Paşa lived in a high style. His house, which Villemessant visited along with Jacques Offenbach, the composer, was full of servants in livery. In his office were paintings, marble statues of the best French artists, walls covered with silk damask in white, cherry, and golden hues, and an arm-chair of interwoven buffalo horns. Dinner for his guests was followed by smoking of bejeweled çubuks in the smoking room and then by card playing in a large salon⁴⁶. Halil Şerif also entertained Namık Kemal, probably in the same house, where they talked at length about the latter's plans to publish a new newspaper. This was in 1870, probably as Namık Kemal was returning to Istanbul from his European exile. The two men evidently got along well together, and each respected the other⁴⁷.

While Halil Şerif was ambassador in Vienna, his patron Âli Paşa died in September 1871. Mahmud Nedim Paşa was chosen by Sultan Abdülaziz to be the new grand vezir. Âli's death had, of course, also left vacant the post of foreign minister. Possibly Halil Şerif might have been appointed foreign minister. But Ismail Paşa paid Mahmud Nedim to make sure that this did not happen⁴⁸. Halil Şerif stayed on in Vienna as ambassador through 1871 and into 1872. Meanwhile, at the end of July, 1872, Midhat Paşa became grand vezir. He secured Mehmed Cemil Paşa, formerly ambassador

44 DBHE, S49, d.3, Halil to Âli, conf., no. 3240/341, 31 October 1870.

45 PRO,FO65/939, Loftus (St. Petersburg) to Derby, conf., no. 355, 15 August 1876, reports Gorchakov's assertion that documents were false.

46 Villemessant, *Mes voyages*, pp. 105-110. Much of his description is repeated in Kuntay, *Namık Kemal*, I, 329-30.

47 *ibid.*, I, 331-34.

48 Davison, *Reform*, p. 285.

in Paris, as foreign minister. But Mehmed Cemil died suddenly after a little more than a month in office. Halil Şerif then was summoned from his Vienna embassy to become foreign minister. On 22 Receb 1289/25 September 1872 he was appointed. He left Vienna on October 3, 1872, to take up the new post⁴⁹.

Soon after his arrival in Istanbul, on October 15, 1872, Halil Şerif was married to Nazlı Hanım, the daughter of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa⁵⁰. Thus was cemented the tie between the leading opponents of Ismail, Mustafa Fazıl and his now son-in-law Halil Şerif. Nazlı Hanım was, like Halil Şerif Paşa, quite familiar with western culture. Her father had given her a good education, an English governess, and a reasonable amount of freedom. She knew English, French, and played the piano — all unusual accomplishments for a woman in the Ottoman society of the 1870s⁵¹. Halil Şerif himself continued his interest in westernizing culture while he was foreign minister. In January, 1873, he sponsored the performance at the Gedik Paşa theatre in Istanbul of a western-style play, *Ecel-i Kaza*, written by Namık Kemal and Ebüzziya Tevfik⁵².

The anti-Ismail views of Halil Şerif were shared by the grand vezir Midhat Paşa. Both men were trying to hold the Ottoman Empire together, whereas Ismail was trying to increase his own authority and to act like an independent monarch. Despite the opposition of the grand vezir and the foreign minister, Ismail achieved new success. By distribution of money to Palace officials, he obtained two fermans removing some restrictions on his independent financial and economic activity in Egypt. The second one authorized Ismail to contract loans on his own authority⁵³. Halil Şerif had already

49 *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 170; Villemessant, *Mes voyages*, pp. 112-16.

50 *ibid.*, pp. 116-17; Kuntay, *Namık Kemal*, I, 373, quoting *İbret* no. 31, 3 Teşrin-i evvel 1288/15 October 1872.

51 Horace Rumbold, *Recollections of a Diplomatist* (London, 1902), II, 329-32. Rumbold served in the British embassy in İstanbul, 1871-73, and knew Mustafa Fazıl.

52 *Levant Herald*, 25 and 30 January 1873.

53 French texts of fermans of 7 Receb 1289/10 September 1872 and 25 Receb 1289/28 September 1872 in Gabriel Noradounghian, *Recueil d'actes internationaux de l'Empire ottoman* (Paris, 1897-1903), III, 342-43.

been appointed foreign minister when the second ferman was issued, but he had not yet reached Istanbul. The second ferman was accompanied by a *hat* which was very specific on Ismail's right to negotiate foreign loans, a *hat* that was never shown to Midhat Paşa before he was dismissed from office, and that Halil Şerif later saw only because the British ambassador showed him a copy he had received from the British consul in Egypt⁵⁴. In spite of his success in obtaining the fermans, Ismail continued to work against both Midhat Paşa and Halil Paşa. Ismail's agent in Istanbul, Abraham Bey, was ordered to seek their dismissal. By October 18, 1872, Ismail's presents to the Sultan did, in fact, succeed in obtaining Midhat's dismissal. Midhat was replaced as grand vezir by Mütercim Mehmed Rüşdi Paşa⁵⁵. But Halil Şerif stayed on as foreign minister. This may have been because of his ability. It may also have been that he was kept in order to attract still further payments from the Khedive.

About a month after Midhat Paşa was removed from office, Halil Şerif Paşa proposed a plan to make the Ottoman Empire a kind of federation. Midhat had probably worked on this plan with Halil. The essential point of the plan was to make sure that Romania and Serbia, while retaining internal self-government, were closely tied to the Ottoman Empire for purposes of defense. Under Halil's plan, the Romanian and Serbian armies would be incorporated into the Ottoman armed forces, under the Sultan. In return, those two states would be granted not only continued political autonomy, but also the right to their own coinage, their own decorations, and exemption from the capitulations. They would be a part of the Ottoman Empire in the same way as Bavaria and Baden were part of the newly created German Empire. The plan was obviously one of Halil Şerif's projected methods of strengthening the Empire against the menace of Russia. The Russian ambassador, Ignatyev, understood this and opposed the plan bitterly. Ignatyev later wrote

54 PRO, FO 78/2219, Elliot to Granvil'e no. 214, 14 October 1872, no. 215 conf., 14 October 1872, and no. 233 conf., 24 October 1872.

55 Angelo Sammarco, *Histoire de l'Égypte moderne*, III : *Le règne du Khédive Ismaïl, de 1863 à 1875* (Cairo, 1937), pp. 218-19.

that Halil Şerif was very dangerous for Russia. Despite support from Britain and Austria, the Russian opposition, along with Romanian and Serbian, prevented further consideration of the plan⁵⁶.

The two most important enemies of Halil Şerif were Ignatyev and the Khedive Ismail. It seems to have been Ismail's influence that finally led to the removal of Halil Şerif from the Foreign Ministry. Ismail's agent, Abraham Bey, tried to bribe the grand vezir, Mütercim Mehmed Rüşdi Paşa, to dismiss Halil. Mehmed Rüşdi refused the bribe. Abraham then bribed Palace officials, and finally Sultan Abdülaziz sent word to Mehmed Rüşdi that Halil was displeasing to him. But the grand vezir replied that he found no fault with Halil's work. He is «a man of patriotic public spirit and political knowledge,» said Mehmed Rüşdi. «It is not appropriate to dismiss so capable a minister and one so well known in Europe.» Mehmed Rüşdi himself resigned his office⁵⁷. Halil Şerif stayed on as foreign minister for a few weeks, but was dismissed finally on 11 Muharrem 1290/11 March 1873, when Ahmed Esad Paşa was grand vezir⁵⁸. He had been the foreign minister for almost six months, during the terms of office of three grand vezirs. At a time when ministers were being frequently shifted, the length of Halil's service testifies both to his ability and, probably, to his usefulness as a barrier to Ismail's influence in Istanbul.

For a period of more than two years, Halil Serif Paşa held no public office. In the opinion of the British ambassador, this was owing to the influence of Ismail⁵⁹. It is not certain what Halil did during these two years, or whether he was in Istanbul all that time. Then, on 23 Cemazielâhir 1292/27 July 1875, he was appointed ambassador to Paris⁶⁰. But he never went to Paris, and was

56 Jorga., *Correspondance diplomatique roumaine*, pp. 95-99; PRO, FO 78/2220, Elliot to Granville no. 259 conf., Therapia, 13 November 1872; N. P. Ignatyev, «Zapiski Grapha N. P. Ignatyeva (1864-1874)», *Izvestiia Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del*, 1915, I, 148-50, 158, 170-72.

57 This account is in İnal, *Son Sadrâzamlar*, pp. 108-09. Mehmed Rüşdi resigned on 15 February 1873 and was succeeded by Esad Paşa the same day.

58 *Sicill-i Osmanî*, II, 309. Safvet Paşa replaced Halil Şerif as foreign minister the next day.

59 PRO, FO 78/2384, Elliot to Derby no. 404, conf., 30 July 1875.

60 *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 181.

dismissed from that post less than two weeks after the appointment. This curious episode is probably to be explained in terms of the fluctuating relationship between Sultan Abdülaziz and the Khedive Ismail. It seems that the Sultan, to show his displeasure at something Ismail had done, decided to appoint Ismail's enemy, Halil Şerif, to the ambassadorship to France. This was an important post, where harm might be done to Ismail's influence or reputation. The Sultan seems to have taken this decision without consulting Esad Paşa, who was again grand vezir, or the ministers. Then suddenly the Sultan changed his mind, perhaps as the result of bribery by Ismail. On August 5 he ordered Esad not to send Halil to Paris, and to compensate him by finding for him a provincial governorship. This Paris appointment might not be acceptable to the French, and would unnecessarily arouse suspicions in Ismail's mind, said Abdülaziz. The sudden reversal caused some embarrassment to Esad, who must have agreed to the appointment earlier. In any case, Halil Şerif did not go to Paris, and the previous ambassador there, Ali Paşa, former Aydın vali, was reappointed on August 16⁶¹.

The revolt in Herzegovina and Bosnia had already started at this time. Through the fall and winter of 1875 and on into the spring of 1876 the situation of the Ottoman Empire, both internally and in its foreign relations, became more difficult. What Halil Şerif did during this period is not clear. It was reported that he worked on a draft of a constitution for the Ottoman Empire, along with Midhat Paşa, who was also out of office during that winter⁶². When the great discontent with the grand vezir, Mahmud Nedim Paşa, led to demonstrations of softas on May 10 and 11, 1876, the

61 This account is based on information in PRO, FO 78/2384, Elliot to Derby no. 404, conf., 30 July 1875, and FO 78/2385, Elliot to Derby no. 430, 9 August 1875, and also on information in a memorandum of Esad Paşa to his foreign minister Safvet Paşa of 25 Temmuz 1291/5 August 1875, quoted in full by İnal, *Son Sadrâzamlar*, p. 434.

62 (Cherbuliez), «L'Angleterre et la Russie en Orient», *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* 10 (1896), 68. Cherbuliez was a European diplomat, otherwise unidentified, who wrote this in 1877. Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, Halil Şerif's father-in-law and also an advocate of a constitution, died early in December, 1875.

rumor circulated that Halil Şerif was reappointed as foreign minister, along with Midhat as grand vezir⁶³. This was not true. Mütercim Mehmed Rüşdi was appointed by the Sultan to be grand vezir, but Midhat was added to the ministry after a week, and on May 27, 1876, Halil Şerif also was named a minister, like Midhat without portfolio⁶⁴. Halil was thus a part of the ministry that deposed Sultan Abdülaziz on May 30 and brought Murad V to the throne, although there is no indication that Halil took part in the plotting, like Midhat.

Halil Şerif's position in the council of ministers was changed on 24 Cemazievvel 1293/17 June 1876, when he became minister of justice⁶⁵. Cevdet Paşa had been minister of justice, and was not so strong a supporter of Midhat's constitutional ideas as Halil Şerif was. Possibly the change in the ministry of justice was made by Murad V because of this difference between the two. Halil Şerif was well known as a constitution-supporter. The French ambassador reported in early June that Halil and Midhat were even talking of the Belgian constitution as a model⁶⁶. Halil was present at the first full-scale discussion of the possibility of a constitution, after Murad V's accession. This discussion took place at the Bab-i fetva on June 8, 1876, with all the ministers and a few other high officials present. Halil Şerif may or may not have spoken at the meeting, but his position was known, and he was criticized for it by the grand vezir Mehmed Rüşdi, who did not believe in constitutions⁶⁷. It was nine days after this meeting that Halil Şerif became minister of justice. Halil Şerif, along with some other ministers, evidently got the reputation among Europeans of fostering an

63 Letter of Hüseyin Nazım Bey to Namık Kemal, undated (mid-May 1876), in Kuntay, *Namık Kemal*, II, part 1, 616.

64 Knud Graah Bolander, *Förspelet till Balkankrisen pa 1870-talet* (Göteborg, 1925), quoting ambassador Zichy (İstanbul) to Andrassy (Vienna), 28 and 30 May 1876; *Levant Herald*, 5 July 1876.

65 *Sicill-i Osmani*, II, 309; *Levant Herald*, 5 July 1876.

66 Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, Turquie Politique no. 404, Bourgoing (İstanbul) to Décazes no. 84, 7 June 1876.

67 Süleyman Paşa, *Hiss-i inkulâb* (İstanbul, 1326), p. 62; I. H. Danişmend, *İzahl Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, IV (İstanbul, 1955), p. 280.

extremist or a fanatic view, in the critical international situation of the summer of 1876⁶⁸. This was not true, although he was certainly an Ottoman patriot.

When the ministers deposed Murad V and raised Abdülhamid II to the throne, on August 31, 1876, Halil Şerif was still minister of justice. Shortly thereafter, he apparently became ill. It was reported that he suffered a stroke on September 11, and lost his power of speech⁶⁹. Again rumors seem to have started, concerning his health. One newspaper, *Stamboul*, was suspended for 15 days for publishing the false news that Halil Şerif had an incurable malady⁷⁰. The truth about Halil Şerif's illness is not certain. He was, in any case, soon replaced as minister of justice. Abdülhamid II appointed Cevdet Paşa again to that position in mid-October 1876. At about the same time Halil Şerif was named to one of the government councils⁷¹. But he seems to have had no role in the drafting of the constitution that occupied many of the leading statesmen in the fall of 1876. Presumably he was recuperating from his illness⁷².

68 *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 250, 6 September 1876, from Pera, 31 August.

69 *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 264, Ausserordentliche Beilage, 20 September 1876, correspondence (by Andreas D. Mordtmann) dated Pera, 11 September.

70 *The Times* (London), 16 September 1876, p. 5.

71 Cevdet's appointment is in Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Marûzât*, ed. Yusuf Halaoğlu (İstanbul, 1980), p. 238. *Sicill-i Osmani*, II, 309, says that Halil Şerif on 26 Ramazan 1293/15 October 1876 became a member of the «mecalis-i aliye», a term which may be an error.

72 İsmail Kemal Bey, who was close to Midhat Paşa in 1876-77, recounts a rather confusing story about Halil Şerif in this period. İsmail Kemal says: Halil Şerif was associated with Ali Suavi, who had returned from exile, in urging Abdülhamid II to rule as an absolute monarch. Halil Şerif, says Kemal, had an audience with the Sultan to encourage absolute rule, but found his tongue paralyzed and could say nothing. Midhat Paşa heard of this and said, «May all who dare to try and talk against the Constitution find themselves similarly tongue-tied». Sommerville Story, ed., *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey* (London, 1920), p. 146. İsmail Kemal wrote and dictated these memoirs in Paris in 1917-19, and his memory may be inexact on some points. It is not clear, for instance, whether this audience with the Sultan was in the fall of 1876 or in January or early February of 1877.

In 1877, during the period of diplomatic crisis after the Tershane Conference, and after the dismissal and exile of Midhat Paşa by Sultan Abdülhamid, Halil Şerif was again appointed ambassador to Paris. This time, the appointment was made by Abdülhamid, which may indicate that he approved of Halil Şerif and wanted his diplomatic ability to aid him; or it may mean that Abdülhamid wanted to get Halil Şerif out of Istanbul. The appointment was made on 26 Safer 1294/12 March 1877⁷³. This time it was not rescinded. Halil Şerif Paşa went to Paris immediately; later that month he was reporting on French views of what would happen in the event of a Turkish war with Russia⁷⁴. Such a war did occur, of course, in the following month. In May, Halil sent a memorandum on the improvement of military matters⁷⁵. He did not remain long in Paris, however. While the war with Russia was still going on, on 3 Ramazan 1294/11 September 1877, Arifi Paşa was appointed to succeed him as ambassador to Paris⁷⁶. This seem to have been Halil's last tenure of public office.

Possibly Halil Şerif was not in good health in 1877. He lived for somewhat more than a year after his ambassadorship ended, and died on 18 Muharrem 1296/12 January 1879 of a brain disease⁷⁷. He was probably about fifty years old.

The foregoin sketch of Halil Şerif Paşa's life is obviously far from complete. There are many gaps, and even when Halil's positions and moves are known, the reasons for them may not be known. There is probably sufficient material in the Ottoman archives and in the archives of western nations like France, Austria, and Britain, on which to base a much fuller biography. There is certainly more material scattered in published sources, both Turkish and western European and possibly even Russian. There may, in addition, be useful private papers, if not of Halil Şerif himself then of those who knew him.

73 *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 181.

74 See his despatch of 26 March 1877, printed in Ali Fuat Türkgeldi, *Mesâil-i Mühimme-i Siyâsiyye*, ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Ankara, 1957-66), II, 277-78.

75 BA, Yıldız, Kısım 14, evrak no. 1236, 28 Rebiülâhır 1294/12 May 1877.

76 *Salname-i Nezaret-i Hariciye*, p. 181.

77 *Sicill-i Osmani*, II, 309; Inal, *Son Sadrâzamlar*, p. 434, n.2.

From this brief account, however, it will be evident that Halil Şerif was a remarkable individual in a number of ways. Although he was not a great diplomat, he was an intelligent and an able one. He seems to have been a good representative of his government. Sir Henry Elliot, the British ambassador in Istanbul in the 1870s, found him «a man of very decided intelligence and capacity,» although he was «held in low repute by the Turks on account of his habits of gambling and love of low company acquired as a young man at Paris.»⁷⁸ He obviously had the ability to get along with superiors of many varieties : he worked with, or for, Abbas and Said Paşas of Egypt, Fuad Paşa and especially Âli Paşa, Midhat Paşa, and Sultans Abdülmecid, Abdülaziz, Murad, and Abdülhamid. He was also on good terms with some of the leading Yeni Osmanlılar, and with some leading European statesmen and diplomats. He apparently chose his enemies carefully : Ignatyev and Ismail, each of whom in his own way threatened the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire.

Halil Şerif was also a cultured individual, although much more, it seems, in an occidental than in an Ottoman fashion. His tastes and his attitudes, so far as they are now evident, appear to have been almost completely secular. Perhaps he was insensitive to Muslim traditions or feelings at times. The fact that, during his term as foreign minister, ground in the Muslim cemetery of Ayaz Paşa was made available to the German government for construction of its embassy —thereby arousing protests among Muslims— would indicate this⁷⁹. So would his tastes in western art and sculpture, totally removed from Ottoman or Muslim tradition. The journalist Villemessant found Halil Bey to be really a Frenchman, or an ideal combination of the Orient with France. Halil's knowledge of French, and of European politics and international affairs, was good. Undoubtedly he was too westernized an individual for Istanbul of his time. As Villemessant said, «He is a man who sums up modern civilization in its most complete form.»⁸⁰

78 PRO, FO 78/2384, Elliot to Derby no. 404 conf., 30 July 1875.

79 İnal, *Son Sadrâzamlar*, p. 121.

80 Villemessant, *Mes voyages*, p. 121.