

# THE PLACE OF THE YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION IN TURKISH HISTORY\*

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## I. Introduction

**The Turks in History:** The Turks of Turkey are part of the Turkic peoples who, back in history, were once concentrated in Central Asia. Central Asia can be roughly described as the region to the north and the north-west of the China Wall. The China Wall was built to keep the nomadic peoples -including the Turkic peoples- out of China. The Wall also roughly corresponded to the frontier of fertile land where agriculture could be practised. In Central Asia the land was generally not suitable for agriculture, but could sustain the animal herds of the nomads.

The first "state" of the Turkic peoples was the Empire of the Huns, for which the approximate dates 220 BC-216 AD are given. But whether or not this formation can be considered a state or empire in the proper sense of the word is not clear, because the Huns did not use the written word. Probably this formation was a confederation of tribes, rather than a state. The same can probably be said for the Göktürks (552-745), though at the end of their primacy they began to use writing. The third important political formation of the Turkic peoples was the Uygur State (745-940). By the end of the 8th century, two important developments took place among the Turkic peoples. 1) A great number of them began to move west, to Transoxania and contiguous regions and 2) they began to adopt Islam. It seems that the proces of Islamization was a rather long, drawn-out affair, lasting more than two centuries (900-1150).<sup>1</sup> The first Moslem Turkic state was the Kara-Khanid State (940-1040), followed by the Ghaznavid state (963-1186). If we don't count the inscriptions at Ötüken (730), it was in the Kara-Khanid State that the first two works of literary significance in the Turkic languages, the *Kutadgu Bilig* (1070) and the *Divan-ı Lügat-it-Türk* (1074) were written.

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<sup>1</sup>İlber Ortaylı, *Türkiye İdare Tarihi* (Ank., TODAİE, Y., 1979), p. 34.

It was in the time of the third Muslim Turkic empire, the Empire of the Great Selçuks (1038-1157) that this state, by defeating the Byzantine army at Manzikert (Malazgirt) (1071), gained entry into Anatolia. From then on, or perhaps even earlier, Turkish Oğuz tribes began to migrate into Anatolia on a massive scale. Starting in 1077, an Anatolian Selçuk State was established with Konya as its capital, lasting until 1308. It is evident that the coming of the Turks to Anatolia was a very significant turning point in their history. For the first time the Turks were in a country that had no deserts, where there was arable land for those who wished to settle and plateaus and pastures for those who chose to pursue the nomadic way of life. The Ottoman Empire, which had started from a very modest beginning in 1300, by 1481, at the death of Mehmet the Conqueror, dominated most of present day Anatolia, as well as Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Wallachia, Crimea. The Empire continued to grow for about a hundred years and lasted until the 20th century.

It seems to me that the Ottoman empire had a specific mission as regards the Turkish people who were its subjects and this was the transformation of the nomadic Turks in Anatolia into peasants. This process took many centuries and had many ups and downs. Even as late as the 19th century the government was organizing expeditions to force nomadic tribes to settle on the land.<sup>2</sup> The mountainous character of Anatolia, which, on the one hand made centralization a difficult process and, on the other hand, facilitated nomadism, probably slowed down the progress of settlement. In Rumelia, where the central government had the situation under its firm control, there was also a very sizable migration and settlement of Turks, but there, nomadism appears to have been far from being the dominant way of life.

**The Military Crisis of the Empire and Its Sequel:** With the development of fire-arms the traditional Ottoman mounted army of sipahis gradually became ineffective. This necessitated the increase of the janissaries, who were foot-soldiers and who used fire-arms. However, in the 17th century, parallel to the arrest of territorial growth, the Empire began to lose interest in the military machine. The janissaries were allowed to become underpaid, with the understanding that they need not live in their barracks, that they could go out and engage in trade, get married and raise a family. With the further development of fire-arms and given the lack of training of the janissaries, military disasters were inevitable. The string of these disasters started with the second siege of Vienna in 1683. The Ottomans now began to learn to avoid war, when the loss of the first Turco-Moslem territory, namely, Crimea (in 1774, by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca), dealt a great blow to their complacency. The gigantic upheaval that was the Napoleonic Wars, which brought Bonaparte to Egypt and which involved the Ottoman Empire to a great extent, added further stimulus. It was now necessary to brave janissary opposition and to create a modern army which meant, first of all, an army training every day, living in the barracks and therefore costing a good deal. Despite attempts in this direction during the reign of Selim III and Mahmut II, culminating in the complete abolition of the janissary corps in 1826, the latter Sultan

<sup>2</sup>On the settlement of nomadic tribes see, for example, Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Aşiretlerin İskanı* (Ist., Eren Y., 1987). The well-known expedition of the 19th century was the Fırka-i İslahiye of 1865, in which the historian Cevdet Paşa took part.

could not prevent the defeat of his army in four different battles at the hands of his vassal, Mehmet Ali Paşa, governor of Egypt.

Mahmut II, therefore, had no choice but to imitate the much more radical reforms of Mehmet Ali, including the establishment of a modern, European-type school system. The major steps in this direction were the founding of the Medical School in 1827 and of the War College in 1834. Some time before, the outbreak of the Greek Revolution in 1821 had initiated a second development. Traditionally, cultured Moslem Ottomans had learned only Arabic and Persian. It was the Greeks who had learned Western languages and acted as interpreters. With the crisis of confidence stemming from the Greek Revolution, Moslems began to learn French.

Western-type schools and western languages were to mark a new crisis in the Ottoman Empire - this time a crisis for the ruling dynasty. Hitherto the Palace - as an institution - had led in every aspect of Moslem life - military, financial, religious, cultural, intellectual, artistic. Now, the above-mentioned two aspects of Westernization were to develop outside the Palace. Soon, the Sultans and their dynasty and the Palace as a whole, were to be outshined by a new group of officials graduating from these schools and/or speaking French. The Palace, as the centuries-old center of secular and religious power, continued to command the loyalty of all Moslems, including these officials. However, the loyalty of the latter, when they realized the backwardness of the Palace, began to ring hollow. At a very early stage the dynasty must have sensed the danger to the throne emanating from this situation. Nevertheless, it is very clear that till the very end, they did very little to correct this state of affairs.

What was even worse, with the Tanzimat, the Palace began to live a life of luxury and prodigality. In 1854, with the beginning of borrowing from abroad, expenses rose on a phenomenal scale. It appears that almost none of this money was spent on economic investment and that nearly all of it went to building palaces, luxury spending, arms, battleships, salaries, servicing earlier debts. Though some contemporary writers try to minimize the role of the Palace, blaming high officials and the bad example of the Egyptian aristocracy, it seems apparent that the Palace was responsible. In 1875 came the crash - the Ottoman government declared it could pay only half of the interest on the Ottoman debt.

At that particular point there were two alternatives in front of the Palace. For it to continue to rule as well as to reign, it would have to mend its ways. This would mean getting a modern education for the dynasty (including learning French), dissolving or at least severely limiting the Harem, and imposing a strict discipline on spending. The second alternative was a limited monarchy - limited either by the high bureaucracy or by an elected parliament. The first solution in the second alternative was imposed by the Paşas who had deposed Sultan Abdülaziz on his successor, Murat V (1876). That was probably one of the main reasons why he lost his mind. He was dethroned in 3 months. Mithat Paşa tried a parliamentary solution with his successor, Abdülhamit II. In the end Abdülhamit threw aside both the projects for a limited monarchy and the idea of a radical, structural reform. Instead, he set up a police state with himself as chief policeman. He solved the financial problem by turning over certain state revenues to European creditors who, through the Public Debt Administration, collected their own loans and became a state within the state. The other facet of the financial problem had been the inexhaustible spending appetite of the Palace. This he solved by imposing a

strict discipline on the spending of the dynasty and creating for himself a huge empire of private property.<sup>3</sup>

## II. The Young Turks

The coming to power of the Young Turks in 1908 was a revival of the rather short-lived idea of limited nomarchy. It was also the coming to power of the New Educated Man. In 1876 they could probably be counted by the hundreds. Now they could be counted by the thousands, and because they controlled, through the officer corps, the army, their position seemed assured. Who were the Young Turks, or to be more specific, the members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)? Generally speaking, we can discern 5 characteristics that sum them up:<sup>4</sup> 1) They were Turks. All of them may not have been ethnic Turks, but they identified themselves as Turks. Also, they were Turkish nationalists. This was something that they would tend to keep secret, because the Ottoman Empire was multi-national and to openly practise nationalism would be an invitation to other nationalities to do likewise. They, on the other hand, wanted to maintain the Empire by seeming to espouse multi-national Ottomanism, while pursuing policies of Turkish nationalism. 2) The great majority of them were young. This was natural, for being a member of a secret revolutionary organization is a risky thing that young people can more easily undertake. 3) They belonged mostly to the bureaucratic class, that is to say, they were either military officers or civilian officials. 4) They were graduates of, or had studied in modern schools - secondary schools and schools of higher education. 5) They had a bourgeois ideology. This, in spite of the fact that they did not belong to the bourgeoisie (which was nearly non-existent among Moslem Turks). It may seem rather curious that though the CUP was composed mainly of members of the bureaucracy, they espoused the ideology of a different class, but if one thinks of the French, Russian, Chinese revolutions, one can spot plenty of such examples among their leaders. The Young Turks were not bourgeois, but they aspired to create a modern Turkish society on the contemporary European model, in other words, a bourgeois society. That meant the creation of a capitalist class and a capitalist system where these did not exist. This was, indeed, a major *tour de force* or, from a Comteian perspective, a feat of "social engineering"<sup>5</sup> that has challenged governments in Turkey to this very day.

Thanks to the CUP's domination of the army and the bureaucracy in Rumelia, it was able to challenge Abdülhamit's rule in this region. After a sharp, but short and largely bloodless struggle, it was able to simultaneously "Proclaim Liberty" (*Hürriyeti ilân*) in most of Rumelia on July 23rd, 1908. Abdülhamit, with his usual cunning, saw that he had to give in, and so the government followed suit, decreeing elections the next day. Thus the CUP had brought back the constitutional regime in Rumelia, but in the rest of the Empire, including the unsuspecting capital, it was Abdülhamit who had done so. The end result was, therefore, a compromise which allowed Abdülhamit to stay on the throne.

<sup>3</sup>See Vasfi Şensözen, *Osmanlıların Varlıkları ve II. Abdülhamit'in Emlakı* (Ank., TTK Y., 1982).

<sup>4</sup>See my *Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakkî*. (İst., Remzi Kitabevi, 1987).

<sup>5</sup>For this term I am indebted to Prof. Şerif Mardin.

The "coming to power" of the CUP happened in a very special way. I mentioned above that CUP members were largely young people. Neither public opinion, nor they themselves were ready to envisage a cabinet composed completely of CUP men. What happened was that some venerable Paşa became Grand Vizier and nominated others like himself to cabinet posts, though sometimes a number of CUP men also entered the cabinet. However, the CUP exercised a rather close control of the affairs of state, very often instructing the government as to what it should do and what it should not do. This was a model of government that the CUP was to maintain until the assassination of Mahmut Şevket Paşa on June 11, 1913, after which date CUP members assumed the office of Grand Vizier, as well as all the other cabinet posts. However, Kâmil Paşa, the venerable old Vizier of the early months of the constitutional period, could not understand or stomach the interference of these 'youngsters'. He therefore made an attempt to get rid of this control, but soon found himself facing a vote of non-confidence from Parliament (February 13, 1909).

The opposition had the naive notion that the CUP's function should be limited to restoring the constitutional regime and that it should not interfere in government affairs. More specifically, it regarded the overthrow of the Kâmil Paşa government as a monstrous act. It was also very critical of the CUP's compromise with Abdülhamit. Thus, when a prominent opposition journalist was assassinated, a week later they launched an uprising by the soldiery against their officers and the CUP (the so-called "Event of 31st March", 13 April 1909 by the Gregorian calendar).<sup>6</sup> The opposition must have planned this manifestation of force as a disciplined affair. Instead, it turned out to be a bloody mess. The government resigned, the CUP leadership fled to Rumelia. Parliament, to which the mutineers were to address their demands, could not convene, because most deputies did not dare to go there. In the end, the soldiery, who were also clamoring for pardon, turned to the traditional center of authority, namely, Abdülhamit. Abdülhamit made the mistake of appearing on the balcony of Yıldız Place and acknowledging the cheers of the mutineers. What is more, when, two days later they brought the commander of a warship who had dared train his guns on Yıldız, he again appeared on the balcony, a few moments before they lynched the unlucky man. These balcony appearances sealed Abdülhamit's fate.

In the days following the mutiny, the Chamber of Deputies was able to muster a majority. It is interesting to note that the Chamber, in spite of the vociferous protests that began to pour in from Rumelia, adopted the attitude of accepting the *status quo* imposed by the mutiny as an accomplished fact. This meant that the CUP would be out of power and also, out of İstanbul. This is very curious, because nearly all Moslem deputies had been elected from CUP tickets. The explanation for this is that before the Proclamation of Liberty, the CUP's organization in the Asiatic and African provinces had been at best rudimentary. With the coming of Liberty, all sorts of persons stepped forward who claimed to be CUP sympathizers. In many cases neither these persons nor, during the elections, the candidates for the Chamber had the 5 CUP characteristics enumerated above. But the CUP needed local organizations and local candidates and, pressed for time, could not afford to be choosy. It is therefore no wonder, then, that the majority of these deputies, taking the line of least resistance, accepted the mutiny even if they did not approve it. Indeed, they formed delegations to send to the Army of

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<sup>6</sup>See my 31 Mart Olayı.

Operations (*Hareket Ordusu*) coming from Rumelia to quell the revolt, to advise them not to enter the city. But once these deputies reached Yeşilköy, where the Army was camped, they realized they had to choose sides and, also, which side they had to choose. Thus, they stayed in Yeşilköy. Soon some Senators also joined them and, before long, the two Chambers were meeting together, under the presidency of Said Paşa, President of the Senate. The Constitution had foreseen the joint meeting of the Chambers only for the opening ceremony of Parliament. The two Chambers, together, made up Parliament or *Meclis-i Umumi*. Now, the two Chambers were holding regular joint meetings and, what is more, under a rather suspicious name non-existent in the Constitution: *Meclis-i Umumi-i Milli* (National Assembly). After the return of Parliament to İstanbul, no more joint meetings were held except as foreseen by the Constitution (except for the session which deposed Abdülhamit) and the name *Meclis-i Umumi-i Milli* or *Meclis-i Milli* disappeared. However, in later years it surfaced again as an unofficial synonym of the Chamber of Deputies, its use becoming more frequent until it became official with the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*) convened in the spring of 1920 by Mustafa Kemal.

One cannot help thinking that some people at Yeşilköy may have been taking a leaf out of the very early stages of the history of the French Revolution, when, upon the insistence of the *Tiers Etat*, the *Etats Generaux* was dissolved and the three Chambers, meeting jointly, formed the *Assemblée Nationale* (June 17, 1789).<sup>7</sup> Once the *Hareket Ordusu* occupied İstanbul, the revolutionary Parliament deposed Abdülhamit and voted the Heir Apparent Mehmet Reşat (Mehmet V) to the throne (April 27, 1909). This event was truly the consummation of the Proclamation of Liberty. A constitutional monarchy presided by the former arch-autocrat and 'head-policeman' of 30-odd years could not be considered a very healthy state of affairs for the new regime. On the other hand, the person of the new Sultan was very felicitous for the CUP. He was an amiable old gentleman, whose ambition in politics (in spite of the fact that he enjoyed being on the throne) was at a minimum. Thus the CUP, from that quarter at least, had a more ample opportunity to start building a modern society.

### III. Contributions of the CUP

Having thus placed the CUP within the framework of general Turkish history, and having outlined its coming to power, we can now proceed to describe some of its contributions to the life of the country.

**A. Contributions to the Political and Intellectual Life of the Country:** The regime instituted by the CUP can hardly be called democratic in the modern sense of the word. In the first place, the CUP openly described itself as the "sacred society" ("*cemiyet-i mukaddese*"). One can easily imagine how an association with such pretensions would view other organizations, especially if they were in the opposition. After the counter-revolution of "March 31", this attitude became more pronounced. Opposition organizations or parties were readily identified as being "pro-March 31". Indeed, after the suppression of the counter-revolution, İstanbul was placed

<sup>7</sup>See my "La Révolution française et la conscience révolutionnaire des nationalistes turcs à l'aube de la guerre d'Indépendance", *La Turquie et la France à l'Époque d'Atatürk* (Paris, Collection Turcica, 1981).

under a regime of almost continuous martial law. Parliamentary deputies could and did form opposition parties, yet outside parliament they experienced extreme difficulty in forming local organizations and in engaging in political activity. The Liberal Union Party (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*) founded in November 21, 1911, had a certain success, because it enjoyed a) the leadership of the husband of a princess (namely, Mediha), Damat Ferit Paşa, and the probable patronage of Vahdettin, his brother-in-law, who was to be the last Sultan (1918-22) and b) because by that time the invasion of Tripoli by Italy had tarnished the image of the CUP. However, when the Liberal Union won the by-election of December 11, 1911, the CUP panicked and held elections in 1912 which came to be known as the "big stick" elections (*sopalı seçimler*), where the opposition could only win 6 seats. And then, when Mahmut Şevket Paşa was assassinated in 1913, those responsible were tried and executed, while the whole leadership of the political opposition was banished to Sinop till the end of World War I. It was only towards the end of that disastrous war that the CUP made certain moves in the direction of creating a 'very' loyal opposition.

Again, when it comes to democracy, one can dwell on a very ugly stain on the CUP's record, the shooting down by CUP gunmen of 4 'undesirable' persons between 1908 and 1911. The first person, killed in 1908, was an agent of Abdülhamit, the others were opposition journalists. The killing of adversaries, one person per year, was probably thought of as a warning to the opposition. It is difficult to think that the responsible bodies of the CUP were unaware of these assassinations, even before they happened. At any rate, the CUP considered itself (and was) a revolutionary organization and did little to disassociate itself from them.

In spite of this dismal record, it can be said that, compared with the rule of Abdülhamit, the CUP's government was an era of great freedom. Under Abdülhamit, persons were not even allowed to form non-political associations. A person who made a list of neighbours in order to collect money for the repair of the neighbourhood street fountain, would get into trouble because he would be suspected of forming some sort of illegal organization. After 1908, persons could get together to form associations, commercial or industrial corporations. If one was ready to take certain risks, political associations could be formed.

Freedom of the press was another thing that came with Liberty. Formerly, every word had to be censored before it was allowed to get into print. The farcically paranoiac aspects of the Hamidian censorship are well-known. The Turkish word for star (*yıldız*) could not be published because it might be a reference to Abdülhamit, who lived in Yıldız Palace. The word *murat* (wish) had also disappeared from print, because it might be a reference to Abdülhamit's predecessor, Murat V. With the Proclamation of Liberty, censorship disappeared completely. The CUP was very sensitive to criticism, but, ideologically, it had an open mind. Thus, all kinds of ideas, whether right or left, were freely discussed in the press. In the field of ideas, the main constraint came from the quarter of religious conservatism, which was against free-thinking or criticism of Islam. The CUP was hardly in sympathy with conservative attitudes, but it had to be careful about being identified with anti-Islamic views. The sudden advent of freedom of the press created a veritable torrent of publications, currents of thought, ideas. Later the Turkish Republic was to be built on the intellectual and ideological experience gained from this

period. For this reason Professor Tunaya has aptly described the 2nd Constitutional Era as the "political laboratory of the Republic".<sup>7bis.</sup>

Another important impact on the intellectual life of the country came from radical changes in educational policy. First, school curriculums were revised. The Hamidian regime took a very jaundiced view of the humanities and social sciences. The teaching of history was mainly restricted to the history of the birth of Islam and the 4 Caliphs, as well as a superficial treatment of the history of the Ottoman Empire. Great accent was placed on the inculcation of religious values and morality, hoping thereby to produce obedient and loyal subjects to the Sultan. Students at all levels had to spend many hours in lessons given for this purpose. With the Constitution, such courses were limited. On the other hand, subjects such as world history, philosophy, sociology, were introduced or expanded. Secondly, thanks to a much freer climate of thought, the contents of the courses were enriched. Very probably, student participation in the teaching process (mainly, asking questions in class) was greatly increased. Thirdly, the public educational system was greatly expanded. We can follow this expansion from budget figures. The budget of the Ministry of Education was about 200.000 liras a year during the period 1904-1908. This figure rose to 660.000 in 1909, 940.000 in 1910, 1.230.000 in 1914.<sup>8</sup> If we take into account the territorial losses during this period, the rise in allocations becomes even more pronounced.

Lastly, we can dwell on the legislative activity of Parliament, which, starting at the end of 1908, within a year built the foundations of a modern, democratic state. Most important, the Constitution of 1876 was almost completely overhauled. 21 articles were changed, one was abrogated, 3 more were added. It can be said that what emerged was a new constitution, the Constitution of 1909. To give a few examples of these changes, the Sultan, upon ascending the throne, was now obligated to swear to abide by the Sharia, by the Constitution and to be loyal to the motherland and the nation. He had the right to appoint only the Grand Vizier (not the ministers) and the Şeyhülislam, the right to dismiss or change ministers being only formally his. The right to dissolve Parliament could now be exercised only under certain conditions. Important treaties could only enter into effect after the approval of Parliament. The changed Constitution also specified that the cabinet would be responsible before Parliament. The Chamber or Deputies would directly elect its Chairman and Vice-Chairmen (formerly the Chamber nominated 3 candidates for each position, one of whom was appointed by the Sultan).

Then, a whole series of basic laws were enacted concerning public meetings, the press, printing-houses, labor strikes, associations etc. There was also a series of legislation or measures abrogating or bringing limitations to the *Ancien Regime*. Among these were the transfer of royal property having an income of more than 400.000 liras a year to the Treasury, a drastic reduction in appropriations for the Place, a reduction of the salaries of high officials, the prohibition of white slavery, the combing-out from the army, the civil service and the Palace of uneducated personnel. In the army, for instance, 7500 ranker (*alaylı*) officers were retired. Another important aspect of the reforms was the application of modern budgetary and fiscal practices, including the

<sup>7bis.</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Hayatında Batılılaşma Hareketleri* (Ist., Yedigün Matbaası, 1960), pp. 97-8.

<sup>8</sup>Osman Ergin, *Türk Maarif Tarihi* (Ist., Eser Y., 1977), pp. 1330-9.



discussion and approval by the Chamber of the budget, and examination of expenditures by the Court of Accounts.<sup>9</sup>

**B. Contributions to the Economic Life of the Country:** I mentioned above the benefits derived from the freedom of organization. This was also true in the commercial and industrial fields. Abdülhamit seems to have had little compunction about throttling the economic life of the country if he felt that the safety of his throne called for it. According to Zafer Toprak, until the 2nd Constitutional Period, almost no joint-stock companies were formed in the Empire without resorting to foreign capital, excepting Şirket-i Hayriye (1849) and Ziraat Bankası (1863).<sup>10</sup> According to Vedat Eldem, in 1881 there were 4 industrial joint-stock companies formed with national capital.<sup>11</sup> Figures for later years were: 7 in 1886, 1 in 1899, 2 in 1901, 1 in 1902, 2 in 1903, 1 in 1904, 3 in 1905, 2 in 1906, 3 in 1907, 2 in 1908. During the 23 years between 1886 and 1908, 24 joint-stock companies were thus founded with national capital. The total capital involved was 40.2 million kuruş or an average of 1.75 million kuruş per year. On the other hand, during the years 1909-1913, 27 industrial companies with national capital were formed with a total capital of 79.2 million kuruş or an average of 15.9 million kuruş year. This means a 5-fold increase in the number of companies per year, and a 9-fold increase in yearly capital. There is a similar increase in companies formed with foreign capital, but from the point of view of number and capital, there is, on the average, only about a two-fold increase. This obviously shows how drastically the climate for the investment of national capital had changed.<sup>12</sup> In favour of Toprak's minimalist statement, it can be said that most probably the companies formed during the Hamidian era were of a semi-official character. It is also certain that most of them, despite Eldem's qualification of "industrial", were public utility concerns.

One other important indication of the change of climate was legislation to encourage industry. Two laws were promulgated for this purpose, one in 1911, the other in 1913. These laws provided for the granting of free land, tax exemptions, preference in state purchases for new industrial enterprises.<sup>13</sup> Other legislation authorized the land of ruined pious endowments to be sold, thus allowing their return to economic use. Another

<sup>9</sup>Akşin, Jön... pp. 143-7.

<sup>10</sup>Z. Toprak, *Türkiye'de Millî İktisat* (1908-1918) (Ank., Yurt Y., 1982), p. 40. Toprak also explains how Islamic law had no conception of corporate personality and only sanctioned partnerships.

<sup>11</sup>Vedat Eldem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun İktisadi Şartları Hakkında bir Tetkik* (Ank., İş Bankası Y., 1970), p. 122.

<sup>12</sup>Even in agriculture we find an accelerated rate of increase in production. Between 1889-90 and 1909-10 the agricultural production index increased at a yearly average of 1.71 points. Between 1909-10 and 1913-4, the index rose at a yearly average of 2.2 points. According to another table, taking the years 1897-8 as the base, the yearly average increase was 1 point until 1909-10, but between the latter date and 1913-4 it was 3.8 points. Apparently these figures are not very dependable. If they do not take into account the losses in Rumelia during the Balkan Wars (1912-3) the increase is all the more impressive. Eldem, pp. 36,79. Theoretically, the increase of agricultural production may be the result of such different factors as better law and order, new roads, more machinery and fertilizers, confidence in the new regime.

<sup>13</sup>Eldem, p. 243.

law allowed construction and agricultural companies to acquire property. This and other legislation helped to promote the spread and accumulation of capital.<sup>14</sup>

Another important development in this period was the institution of free travel, both abroad and within the Empire. The Ottomans had always taken a dim view of freedom of movement and had tried to restrict it. Mahmut II (1808-1839) had initiated the practice of *mürur tezkeresi* which meant a system of internal passport. Any stranger who did not have this document authorizing him to be where he was, would get into trouble. It appears that with the Tanzimat (1839), this obligation was relaxed. However, the Hamidian police regime, installed after April 1880, vigorously revived and reinforced the practice.<sup>15</sup> In March 1884, an announcement by the Ministry of Police informed the public as to the treatment accorded to those caught without a *tezkere*. They were "called" to the Ministry and those whose innocence was established had to indicate a guarantor, while enquiries were made from the person's locality. Those who could not show a guarantor were placed under detention before being returned, at their own expense, to their localities.<sup>16</sup> Many documents from the period are in agreement that these restrictions on travel discouraged economic activities.

**C. Contributions to the Social Life of the Country:** First let us look at labour conditions. Before 1908, neither strikes, nor labor organizations were sanctioned by law. However, the creation of an *Ameleperver Cemiyeti* (Worker's Benevolent Society) in 1871 is known. Under the Hamidian regime two attempts to form a secret trade union by the gun foundry (Tophane) workers in 1894 and 1901-2 were foiled. Working conditions - a working day of up to 16 hours, plenty of child labor, subsistence wages- were very bad. From time to time even these subsistence wages could not be paid. The result was that workers, in spite of its prohibition, went on strike. As soon as Liberty was proclaimed, spontaneous strikes broke out all over the country. At first the CUP, because it was aware of working conditions, was sympathetic, but the dissatisfaction and pressure of foreign capital forced it to bring out, even before the convening of Parliament, a "temporary law" (8 October 1908) which was later enacted. This law regulated strikes in places and companies which provided public services such as water, gas, electricity, tramways, railroads. In such companies, trade unions could not be formed and workers were obligated to submit their disputes to arbitration before they could strike. This was an important restriction. Nevertheless, it can be said that after 1908, there was an improvement in conditions for the labor movement and its struggle. Besides trade unions and workers' associations, there were a number of socialist minded deputies in Parliament (especially among the Armenian and Bulgarian deputies). In

<sup>14</sup>Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi* (Ank., TTK Y., 1952) vol. II, pt. 4, p. 303.

<sup>15</sup>In spite of the fact that no elections had been held since 1878, when Parliament was dissolved, until April 1880 Abdülhamit acted unmistakably as though the constitutional regime would continue, as though elections might be held any time. With the coming to power in England of Gladstone's Turcophobe Liberal Party, Abdülhamit suddenly changed his mind and started to institute his police regime. See my "I. Meşrutiyet Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler", *Uluslararası Midhat Paşa Semineri* (Ank., TTK Y., 1986), pp. 30-3.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 37-40.

September 1910, a certain Hüseyin Hilmi even formed the Ottoman Socialist Party and published a review, the *İştirak*.<sup>17</sup>

Another social area where the CUP made certain contributions, more willingly and actively than in the field of labor problems, was in the domain of women's rights. The condition of Ottoman women, especially in the capital and the cities, was quite dismal, but it tended to undergo changes from time to time. It can be said that when public affairs started to go wrong, when the Empire suffered military defeat, there was a tendency on the part of the rulers to clamp down on women, to restrict their already very limited freedom even further in order to curry favour with conservative circles. As a rule, Moslem girls, as soon as they attained puberty, were required to stay indoors, not to talk with men and to cover themselves up when they went out. It is said that Osman III (1754-6) went so far as to decree that on the days that he went out of the Palace, no women were to be permitted to go out in the streets.<sup>18</sup> With the coming of Tanzimat (1839), women were allowed a certain amount of freedom. In 1838, the first rüşdiye or modern school for boys was opened in İstanbul. The first rüşdiye for girls was opened in 1858. The first teachers' college was opened in 1847. Because it was thought inappropriate for girls to be taught by men, a teachers' college for girls followed in 1870. Thus, a way, however narrow, was opened for the education of professional women. The creation of more educational facilities for girls continued under Abdülhamit, but in other respect there appears to have been a retrogression in the condition of women. No longer were palace ladies allowed to go out. In 1889, upon an incident of molestation of women, the *çarşaf* (usually with full veil), an Arab type of somber outdoor covering dress generally made from black cloth, instead of the traditional, more open and more colorful *ferace* and *yaşmak* (half veil) was declared obligatory.<sup>19</sup> (Except for palace ladies, because under the *çarşaf*, it was not possible to identify who was going in or out of the Palace, and this was considered a security risk). At this time, a committee presided by the Şeyhülislam decided that girls who were older than 9 years were a source of temptation. Therefore it proposed that they should not go to school after that age and that the women's teacher colleges should be closed down. Fortunately, Abdülhamit did not act in accordance with this recommendation.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, a man and a woman, whether they were brother and sister, or mother and son, or husband and wife could not walk together or be in the same carriage, because others could not be sure there was not a sinful relation between them.<sup>21</sup> In trams or boats, these persons had to sit in different sections. (Even in hot weather, women were not allowed to sit on the decks of İstanbul boats, which were all reserved for men.) A firman in 1881 made veils obligatory and prohibited light veils in busy public places. Women were also not to appear in the streets or in vehicles in the

<sup>17</sup>T.Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler* (İst., Hürriyet Vakfı Y., 1984), vol. I, pp. 247-62.

<sup>18</sup>İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ank., TTK Y. 1956), vol. IV, pt. 1, p. 337. In the time of Mustafa IV (1807-8) women were completely forbidden to go out of their homes. A. Afetinan, *Atatürk ve Türk Kadın Haklarının Kazanılması* (İst., Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1968), p. 80.

<sup>19</sup>Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, "*Çarşaf*", *Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*. It is rather typical of the traditional Islamic attitude than though those responsible for such an incident should be men, it would be women who would be penalized.

<sup>20</sup>Bayur, vol. I, pt. 2, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup>Afetinan also cites an earlier announcement, in 1862, to this effect (p. 80).

Istanbul neighbourhoods of Şehzadebaşı, Beyazıt, Aksaray, nor were they to stroll in the Covered Bazaar or sit in the shops. A man who talked to a woman or who made a sign to her was to be punished according to article 202 of the Penal Code. Women were also not to gather in public places.<sup>22</sup>

In great contrast with this official Hamidian policy was the attitude of the CUP. In its first known regulation, probably dating from 1895-6, the CUP specified that all Ottomans, men and women, could become members (art. 1). As if to show that this was not mere lip-service, another article (art. 37) repeated that women could become members and that they would have the same rights and duties as men.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it appears that before 1908 they did have a lady member: Nazlı Hanım, probably from the Kavalalı dynasty which ruled Egypt, who was a member of the Paris CUP branch.<sup>24</sup>

The Proclamation of Liberty unleashed great demonstrations in İstanbul during the first days. The primary object of these seems to have been to show to Abdülhamit and his men that the CUP was strong not only in Rumelia, but also in İstanbul. One crowd which marched to the Sublime Porte and held a meeting there, was led by an unveiled woman. On July 27, 1908 carriages decorated with constitutional slogans and carrying women (also unveiled) made a procession in the streets of İstanbul. Articles by women, publications by and/or for women, associations of women,<sup>25</sup> soon gave rise to rumours that *tesettür*, or the Islamic obligation for women to cover themselves was about to be ended.

This gave rise to a reaction. In October 1908, a number of roughnecks attacked and beat an officer who had hired a carriage with his wife and daughter, shouting that he was going around with "whores". They also tore the clothes of the women and opened their veils. The incident was reported to have occurred in front of a police station, but apparently the policemen had not intervened. It was also reported that women going to a mosque had had their *çarşafs* torn up and that orders had been given for the detention of the culprits.<sup>26</sup>

On October 14, 1908, the Beşiktaş lynching occurred. A Moslem widower by the name of Bedriye and Todori, a Greek gardener, decided to get married. When Bedriye went to Todori's house, her father informed the police, who brought the couple to the police station. The news spread and a crowd which gathered outside demanded that the couple be

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 85-6 (citing *Levant Herald*, 15/8/1881). In 1901, the Hamidian administration had expressed the desire that Moslem families should not hire European governesses, that Moslem women should not go into European shops, that their veils should be covered even inside carriages. Also, the colour and thickness of the veil, as well as the kind of shoes that could be worn were specified. George F. Abbott, *Turkey in Transition* (London, Edward Arnold, 1909), pp. 27-8.

<sup>23</sup>T.Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasî Partiler* (İst., Doğan Kardeş Basımevi, 1952), pp. 117-22.

<sup>24</sup>M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük (1889-1902)* (İst., İletişim Y., 1986), pp. 204, 431.

<sup>25</sup>Tunaya lists 14 such associations created between 1908 and 1918. Tunaya 1984, pp. 476-82.

<sup>26</sup>*İkdam*, 11-12/10/1908, no. 5166-7; *The Times* (report dated 13/10/1908).

handed over. According to the Sharia, a Moslem woman could not marry a non-Moslem. Her going to his house was also -naturally- unacceptable. The efforts of the police superintendent and of a member of the ulema, were of no avail. Thereupon, 40 soldiers from Yıldız Palace commanded by Major Osman Efendi arrived on the scene. But the soldiers made no attempt to disperse the crowd, and after a while the Major even decided to withdraw. At this point, and 4 hours after its gathering, the crowd charged the police station. They killed Todori and heavily wounded Bedriye. No shots were fired, and some policemen were beaten up. The affair was treated in the press as a great scandal and a number of measures were taken in response to it. The Major was interrogated and legal proceedings against 13 persons were initiated.<sup>27</sup>

On October 17, 1908, the Ministry of Police published an announcement, reporting 3 incidents concerning the molestation of women. The first had happened to women in the Covered Bazaar who were wearing "very open" clothes. The second occurred in the same place to a woman who was walking with her officer husband. The third incident happened to an artillery officer who was riding in an open carriage with a "very well-dressed" woman and some children. In the second incident, the culprit had been a soldier and he had been apprehended by other officers. It is interesting to note that officers, who played a key role in the revolution of 1908, seemed to be bent on flaunting conservative conventions. Or, what seems less likely, conservatives were singling out officers in creating such incidents. What is also striking is that the Ministry of Police, by dwelling on the attire of these ladies, seemed -even if it was not blaming them- to be warning women to be careful not to dress or behave in the same way.<sup>28</sup>

These incidents give an indication of the atmosphere of the country and the kind of uphill struggle for the emancipation of women. Important progress was made, but this progress always seemed to run into the dead end of the Islamic state. It was with the advent of secularism under the republic that real gains in the emancipation of women were attained. The difficulties encountered by the CUP are illustrated by the situation during World War I. Because of the scarcity of manpower, women, by necessity, had to take up all sorts of jobs, from office work to factory jobs or street-sweeping. Under the patronage of the army, a society to provide work for women was created which employed 13,000 to 15,000 women in sewing jobs (some of them worked in work-shops, some of them at home). There was even a Women's Battalion attached to the 1st Army in İstanbul. Women began to attend schools hitherto closed to them, including the university. A number of Moslem actresses started to appear on the theatre stage. Though

<sup>27</sup> *İkdam*, 15-6, 26/10, 4/11/1908, no. 5170-1, 5181, 5188; *The Times* (report dated 15/10/1908).

<sup>28</sup> *Tanin*, 17/10/1908, no. 78. This newspaper, a CUP organ, sharply criticized the Ministry because there was no indication concerning the apprehension of those responsible. The carriage incident here described may have been the same as the one earlier referred to. During the same period in Aydın, the local authorities decreed that a man caught talking with a woman would be fined 100 kuruş and that the woman would be bastinadoed. (The difference in punishment is striking.) Şehmus Güzel, "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Toplumsal Değişim ve Kadın", *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3-4, pp. 858-74. It seems rather clear that all these incidents played some sort of part in the military mutiny of "March 31".

all wore the *çarşaf*, many women began not to use the veil.<sup>29</sup> In 1917 an ordinance called *Hukuk-u Aile Kararnamesi* was promulgated which aimed at regulating family law for Ottomans, whatever their religion -something which was unimaginable in the domain of family law. It was asserted, with the backing of a *fetva* (religious opinion) that there was nothing contrary to the Sharia in this ordinance which, however, brought quite a number of innovations in favour of women. For instance, it made polygamy difficult and under certain conditions a judge could grant a divorce to the wife.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of all this progress, the CUP from time to time felt it had to make certain concessions to conservative opinion. Curiously, it was Enver Paşa, the Minister of War who, despite the many measures that he had initiated for the emancipation of Moslem women, on various occasions acted -or felt compelled to act- as a conservative. Thus when Cemil (Topuzlu) Paşa converted the Gülhane palace gardens into a public park, the presence of women at the opening ceremony and, in the following days in the park, gave rise to gossip. Malicious tongues called it "Cemil Paşa's Brothel". The Minister of War at that time (who may or may not have been Enver) ordered that no women should enter the park. Upon objections, it was decreed that women could enter the park only on certain days, when men would be excluded. It seems, however, that in practice, this rule was largely disregarded.<sup>31</sup>

According to another source, the conservative action of Enver Paşa was the result of the beginning of military defeat. He arranged for a committee to decide how long *çarşafs* should be. Police started to go around measuring the skirt lengths of ladies.<sup>32</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion.

It seems apparent from the above account, that with the coming to power of the CUP in 1908, a major transformation began to take place in Ottoman, and more specifically, in Turkish society. The process of reform which started in 1718, in the so-called Tulip Age, and which gained a certain acceleration after 1789, produced important results. The major result, it can be said, was the 1908 revolution itself. But the process

<sup>29</sup> Ahmed Emin (Yalman), *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven, Yale U.P., 1930), pp. 168-86, 224-7, 259-60.

<sup>30</sup> Bayur III, 4, pp. 374-6. It is interesting to note that that this piece of legislation was promulgated not as a law, but as an ordinance, presumably to evade parliamentary discussion - this, in spite of the fact that Parliament had been reduced to rubber - stamp status during the War. It is also very telling that very soon after the CUP's fall from power, in June 19, 1919, the *Kararname* was abrogated.

<sup>31</sup> Afetinan, pp. 93-94; Rakım Ziyaoğlu, *İstanbul Kadınları Şehreminleri Belediye Reisleri ve Partiler Tarihi* (İst., İsmail Akgün, 1971), pp. 198, 203-4. Cemil Paşa was Mayor of Istanbul from 18/8/1912 to 7/11/1914.

<sup>32</sup> Kemal Savcı, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadını* (Ank., Cihan Matbaası, 1973), pp. 59-60. A police director, upon hearing that a man and his wife were living in an hotel room on Prinkipo Islands, personally went to the hotel and sent her out. When the daughters of a high-ranking officer who was fighting at Gallipoli and whose wife was German, attended a reception at the German Embassy, Enver had the officer retired and also had a Customs official who was married to a lady from that family dismissed from his job. How reliable Savcı's information is, I do not know.

of change after 1908 was essentially very different in character and magnitude from the one preceding it. It was no longer a case of improvisation in order to try to cope with external and internal challenges. It was a conscious and deliberate attempt to build a modern, capitalist society. It was a period of revolutionary change.

In Turkey the French quadripartition of history is widely accepted, both in schools and university programs.<sup>33</sup> According to this model, Ancient History (*İlk Çağlar*, "First Ages" in Turkish) starts with the invention of writing and ends with the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476. The Middle Ages goes up to 1453, date of the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans. Modern History, which follows, ends in 1789, date of the French Revolution. After 1789 is Contemporary History. This quadripartition may be meaningful for the French, it may be meaningful for Europe in general, but for Turkish history it is not so meaningful. The collapse of the Western Roman Empire had little significance for the Turks. The conquest of İstanbul was a very important event in Ottoman history, but it cannot be considered the dawn of a new historical age for the Turks. The French emphasis on that date is because the conquest of Constantinople is purported to have resulted in a major movement of Byzantine scholars to Italy, who there helped to initiate the Renaissance. Doubtless, the Renaissance played a major role in the development of European civilization, but it had no immediate effect on the Turks. The same is true of the French Revolution. It had immediate effects, but for the Moslem population of the Empire, these were mainly confined to the military field. For the Turks, the ideological-political-social effects were to come some time later, especially with the CUP.

For these reasons I have proposed, in the foreword of *Türkiye Tarihi*,<sup>34</sup> a tripartite division of Turkish History. Thus the "First Ages" would begin with the invention of writing among the Göktürks (730 A.D.) in Central Asia. For the Turks of Turkey, this age would end with the beginning of the conquest of Anatolia (1071). It would also correspond to the Turks' nomadic age. The Selçuk and Ottoman periods in Anatolia and Rumelia, lasting until 1908 would be the Turkish Middle Ages and would correspond to the process of settlement of the Turks, in other words, the transformation of the Turks from nomads into peasants. From 1908 to the present would be Contemporary Turkish History. In this last era, the dominant motif might be considered the process of urbanization. The attractiveness of this tripartite division would be that it would also correspond, to some extent, to the major socio-economic transformations in Turkish society.

It might be asked, whether or not the contemporary age of Turkish history should rather start with the Republic (1923), or with the struggle for independence (1919). To this writer it seems difficult to separate the 2nd Constitutional Period from the Republic. After all, Atatürk and most of his close supporters had their baptism in politics within the ranks of the CUP. In this respect, Tunaya's evaluation of the 2nd Constitutional Period as the "political laboratory of the Republic" has been a source of inspiration in

<sup>33</sup>For critical discussions of French quadripartition see J. Chesneaux, *Pasts and Futures or What is History For?*, translated by S. Coryell (London, Thames and Hudson, 1978), pp. 63-7; İbrahim Kafesoğlu, "Üniversite Tarih Öğretiminde Yeni Bir Plân", *İÜEF Tarih Dergisi*, vol. XIV, no. 19, March 1964.

<sup>34</sup>(*History of Turkey*), vol. I (İst., Cem Y., 1987).

joining the two periods. At the same time, of course, this should not blur the major differences between the two sub-periods. The Turkish Revolution began in 1908, but it attained its fruition in a much more profound and radical form with the Republic. The Constitutional Revolution (1908-1918) took place within the framework of the monarchic principle embodied by the Ottoman dynasty. Because of the dead hand of tradition, this Revolution also accepted the theocratic principle. It was to a large extent due to Vahdettin's attempt to restore absolutism upon the eclipse of the CUP during the Armistice and his determined opposition to the National Struggle -as well as Atatürk's secular republicanism, his military victories- that led to the radicalization of the Turkish Revolution and the advent of the Republican Revolution. In other words, the contemporary period of Turkish history begins with the Constitutional Revolution in 1908. The abolition of the Sultanate on November 1, 1922 marks the beginning of the Republican Revolution. On the other hand, the two revolutions can be subsumed under the title of "Turkish Revolution".

While accepting the tripartite classification, it might be also argued that the beginning of the Contemporary Age should be carried back to an earlier date, say 1876 or 1839. The ease with which Abdülhamit could do away with the Constitutional regime in 1880 indicates the great weakness of that movement. 1839, the Tanzimat, is a major turning point, no doubt. Nevertheless, and in spite of the stature of men like Mustafa Reşit, Ali, Fuat and Mithat Paşas, it is clear -especially in internal politics- that in the period 1839-1880 the Palace, in the last analysis, generally had the last word. Fuat Paşa's famous words aptly describe the position of these statesmen: "In every country there are two forces. One comes from above, the other from below. In our country the force coming from above oppresses all of us. There is no possibility of creating a force from below. That is why we need to use a force coming from the side, like a shoemaker's hammer. That force are the embassies." (Above is the Sultan, below is the people.)

Another counter-argument might be against classifying history into major, millennial epochs. This argument would -perhaps necessarily- also object to the concept of revolution, or at least to attaching major significance to revolutions. The idea that history is a linear progression with no cataclysmic turning points is one that is popular among some Turkish historians who like to see an 'ironed out' history with no revolutionary events. This is not, perhaps, the place to go into the philosophical intricacies of this argument.<sup>35</sup> This much can be said: the validity of every classification can be argued, but classification is the irresistible urge of the scientific mind. It is also a necessity: the human mind masters facts by classifying them. As to the significance of

<sup>35</sup> For views on this subject, see, for instance J. Huizinga, "The Idea of History", *Varieties of History*, edited by F. Stern (N.Y., Meridian Books, 1956), R. Chartier, "Révolution" and K. Pomian, "Periodisation" in *La Nouvelle Histoire*, edited by J. Le Goff (Paris, CEPL, 1978). For discussions of the subject within the Marxist context see *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* by M. Dobb, P. Sweezy, K.H. Takahashi, R. Hilton, C. Hill and articles and comments in *La Pensée*, June 1976, no. 187 by M. Grenon and R. Robin, A. Soboul, F. Gauthier, E. Guibert. The same problem -but in the field of science- is taken up in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. İlkay Sunar has attempted to apply Kuhn's concept of changing paradigms to Turkish history in *State and Society in the Politics of Turkey's Development* (Ankara, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1974).



revolutions, it is true that the origin of every development in history may be traced to innumerable earlier developments, some going back to the very beginning of existence. Nevertheless, if we may be permitted the use of a well-known simile, events in history are a multitude of straws which all lead up to something, but it is the straw that breaks the camel's back that is significant. Because, to put it rather glibly, there is a world of difference between "live camel" and "dead camel". All the straws on the camel's back contributed to break it, but the role of the last straw was considerably greater than that of all the other straws. It seems to me that it is a duty for the historian to signal out that particular straw and that particular moment.