

**A PRELIMINARY NOTE ON
THE POLITICS OF CIVIL SOCIETY FORMATION
IN TURKEY**

Dr. İlkay SUNAR

In a passage which few contemporary social scientists would dare put so boldly, historian Arnold Toynbee describes the founding of the Turkish Republic in the following way :

«The Turkish Republic which was called into existence on 29 October, 1923, by resolution of the Grand National Assembly at Angora, is a monument to the ascendancy which the modern civilization of the West has established in the contemporary world. Had our Western civilization not developed on certain lines, and had it not impressed those peculiar lines of development on non-Western minds by expanding far and wide beyond its first narrow borders, it is inconceivable that a Turkish Republic, equipped with a constitution like that of 20 April, 1924, and governed by policies like those of Turkish statesmen in 1925 should ever have come into existence in the interior of Anatolia.»¹

Toynbee's statement asserts a correspondence between the «peculiar lines of development» in the West and the character of the Turkish Republic. The constitution of 1924 and the policies of Turkish statesmen are given as testimony for such correspondence. It is interesting that similarities between the two cultures are emphasized while the historical differences are simply assumed. To earlier Western observers of the Turks it was the contrasts between the institutions of the Ottoman Empire and those of Europe which demanded attention: then curiosity arose from the need to un-

(1) Arnold Toynbee and Kenneth Kirkwood, *Turkey*, (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1927), p. 3.

derstand the operational code of a dangerous opponent. In 1927 when Toynbee wrote his book, there was not much to fear; the Westerner needed only to know himself in order to discover his now-pacified neighbor.

I

It is the thesis of the following pages that the fundamental notion with which the West impressed the Turkish mind was a peculiarly Western understanding of **society** as an **independent** entity. In the West, the independence of society was jealously kept against any intervention from the outside, especially and significantly against that which could come from the political center. The origins of this independence have been traced as far back as medieval Europe. Bendix, for instance, points out that the character of feudal life in Europe was such that there was always an underlying tension between the royal authority (political center) and the society of estates (local communities). This tension was due to the system of immunities and autonomous jurisdictions which were recognized to certain persons or groups who were in turn exempted from «direct obedience to the commands issued by, or in the name of, the ruler.» The consequence was a precariously united political society in which there was continual struggle between the corporate body of estates and the king over the distribution of fiscal and administrative preserves.²

Although we should not exaggerate the immunities of feudal estates, and later those of towns, the overall structure of Medieval Europe does pose as a contrast to the relatively Platonic organization of the Ottoman Empire. An earlier observer, no other than Niccolo Machiavelli, for instance, was impressed by this difference when he wrote, not so impartially:

«...the kingdoms known to history have been governed in two ways: either by a prince and his servants, who, as ministers by his grace and permission, assist in governing the realm; or by a prince and by barons who hold their positions not by favour of the

(2) Reinhard Bendix, «Social Stratification and the Political Community», in Peter Laslett and W. C. Runciman (eds.), **Philosophy, Politics, and Society**, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1962), p. 213.

ruler but by antiquity of blood. Such barons have states and subjects of their own, who recognize them as their lords, and are naturally attached to them. In those states which are governed by a prince and his servants, the prince possesses more authority, because there is no one in the state regarded as superior other than himself, and if others are obeyed it is merely as ministers and officials of the prince, and no one regards them with any special affection.

Examples of these two kinds of government in our own time are those of the Turk and the King of France. All the Turkish monarchy is governed by one ruler, the others are his servants, and dividing his kingdom into 'sangiaccates', he sends to them various administrators, and changes them or recalls them at his pleasure. But the King of France is surrounded by a large number of nobles, recognized as such by their subjects, and loved by them; they have their prerogatives, of which the king cannot deprive them without danger to himself.»³

It has been pointed out that the portraits drawn by Machiavelli correspond to Weber's distinction between «patrimonialism» and «feudalism.»⁴ Şerif Mardin has also argued that the Ottoman Empire was a patrimonial system with emphasis on the status dimension of stratification.⁵ The contrast is significant to the extent that a patrimonial system excludes the rights and immunities enjoyed by local communities in a feudal arrangement. If we refer to these legally immune communities (Weber called them «law communities») as constitutive of **civil society**, then it can be said after Şerif Mardin that the Ottoman Empire was characterized by its lack of civil society.⁶ However, it would be a

(3) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 15-16.

(4) Lloyd Fallers, «Equality, Modernity, and Democracy in the New States», in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States*, (New York: The Free Press, 1963), p. 171.

(5) Şerif Mardin, «Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire», *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 11/3, (June 1969), pp. 258-81.

(6) «It (the Ottoman Empire) lacked the basic structural component that Hegel termed «civil society», a part of society that could operate independently of central government and was based on property rights.» Mardin, *ibid.*, p. 264.

gross exaggeration to infer from this lack that the Ottoman Empire was a bureaucratic despotism. True, unlike the loosely knit political society of Medieval European life, in which politics was more like international clashes among feudal bodies and the king, the Ottoman Empire was more a political whole with no distinction between state and society. But in theory as well as in practice, the authority and the power of the Sultan was circumscribed not only by his responsibility for the welfare of his subjects and a Divine Law (**Şeriat**) he could not transgress, but also by a **millet** system in which each religious-ethnic community was permitted to have a relative degree of autonomy. The Ottoman administration was not exactly an alien bureaucracy imposed upon society; it ruled more by reciprocal ties of patronage than by direct force—in fact, such was the nature of the Sultan's power that the popular Ottoman expression described it as no different than the kind of authority exercised by fathers over their sons. In folklore, **Devlet Baba** meant «Papa State».

Nevertheless, it is true that what made the Ottoman Empire different from Medieval Europe was a model of society in which social relationships and institutions were sustained by the direction imparted by the state. It was political authority which held together and defined the limits of society as a whole. Political authority penetrated the social sphere of life in such a way that society was subsumed under the state, and economic life was closely supervised by the ruler. No irrevocable immunities existed for the **reaya** (subjects). In short, there were no privileged or immune estates which could act independently of the political center based on property rights, corporate personality, or the autonomy of towns.⁷ Both property and people belonged, in the-

(7) This is not to say that there were no organized bodies among the subjects (**reaya**). In fact, Gibb and Bowen point to trade guilds, village councils and the tribal organization of the nomads as having exercised a significant influence on the loyalty of the **reaya**. But although these bodies enjoyed a measure of autonomy they were also closely supervised by the local governors, men of the ruling center. Thus they never approached the autonomous towns of the West, nor were they invested with a corporate legal personality. For further details on these «secondary» structures in the Ottoman Empire, see H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, **Islamic Society and the West**, Volume I, part I, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 159-60, 277 ff.

ory, to God, and were in the trust of the Sultan.⁸ The land held as benefice by the Ottoman provincial gentry was not their own; the peasant was entitled only to the usufruct of the land. Patronage relations, on the other hand, helped bind the various social groups to the state. While it was the duty of the Sultan, as God's trustee, to dispense justice (*adalet*) and to administer welfare (*hisba*), the socio-economic institutions of the Empire were so arranged by the center that they were maintained through a mixture of bureaucratic and patronage relations and legitimized through the twin obligations of *hisba* and *adalet*.⁹

II

The Ottoman paradigm of order was admired by Machiavelli particularly for its strength and durability. However, Machiavelli also knew that no order was permanent and that no kingdom could escape decline, its eventual fate. And right he was, for when Western Europe had reached its apogee in power and wealth, the once mighty Empire had to turn to Europe in order to discover the secret which would also shed its blessings on a society now caught in spiraling descent.

The secret was the liberal version of independent society fashioned in such a way as to meet the obsessive economic emphasis of the times. In the liberal view the importance of the

(8) In practice, much of the arable land was apportioned to military gentry who collected taxes from the peasantry and in return provided the Sultan with armed troops in times of war. Thus while the usufruct of the land belonged to the peasantry, the military gentry (*sipahi*), without hereditary rights and the right of ownership, collected taxes and trained armed troops as members of the ruling center. In the late 17th century, but especially in the ensuing centuries when the Empire was in dire financial troubles, land began to be given to the highest bidder with tax-farming privileges of varying duration. It has often been commented that the corruption of the old (*dirlik*) system was one of the outstanding reasons for the Ottoman decline.

(9) The authority of the Sultan was based on the political understanding that «a ruler could have no power without soldiers, no soldiers without money, no money without justice.» See Halil İnalcık, «The Nature of Traditional Society: Turkey», in Dankwart Rustow and Robert Ward (eds.), *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 43. For the sources

(market) economy was extended to the point where its features became identical with the society itself.¹⁰ In the market society legal immunities continued to be guarantees to local groups against the intervention of the political center. However, the primacy of economic action was such that civil preserves were significant to the extent that they were conducive to a feverish pace of economic activity. Property rights, legal personality of corporations, autonomous towns and other such immunities were all in the service of one overriding aim: the proper protections for unlimited gain.¹¹ The theoretical expression of that aim was formulated in such a way that not only were civil immunities justified in terms of efficiency and welfare but the market structure was viewed as sufficient in providing the bonds which hold the parts of society together. The spontaneous activity of a multiplicity of social groups was to be coordinated through the supreme social institution, the market, without the aid of any outside agency. As Sheldon Wolin expressed it,

of the ruling ideas in the Ottoman Empire, see Bernard Lewis, **The Emergence of Modern Turkey**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), Second Edition, Chapter 1

- (10) Referring to this unprecedented emphasis on the market in the nineteenth century, Karl Polanyi notes the following: «No society could, naturally, live for any length of time unless it possessed an economy of some sort; but previous to our time no economy has ever existed that, even in principle, was controlled by markets... Gain and profit made on exchange never before played an important part in human economy. Though the institution of the market was fairly common since the later Stone Age, its role was no more than incidental to economic life.» **The Great Transformation**, (New York: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 43.
- (11) Recent research by Turkish social scientists has tried to explain Turkey's underdevelopment by seeking its origins either in economic exploitation by the West or in the cultural and structural aspects of the Ottoman Empire. Şerif Mardin, in a recent article, taking the structuralist viewpoint, locates the impediments to capitalist accumulation in the Empire's lack of civil society. He writes: «The obligation which the Sultan felt to be a «father to his subjects» in towns placed commerce at a disadvantage as compared with guild industry. Whereas in the West feudal lords and kings had on the whole given more support to merchants than to artisans, in the Ottoman Empire the situation was reversed. While the state was powerful this hindered the growth of mercantile capital. Not only did the state protect the guilds against monopolistic practices by merchants, but more importantly, by denying corporate personality and independent government to towns it blocked the formation of oligarchies and merchant capitalists.» Mardin, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

«What was truly radical in liberalism was its conception of society as a network of activities carried on by actors who knew no principle of authority. Society represented not only a spontaneous and self-adjusting order, but a condition untroubled by the presence of authority... (Hence) the age-old function of distributing goods according to some standard of justice was transferred from the political sphere and assigned to the market mechanism.»¹²

Was the political order then left without a role to play? This was not exactly the liberals' conclusion; the political center was assigned the governmental task of preserving a secure environment in which productive activity could proceed unhampered.

The Ottoman Empire began to be significantly molded by the liberal model of society especially during the 19th century. The pressures were applied through a variety of channels. For one, the West itself became the champion of liberalization. Now at the peak of her productive energies, the West was interested in the free flow of European goods to the Ottoman markets. This meant that an environment of free economic activity had to be secured in accordance with the *laissez-faire* policy of free trade and investment.¹³ This in turn required the enactment of laws which would provide the foreign and the local investors with the kind of immunities prevalent in the market society of Western Europe.¹⁴

(12) Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, (New York: Little, Brown, 1960), p. 301.

(13) The Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention of 1838 is a good example of Western application of «free trade» on a global scale. In an introduction to the document itself, Charles Issawi makes the following remark: «The Convention of 1838... set up the framework for Ottoman fiscal policy that prevailed until the First World War. It removed all monopolies, allowed British merchants to purchase goods anywhere in the Empire, and imposed duties of 5 per cent on **imports**, 12 per cent on **exports**, and 3 per cent on transit. It was to apply to all parts of the Empire... Other European powers soon acceded to the Convention.» *The Economic History of the Middle East*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 38. (Emphasis is mine).

(14) Referring to the relationship between Ottoman reforms of the 19th century and the influence of Europe, Bernard Lewis writes: «The general feeling of Europe was that the ancient institutions and structure of the Empire were barbarous and irretrievably bad, and that only the adoption, as rapidly as possible, of a European form

The fact that local business circles of the Empire happened to be largely Christian minorities provided the Western powers with yet another excuse for political intervention: they took it upon themselves to see that the minorities enjoyed the full benefits of liberal citizenship. It is not my purpose to go into further detail on the pressures the West applied against the authority of the Sultan. Suffice it to say that Western powers did contribute to the decline and fall of the Ottoman structure of authority.

By the 19th century the Empire had itself evolved a looser structure in which fiefs were given out more and more to tax-farmers who acted in the manner of local oligarchs. As early as 1808 the political center, for the first time in Ottoman history, had been forced to sign a charter with the local notables (*ayan*). What the local magnates secured was recognition of their local autonomy at the expense of the Sultan's authority. The Sultan's response was a counter-attack to re-establish his power over the provinces. This exchange marked the beginning of a peculiar dialectic between centralization and localization which has continued in a variety of forms. The dialectic was peculiar in that each centralizing response to local autonomy would be undertaken in the name of reform and progress. However, each act of reform drew its inspiration from liberal Europe and hence contributed toward the further formation of an independent society of local dynasties.¹⁵

of government and way of life would admit Turkey to the rank and privileges of a civilized state. This view was urged on Turkish statesmen with considerable vigour by the governments and embassies of the European powers, and eventually came to be accepted, at least tacitly, by a larger and larger proportion of a Turkish ruling class which was deeply aware of the power, wealth, and progress of Europe...» Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 124. The consequence of this «vigorous urging» and «tacit acceptance» was a series of legal reforms in land, commercial, maritime, and penal codes, all of which were European and liberal in origin. For further information see Lewis, *ibid.*, pp. 74-128, 455ff.

- (15) The new land code of 1858 adopted from France by the Porte in the name of progress was to result in the following: «The general trend of the reforms was to abrogate the earlier agrarian relationships and progressively to extend and confirm the right of use, possession, and of ownership. Leaseholders and tax-farmers acquired freehold ownership... The actual cultivators, their rights and status much diminished, became sharecroppers or hired laborers, at the mercy of a reinforced landlord class which was the principal beneficiary of the reform.» Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 119.

Thus we can see that while Western policy applied pressure for the formation of civil society, especially in the urban areas, the reformist sultan and his ruling entourage undertook, in the name of progress, a process which contradicted and undermined their own legitimacy and power. Once the assignment of progress was taken seriously, every attempt at reform, while requiring the concentration of authority at the center, was to bring about the prerequisites (civil immunities) of a wealth-generating market economy.

The reforms were essentially a response to the decline of the Empire. Moreover, the Porte (political center) was neither fully aware of the implications of liberal reforms for its authority nor, of course, could it control the unintended consequences of its actions.¹⁶ Policies that were drawn with with the explicit purpose of solidifying the Sultans' power had a way of contributing to the autonomy of social groups. In addition, by the end of the nineteenth century, the local groups were themselves strong enough to engage in political pressure against the authority of the center.

We need not go into the details of how civil society was finally to arrive in Turkey. Legal concepts, property rights, appropriate political institutions (sometimes established in order to strengthen the state), and ideological equipment were all acquired and with special haste after the founding of the Republic. There could be no development without a market economy, no market economy without an independent civil society; hence the emphasis on the governmental legal and ideological underpinnings of a market society. The whole package was labelled «progress»; and it fell largely to the state to carry the burden.

(16) In an interesting observation Karl Polanyi notes that in Europe markets developed under the mercantile system. Central «regulation and markets, in effect, grew up together. The self-regulating market was unknown; indeed the emergence of the idea of self-regulation was a complete reversal of the trend of development.» Polanyi, *op. cit.*, p. 68. Perhaps the emergence of the self self-regulating market was not a «complete reversal of the trend of development» but an unintended consequence of mercantilist policy. The early feeble market groups are always in need of protection and regulation by the state. Once, however, measures are taken to encourage their development it is certain that in time what was once protection will be considered a nuisance by the commercial groups.

III

The independent society arrived by yet another route: this was prompted by the problem of community which began to beset the Empire especially during the latter half of the 19th century.¹⁷ The Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) had by their declarations of universal citizenship greatly undermined the traditional system of **millets**. **Millet** had been the traditional term for the various non-Muslim religious communities which had all been allowed to practice their faiths without much intervention from the Muslim community. The **millets** had traditionally been the foundation of minority loyalties as Islam and the Sultan-Caliph had been that of the Muslims.¹⁸

The Tanzimat reforms, initiated under pressure from the West, challenged these loyalties when Ottoman citizenship was declared the basic loyalty overriding all others. The following confusion was inevitable: not only was the idea that one could be a non-Muslim and an Ottoman at the same time somewhat confounding, especially to the Muslims, but the notion of universal citizenship was totally new and strange to all concerned.

The first Constitution of the Empire (1876) attempted to come to grips with this strange notion. What emerged, however, was a crippled understanding not only of citizenship itself but of the authority of the state as well. Citizenship assumed that the

(17) The ideologies which were considered for providing the necessary cohesion for a disintegrating Empire are discussed in the following books: Tarık Z. Tunaya, **Türkiye'nin Siyasi Hayatında Batılılaşma Hareketleri**, (Westernization Movements in Turkish Political Life), (İstanbul: Yedigün, 1969); Niyazi Berkes, **Batıcılık, Ulusculuk ve Toplumsal Devrimler** (Westernism, Nationalism and Social Reforms), (İstanbul: Yön Yayınları, 1965). In English the best source is Bernard Lewis's **The Emergence of Modern Turkey**, 1961.

(18) Referring to the **millet** system, Niyazi Berkes makes the following observation: «Traditionally, and until the Tanzimat, the Armenian, Greek, Jewish and other recognized communities had been little theocracies within an empire. The spiritual head of each community had had civil, fiscal, educational and even penal jurisdiction over his flock... Following the Reform Edict (1856), these communities underwent secularizing constitutional changes... With these changes giving scope for new political experiences the **millets** became little non-territorial republics and incipient «nations., Niyazi Berkes, **The Development of Secularism in Turkey**,» (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p. 158.

state was based upon the consent of the governed. However, the framers of the Constitution also agreed that an unjust act was unjust «even if it were sanctioned and carried out by the whole population». Hence the conclusion was that full popular sovereignty had to be limited by the Good (**Hüsn**), which was created by God in nature and found its expression in the **Sharia**. This meant in effect that while the Sultan continued to draw his authority from the Divine Law the consent of the governed would be an effective check on his possible arbitrary acts. The consequence is well known: the Constitution was abrogated in 1878 and the Empire was ruled by total absolutism until 1908.

The twentieth century formulation of state and society sought to put an end to the contradiction of the first Constitution. The consent of the governed was followed to its logical conclusion: when finally the Ottoman dynasty was deposed and Islam was disestablished as the basis of traditional authority, the ensuing notion of community as nation was a defication of society. Ziya Gökalp, the theorist of Turkish nationalism, formulated an understanding of the nation which was none other than a re-assertion of Durkheim's notion of society. Uriel Heyd expressed this affinity in the following terms:

«For Durkheim's **society** he (Gökalp) substitutes **nation**... Consequently he transfers to the nation all the divine qualities he had found in society, replacing the belief in God by the belief in the nation: Nationalism has become a religion.»¹⁹

Thus what had been reserved for the political-religious order in the Empire was transferred to society. Everything was society's creation. Nation as the source of all ideals became the supreme moral judge. The founding Father of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal, himself expressed this belief when he addressed the members of the Economic Congress of İzmir in 1923:

«Friends, you come directly from the classes of the people who really constitute our nation, and are chosen by them. You know at first hand the condition and the needs of our country and nation, the hopes and sorrows of our people. The words you will utter, the measures

(19) Uriel Heyd, **Foundations of Turkish Nationalism**, (London: Luzac and Co., 1950), p. 57.

that you will prescribe, may be considered as spoken by the people... The voice of the people is the voice of God.»²⁰

If the voice of the people was that of God then the analogy implied that just as God was one so was society. The people, the nation were indivisible entities. Nationalism guaranteed that indivisibility and unity. Thus, once traditional forms of authority were undermined, nationalism-populism emerged as a substitute which would provide the necessary authoritative concepts which render action meaningful.²¹ Populism meant that those concepts would be drawn from the society itself. Once again society was declared independent and sufficient unto itself. Since all authority was social in origin none but society could give itself the direction it needed.

Gökalp's and Atatürk's understanding of society as nation shared a striking similarity with the market model of society: in both society was set up as an autonomous being in no need of outside guidance. There were differences, however: in fact nationalism was a testimony to the lack of faith among the Turks that the forces of the market were adequate for the society to **cohere**. Perhaps it could not have been otherwise under the circumstances following the Independence War (1919-1922). What little existed of a market structure was now in shambles. Nonetheless, the Economic Congress where Mustafa Kemal declared the «voice of the people as the voice of God» was itself a witness to the fact that Kemalists had not altogether abandoned their faith in the **developmental** capacities of a market economy. It was there that a liberal program for economic development was drafted.²²

(20) «The Opening Speech of the 1923 Turkish Economic Congress by Başkumandan Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa». The Turkish text of this speech is found in Gündüz Ökçün's **Türkiye İktisat Kongresi: 1923—İzmir**, (Ankara: Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1968), p. 244. The passage is also cited in Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 466. The above translation is slightly different than the one found in Lewis.

(21) For an excellent discussion of ideology as a «road map» which provides direction for action, see Clifford Geertz, «Ideology as a Cultural System», in David Apter (ed.), **Ideology and Discontent**, (New York: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 47-76.

(22) For further details on this Congress see Gündüz Ökçün, **Türkiye İktisat Kongresi: 1923, İzmir**, (Economic Congress of Turkey: 1923, İzmir), (Ankara: Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1968).

It has been suggested above that Kemalism embraced simultaneously the two notions of society as nation and market economy. While Turkish nationalism was to provide the necessary cohesion among a people that had previously conceived of themselves as Muslims and Ottomans, the market model of society was adopted for its capacities of generating wealth. However, the two notions of society held incompatible propensities: while nationalism viewed society as one indivisible corporate unit, the market model required for its spontaneous and efficient operation a plurality of groups in the pursuit of their maximum interests. In the market model one could not in an *a priori* fashion formulate a detached understanding of common or public interest. Public interest was conceived in such a model as the consequence of a multiplicity of interests «coordinated» by an «invisible hand»: to interfere with the free operation of these interests was, therefore, a blow to public welfare itself. In the understanding of nation, in the sense that it came close to Durkheim's «society» or Rousseau's «community», the notions of public interest, justice, etc. were no longer traceable to a source outside of society but they were nonetheless located in the «general will» of the «collective conscience» which transcended particular groups and individuals. The similarity was that while in one model authority had been immaterialized as the «invisible hand», in the other it disappeared into the «general will». The difference, on the other hand, pitted the oneness of the national conscience against the multiplicity of groups which underwrote the concept of the «invisible hand». Kemalism denied the conflict of interests which occurred in the market economy, conceived of national interests as one, and hence resurrected authority in the visible and active form of a one-party representation system.

«This nation has suffered much from a multiplicity of political parties. Let me acknowledge that in other countries, parties are certainly based on economic interests. The reason is that in those countries there are classes. In opposition to a party that represents the interests of one class, another party is formed to preserve the interests of another. This is natural. The consequences we have suffered from the multiplicity of parties that were formed, as if there were classes in our

country, are well known. However, when we say the the People's Party, included in it is not only a part of the nation but its whole.»²³

Here the indivisibility of the nation is unequivocally stated. When, in the same speech, Atatürk immediately proceeded to advocate development through a market economy, the policy consequences were clear: since the interest of the people was one and harmonious, and since all were more or less equally poor, all needed encouragement and protection by the only representative of national interest, the People's Party.

«Let us look at our people. As you know, most of them are farmers and shepherds. Contrary to such a situation we can think of big landowners. How many among us hold such large holdings of land? If we investigate we will see that in relation to the largeness of our country no one is a big landowner. Therefore, the landowners are also to be helped and protected. Then come the artisans and small town merchants. Naturally, we must provide for their futures and protect their interests. There are no big capitalists confronting these commercial groups, as there are no big landowners confronting our farmers. How many millionaires do we have? None. Hence we shall not be the enemy of those with little capital. On the contrary, we shall work towards the creation of millionaires, nay, even billionaires. Then come the workers. There are very few factories and other such production plants in our country. Our present worker population does not exceed twenty thousand. But we need factories in order to develop our country, this is necessary. And for this we need workers. Hence, we must also protect the workers who are no different from the farmers who work on our fields. Then come the intellectuals and scholars. Can these intellectuals and scholars get together and be the enemy of the people? Their task is to go among the people, to educate them, and be their leaders in progress and modernization. This is how I see our nation. Therefore, since the interests of the various vocations are coales-

(23) Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri (Atatürk's Speeches), (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1959), II, p. 97.

cent, they can not be divided into classes; their whole constitutes the people.»²⁴

It is clear that Mustafa Kemal acted as a 20th century descendant of a long line of Ottoman reformers who had likewise undertaken the formation of a market economy under political auspices. But whereas the earlier reformers were limited to a single model generative of wealth, Atatürk was highly conscious of the contemporary alternatives for development. However, despite leanings toward etatism in the 1930's, an ideological shift was never undertaken.²⁵

The reasons for this ideological continuity can now be sought both in the conception of modernization and in the presence of civil society. The profound changes in the nineteenth century had created powerful social groups which in the Republic constituted the social basis of the People's Party. This is to say that while the disintegration of the Empire found in Mustafa Kemal an authoritative response, his cooperation with these social power sources limited his political horizon. The local notables and the commercial bourgeoisie of the cities constituted a social force which the political center could no longer ignore; their demands had to be incorporated into the ideological premises of the Party.

IV

As mentioned above there was a brief attempt in the 1930's to give a more permanent character to state initiative.²⁶ This attempt, which reached its apogee in the **Kadro** movement (1932), was significant to the extent that it exposed the tension which

(24) *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

(25) See Mümtaz Soysal, «The Policy of Mixed Industrial Enterprises in Turkey and Its Sociopolitical Consequences», **Development and Change**, 1/2, (1969-70), pp. 18-28.

(26) The economic policy of Turkey prior to 1930 was marked by a liberal approach. This was due not only to social pressures and political commitment, but also to the restrictive provisions of the Lausanne Treaty (1924), which did not allow the Turkish government (until 1929) full control over custom tariffs and the foreign concessions. The Depression in 1929 effected significant change in which the central bureaucracy, frustrated by the infantile and inefficient private sector, began to push for a comprehensive planning for development. For further details, see Z. Y. Hershlag, **Turkey: An Economy in Transition**, (The Hague, 1958), pp. 75-125.

had provided the background for the contradictory proclamations of the People's Party.²⁷ The **Kadro** movement, which advocated a polity guided and ruled by the expertise of a skilled few (cadre), found its opposition in the local constituency of the Party. The clash signalled the fact that modernity had arrived in a twofold fashion: while the local opposition was a consequence of century-and-a-half long efforts in the service of civil society formation, the **Kadro** movement represented the first clear formulation of a modern emphasis on bureaucratic action. The «intellectuals and scholars», now in the role of technical professionals, began to take Mustafa Kemal's advice seriously: they were ready to assume the role of the elite in the education and modernization of the people. There was one problem, however: The local leaders, now securely rooted in society, were not willing to relinquish their authority over their spheres of influence. The result was not a head-on clash, but the renewal of a tacit elite partnership which had been forged in the early days of the Republic.

The roots of that partnership, in fact, went as far back as the Independence War, when the local notables (**eşraf**) and the nationalist military officers had cooperated in mobilizing the Turkish population against the invading powers. Since the local notables exercised much control over the peasantry, they were highly instrumental in shoring up resistance against the enemy. For the most part, they were landed families and local religious dignitaries who had traditionally been the local officials of the religious order (local **ulema**), or former **ayan** who at various times had turned into tax-farmers. Included among them were also tribal leaders dominant especially in eastern and southeastern provinces of Anatolia. All had greatly benefited from the process of civil society formation, which brought them to highly influential economic and social po-

(27) The **Kadro** movement articulated a peculiar synthesis of nationalism and socialism, wherein the indivisible interests of the classless Turkish nation were best represented by a small skillful elite. The ideology assigned to the elite a program of planned development under state supervision. It has been noted that the **Kadro** ideology drew its inspiration from the Soviet experiment and the corporatist nationalism of Mussolini's Italy. It is not certain, however, as to how sympathetic the response to these ideas was among the inner group of Kemalists. Whatever the response may have been, it was clear by 1934 that the Kadroists were not taken seriously. See Kemal Karpat, **Turkey's Politics**, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 70ff.

sitions in the local communities. Especially significant were the profound changes of the 19th century which brought them private control over previously *miri* or state lands. By the twentieth century their control over the peasantry was complete; their leading role in religious and cultural life was now reinforced by their economic supremacy.²⁸

The military-civil bureaucrats, on the other hand, were the legatees of a long tradition of Ottoman rulership. Now secular and nationalist in outlook, they derived their legitimacy from a claim to national representation and leadership; but their power issued mainly from their monopoly over governmental positions and the military.²⁹ In forging a partnership with the local notables, they had been able to bring the peasantry into the liberation struggles on the side of the Nationalist Government of Mustafa Kemal. With the founding of the Republic they had come to terms with the notables, local supremacy over the peasantry. The result was an implicit but well-understood coalition in which recognition of the notables' authority was exchanged for acceptance of the bureaucrats' central position.

Given the points of compromise underlying this coalition, it was obvious that emphasis on etatism by the central bureaucracy would largely pre-empt the sphere of investment of urban commercial groups. In the depression years of the 1930's, this was realized to the extent that it was industry which became the focus of state investment and control. However, commercial groups with close kinship ties to the local families were not only protected and encouraged, but were given concessionary positions for providing raw material and distributing state-refined goods. Since industry

(28) For further details on the nature of these local families, see the following articles by Kemal Karpat: «Recent Political Developments in Turkey and Their Social Background», *International Affairs*, v. 28, (July 1962), pp. 207-11. Also, «Society, Economics, and Politics in Contemporary Turkey», *World Politics*, (October 1964), pp. 51-61.

(29) This is not to say that the civil-military bureaucracy under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal was a monolith. Immediately following the founding of the Republic the Kemalist entourage was, in fact, severely opposed by a group of highly placed army officers who had been Mustafa Kemal's comrades-in-arms. They constituted an outspoken opposition within the National Assembly and continued to emerge as opposition leaders despite Atatürk's attempt at their subordination. Their political power, however, was never significant after their prosecution following the Kurdish revolt in 1925.

was totally lacking in Turkey, it was not an encroachment on commercial interests for the state to take the active lead in industrialization; on the contrary, by establishing industry and creating intermediary positions for the commercial bourgeoisie, the state continued to be instrumental in the accumulation of private capital.³⁰

Such contortions were perhaps inevitable given the necessary alliance of the state bureaucracy with the landowning elite. The alliance had resulted in the denial of a comprehensive political re-fashioning of society for development. This meant that not much surplus could be derived from a traditional and socially controlled agricultural system.³¹ And if industry was reducible to a few handicraft operations in textile, then a fragile bourgeoisie engaged in commerce and trade represented the only financial and dynamic source for development. Hence when the **Kadro** movement failed at comprehensive planning, the state undertook industrialization while the bourgeoisie was encouraged to become its partner in further investments. The resultant melange has been called «state capitalism».

In sum, the central bureaucracy, the commercial bourgeoisie, and the local elites, none of which was able to rule alone, had now established a coalition at the expense of the large population of peasantry and the small but emerging working class. The nationalist bureaucracy, which was reformist, even revolutionary, in cultural

(30) Let me note that members of the central bureaucracy not infrequently used political influence to establish economic interests of their own within the society. Thus not only did a number of them join the commercial bourgeoisie itself, but they also used their commercial savings to become landlords with large holdings of their own. These groups however, not only established themselves as economic interests, but they exploited their governmental connections for further opportunities in gain, whether this were cheap sale of land, illegitimate credit facilitation, or the assumption of a lucrative concessionary position for state industries. For further details on the «etatist bourgeoisie», see Kemal Karpaz, «Recent Political Developments in Turkey and Their Social Background», pp. 308-10; and Dankwart Rustow, «Politics and Development Policy», in F. Shorter (ed.), **Four Studies in the Economic Development of Turkey**, (London, 1967), pp. 11-16.

(31) **Öşür**, the agricultural tax, was abolished in 1925. This put a great deal of strain on the government in financing the state budget. The deficits were partially financed by internal loans, foreign loans, and occasional taxes levied in times of crisis. See Hershlag, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-24.

life, never interfered to change the social structure. Rather, measures were taken to preserve the «harmony» of social relations. Informing the nationalist populism of the times was the apprehension that, left to its own devices, society would move towards a state of class conflict.³² Thus while several feeble attempts at land reform were quickly diffused, repressive legislation concerning peasant and worker organizations was borrowed from Italy.³³ It was during these years that the president of the Republic, İnönü, was declared the «Permanent Chief».

V

In the aftermath of World War II, the bureaucrat-bourgeoisie-landlord coalition completely broke down. By 1950 a new political party held power. The explanation for these changes has been controversial, since the shift was not a simple and ordinary transfer of duty from one party to another. It had significant consequences

-
- (32) This was a realistic fear, since the adoption of the market society model demanded precisely what Mustafa Kemal himself had correctly diagnosed about «other» (i.e., Western European) countries: a multi-party system representative of differing social interests. Hence when the market economy was imitated without the appropriate political institutions, the consequence was the predominance of those social interests which were relied upon for investment and development. Since the commercial bourgeoisie (both rural and urban) were not yet in a position to meet the demands of peasants and workers, their protection meant not only legal and economic incentives, but the proper legislation against demands which would decrease their investment potential. Politically, the fear was of the possible mobilization of class consciousness for ideological transformation. All leftist activity was severely repressed in 1925. For information on leftist movements active between 1908 and 1925, see Mete Tunçay, **Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar** (Leftist Movements in Turkey), (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1967) and George Harris, **The Origins of Communism in Turkey**, (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 1967).
- (33) The two major attempts at land reform both fizzled out in the National Assembly. For a brief account of land reform attempts in Turkey, see Reşat Aktan, «Problems of Land Reform in Turkey», **Middle East Journal**, XX, (Summer 1966). For workers the Work Stoppage Act of 1909, which forbade union organization, especially in public industries, and prohibited all strikes, remained in effect until 1938. «In 1938 the Turkish legislature adopted a new association act and prohibited the establishment of class-based organizations thus making it virtually impossible to form trade unions». Orhan Tuna, «Trade Unions in Turkey», **International Labour Review**, 90, (November 1964), pp. 413-31.

for the society and its future line of development. The extent of the shift has been matched by the heated and controversial interpretations of this peaceful but intensely conflict-ridden move toward the long-cherished market society.

According to sympathizers of the triumphant Democratic Party (D.P.), the shift in political power signified the victory of democracy and individual liberties which had been held under dictatorial control by a repressive government. This view was especially popularized by Western writers, who observed in the transformation not only a friendly move towards an alliance with the West (significantly the United States), but also the opportunities for a middle-class-based pluralist democracy. Accordingly, the 1950 elections were held to be exemplary conduct in the development of a free society.

Now it is true that the political elite of the People's Party (C.H.P.) had curtailed political liberties, jailed opponents, levied extraordinary taxes, and, in short, acted in a dictatorial fashion. However, these reasons are not adequate to explain the shift, because significant questions are left unanswered. The founding of the Democratic Party was the accomplishment of the business circles and the large landowners³⁴; why did these classes, which had been in coalition with the bureaucrats, have to fight the battles of liberty? They had been the supporters of the nationalist bureaucracy; what had happened in the meantime to change their politics? The answer is that these classes had supported the central bureaucracy because they had benefited from the latter's policies; however, by the post-war period, the protections had turned into fetters.

According to the CHP sympathizers, the story is not at all what DP propagandists made it out to be. Here the claim is that the CHP, largely meaning its bureaucratic leaders, really stood for popular interests and progress. These leaders were always up against a handful of capitalists who were trying to exploit the common people. The opposition against the nationalist and progressive bureaucracy was organized by the capitalists only to turn the direction of Turkish history backwards. They succeeded when they were able to identify their interests with democracy.

(34) For the social background of the DP founders and leadership, see Frederick Frey's comprehensive and detailed study, **The Turkish Political Elite**, (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1965), Chapters 3-5.

Here again it is true that the conflicts of the 1945-1950 period were struggles for political and economic independence, waged by the emerging bourgeoisie. But it is not true that against these commercial and landed interests the central bureaucracy (with which the CHP is identified) stood for the interests of the common people: on the contrary, popular opposition proved to be highly militant and vigorous against the CHP. The new Democratic Party was overwhelmingly supported by popular vote.

The truth is that the interests for which the CHP stood were not those of the common people at all. The CHP was an elite coalition established to the exclusion of popular interests.³⁵ The commercial classes had not been powerful enough to rule alone and had accepted bureaucratic protection. However, by the aftermath of the Second World War they ceased to depend on the bureaucracy since in the meantime they had accumulated significant amount of capital. While their problem was how to utilize that capital as they saw fit, their struggle to shake off the political control of the bureaucrats was not merely selfish: it espoused a view of development which was denied unqualified legitimacy under bureaucratic controls. Hence when the central bureaucracy began to act so as to meet the dangerous political possibilities of capitalist accumulation, the bourgeoisie strove to consolidate its position before it was too late. The consequence was a struggle for control over financial resources as well as the sympathies and support of the hitherto apolitical masses.

It was in the aftermath of the War that the position of the central bureaucracy began to be questioned. Turkey's first experience

(35) Ergun Özbudun, for instance, notes this exclusion in his comparison of the Mexican and Turkish revolutions: «This ruling coalition denied the lower strata of the Turkish society (namely, the incipient urban proletariat and the great mass of agricultural workers and smallholders) any effective share of political power. Herein lies the most basic difference between the Turkish and the Mexican revolutions: Unlike those in Mexico the Turkish peasants and workers did not become an integral part of the Revolution; and while the landed aristocracy was effectively broken by the Mexican Revolution, their nearest Turkish counterpart, the local notables, became influential, even if junior partners in the governing coalition of Turkey.» Ergun Özbudun, «Established Revolution Versus Unfinished Revolution: Contrasting Patterns of Democratization in Mexico and Turkey», in Samuel P. Huntington and Clement H. Moore (eds.), *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society*, (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 388.

with runaway inflation during the war (1944-45) meant a condition in which prices had risen drastically and the wealth of the bourgeoisie had increased by leaps and bounds, yet the revenues of the state remained stagnant. Hence unless the bureaucracy could tap the new wealth, either by significantly increasing taxation at the expense of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, or by somehow expanding its part in the productive process, its resistance to the political pressure of the bourgeoisie would be denied the necessary economic base.

The first policy, implemented in the form of extraordinary taxation (**Varlık Vergisi**) of capital, led to bitter criticism both from business circles and from abroad. Although the tax had to be totally abandoned in a year, the commercial classes were even more convinced that their security would only be assured by the replacement of the bureaucrats.

The second alternative was never tried, since it never had a chance of success. The inadequate financial resources of the state, and the failure to tax the moneyed classes, would have driven the bureaucracy to extract the cost from either the salaried groups or the peasantry. The salaried groups were already burdened with the drastic rise in prices and the mild move toward agricultural dues met with such popular discontent that the CHP bureaucrats were driven to give it up in haste. We should also note that the international alliances which the CHP veered towards after the War were also against an expansion of state control over economic life. The Truman aid to Turkey aimed primarily at the containment of communism but was also extended with the hope of encouraging private enterprise.

The reaction of the CHP bureaucrats to these factors vacillated between a stiff confrontation in which the use of force seemed inevitable and a policy of political liberalization which would unleash the forces of opposition.³⁶ When İnönü supported liberalization certain displaced bureaucrats had to be resettled in less prominent positions.³⁷ The policy aimed to gain the favor not only of the international allies but more importantly the support of the population at large.

(36) For a brief discussion of this vacillation and the available CHP alternatives see S. P. Huntington, «Social and Institutional Dynamics of One-Party Systems», in *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

(37) Clement Moore, in an interesting observation, notes that had the Entente powers won the World War II, CHP under the authorita-

It was clear to the CHP elite that popular feeling was against them. The Democratic party had studied the facts well and was already recruiting mass support through emphasis on popular sovereignty and religious freedom. The CHP move to gain favor with the popular forces was informed by the DP strategy. Popular sovereignty, religious freedom, liberalization of politics and economic policy also became their slogans in the contest for the votes of the masses. However, none of the CHP strategies for popular support could reverse the enthusiasm with which the DP was received by the common people. Long years of heavy-handed rule by the modernizing elite had brought cultural modernity especially to the cities but the peasantry continued to be poor. The CHP attempt at land reform in 1945 had aimed to gain the favor of the peasantry. However, the attempt completely backfired: the large landowners joined the bourgeoisie in its opposition against the CHP. The peasants followed suit: long years of alienation from the secularist bureaucracy could not be reversed instantly.

The bourgeoisie-landlord alliance aimed from the start at the acquisition of popular support. Religion proved to be highly instrumental in the achievement of this aim. Islam, despite prior bureaucratic attempts to dislodge it from prominence, was still the guiding belief of the population from birth to death. Hence the DP attack on bureaucratic enforcement of secularism found a receptive response in the people and proved to be an enormous success in drawing mass support. The CHP, anxious to share the benefits of popular support, joined the DP in similar style. It was clear that now within the contingency of popularity with the masses both parties utilized religious freedom for identical ends: behind the religious slogans stood the attempt for political control.

In the 1950 elections the population voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party. Observers have found this support confounding. Ergun Özbudun, for instance, notes that

rian leadership of Premier Recep Peker could have moved toward being the «exclusive source of legitimacy justified by an explicit ideology». See C. H. Moore, «The Single Party as a Source of Legitimacy», in *ibid.*, p. 50. With İnönü's (President) insistence on the liberalization alternative Peker had to resign from premiership and was eventually expelled from the Party.

«... the ambivalent attitudes of the RPP (CHP) governments toward social questions led to a paradoxical situation, which continues to intrigue almost every observer of Turkish politics. It is true that the DP represented, and greatly benefited by, the legitimate discontent of the masses with the RPP regime. But this popular reaction was canalized and led by groups whose interests were more inherently adverse to those of the masses than the interests of the military-bureaucratic elite...»³⁸

The confusion actually resides more in the interpretations than in the intrinsically enigmatic character of the popular act. The insistence that the CHP bureaucrats represented the better interests of the workers and peasants is simply not borne out by the facts. The politically and culturally revolutionary character of the bureaucrats was not matched by a social one which addressed itself to the interests of the peasants and the workers. On the contrary, despite the minority movement of the Kadroists, the bu-

(38) Özbudun, *op. cit.*, p. 401. Let me note that, as I have quoted him earlier, Özbudun himself argues that the CHP was established as an elite coalition to the exclusion of popular interests. However, it is his assumption that the bureaucrats were more representative of popular interests than the bourgeoisie-landlord coalition which drew immense mass support. When such an assumption is made, the natural inclination is to explain the behavior of the workers and the peasants. These explanations can be basically reduced to two types: one views the workers and the peasants as being falsely conscious, the other explains their behavior in terms of the socio-economic sanctions with which the dependent peasant and worker are disciplined to act in accordance with the interest of their patrons. I am certain that both of the explanations cover the behavior of some; however, I am not convinced that ultimately they account for the popular act. My argument is that the problem is with the assumption that somehow the cultural and political changes of the bureaucratic elite were in the best interest of the masses; the socially conservative nature of the bureaucracy is admitted by all, including Özbudun. It is clear, however, that the peasantry was pleased neither by the enforced secularism nor by the republican institutions of «modernity». They were sensitive to their destitute plight, made worse by the harsh tax collector and the conscription officer. The landlords had often been their protectors. To the workers it was the CHP government which suppressed their rights. In their support of the opposition, they did not need to be forced by their patrons, nor were their perceptions of their interests out of focus. In fact their judgment was confirmed when under the DP regime their material welfare did not decline, but improved.

reocracy proved on the whole to be socially conservative and shared with the landlords and the bourgeoisie a similar social outlook in the first twenty years of the Republic. By the post-war period, while the bourgeoisie wanted to break out of the conservative coalition, the bureaucrats were still adamant in the preservation of the *status quo*. Their attempts at land reform and liberal labor legislation were more in the way of response to the DP efforts at popular support than acts which were spontaneously initiated by their outlook. In sum, it was the bourgeoisie which acted to break away from a stagnant coalition. Their aim to bring about a capitalism suited to their interests and without the bureaucratic fetters was in actuality a progressive act. It is in this sense that the interests of the bourgeoisie proved to be compatible with those of small peasants, artisans, and workers.

Concluding Remarks

This essay provides a summary background to the rise of society as an independent entity in Turkey. As we have seen, Ottoman emphasis on political-religious authority was completely reversed by 1950. The liberal model of society as an independently operating self-correcting mechanism found its most eager advocacy in the emergence of an economically autonomous Turkish bourgeoisie. Such a notion of society assumed an order capable of self-perpetuation. This, however, remains problematical. Contemporary Turkish society is constituted not as a harmonious whole held together by an invisible hand but one that has its share of conflict. The lines of division as well as the alliances reflect the profound material interest of the times. Issues may be cast in religious and philanthropic terms but underlying them is a preoccupation with individual material welfare defined as constitutive of progress and happiness. Such is the nature of this preoccupation that the legitimacy of authoritative functions are fundamentally judged in terms of the promise they hold for generating wealth and power. Hence the liberal conception of self-regulating society must meet the requirements of development if it is to survive.