

## ATATURK'S REFORMS : REALIZATION OF AN UTOPIA BY A REALIST (\*)

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"The revolutionaries are those who are capable of understanding the real aspirations in the mind and the conscience of the people whom they desire to orient towards the revolution of progress and renovation". Atatürk (1925).

Abdullah Cevdet, a well-known Turkish writer of the beginning of the century, believed, as did many others, that

"There is no second civilization; civilization means European civilization, and it must be imported with both its roses and thorns".<sup>1</sup>

According to him, the rulers of the Ottoman Empire had to abandon the policy of "half-way" borrowings and try to adopt so-called Western civilization. In other words, Turkey had no other way out, but to integrate herself thoroughly into European civilization. A series of articles (\*\*) that appeared in his periodical *İctihad* in 1912 under the title "A Very Wakeful Sleep" (Pek Uyanık Bir Uyku), described a visionary view of the future for the country that certainly must have appeared fantastic to his contemporaries. The reverie contained such revolutionary novelties as :

"The Sultan would have one wife and no concubins; the princes would be removed from the care of eunuch and harem servants, and given a thorough education, including ser-

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(\*\*) Unsigned, but most probably written by Kılıçzade Hakkı.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 231.

vice in the army; the fez would be abolished, and a new headgear adopted; existing cloth factories would be expanded and new ones opened, and the Sultan, princes, senators, deputies, officers, officials, and soldiers made to wear their products; women would dress as they pleased, though not extravagantly, and would be free from dictation or interference in this matter by the *ulema*, policemen, or street ruffians; they would be at liberty to choose their husbands, and the practice of match-making would be abolished; convents and *tekkes* would be closed, and their revenues added to the education budget; all *medreses* would be closed, and new modern literary and technical institutes established; the turban, cloak etc., would be limited to certified professional men of religion, and forbidden to others; vows and offerings to the saints would be prohibited, and the money saved devoted to national defence; exorcists, witch-doctors, and the like would be suppressed, and medical treatment for malaria made compulsory; popular misconceptions of Islam would be corrected; practical adult education schools would be opened; a consolidated and purified Ottoman Turkish dictionary and grammar would be established by a committee of philologists and men of letters; the Ottomans without awaiting anything from their government or from foreigners, would by their own efforts and initiative build roads, bridges, ports, railways, canals, steamships, and factories; starting with the land and *Evkaf* laws, the whole legal system would be reformed".<sup>2</sup>

This imaginary *tour de force* contained many themes that accorded with various trends that coexisted among the educated class: Ottomanism, Westernism, Secularism, Turkism and Islamism. And Cevdet was by no means the only Turkish writer of his time to profess or support ideas seemingly utopian to his compatriots. During the last decades of the moribund Empire, many reformist personalities had already surfaced. A rapid overlook of the history of the political ideas in the second half of the XIXth century within the Ottoman Empire would suffice to catch the names of such people as Milasli Ismail Hakki, who had proposed that the Arabic alphabet being used by the Turks should be abandoned so that Turkish would be easier to teach to the masses; Munif Pasha, also stressed the need for such a reform.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, other members of the Ottoman

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hilmi Ziya Ülgen, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (History of Contemporary Political Thought in Turkey) (2nd edition), Istanbul: Ülken Yayınları, 1979, pp. 64-67.

intelligentsia, such as Ali Suavi or Fuat Raif continued urging the "purification of the Ottoman Turkish"<sup>4</sup>. Ahmet Mithat and Musa Akyigit for their part, advocated economic protectionism for the emerging Turkish industries by the abolition of the "capitulations", that is the concessions granted to foreign powers<sup>5</sup> —an idea that Enver Pasha, once he came to power, tried to put into force, as well as obtaining from the Ottoman Parliament in 1913, a new law that launched incentives to future Turkish industrialists. Also, Mithat Pasha, considered the architect of the first written Ottoman Constitution in 1876, was surely the most eminent defender of a new civil code based solely on secular principles. Celal Nuri, who was sensitive to women's rights, ardently wished that the Turkish women could work and deal with business as men did, also stressed the need of reshaping the legal status of the pious foundations, the *Ev-kaf*.<sup>6</sup> Last but not least, the notion of a distinct Turkish nation was well established since the second half of the XIXth century among the military and the intellectual élite of the Ottoman society.

The founding father of Modern Turkey, Atatürk, was going to realize many of the "dreams" of the progressive Ottomans. Evidently, none of his reforms had been unheard of in the past. But Atatürk had the genius of **realizing** them, in contrast to others, who had only made **statements** in the best intellectual tradition. Atatürk, indeed, had many other talents than simple power of imagination: not only had he the determination, but also the political power as the War of Independence hero, and a tremendous gift of timing and measuring what could be accomplished. Thus, as Dankwart A. Rustow points out, Atatürk's style was:

"... less one of innovation than clarification, less one of composing new messages than sorting out the old ones; one of selection, of rerouting, and of establishing priorities".<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-89; 340.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-120; 215-221.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 392-401.

<sup>7</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "Atatürk as a Founder of a State", *Daedalus*, Vol. 97, No. 3, Summer 1968, p. 814.

Samuel P. Huntington also underlines that :

"The sequence in which many countries have tackled the problems of modernization have been the products of accident and history. The sequence of change in Turkey, however, was consciously planned by Kemal, and this pattern of unity-authority-equality is the most effective modernization sequence".<sup>8</sup>

Much has been written by scholars about Atatürk's reforms that drastically changed the traditional face of the Turkish society. These scholars in their final remarks usually add some commentaries of their own. Some assert that Kemalist reforms which took place between 1922 and 1938 should be taken as a "model" by the leaders of the presently "underdeveloped" countries. Others, on the contrary, tend to re-assess the achievements of Atatürk as "purely superficial", without having really led to structural changes; still others, who are especially critical towards Atatürk's faith in secularism, think that the reforms he made were not only useless, but dangerous, for they cut the Turkish people from its cultural sources, such as religion and the language.

To sum up: for the liberal-minded authors, Atatürk was too statist both in politics and economy, whereas, Marxists generally felt that Kemal had no other ambition but to foster the path to capitalism in Turkey. As far as pro-Islamic circles were concerned, Atatürk was simply a sacrilegious man. In many ways, the early comments about Kemalist reforms tend to survive even in present days.

The aim of this paper is, on the contrary, to invite critics of different ideological approaches to realize that the evolution of Kemalist reforms can not be soundly made through the eyeglasses of the 1980s. In fact, as Turks commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of their "Father", it would be just too simple to praise these reforms blindly, or similarly, to criticize them *in toto*, according to dogmatic "scientific" principles of Marxist or Islamic creed; or to adopt a middle-of-the-road view, finding them "important but insufficient". What we would like to suggest instead is that scholars should, above all, make an effort to "reinsert" the Kemalist reforms into their political, economic, social and cultural context of the 1920s and the 1930s. In other words, we believe that Atatürk's reforms should

be interpreted in light of the conditions of that period, without which one can only produce an over-simple picture in black or white, without nuances.

We are of the opinion that modern Turkey reflects the realization of an utopia by a realist, Atatürk. Consequently, our paper will try, after a brief listing of the main Kemalist reforms in chronological order, to focus essentially on the political, economic and social context of his day; and finally, to examine the personal characteristics of the illustrious man of the Turkish revival.

## I — THE KEMALIST REFORMS : RUPTURE WITH THE PAST

What were the main reforms introduced to the Turkish way of life, and what was the common denominator, the key to these reforms?

### A — Milestones of the great transformation<sup>8</sup>

Let us summarize in chronological order the reforms that were carried out during the Atatürk period, to assure modernization through westernization of Turkey.

While the Caliphate was preserved, the abolition of the Sultanate took place in November 1922, in the aftermath of the decisive victory of the nationalist forces led by Mustafa Kemal against the foreign occupation powers. The proclamation of the Turkish Republic in October 1923 was the logical outcome of the previous change. The Caliphate was abolished several

<sup>8</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, p. 348.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Sami N. Özerdim, *Atatürk Devrimi Kronolojisi*, (Chronology of the Atatürk Revolution), Ankara: Halkevleri Atatürk Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974; Suna Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi* (History of the Turkish Revolution), Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1980; also by the same author, *Kemalism*, Istanbul: School of Business Administration and Economic, Robert College, 1969. For a useful background cf. Ilkay Sunar, *State and Society in the Politics of Turkey's Development*, Ankara: Faculty of Political Sciences Publication, 1974, pp. 1-58.

months later, in March 1924. At the same time, a new law on the unification of education under secular principles was enacted by the Grand National Assembly (GNA), while the Ministry of Sheriat was replaced by the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

The new Turkish Constitution, based on the principle of national sovereignty adopted in April 1924; the "new order" now had its legal frame. In November 1925 Western headgear was officially adopted. The religious orders and their premises were banned during the same month. In December 1925 a new law established the Western calendar and time system which were to be effective as of January 1926. A new civil code, inspired by the Swiss code was enacted in February, transforming the legal basis of marriage, family and property. Also, a new penal code, following the existing Italian penal code, and a new code of civil obligations were adopted, respectively in March and April of the same year.

In April 1928, Article 2 of the Constitution of 1924, which stipulated that Islam was the official religion of the Turkish State, was annulled. Latin numbers were adopted in May 1928, and the Latin alphabet, replacing the Arabic alphabet, in November of the same year. In May 1929, the new code of commercial law, inspired from Italy and Germany, was enacted. The new law on municipal administration in April 1930, enabled Turkish women to vote in municipal elections as well as running as candidates. The Free Republican Party was founded, but was forced to dissolve itself four months later, in December 1930, under pressure coming from the ruling Republican People's Party which feared an anti-Kemalist front behind this new political formation, though Atatürk was, on the outset, willing sincerely a multi-party experience.

International measures of length and weight replaced the existing traditional ones in March 1931. The Turkish Historic Society was founded in April 1931. People's Houses were opened in February 1932 in many provinces to serve as cultural centers of the young Republic. The Turkish Language Society was created in July 1932, and with the Historic Society had the task of legitimizing the Turkish revival. In May 1933, a new law abolished the legal status of the old University of Istanbul

and founded a new one. Turks were also to have family names in the Western fashion, thanks to a law that was voted by the GNA in June 1934. In November of that year, Mustafa Kemal took the name of Atatürk, the Father of Turks. In December of the same year, another law authorized Turkish women to vote in national elections and be eligible for election. The first Turkish women deputies entered the GNA in March 1935. In May 1935, Sunday was adopted as the weekly holiday, replacing the holy Friday.

The "Six Arrows", that is the six basic principles of the Republican People's Party, namely republicanism, nationalism, secularism, populism, statism and reformism (also revolutionarism), which were adopted in 1931, became part of the Constitution by an amendment voted in February 1937.

Atatürk died on November 10, 1938. He was 57 years old. He had been President for 15 years. A soldier who had fought on three continents ended as a remarkable statesman, succeeding in modernizing his country radically.

After the present bird's-eye view of the Kemalist reforms, about which abundant information is available in print,<sup>10</sup> let us now try to elaborate on the very essence of Kemalism which springs from this imposing list of transformations.

#### **B — The essence of the "Turkish Revolution"**

Atatürk realized the utopias of his progressive predecessors, but putting at the same time a personal stamp on the reforms he undertook. The tendency of the above mentioned reforms could be summarized as follows:

First, Turkey, thanks to Atatürk, moved from the Orient to the West, adopting the latter as the new model civilization. Second, Turkey passed from monarchy to a republican era. Third, the principle of secularism replaced that of the Sheriat; Turkey thus abandoned the theocratic order of the Sultan,

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<sup>10</sup> For a rich bibliography cf. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*; and for the climate of the day cf. Lord Kinross, *Atatürk: The Rebirth of a Nation* (Fourth impression), London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966.

based on the rules of the Koran, to a rational administration based solely on human "national will". Last but not least, Turkey, from a **community** based on Islamic solidarity, the **oumma**, opted for the modern societal life based upon the Turkish nation, which the Turks themselves had started to discover under the Kemalist banner during the War of Independence. Kemal, a republican and secularist was both anti-Ottoman and anti-clerical; and as a nationalist who only fought to save his country, he had naturally an anti-imperialist stand.

The "Turkish Revolution" implies political, religious, legal and cultural transformations, while authors usually try to sum up Kemalism in his "Six Arrows", though with varying emphasis on each.<sup>11</sup> For our part, we would rather focus in particular on the word **inkılapçılık**, a word of Arabic origin that we have previously translated as "reformism (also revolutionarism)" among the six basic tenets mentioned.

In fact, this word is one of the most difficult in Kemalist vocabulary to find a precise equivalent for in Western languages. Some translate **inkılab** as "reform", while others prefer "revolution". However, as a matter of fact, the word **ihtilal** corresponds to "revolution". Tentatively, we would like to propose here a distinction between the word **inkılab's** general and specific meanings.

In the general, but more important, meaning of the 1920s, it is neither "revolution" nor "reform"; one can without risk of committing a **lèse majesté** in translation, understand this magic word simply as "extensive transformation". Re-reading some of Atatürk's important speeches, we can discover what he really meant with that word. Let us take for instance, the short speech that Atatürk delivered on November 5, 1925, on the occasion of the inauguration ceremonies of the new Law School of Ankara. Atatürk started by asking "What is the Turkish **inkılab**?" And without waiting for an answer from others, he went on to say that:

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. for example C.H. Dodd, "Reflections on Revolution in Turkey", Paper presented to Türkiye İş Bankası International Symposium on Atatürk, Istanbul, 17-22 May 1981, p. 18.



"İnkılab, other than its immediate meaning of revolution, implies a much more extensive transformation".<sup>12</sup>

In Kemal's mind, **Nation** and secularism are the key concepts of this great transformation. According to him, the new form of the Turkish State,

"has driven away her former forms, which were work of the centuries".

Kemal underlines in this respect that the common link that the Turkish nation now adopted "in view of preserving her existence, has changed "form" and character". The nation, Atatürk points out, henceforth is formed by individuals whose "common bond" is Turkish nationalism, and not religion any longer, as was the case in the past. In other words, secularist nationalism has replaced Islam as the integrating cement of the Turkish society: a secular Nation-State is the logical corollary of this fundamental change. Atatürk affirms that the principle of nation relies, "as the directing force" of its essence, upon the idea of change as dictated "by the needs of the society", of which the only "true guide" is science.

Atatürk himself repeated elsewhere that

"Resisting the climbing waves of civilization is vain; civilization is without mercy for those who ignore or disobey it. Civilization pierce mountains, rises in the air, sees and illuminates and studies everything from the invisible particles to the stars... The nation has to understand clearly that civilization is an ardent coal of fire that burns and destroys all those who don't agree to recognize it".<sup>13</sup>

Apparently, the words "civilization" and "science" are synonymous in the Kemalist vocabulary, which reflects how deeply in deference Atatürk held science, "the sublime majesty" which should replace the "medieval spirit and primitive superstitions". So, in its general meaning, **inkılab** corresponds to a radical rupture with the past that Atatürk intended to realize; for he considered this republican, nationalist and secularist

<sup>12</sup> Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri (Collected Speeches), Ankara: Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1952, Vol. II, p. 240.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Geoffrey Lewis, *La Turquie* (Traduit de l'anglais par P. Willemart), Verviers: Gérard & Co., Collection Marabout Université, 1968, p. 127.

transformation a "must", commanded by the "vital requirements of Turkish society".

As for the specific meaning of the word **inkılab**, we can refer to the observations of a witness of Atatürk's epoch, Ahmet Hamdi Başar, a leading intellectual. Başar affirms that in the 1930s the order of importance of the "Six Arrows" was as follows: republicanism, nationalism, statism (**étatisme économique**), populism, secularism and **inkılapçılık**. He reports that the Republican People's Party leaders who gathered under the chairmanship of Atatürk, agreed that all the five forementioned achievements had been, after all, the work of the **inkılab**, and "not of a spontaneous and progressive process".<sup>14</sup> In this sense, **inkılapçılık** means a deliberate policy of transformation. But since the main transformations at that time had already been realized, we think that, as for the future, the word **inkılapçılık** which officially figured on RPP's 1931 Program as an important tenet, must be implying that the administrators of the country should remain "reformists" in order to cope with the arising new problems of the society.

In the same line of thought, Atatürk connected civilization and science: "We will attain the level of contemporary civilization". Atatürk's famous word was based on the conviction that new Turkey can only defend itself and also progress if it becomes a national society and catches up with the Western nations. The progress will be secured, Atatürk affirmed, by scientific thinking, and not by remaining fatalist victims of traditional obscurantism. It is this very sin that the Ottoman Empire had to pay for the consequences while Western expansionism reached to its peak.

"The sick man of Europe" which was continuously defeated on battlefields and also in the domain of civilization, will be no more. If Turkish people acquired the same skills of the Western nations, they will not be "swallowed" anymore by "imperialistic capitalism". Atatürk is anti-colonialist by experience. But in order to defend herself properly against the future

<sup>14</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Başar, *Atatürk'le Üç Ay* (Three Months with Atatürk) (1945), Reprinted, Ankara: İktisadi Ticari İlimler Akademisi Yayınları, 1981, pp. 43-44.

enemies Turkey must also have the same weapon: science. It is not enough to have rights, one should be able to defend one's rights and existence. And one can only defend these by force. But this force could be procured only through science. Secularism and scienticism, nationalism and anti-colonialism, as we see, can hardly be dissociated one from the other in Atatürk's "Turkish Revolution": creation of a modern, national and independent state over the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

What were the conditions of the Turkish society as Kemal prepared himself for the future? We must now try to enumerate some bench marks that we think should facilitate a more realistic reappraisal of the Kemalist reforms.

## II — THE CONTEXT

The political, social and economic conditions of the epoch would certainly explain how and why the Kemalist reforms were carried out. We would like to mention here several different angles, among many possible others, in the limited space of the present paper.

### A — Political outlook

In a very brief but brilliant essay on the Kemalist transformations, Sina Akşin warns that one should bear in mind three major factors "before reflecting over the "Turkish Revolution".<sup>15</sup>

According to Akşin, the Ottoman reform that the people had discussed since the XVIIIth century had nothing equalling it, if not its superficiality and shortcomings. Akşin suggests that the date 1908, the proclamation of the second constitutional period of the Empire, could be taken as the beginning of the new era, which, however, was stranded on the shoals of the Ottoman defeat during the World War I. The Anatolian victory in the following years did nevertheless, contribute to resumption of the quest for reform. Thus, Atatürk was able to pursue the

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<sup>15</sup> Sina Akşin, "Atatürk Devrimini İncelerken" (Studying the Atatürk Revolution), *Ulusal Kültür*, October 1978, pp. 112-113.

“grand design” which had started during the late XVIIIth and XIXth centuries, and realize the major dreams of his predecessors.

In the second place, Akşin justly underlines the fact that at the origin of the Kemalist reforms resides a military victory.<sup>16</sup> The military victory indeed gave the new rulers of Turkey a liberty of movement which they could not have otherwise obtained, had the war been lost. The abolition of the Sultanate for example, was carried out with relative ease, due to the successful resistance of the Ankara government against the occupying powers, without which many other similar reforms could also have been delayed by decades.

Akşin points out thirdly that, as far as international politics was concerned —from which the nationalist forces naturally could not dissociate themselves— the “Revolution of Atatürk”, whether it was willing or not, had to side in the long run with the Western way of government and development. Indeed, while countries such as China, Iran or Ethiopia were about to be swamped under new waves of Western imperialism, the new rulers of Turkey had to give confidence to the European powers, who were not at ease precisely on the aftermath of the Soviet Revolution of 1917. The Peace Conference of Lausanne, which ended with a successful treaty for Ankara in 1923, reconciled the aims of the anti-colonialist Kemalist forces, and the apprehensions of the Western powers, who feared that Turkey might be tempted to pull out of their sphere of influence, if not domination.

#### **B — Economic and social panorama<sup>17</sup>**

The Ottoman Empire had shrunk within several decades from some 45 million inhabitants to 14,1 million in 1919, within

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. also Lewis: “The incantatory flourish of constitution, parliament, party and election does not hide the basic fact that the Republic was established by a professional soldier leading a victorious army and maintaining himself, in the early stages at least, by a combination of personal and military power”. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 201.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Türkiye’de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişmenin 50 Yılı (50 Years of social and Economic Development in Turkey)*, Ankara: Başba-

the boundaries of the **Misaki Milli**, the National Pact that opposed to Turkey's partition by the victorious nations of the World War I. Istanbul was by far the largest city, with 1,1 million inhabitants, while Izmir had 198000, and the future capital, Ankara, only 27 000.

According to data obtained through the industrial survey of the Empire between 1913-15, the total of workers did not exceed some 15 000, of which 45 % were employed in textile factories, 25 % in agriculture and about 10 % in the leather goods industry. The country was definitely underdeveloped, for it had only 284 plants employing five or more workers in various branches of activity; of which 148 were situated in Istanbul, 62 in Izmir and the other 74 in the rest of Asia Minor. Also, several thousand workers were employed in the coal mines of the Zonguldak region in Western Black Sea coast. The shares of the sectors in the Gross National Product in 1914 were 58,3 % for agriculture, 10,9 % for industry and 8,2 % for the services, among which the trade occupied the first place.

The number of workers was to rise however to some 76 000 in 1922.<sup>18</sup> But there existed practically no plants which one could really consider 'capitalist': an average of two workers were employed in Turkish enterprises. Also, about 80 % of the capital then belonged either to foreigners or to members of ethnic minorities, such as Greeks, Armenians or Jews. Even in 1927, 91 % of Turkish industrial plants employed between one and five workers, and national entrepreneurs still lacked most of the capital to be able to start ventures. Taner Timur depicts the situation in brief :

"In the country, an industrial bourgeoisie was almost non-existent, and was also not national".<sup>19</sup>

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kanlık İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1973. See also Tefik Çavdar, **Milli Mücadele Başlarken Sayılarla** "... Vaziyet ve Manzara-i Umumiye" (Facts and Figures on the Eve of the National Struggle), İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1971.

<sup>18</sup> *Türkiye'de Toplumsal...*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Taner Timur, **Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası** (Turkish Revolution and its Aftermath) 1919-1946, Ankara: Doğan Yayınları, 1971, p. 21.

The 1927 industrial survey still showed that the economy was dominated by some 65 000 small enterprises with rudimentary equipment: about 96 % of the plants on the other hand, had no means to utilize any electro-mechanic source of energy.

On the rural side, during the early 1920s, there existed about 32 000 villages scattered over the country, with an average of less than 500 inhabitants each. In Southern and Eastern regions of Anatolia a minority of families owned most of the land, but the country in general was characterized by small properties. The following table shows the land distribution that prevailed in the 1920s :

| Land owned by                 | % of the surveyed families | % of the surveyed land |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Feudal families               | 1,0                        | 39,0                   |
| Large landowners              | 4,0                        | 23,0                   |
| Medium and small farmers      | 87,0                       | 35,0                   |
| Without any land of their own | 8,0                        | —                      |

Source : Türkiye'de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişmenin 50 Yılı, Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1973, p. 24.

Also, the communication systems were insufficient. The main means of transport was train, with a 4,200 kilometer-long railway network controlled by foreign contractors in the early 1920s. There existed only six merchant navy ships grossing more than 3,000 tons each. Turks had only about a thousand motor vehicles, of which 800 were in Istanbul and the rest in Anatolia, where camels were still very popular as means of transport.<sup>20</sup> The shortcomings of the transport system were naturally to produce drastic results: the wheat harvested in Anatolia decomposed because of the impossibility to send it to big towns, while Istanbul had to import wheat which she needed from Rumania, speakers complained during the first Economic Congress of Turkey convened in Izmir in February

<sup>20</sup> Çavdar, Milli Mücadele Başlarken..., p. 84.

1923, only seven months before the foundation of the modern Turkish Republic.<sup>21</sup>

Even these limited examples may assist an evaluation of the Turkish economy during the first decades of the present century. The country still remained under developed, with little if not inexistent industry on the urban level, and with an autarchic economy in the rural world, where the pawnbrokers, living in small towns unscrupulously exploited the peasants with high interest rates.

In sum, as Celal Nuri, a Turkish writer of the epoch, observed :

"In our country there is neither bourgeoisie nor capitalists".<sup>22</sup>

Another contemporary figure, Şefik Hüsnü, one of the most influential leftists of his day, had to confess that

"Our industry is very backward, and the struggle of masses is very far away from its ultimate phase... That is why the question of social reform in our country is very particular".<sup>23</sup>

Even, years later, Rasih Nuri İleri, another Turkish leftist, descending from the same family as Celal Nuri, would be writing that during the War of Independence :

"There was neither 'cadres' nor a class capable of carrying a social'st revolution".<sup>24</sup>

There was another peculiarity of the new Turkey, to which we believe that insufficient attention has been paid by observers, and we would like to emphasis it as a part our remarks concerning the context of the Kemalist reforms.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. Gündüz Ökçün, *İktisat Kongresi 1923 - İzmir* (Documents on the Economic Congress), Ankara: Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1968, p. 253.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted by A. Cerrahoglu (Kerim Sadi), *Türkiye'de Sosyalizmin Tarihine Katkı* (Contribution to the History of Socialism in Turkey), İstanbul: May Yayınları, 1975, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted by Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar* (Leftist Movements in Turkey) 1908-1925 - (3rd edition), Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, p. 333.

<sup>24</sup> Rasih Nuri İleri, *Atatürk ve Komünizm* (Atatürk and Communism), İstanbul: Anadolu Yayınları, 1969, p. 27.

**C — The great paradox: advanced institutions vs. backward society**

It is generally admitted by political sociologists that a republican order presupposes a determined "social formation", where a bourgeois class dominates the others as the initiator and the defender of the régime. If one remembers that practically all the movements of reform originated in the Western part of the Ottoman Empire, known as Rumelia, where progressive officers and intellectuals deployed a vivid opposition to the Sultan's rule in Istanbul, there certainly was a connection between the aspiration for a new order and the relatively better degree of development of this region as opposed to the rest of the Empire, with the exception of Istanbul, the capital.

In 1907, during the last decade of the Empire, Rumelia alone provided 22,5 % of the GNP. Most of the industrial plants were concentrated in this region. However, only a few years later, when the Ottomans lost the Balkan Wars and were forced to content themselves with certainly less developed Eastern Thrace, the share of Rumelia in the GNP was to shrink to a bare 2,99 %. Istanbul, the most advanced center of the Empire on the other hand, now contained 37 % of national industry and 21 % of the trade activities of the country.<sup>25</sup> Gone was, for example, Salonika, where Mustafa Kemal was born in 1881, the second most prosperous city of the Empire. Industry and trade were the main activities in Salonika, and labor was well organized. It is certainly not accidental that the Young Turkish officers who desired to reform the Empire found more and more support in Rumelia, where new ideologies circulated with a greater speed.<sup>26</sup>

The new Turkish state emerged in 1923 from the ashes of the fallen Ottoman Empire. As compared to the previous one, the new régime reflected a political advance in conformity with

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<sup>25</sup> *Türkiye'de Toplumsal...*, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> For the socio-cultural and ideological climate of Salonika between 1908-1913 cf. George Haupt & Paul Dumont, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyalist Hareketler* (Socialist Movements in the Ottoman Empire), (Translated from Frenchy by Tuğrul Artunkal), İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977, pp. 13-33.



the democratic evolution of the world nations since the late XVIIIth century. However, the new political order had to face from the outset a great contradiction: it could not depend on a bourgeoisie, as it was the case in Western democracies which had undergone many decades ago their "national democratic revolution" against the ruling dynasties. Worse, Turkey had retreated mainly to Asia Minor, where semi-feudal economic and social conditions prevailed. Such a social configuration would favor the Sultanate, as in the past, and not the Republic. The paradox was there with symbols: Ankara, the small town of backward Anatolia was made the new capital of the republican régime, in opposition to Istanbul, the most developed part of the Empire, which, till then, had been the capital of the Sultans.

Definitely, the **political order** was more advanced than the **society**; it was not a spontaneous outcome of the then existing conditions, but rather, a choice imposed to the people by the new ruling élite. Had there been a referendum, one could have easily predicted the Sultan's victory in keeping his title, despite the military victory of the republican forces against the occupying powers. Atatürk and his friends knew this; that is why the Sultanate was abolished in November 1922, immediately after the decisive victory against the Greek troops on the Afyonkarahisar battlefield in late August.

How was the economic, social and cultural gap that handicapped the young Turkish Republic to be filled? Atatürk a fervent defender of republicanism and secularism, had for decades had one definite idea: creation of modern Turkish nation. But he was well aware of the fact that the Republic needed its bourgeoisie, and pending the emergence and development of a national bourgeoisie, the military and the civilian bureaucracy—the most ardent ramparts of the new state— were going to fill temporarily the socio-political vacuum. The day a strong national economy and active national entrepreneurs were assembled—and this would be the case in the late 1940s—the great paradox had simply disappeared. Thanks in fact to the "Silent Revolution",<sup>27</sup> the Democrat Party's landslide victory

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 472.

over the RPP of İnönü in 1950 elections can justly be taken as the milestone of the new era. The **society** had now caught, to a large extent, with the new political order instaured in the early 1920s.

Till then, Atatürk and his friends had to fight against the handicaps of a republican régime that lacked in its very beginning the necessary economic, social and cultural foundations. And that must have been the reason why, during and after the War of Independence, the military had got into a successful coalition of forces with civil servants of petit bourgeois origin, with local Anatolian notables, with the heads of the main religious orders, as well as with the feudal landlords of the Eastern provinces: the anti-imperialist struggle that the nationalist forces were waging against the occupying foreign powers, also implied for these social categories waging a civil war against the privileged cosmopolitan Istanbul bourgeoisie which was much too servile to Western interests over Asia Minor.<sup>28</sup>

The new frontiers of Turkey, as we have stressed earlier, did not include anymore the Western provinces where industrial revolution had already begun; and Asia Minor, which had lost nearly 900.000 sons during World War I and the ensuing War of Turkish Independence, still practiced a precarious agrarian economy. The country lacked capital accumulation, and in the absence of industrial centers, social mobility of the peasant masses was at its lowest. The rural population, forming about 90% of the country, was also overwhelmed by the ancestral traditions and illiterate.

It is true, as Klaus von Beyme emphasizes, that

"In Western literature, not only Marxists cite Kuomintang China and Kemalist Turkey frequently as the main exemples that a national revolution without far-reaching social transformation of the structure of society, confined to establishing a secular and legal state, was bound to fail from the outset".<sup>29</sup>

But what else could have been achieved, given that there was no more than a handful bourgeois or a handful of workers,

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası*, pp. 27-29; 39-40.

<sup>29</sup> Klaus von Beyme, "Kemalism in Western and Marxist Theory of Development", Paper presented to Türkiye İş Bankası International Symposium on Atatürk, İstanbul, 17-22 May, 1981, p. II.

against the immense majority of backward peasantry. Neither the objective nor subjective conditions were ripe for a true bourgeois revolution, or for a socialist revolution. Suppose that there had been an immediate land reform. Would it really have increased agricultural output, if the country lacked agricultural machines, transport facilities and human skill? Would it have really "liberated" the Turkish peasants from the yoke of their immediate social and economic environment?<sup>30</sup> Atatürk was well aware of the difficult conditions of life for Turkish peasants; but he had other top priorities till the mid-30s, when he started to urge the need for a better land distribution in his annual messages to the GNA.

Atatürk's "Third Road" reforms should therefore be studied in light of the conditions of his time. We need also to have a closer look at his personal characteristics, as well as the methods of action that forged his success in Turkey's quest for modernity and development.

### III — THE KEMALIST MIND

Throughout his life, Kemal succeeded in proving, thanks to his extraordinary personal gifts, that a single man could challenge and overcome the existing unfavourable conditions surrounding him. But Kemal was not a wizard. He simply understood well his country and acted with skill. He was certainly a revolutionary, but not in the Marxist sense; for, he favored above all, "cultural revolution" and at the same time, was determined to combat imperialism as well as underdevelopment.

#### A — The man

Mustafa Kemal was born into a modest family. His father was a petty civil servant of the Customs administration and his mother a rather conservative-minded woman, who would have, at the outset, deeply appreciated it if his son became a

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion by a Turkish leftist writer cf. Ileri, *Atatürk ve Komünizm*, pp. 27-33.

religious official instead of opting for a military career. Kemal's father died relatively young, after failing in a private business venture. Kemal was an intelligent student, and among the best in the Military Secondary School of Salonika, and later at the Military High School of Monastir. Also, at the Military Academy of Istanbul, he was considered particularly keen in strategy and tactic courses. At the same time, Kemal read with deep interest all about the French Revolution. The slogan "Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood" profoundly influenced the future officers of the Empire. Belonging to the traditionally the most progressive milieu of the Ottoman society, Mustafa Kemal, the young and brilliant officier, got deeply interested in the positivist ideas that marked his educated friends. He cultivated his secularist and republican ideas in the same milieu.<sup>31</sup> Let us underline it once more, Kemal was a Rumelian by birth, where people used to be most open to Western thought in a rich cosmopolitan environment. So, his intellectual orientation was quite natural.

Also, naturally, Mustafa Kemal shared the common humiliation felt by the young Ottoman officers of his day, who thought that something should be done to rescue "The Sick Man of Europe" as the Western powers prepared to have each, his own part of the cake. Kemal deeply resented the financial control of the Empire by the European nations. For him, the culprit was the Sultan and the system of government he incarnated. He accused the Ottoman State of being *de facto* a non-independent authority, more like a gendarme that lavishly protected foreign capital.<sup>32</sup> The taxes collected were under the control of the Ottoman Debts Organization, **Düyunu Umumiye**, headed by foreigners. All this was too much: Turks had only

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Artun Ünsal, "La Bibliothèque Politique Française d'Atatürk", Paper presented to the Symposium "La Turquie et la France à l'Epoque d'Atatürk", organized by the Institute of French Studies of Ankara, 5-7 May 1981 (published by the French periodical *Turcica*, Paris, 1981, pp. 27-43). For a more extensive survey on the impact of positivist ideas in the Turkish Revolution cf. Timur, **Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası**, pp. 127-153.

<sup>32</sup> Atatürk will call back to mind this humiliating period of the Ottomans in his opening speech to the Economic Congress of İzmir in February 1923. **Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri**, Vol. II, pp. 103-104.

one way out; to resist Western expansion and colonialism, they had to be strong enough. But with the then present theocratic state and its corrupt bureaucracy of the Sublime Porte, nothing could be achieved. The Turks should ask for a new deal which required naturally a new order.

Atatürk belonged to the progressive élite who thought that the future of the country and its people were at stake and that Turkey should be modernized and strengthened. In this connection, Klaus von Beyme, referring to Cyril E. Black's typology, thinks that:

"Kemalism seems to be the classical example for 'defensive modernization' where parts of the traditional oligarchy and modernizing leaders representing new political interest combine their efforts for 'unbloody revolution' from above".<sup>33</sup>

As a matter of fact, Atatürk was, as Rustow aptly observes, a "reluctant revolutionary".<sup>34</sup> Though a fervent republican and secularist, Atatürk was yet a "man of order", if not that of the "existing order". That is probably why he wanted every new move that he took while he had the absolute power in the country, to conform to legality. The Sultanate was abolished in due form by the GNA, representing the "will of the nation", and not of anyone else. At the same time, Atatürk wouldn't tolerate social turmoil; he considered, for example,

"Bolchevist theories; revolutionary anarchist trade unionism; as well as corporatist ideas, as contemporary movements assaulting democracy".<sup>35</sup>

Atatürk added that in the Soviet Union the rulers were composed of a minority who were not nationalists and did not respect the individual liberties. He accused the Soviet administration of not being deferential to the principle of the sovereignty of the people and of forming a "diktatür". Also, he did not appreciate either "fascist" or "national socialist" ideas of his day, qualifying them as "morbid".

<sup>33</sup> Von Beyme, "Kemalism in Western and Marxist Theory of Development", p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Rustow, "Atatürk as a Founder of a State", p. 796.

<sup>35</sup> K. Atatürk Diyor ki (Sayings of Atatürk), Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayını, 1980, pp. 64-69.

As an Ottoman general staff officer, then considered an élite position, Mustafa Kemal would have easily sided with the "establishment". Though he belonged to it, he did not side with it and always remained a determined opponent of the Ottoman régime. Besides, Atatürk's modest origins and difficult childhood days must have marked him to feel closer to the common people, his "nation". When he came to power, he preached "One for all, all for one", insisting on the solidarity among all strata of the nation, in opposition to Marxist theories that gave top priority to the struggle between classes.

In his opening speech to the Economic Congress in February 1923 Atatürk states:

"Our people is not constituted of classes with diverging interests but classes whose existence and work require each other. Who can deny the fact that the farmer needs the craftsman, the craftsman the farmer, and the farmer the merchant, and that each of them needs all others and the worker".<sup>36</sup>

Atatürk, thus, places emphasis on solidarity among the people of the country, and his desire to reconcile all their interests. He makes no distinction between his people, as an army commander should treat his soldiers equally no matter their different social origins. Atatürk's "populist" stand also appears in another speech he delivered the same year in Balıkesir where he defined his Republican People's Party's program, underlining his conviction that the Turkish nation is not divided between antagonistic classes as in other countries where conflicting interests are naturally expressed by various political parties:

"As you all know, our country is a farmer country. Hence, the dominant majority of our nation consists of farmers and shepherds... How many among us have large landholdings? What is the importance of such property? If we investigate, we will see that in proportion to the size of our country no one is a big landowner. Therefore, these landowners are also to be helped and protected. Then come the craftsmen and small town merchants... There are no big capitalists confronting these trade groups. How many millionaires do we have? None. Hence, we are not going to be hostile to those with little capital... Then come the workers. There are only a few factories, workshops and such for the time being in our country.

<sup>36</sup> Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, Vol. II, p. 112.

Our present worker population does not exceed 20,000. We need many factories to develop our country, and for this, we need workers. Therefore, we must also protect the workers, who are no different from farmers who work in the fields. Then come the intellectuals and scholars. Can these intellectuals and scholars unite and be the enemy of the people? The duty which lies upon them is to go among the people, to instruct and educate them and lead them to progress and modernization. This is how I see our nation. Therefore, since the interests of different professions are coalescent, they can not be divided into classes and their whole forms the people".<sup>37</sup>

In Atatürk's mind, the people, who are closely bound in solidarity and form a whole, is the nation. In other words, his "populism" has no class dimension. The main contradiction of interests is not between various Turkish strata, but between the Turkish nation and the others. Given the economic, social and cultural context of the 1920s, we believe that Atatürk's populism can be better understood. Atatürk, as a nationalist officer, with an Ottoman background, coming from a humble family, sensitive to Westernization not for the sake of imitating it, but in order to become strong inside to be able to resist better Western political and economic expansion, it is true, was a "reluctant revolutionary". But he had nothing in common, for example, with the philosophy of the principal character in the famous Italian novel *The Leopard* (by Guiseppe di Lampedusa), "Everything should change so that everything remain the same". Atatürk, on the contrary, meant a genuine change, though he was rather close to a "middle-of-the-road" approach in his policies. This rapid close-up of the man and his values should be completed by a brief survey of his methods of action.

#### **B — Method of action: military training applied to politics**

"Despite the fact that Mustafa Kemal is a great soldier, his political sagacity is well below his military talents". This pessimistic judgment of the Minister of Interior of the Sublime Porte, who ordered him in June 1919 to report immediately back to Istanbul and abandon any idea of reorganizing the national struggle, shows how the Sultan's men were without vision. Mustafa Kemal, on the contrary, had a total insight

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

and self-assurance about the future of his nationalist movement. That is why he had to disobey the call of the Palace.

Indeed, Atatürk was going to prove that his political talents were also as great as his military genius. First of all, he thought always that an efficient organization was key to any success. The hero of Gallipoli who had greatly contributed to the defeat of the Allied troops while he commanded a handful Turkish defenders of the Çanakkale strait was going to have other occasions during the War of Independence to benefit from his innate sense of organization. The "Anatolian Revolt" was won with his extraordinary talent of military and political organization.<sup>38</sup>

Atatürk also proved to be a shrewd politician on various occasions. He succeeded in dismantling in time plots against him. Facing a badly organized though numerous opposition, both in and outside Turkey, Atatürk and his friends, a minority as always, managed to control the outcome of events. Just to give an example, as far as foreign relations were concerned. Atatürk had based his strategy on exploiting "the contradiction of interests between the British imperialism and the Soviet Russian socialism" to lead the Turkish War of Independence to victory.<sup>39</sup> Atatürk's attitude towards the Turkish Communist Party —initially tolerating and subsequently banning— ought to be assessed in light of this strategy.

As revolutionaries, Atatürk and his friends were somewhat alone, at least in the beginning. But they showed that a determined minority, with a keen sense of timing, would succeed. How can there be any other explanation of the fact that the Republic was proclaimed in October 1923 thanks to a resolution which was carried by a bare majority of 158 votes, with many abstentions —though without any dissenting votes— out of 287 deputies of the GNA?

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<sup>38</sup> For a thorough study of Atatürk's talent for organization cf. Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu, "The Organizing Power of Atatürk", Paper presented to Türkiye İş Bankası International Symposium on Atatürk, İstanbul, May 17-22, 1981.

<sup>39</sup> Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası*, p. 32.



Kemal, who had advocated on the aftermath of the 1908 Revolution that officers should not interfere with politics, did act as a wise politician when it was going to be necessary in the following years, by surprise attacks in the best military tradition to impose his choices. The War of Independence for instance, according to Rustow:

“... was a virtuoso performance of leadership by conciliation, by connection, by communication”.<sup>40</sup>

No doubt, Kemal knew how to act. He always started to examine the field of operations carefully, to evaluate the situation and to take the most suitable step and this, in the most appropriate time. In his famous **Speech** in 1927 to the GNA, the President of the young Turkish Republic, after depicting the perilious situation of the country when he disembarked in Samsun in May 1919, goes on to say:

“Under these circumstances, there existed only one resolution to take, that of creating a new Turkish state, based upon national sovereignty and independence without any reserve or any restriction... The first thing to do was to get in touch with the Army... I shall say that I was obliged to touch gradually our whole social body, tapping the great capacity for development that I perceived in the soul and in the future of the nation, which I was keeping inside me, in my conscience, like a national secret”.<sup>41</sup>

The step by step approach of Atatürk is clearly reflected as he continued his **Speech**:

“When we look back on our deeds in their logical development over the past nine years (1919-1927), we have evidence that our general conduct has never, from the first day on, diverged from the line drawn by the initial resolution, nor from the goal that it aimed at... As the national struggle developed with the unique goal of liberating the homeland from foreign invasion, and was heading for accomplishment, it was natural and certain that it would exercise phase by phase all the principles and all the forces of a government based on national sovereignty... To precipitate by means of declarations on the future could have given an utopian character to the real and material struggle that we had started... To succeed, the shor-

<sup>40</sup> Rustow, “Atatürk as a Founder of a State”, p. 804.

<sup>41</sup> Atatürk, **Nutuk** (Speech), Vol. I, İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1960, p. 16.

test and the safest path was to arrive at every stage in time. This was the way to salvation for the development and the resurrection of the nation. And I acted accordingly".<sup>42</sup>

Atatürk, who was a born general staff officer, knew well the field where he was to operate. Having a good knowledge of the mind of his people, he also had a true notion of the existing social structure of Anatolia. He was well aware of the role that the local notables, landowners, religious and tribal chiefs played among the people. At the Erzurum and Sivas Congresses, where the banner of national resistance was unfurled in 1919, Mustafa Kemal and his soldier, civil servant, and intellectual friends were supported by these locally important social leaders.

The strategy was the establishment of a republic. But meanwhile, Atatürk had to deploy all his tactics in view of uniting people behind him. The "go-ahead" of the local traditional élite was indispensable. That is why the initial battle-cry was "Save the Caliph and the Sultan, and liberate the homeland." Thus, Islam would remain for some time as the dominant ideology of the nationalist struggle, despite the fact that the leaders of the struggle were secularist and modernist. At the inauguration of the GNA in Ankara in April 1920, Atatürk had a religious ceremony held before entering for the first time into the "House of the national will".

In February 1923, in Balıkesir, Kemal addressed his people from the pulpit of a mosque:

"God is one. His glory is great. May the salvation, generosity and the goodness of God be upon you... The mosques are built not only for submission and prayers to God, but also to think of what should be done about religious and secular matters, that is for consulting... Let us now here put forward what we think of divine and secular matters, of our future and our independence, especially what we think of our will. I don't only want to express here my own thought, but am willing to hear also what you think. The national aspiration, the national will is constituted not by the thinking of only one person, but is the sum of the desires, and the aspirations of all the members of the nation".<sup>43</sup>

Even though the War of Independence had been won several months ago, Atatürk wanted to convince his people that

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>43</sup> Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, Vol. II, pp. 93-94.

he was respectful of their religious beliefs, while he did not neglect to underline the concept of the "national will" introduced by the new political order. Kemal, who proudly accepted the title of **Ghazi**, traditionally given to war heroes in the Moslem world, was by no means against religion; he was simply against the harmful effects of religious-mindedness among the people.

### C — Sense of realism

Atatürk's realistic approach was reflected in many fields. In his foreign policy aims he always knew where and when to act, and where and when to stop. Though victorious in the War of Independence, he was, capable of limiting himself and refraining from advancing his troops any further in spite of the fact that Salonika, his birthplace was only 200 kilometers from the cease-fire line. Rustow observes in this respect:

"... a Turkish journalist who knew both leaders closely has surmised that Enver (Pasha), after a battle such as Kemal had won on the Sakarya (1921), would have thrown away victory and independence itself by marching off to the conquest of Syria or Macedonia".<sup>44</sup>

Atatürk also knew that a military success alone could not solve the social problems faced by the country. He thought that, one who "conquers with a sword" will be loosing before one who does it "with a plough". The country should be developed by all means. A new law was enacted in 1927 to encourage industrialization, offering incentives to the private sector. But given the circumstances, state's intervention in the economy, that is a state-capitalist model of development was necessary. Economic statism would give priority to private enterprise and to individual activities, but at the same time, see that the needs of the masses were satisfied. Since there was a lot to accomplish in this domain, state-owned enterprises would control the key sectors of the Turkish economy. Atatürk believed that a national bourgeoisie would in the long run come into being, but meanwhile feared that the deterioration of the world's economic conditions on the aftermath of the 1929 crisis would seriously affect Turkey. Mixed-economy was indeed a realistic

<sup>44</sup> Rustow, "Atatürk as a Founder of a State", p. 801.

solution, where the private sector lacked enough capital and foreign investment was still hesitant, following the abolition of the traditional "capitulations" and a series of nationalizations of some enterprises and public services owned or controlled by Europeans.

On the other hand, Atatürk's single party rule was criticized, and not a few people considered him an autocrat. Atatürk: was he really a dictator? One has to temper hasty conclusions. Atatürk was, deep in his heart, profoundly democrat,<sup>45</sup> but as a realist ruler, he preferred to grant liberties gradually in order not to loose the control of the situation. Already, in first official visit to Ankara as the leader of the nationalist forces, in late December 1919, after having convened the Congresses of Erzurum and Sivas that reaffirmed the Turks' determination to fight for the liberation of their fatherland, Atatürk expressed clearly his belief in democracy in the best jacobin tradition:

"... Today the nations of the whole world recognize only one sovereignty: national sovereignty... If the individuals do not do their own thinking, the masses can be led in an arbitrary direction, can be led by anyone in good directions or in bad directions. To be able to save himself, every individual must become personally concerned with his destiny. A structure that in this way rises from below to the top, from the foundation to the roof, will surely be sturdy. Nonetheless, there is a need at the beginning of any undertaking to go not from below upward, but from above downward... It must be considered a national and patriotic duty that we should make great efforts especially to attain the goal of structuring from below upward".<sup>46</sup>

We have earlier remarked that a democratic régime presupposes the existence of a politically active bourgeois class standing at a minimum level of development. That was why Atatürk and his friends strove hard to bolster a sturdy national economy, not only by creating state economic enterprises, but also by providing various incentives to Turkish entrepreneurs. Atatürk was conscious of the fact that the Turkish state could

<sup>45</sup> "Kemal quite deliberately wanted his country to become a westernized parliamentary state... his ideal was not a military dominated régime, but a parliamentary one", observes S.E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1962, p. 202.

<sup>46</sup> Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, Vol. II, p. 11.

not be governed only by bureaucrats. Democracy also presupposes political parties. But of the Turkish masses, nearly 90% lived in some 30.000 scattered villages, where tradition and the strong local influence of forces hostile to any change prevailed. The single party was to educate the masses, to form a link between the ruling élite and the people, as Maurice Duverger points out,<sup>47</sup> till the day a true multi-party régime was realized. Atatürk himself had shown, though for a very short period in 1930, a deep interest in the creation of the Free Republican Party with a liberal credo opposing to the ruling RPP that advocated state intervention in the economy. But before, Atatürk had achieved a very crucial, and perhaps a unique example in his day, the delicate task of "depoliticizing" the Turkish army and "demilitarizing" the RPP.<sup>48</sup> This fact had led many scholars, among them Amos Perlmutter, after having examined many cases in the world, to stress that:

"The only successful case of a militarily-established political party remains that of Atatürk, who did it by dissolving the military dictatorship and making the civilian cause primary. Turkey may be described as the country which closely fits the model of a praetorian army that has altered the socio-political context and created civilian political organizations. The steps taken by the Turkish officers were inspired initially by civilian actions, but the officers soon became independent of civilian groups. In the Kemalist transformation, the Turkish officers (1) took the primary role in selecting a system of government for the country; (2) chose their allies from among civilian politicians and from the civil services; (3) became the source of the revolutionary change, making an effort to transfer the state from praetorian to non-praetorian rule; (4) formed their own "civilian" political party, and (5) institutionalized the Kemalist tradition that the army in the barracks must serve as the protector of civilian rule".<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Maurice Duverger, *Les Partis Politiques* (5ème édition), Paris: Armand Colin, 1964, p. 288.

<sup>48</sup> Already in 1909, Mustafa Kemal, referring to the Union and Progress Party, was of the opinion that "As long as officers remain in the Party, we shall build neither a strong Party nor a strong Army". Cf. *Finer, op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> Amos Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army: Toward a Taxonomy of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Politics", in Jason L. Finkle & Richard W. Gable (Eds.), *Political Development & Social Change*, New York, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 1971, p. 324.

## CONCLUSION

What else could Atatürk have done in his series of reforms for the Turkish people, whom he wanted to pull from their centuries-old lethargy?<sup>50</sup> All through the present paper we have tried to underline the conditions in Turkey while he was in power. Instead of speculating over what else he could have done or should have done, we have tried to stress **what** he has done and **how**, and this in the briefest way possible. We suggested that it would be erroneous to evaluate Atatürk's reforms if we dissociate them from their socio-economic, political and cultural context. We agree totally with Rustow, who justly notes that:

"The criticism sometimes leveled at Kemal's reforms - that they dealt with surface trivia such as headgear, letters, and family names-does not stand up under closer examination. Kemal, it is true, cared far more deeply about cultural matters than about social and economic problems as these are commonly defined in a post - Marxian world. But culture consists of a set of symbols, and in the context of his time and place these had profound symbolic meaning... The Hat Law meant an ostentatious break with Islam... The alphabet change produced its intended effect by cutting off later generations from most of their pre - 1928 heritage. The abolition of the fez... implied a death sentence on the bastard Levantine culture that pervaded Istanbul..."<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, it would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of the "cultural revolution" of Atatürk. The "superstructural transformations" may also be vital if not totally sufficient for a society, especially in the Middle East. Compared to other neighbouring countries of the Middle East, today's Turkey, despite her 99% Moslem population, distinguishes herself by her secular orientation - which constitutes certainly a valve of security against religious unrest or excessive religious politicization. One must give credit to Atatürk. If today's Turkey, despite every-ten-years military intervention, can boast a more democratic régime as compared to other Islamic nations, credit

<sup>50</sup> For a short list of Western and Marxist critics cf. von Beyme, "Kemalism in Western...", p. 5. Also, Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 279.

<sup>51</sup> Rustow, "Atatürk as a Founder of a State", p. 814.

should be given to Atatürk. If today's Turkey can be proud of her woman doctors, lawyers, magistrates, university rectors, scientists, engineers and politicians, the entire credit once again should be given to Kemalist reforms. And last but not least, if the Turkish army differs from many other armies of the world by its popular origins, by its patriotism, and by its determination to protect the civilian democratic regime, despite its temporary but not infrequent interventions in politics, it is because it has remained the "Army of Atatürk".

We may now conclude that though Kemalist reforms might seem superficial or simply full of idealistic optimism to some observers, one must not neglect the fact that a given "ideal" could easily one day become "instrumental" in a given society as the latter continued its advance. The "alphabetical revolution" which some thought "unnecessary", did not only, as İsmet İnönü, successor of Atatürk as Head of State, stressed, "liberated the Turkish language and the Turkish nation, transporting the country from a cultural world to another", but also contributed to decrease the number of illiterates as well as increasing the skills of manpower. The feminine right "granted" proved also to be very productive, socially and economically. And above all, the proclamation of the national will against that of the Sultan paved way for the future multi-party democracy.

All these reforms, just to take a few examples, were certainly parts of a "revolution from above". But they are now elements of the daily life in the republican Turkey, which has accomplished tremendous, if not totally satisfactory nor sufficient, progress since the 1920s. It is an undeniable fact that the Kemalist Revolution, notwithstanding its shortcomings, provided a new life and a new hope not only to the Turkish people, but also to many Third World countries as the first successful revolt of a developing nation against domination by developed Western capitalist powers.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. for example the interesting study of S.A.H. Haqqi, "The Atatürk Revolution and India", Paper presented to Türkiye İş Bankası International Symposium on Atatürk, İstanbul, 17-22 May, 1981.