VIII. POLITICAL MODERNIZATION IN TURKEY

We can best describe the original features of Ottoman-Turkish traditional society by going back to the times of Süleyman I (1520-1566). In the period immediately before the political modernization of the nineteenth century, we find only more or less degenerate forms of the original Ottoman institutions, and new social and political developments threatening the basis of those institutions. The generation of reformers confronting the period of decline after the sixteenth century avowedly sought to restore the Golden Age of Süleyman I. Under the impact of the defeats in Hungary between 1683 and 1699 the Ottoman Turks first became aware of the superiority of the West; the reforms thereafter increasingly acknowledged Western influences, first in the military field and then, in the nineteenth century, in administration. The decisive modernization movement, accompanied by a basic change in the concept of state and society, began with the national revolution after the First World War.

The hesitations and delays in the Turkish modernization process were due to the fact that, until the twentieth century, Turkey was an empire comprising nations of different cultures and that the dynasty became at a certain time the only focus of common loyalty. On the other hand, the political and social superstructure of the empire was still based on the *shari'a* (Turkish: *şeriat*), the unalterable religious law of Islam, and this politico-religious structure culminated in the office of the sultan-caliph.

The position of this Ottoman ruler and the developments which reduced his power and ultimately led to modernization will constitute the main theme of this essay.

I. The Ottoman Ruler and Ottoman Society

Tursun Beg, Ottoman statesman and historian of the late fifteenth century, stressed that harmony among men living in society was achieved only by statecraft, which kept each individual in his proper place as determined by his ability. As the instrument of social order, statecraft possessed two aspects or

sanctions: the authority and power of the ruler and the divine reason or *sharī'a*. Insofar as the rules instituted by the ruler did not have a perpetual character, he should always be present in a human society. He should have absolute power to determine the place of each man in the social scheme. Always seeking to strengthen his position by expanding his revenues and his armies, he should serve society as a whole by consolidating public security and order. Tursun Beg's rational arguments were manifestly designed to prove that every society must have one ruler with absolute power and with the authority of issuing regulations and laws outside the religious law. The values which this ruler was to conserve were social order and security under justice. These ideas constituted the basic political philosophy of the Ottomans.

The absolute power of the Ottoman ruler found further support in the old Oriental maxim that a ruler can have no power without soldiers, no soldiers without money, no money without the well-being of his subjects, and no popular well-being without justice. Repeated in Turkish political literature from *Kutadgu Bilig* in the eleventh century to the Gülhane Rescript of 1839, this formula was regarded as the summation of practical statesmanship. Kâtib Çelebi in the seventeenth century particularly stressed the central position of the sultan in the state. Though absolute power was ascribed to the caliph in the Islamic community, the theorists stressed that absolute power was simply a means of implementing the religious law.

The Ottoman rulers first made this theoretical absolutism a reality by establishing a type of administration that concentrated power in their persons. This they achieved notably by eliminating all kinds of aristocracies in the conquered lands, by entrusting executive functions only to slaves trained in the court (*kuls*), and by enlisting the *ulema* in their service. The sultan's slaves were entrusted with executive power and the *ulema* with the administration of law, including the supervision of all legal and financial matters. Both of these branches of administration were attached to the central government but each was independent of the other. A governor had no authority to give orders to a local judge (*kadı*) appointed by the sultan. If a conflict arose between the branches, it was appealed directly to the central government. The same judges administered both the *sharī'a* and the subsidiary laws and regulations directly issued by the sultan. On the other hand, the *şeyhülislâm*, the highest authority in formulating opinions on points concerning the *sharī'a*, had no right to interfere directly in the government or in legal administration. Once, when *Şeyhülislâm* Ali Cemali came over to the seat of the government to protest against a decision of Sultan Selim I (1512-1520) which he thought contrary to the *sharī'a*, the sultan denounced him as interfering in state affairs. But in the eighteenth century it became established practice to seek the *şeyhülislâm*'s opinion on every governmental matter of importance. The limitations so imposed on the government by the *sharī'a* and by religious authority in the period of decline

made the application of reforms especially difficult. The all-embracing *sharī'a* became the stronghold of traditionalism in Ottoman government and society—introducing, as we may note in passing, a major difference between the Turkish and the Japanese modernization processes.

Ottoman social policy conformed closely to the traditional view that for the sake of social peace and order the state should keep each man in his appropriate social position. In the first place, Ottoman society was divided into two major classes. The first one, called *askerî*, literally the "military," included those to whom the sultan had delegated religious or executive power through an imperial diploma, namely, officers of the court and the army, civil servants, and *ulema*. The second included the *reaya*, comprising all Muslim and non-Muslim subjects who paid taxes but who had no part in the government. It was a fundamental rule of the empire to exclude its subjects from the privileges of the "military." Only those among them who were actual fighters on the frontiers and those who had entered the *ulema* class after a regular course of study in a religious seminary could obtain the sultan's diploma and thus become members of the "military" class. It was, in fine, the sultan's will alone that decided a man's status in society. In the period of decline, Koçi Beg and others asserted that a major cause of the disorganization of the empire was the abandonment of this fundamental rule in favor of letting subjects become Janissaries or fief (*tımar*) holders.

The subjects in turn were divided into Muslims and non-Muslims, townspeople and peasants, sedentaries and nomads, each with a different status, as reflected in their tax obligations. Taxation was indeed the most important factor in determining the subject's status. Those who were granted certain tax immunities in return for public service actually constituted an intermediate group between the simple subjects and the "military," who were wholly tax-exempt. Living for the most part on state-owned lands as tenants, the peasantry were subject to special taxes and were divided into groups according to the taxes they paid, the status of each being individually recorded at regular intervals. Peasants were not allowed to leave their lands, nor could they settle in towns.

These laws reflect a rigid social organization imposed by the will of the Ottoman ruler. But in the late sixteenth century a profound transformation took place which may be attributed ultimately to economic and military changes in Western Europe. During this period, for example, in order to resist German infantrymen, the Ottoman discarded their *tımar* cavalry in the provinces and increased the force of Janissaries, who were by this time equipped with firearms. This neglect of the fief holders within the army was followed by the disorganization of the land and taxation system upon which their status had been based. Simultaneously, the shift of international trade routes to the Atlantic

Ocean and the invasion of the markets of the Levant by American silver resulted in the disorganization of the rigid Ottoman fiscal and economic structure.

Already during this period of "decline", the sultan and his bureaucracy, who sensed immediate danger to the state from outside, adopted the idea of reform, although they thought of it as reform along traditional lines. The Japanese, at a much later date, experienced the same challenge from outside and their emperor, too, personified the idea of reform. But the Japanese reform movement found national support at least among some leading classes in the society, while in the Ottoman Empire the major ruling classes took a reactionary stance. In the Ottoman Empire reform remained a concern of the sultan and his immediate collaborators alone. *Ulema* and a rising semi-feudal landed aristocracy in the provinces, called the *âyan*, resisted any innovation that might disturb their vested interests.

II. The Decline of the Sultan's Power; The Janissaries, the *Ulema*, and the Rise of the *Âyan*

In the capital of the empire the politically influential groups were the military corps at the sultan's Porte, particularly the Janissaries, constituting the "military" proper, and the *ulema*, the learned in Islamic sciences, who were vested with authority to express and apply the commands of the *sharī'a*. In the provinces, too, the *ulema* and the Janissaries at one time possessed commanding power, but in the eighteenth century the *âyan*, a group of provincial magnates, came to be the most powerful class throughout the empire.

The Janissary corps constituted the original foundation of the centralist government and the principal support of the sultan's absolute power. It formed a standing army at the Porte, which was directly attached to the person of the sultan and which he could use at any time to strike at an internal or external foe. In addition, Janissary garrisons were stationed in the main strongholds in the provinces. In the large cities they occupied the forts, which no one else, not even a governor, was allowed to enter. In the period when central authority grew weaker, these Janissaries took over the actual control of the government in such distants parts of the empire as North Africa, Baghdad, and Belgrade. In the capital they determined who would wield control. As early as 1446, Murad II had accepted the throne only after obtaining their consent in a public meeting. In the first half of the seventeenth century they strengthened their grip on the government. In 1628 for the first time a former commander of the Janissary corps was appointed Grand Vezir with the support of the *şeyhülislâm*, the head of the *ulema*. In the 1630's Koçi Beg complained that the balance established earlier between the power of the Janissaries and that of the provincial forces was gone and that the Janissaries invaded all sectors of the empire. The vezirs, courtiers,

and heirs to the throne all sought their aid to attain power. The Janissaries furthermore obtained for themselves additional privileges, among them that of engaging in trade. Hence many of them joined the class of small shopkeepers and were thus affected by the government's financial policy as was the rest of the Istanbul population.

Let us observe also how the *âyan*, a powerful class of magnates, rose in the provinces. Traditionally the Ottomans granted the craftsmen and merchants in the towns a distinct and honorable status and recognized the most influential and wealthy among them as their natural leaders. Organized in so-called *ahi* unions, the craftsmen had played a major social and political role in Anatolia from the thirteenth century onward; their leaders, the *ahi*s, acquired control of the administration in many Anatolian towns. Under the centralist government of the Ottomans, they were gradually reduced to simple guild masters, but each guild continued to elect its own master, called *kâhya*, to supervise the application of the guild's rules and to act as its representative before the authorities.

Above the guildmasters were the *âyan* (notables) and the *eşraf*, the most influential residents of the city whom the government always addressed on matters directly concerning the town population. We find these *âyan* and *eşraf* present even in fourteenth-century Ottoman cities. Whenever an imperial order was to be communicated to the townsmen, the local judge convoked the *âyan, eşraf,* guildmasters, and *imam*s (district clerics) of the town, because "these were," our source adds, "the agents and representatives of the people, who did what they said to do." Among the population, *kâhya*s were elected as representatives of each district of the town and, from very early times, a town *kâhya*, representing the whole municipality. The local *eşraf* included the head of the descendants of the Prophet in the town, the head of the local *ulema*, and the mufti, the local agent of the *şeyhülislâm*. Though their influence derived originally from religious services, the *eşraf* were usually among the well-to-do citizens.

The *âyan* were the most influential and wealthy citizens in a town except for the *eşraf*. Most of them came from humble origins, many being minor local officials or Janissary officers who had risen by exploiting their official position.

As pointed out earlier, the tax and land-tenure system of the empire underwent a transformation during the upheavals between 1595 and 1610. The new conditions enabled the *âyan* to become feudal lords in the provinces, replacing the fief holders in the state-owned lands as lessees or tax collectors. In the meetings of *âyan* and *eşraf* under the judge, the most important issue was usually the distribution among the people of the total tax assessment of the district. After the decline of the earlier timariote army, the central government, in increasing need of money to support the enlarged Janissary army, resorted more

and more to extraordinary assessments, which were allotted to the counties. These special taxes and the assessments for local expenses were farmed out to individual persons by the council of *âyan* and *eşraf*, who often used these responsibilities to increase their own wealth and influence. They usually added to the assessment books items for themselves, or collected additional dues for their services. They often neglected to send the assessment books to the central government for inspection, and thus levied taxes without government control. In 1705 in Manisa, a city in western Anatolia, the populace became outraged by such abuses, and invaded the judge's court where the *âyan* and *eşraf* were sitting.

But usually the *âyan* managed to show themselves to the people as their protectors. They occasionally sent the sultan petitions for tax exemptions, which bore their own signatures though they were confirmed by the judge. They contended with oppressive government officials sent by the sultan. They were so influential in their areas, all in all, that the sultan's governor and judge often became simple tools in their hands. Without their cooperation, the authorities could not collect taxes, levy troops, or maintain public security.

The *âyan* gained their wealth and power through leasing state-owned lands as well as by tax farming. The larger part of such lands ceased to be assigned to fief (*timar*) holders and were leased by the state to local notables, *âyan* and *ağa*s (*âyan* usually had the title of *ağa*s, but *ağa*s mentioned together with *âyan* meant lesser *âyan* in the provinces), and more than fifty per cent of agricultural lands in the empire were state-owned leaseholds. Large areas of endowed land and land assigned to officials and favorites were similarly exploited. The *âyan*'s influence on, and close cooperation with local authorities, favored them in these leasing operations. Later, in the eighteenth century, the leases were made for lifetime and priority rights to the leases were granted to the sons of lessees.

Tax farming, too, was extended after the dissolution of the old *timar* system near the end of the sixteenth century, and local notables benefited from their involvement in this profitable business.

In the period of decline, the sultan's governors themselves employed the *âyan* as their local agents in financial and administrative matters under such various titles as *mütesellim, voyvoda*, and *subaşı*. Increasingly in need of new troops for its prolonged wars, furthermore, the state encouraged the *âyan* to equip at their own expense forces under their direct command. Thus in the eighteenth century the groundwork had been laid for the rise of a powerful semifeudal aristocracy in the provinces of Anatolia and in the Balkans. Many of the *âyan* families were able to maintain their position for several generations and founded local dynasties. Actual clashes sometimes occurred among rival *âyan* seeking to extend the area of their leasehold. Some of the most powerful among them even forced the government to confer upon them the official titles of vezir or pasha,

thereby consolidating their control of the provinces in which they held their estates and becoming able in time to challenge the sultan's authority. The latter tried in his weakness to play one *âyan* against another, but often only with the result of making his ally excessively powerful. Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, actual ruler of southern Albania and northern Greece, was the most famous example of a pasha of *âyan* origin.

III. The Revolutions of 1807 and 1808: The Struggle for Power Among Janissaries, *Ulema*, and *Âyan*

A brief account of the revolutions of 1807 and 1808 will illustrate the part which the Janissaries, *ulema*, and *âyan* played in political developments in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Selim III (1789-1807) has been regarded as the father of Ottoman-Turkish Westernization and as an exponent of general reform in the state. He was indeed interested in Western civilization in its various aspects. Ebu Bekir Ratib, his envoy to Vienna in 1791, brought him a detailed report not only of the military and administrative establishments but also of technology and social advances as embodied in such institutions as postal system and hospitals. Selim gave positive instructions to his newly appointed ambassadors to Western capitals to study the administrative as well as the military institutions of those states and encouraged the staffs at the embassies to learn Western languages and observe all the things that they considered useful. At home before he began his reform he invited the foreign officers in his service, among whom was a French officer in the Ottoman army, to submit appropriate reform proposals. But Selim's main motive for reform was his determination to restore the military power of the empire and throw back the Russians, who had recently conquered the Muslim-inhabited lands north of the Black Sea and now threatened Istanbul itself. His state philosophy was not very different from that of his predecessors. He reasoned, that there could be no power without an army, no army without sufficient sources of revenue, and no revenue without juctice and prosperity among his subjects. In his decrees introducing military reforms he pointed out that his ancestors had given him an example and that the *shari'a* permitted Muslims to use "the enemies' tricks to overcome them." What was new and anti-traditional in his measures was the introduction not only of European weapons but also of the sciences, training procedures and uniforms of Europe. Western scientific thought challenged traditional Muslim thought, and the European uniforms challenged traditional symbols.

He also issued reform decrees on governorship, *âyan* leases of the domains, currency, and the status of the *ulema*, but all these followed absolutely traditional lines.

Despite his personal conservatism, Selim III created in Ottoman society a trend toward Westernization and a sense of the necessity for rapid and progressive change. The *ulema*, representing religiously sanctioned traditions, opposed him for the most part. The reforms found support only among some of the higher *ulema* who either sought the favor of the sultan or considered the reforms necessary to the ultimate interests of Islam and caliphate. These supporters, too, appealed to the *sharī'a* to justify their position.

The true reasons for the opposition to Selim were to be found in the social situation. His efforts to create a regular army under his direct command threatened the dominant position in the state of the Janissaries, on the one hand, and of the *âyan*, on the other. In addition, his financial measures created widespread discontent in the country and turned public opinion and the *ulema* against him.

To finance the new army, Selim created a treasury of the "New Order" and allotted to it the revenues of an important part of the domain leaseholds. To find additional resources he also raised the rates of the various dues. Since the dues paid for the imperial diplomas conferring an office, immunity, or fief were among these, he thereby alienated a number of influential people. The first reaction came from the *âyan*. When the sultan in 1806 planned to extend the military reform to the Balkans by a transfer of "new troops" from Anatolia, the *âyan* in the Balkans gathered together in Edirne and opposed his further advance. Selim retreated, and this marked the beginning of his fall. The conservatives at once seized power under the leadership of Hilmi Pasha, the new Grand Vezir who had once been the commander of the Janissaries, and *Şeyhülislâm* Ata'ullah, a fanatic supported by the reactionaries. The opposition of the Janissaries to the New Order was understandable enough: it was no less than an instrument of their own destruction. They also rallied the populace of Istanbul, who were afflicted by the new taxes and by the inflation following Selim's debasing of the currency. The sultan's price-fixing and terrible threats against profiteers had proved useless. The abolition of Janissary pensions in the possession of non-military persons had also affected a number of people in the capital. Finally, Selim had let a group of favorites draw up his reform plans and control their application. Exploiting his ambition to restore the power of the sultanate, many of these favorites in fact set out to gain wealth and power for themselves. The responsible government officials hated them and in time turned against the sultan himself. In their eyes the reformist sultan had merely brought back the arbitrary rule of a handful of favorites.

In brief, the population of Istanbul was, as our analyst says, split into two camps, partisans of the New Order, and its enemies. Finally in 1807 the Janissary *yamaks* rose against the reformist sultan. All the Janissaries, *ulema*, and the populace of Istanbul joined them, seeking the abolition of the New Order

and of the treasury created for it, and the execution of the favorites. The head of the *ulema*, Ata'ullah, gave a formal opinion (*fetva*) for the deposition of Selim III, in which he said that Selim was unfit for the caliphate because he had let irresponsible men usurp power and use it against the Muslim population. The rebels made an agreement with the new sultan, Mustafa IV, providing that they would not be prosecuted for their past actions; in return they themselves promised not to interfere in state affairs any more. Our analyst notes that such a pledge on the part of the sultan was unheard of in Ottoman history. The Janissaries and their conservative allies were now in control of the whole governement and busy with the purge of Selim's partisans. Mustafa's authority was not heeded outside the walls of his court.

The *âyan* were quick to seize power from the hands of the Janissaries. The *âyan* of Rumelia under the leadership of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, formerly an *âyan* of Rusçuk (Russe), marched against the capital together with the imperial army then on the Danube. Alemdar seized Istanbul, suppressed the Janissary leaders, and demanded Selim's restoration to the throne. When it turned out that Selim had been put to death in the meantime, Alemdar made Mahmud II sultan and became himself Grand Vezir and dictator. In his diploma of appointment to the Grand Vezirate it was stressed that he should be most careful to act in accordance with the *sharī'a* in all state affairs, to cooperate with the Janissary corps and *ulema*, and enforce the ancient laws of the Ottoman sultans. Under Alemdar, nevertheless, there was a violent reaction against the enemies of the New Order, about one thousand of whom were executed in two months.

Previously the *âyan* had not made a united front against the Janissary corps. In 1806 those in Rumelia had cooperated with the Janissaries while some powerful *âyan* in Anatolia supported Selim's New Order. But now the *âyan* of Rumelia and Anatolia united against the reactionaries, less out of sympathy for the reforms than from a desire to control the central government and guarantee their position in the provinces. Soon the joint forces of the *âyan* flocked into the capital with their armies, terrifying the Janissaries and the court.

Following the example of the Janissaries, they, too, made the sultan sign an agreement called *Sened-i Ittifak* (Covenant of Union). In the introduction of this document, it was emphasized that the division and conflicts within the government and among the *âyan* in the provinces were the main causes of the desperate situation of the empire and that this covenant proposed to revive the empire. The main provisions were as follows: vezirs, *ulema*, high officials, "dynasties" of major *âyan* in the provinces, and military corps in the capital promised always to respect the sovereign authority of the sultan and the orders of the Grand Vezir, who represented in his person the sultan's absolute power, and to take united action against any rebellion. The important article 5 declared that, just as the signatories promised collectively to safeguard the person and authority

of the sultan and the order and security of the state, so the security of the provincial "dynasties" was to be protected by joint action of the signatories in the event that any law-abiding "dynasty" was assailed by the "state" or by vezirs in the provinces. The "dynasties" further undertook not to punish any lesser *âyan* under their own authority without first consulting the central government. Each "dynasty" was to respect the boundaries of the other's area of control, and all were to take joint action against any transgressor. In article 2, the "dynasties" and lesser provincial notables sanctioned a state army and promised to conscript soldiers for it in the face of any opposition, including opposition from the military corps in the capital. In the same article, they promised to cooperate in the collection of state taxes for the sultan in the provinces. They further pledged themselves to protect the population under their authority and observe carefully the tax regulations agreed upon among the state, ministers and provincial *âyan* (article 7).

The document was drawn up in the form of a regular contract according to the *shari'a*, the parties being the state and its officials, *ulema*, generals of the military corps in the capital, and representatives of the provincial "dynasties." It will be noted that the "state" but not the sultan himself was mentioned as a party in the document. He took no oath as the others did, but for confirmation put his imperial seal upon the covenant, even though he had been warned by his closest advisers that it would severely limit his absolute power. The several "dynasties" stood surety for each other. In the postcript it was made clear that the covenant was to be the perpetual and unalterable basis for the regeneration of the empire. As such it was to be signed by every Grand Vezir and *şeyhülislâm* upon his accession to office, and these were to see that it was observed in every detail. A copy of it was also to be deposited with the sultan, who would see in person that it remained in force forever.

This important document has been interpreted in very different ways, often without sufficient recognition of its historical meaning and background. Like Magna Carta, it was a limitation upon the king's power imposed by local magnates; it was not, like Magna Carta of popular conception, a basis for liberal-democratic development. It clearly indicates the diminution of the sultan's power and the rise of the provincial magnates. In it the "dynasties" acknowledged many traditional rights of the sultanate: the supreme authority of the sultan, the independence of his government, and the rights of the state to conscript soldiers and collect taxes directly in the provinces (articles 1-4). At the same time it clearly stated that as long as the "dynasties" did not infringe upon the central authority, the government had to respect their status and their established rights. The "dynasties" and grandees of the empire, furthermore, were arrogating the right to take common action against anyone, including members of the sultan's government, who violated the provisions of the document. Article 4 provided that if the Grand Vezir violated the laws and fell into corrupt practices, it was

the duty of all to sue him and check the abuses. But the document did not constitute any special organization which might carry out such a suit. What the "dynasties" wanted, in fact, was precisely to assure themselves of a degree of autonomy incompatible with a centralist and progressive government.

IV. The Restoration of the Sultan's Power in the Empire: His Bureaucracy Takes the Lead in Modernizing the State

The rule of the *âyan* did not last long. The court and members of Ottoman bureaucracy as well as the population of Istanbul were in a state of terror and rather welcomed the counter-attack of the Janissaries which put an end to *âyan* rule. To reestablish his authority in the provinces, Mahmud II (1808-1839) could only rely on the Janissaries, who now become more disobedient than ever. In 1812, nevertheless, immediately after the conclusion of the peace treaty with Russia, Mahmud began to suppress the principal *âyan* in the provinces. He crushed some of those who resisted him by sending into their territories troops commanded by the neighboring governors. Others he was able directly to deprive of their titles and leases so that they themselves were forced to submit and their sons to accept humbler positions. But in 1821 Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, the most powerful among the pashas of *âyan* origin, raised truly massive resistance. The Greek insurrection followed his revolt.

Mahmud's war against the refractory *âyan* resulted in the dispossession of many of them and restored much of the sultan's authority in the provinces. Yet hundreds of these notables remained at the head of local administrations and in possession of large leaseholds. Still constituting the most influential class in the provinces, they often appeared to the passive local populations in the guise of protectors against oppressive governors and an arbitrary central authority. Later, when the masses were given the opportunity to participate in political life, men of this class were to play a major part in political leadership.

In 1826, during the most critical period of the Greek insurrection, Mahmud II at last made the fateful decision to get rid of the Janissaries. Having done away with these as well as the rebellious *âyan* in the provinces, he would then possess unlimited power to reorganize the empire as the conditions of the time required.

Before the destruction of the Janissaries, Hâlet Efendi, a favorite whom they had supported, had been virtual master of the state. Thereafter, Hüsrev, a reformer left over from Selim's time, was given the task of creating a new army and became the major force in the empire for fifteen years. He was a product of the old Ottoman *kul* (imperial slave) system. This institution, established to provide wholly reliable instruments for the exercise of the sultan's absolute

power, had been clearly defined by Kemal Pasha-zâde at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Hüsrev, its last great representative, had himself trained many slaves who became generals and governors of the empire. It would remain, of course, for westernized diplomat-bureaucrats to introduce truly modern reforms in the Ottoman state.

Muhammed Ali, who had become pasha of Egypt in the manner of pashas of *âyan* origin, proved more dangerous than Tepedelenli. From 1833 on, he threatened to extend his power to all Asiatic provinces of the empire. His influence was felt even in Anatolia, where the *âyan* and conservative masses hostile to Mahmud's reforms were sympathetic to him. He defeated Mahmud's new armies in 1833 and 1839. It was during this critical period that a new generation of reformers, of whom Mustafa Reşid Pasha was typical, emerged to save the empire from total destruction. Differing wholly from the military reformers like Hüsrev, these men were chiefly diplomats who had become acquainted with international conditions and with the structure of Western states during service in European capitals. They came out of the age-old bureaucracy which formed the third class of Ottoman state functionaries, the other classes being the *ulema* and the military. Their training was a practical one in the state bureaus, differing from that of the military, who were mostly trained under the *kul* system, and more markedly still from that of the *ulema*, who came from the rigidly formal religious seminaries. Thanks to their services in diplomacy and finance, the bureaucrats gained an increasing influence in the administration from the eighteenth century on. Devoted exclusively to the secular interests of the state and free from formalism and the bonds of tradition, they were ready to become faithful instruments of radical administrative reform. In 1821 when the Ottoman government had to replace the Greek interpreters with Turks, a Translation Office was created at the Sublime Porte, and Western languages were taught there, the first teacher being a professor from the military engineering school. This Translation Office, like the embassies which Selim III had established in Western capitals, became an educational center for a new generation of Westernized administrators and intellectuals. Âli Pasha, future Grand Vezir and reformer, and Fuad Pasha, collaborator of Reşid, received their first education in these centers.

Confronted with the disaster at Navarino in 1827 and Muhammad Ali's startling successes, Mahmud II heeded the advice of his reformist diplomats who saw the necessity of gaining the sympathy and confidence of Western powers and modernizing the Ottoman administration. Accordingly he introduced, between 1831 and 1838, some administrative and social reforms which can be regarded as the first decisive steps toward Westernization. Principal among these were the creation of state departments and of a council of ministers with a prime minister, the establishment of two high councils for military and civil reform, the use in the administration of civil servants with fixed salaries, the founding of a modern

postal service and of secular professional schools, and modernization in clothing and state protocol, But Mahmud's most significant achievement remained the restoration of the sultan's power in the provinces and in all branches of administration.

After his success on a diplomatic mission to London in 1838, when war was pending with Muhammed Ali of Egypt, Reşid Pasha gained an increasing influence over Mahmud II and was able to persuade him that the disposition of Egypt would finally be decided in Western capitals. The very survival of the Ottoman state, in his view, was dependent on a modernization of its administration which would enable it to enter the concert of European states. The Ottoman defeat at Nezib in 1839 was followed by the death of Mahmud II, and thereafter everyone, including his great opponent Hüsrev, looked to Reşid for salvation and became receptive to his reform projects. The most radical Turkish decisions to reform, we observe, were almost always made in time of crisis.

On November 3, 1839, an imperial rescript, read by Reşid Pasha at Gülhane, intiated the era of reform called *Tanzimat* in Turkish history. That document said in summary: The empire had been declining for one hundred and fifty years because the religious law and imperial laws had been disregarded. In order to restore its prosperity and strength, new legislation was required which should be based on the principle of securing the life, honor, and property of all subjects. Taxation and conscription laws would be revised in accordance with the demands of justice. The tax farming system would be abolished and each citizen taxed in proportion to his means. Every accused person should be publicly judged. These guarantees should be extended to all subjects of whatever religion or sect.

A high council of reforms (*Meclis-i Vâlâ-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliye*) would devise, after free debate, bills fulfilling the purposes agreed upon, and those in turn would be submitted to the sultan to be confirmed and published. Since all the bills would be drawn up for the sake of resuscitating Islam, the state, and the empire, the sultan promised to take an oath not to disregard them. The *ulema* and grandees of the empire were to take oaths to the same effect, and those who broke their word were to be punished without respect of rank and position according to the provisions of a penal code. These dispositions, finally, were to be made public throughout the empire and communicated officially to all the ambassadors of friendly powers resident at Istanbul.

In this rescript the main features of the European constitutions of the 1830's are quite skillfully combined with traditional Ottoman institutions and with practical necessities. A number of references to the *shari'a* obscured from conservatives the revolutionary content of the document, and indeed the traditional state philosophy was genuinely apparent in it: The rescript said that

the state needed armed forces which in turn required money, that state finances could remain in good order only if the subjects were protected against injustices, and so on. The basic principle of legislation, also, was discovered not in natural rights but in the practical necessity of resuscitating the empire. In brief, state power remained the ultimate goal as before; the people were still regarded as mere subjects of the state.

It should be remembered that in classical Islamic thought no principles of law could exist apart from the *sharī'a*. But with the Ottomans there had always in fact been an independent category of laws called imperial laws or *kanuns* which were derived directly from the sovereign will of the ruler. For their justification it was asserted that, though applying to situations not covered by the *sharī'a*, they were necessary for the well-being of the Islamic community The Ottoman sultans had promulgated hundreds of such *kanuns* concerning public law, state finances, taxation, economic life, and criminal law. The Gülhane rescript was promulgated on the same principle, the legislation which it envisaged being thought necessary to regenerate the state. The document itself was rendered in the form of a decree.

When all this is said, it remains nevertheless clear that the rescript introduced revolutionary ideas and institutions into Ottoman society. Among them was the sultan's promise, confirmed by an oath, to respect the laws to be made pursuant to its principles and the establishment of a council for legislative activities with the guarantee of freedom of debate.

When he composed the decree, Reşid had intended to impose limits on the despotic power of the sultan. In his letter to Palmerston, dated August 12, 1839, he confessed this intention: "Les puissances de l'Europe," he wrote, "savent à quel degré était progressivement parvenue la tyrannie des Empereurs ottomans depuis la destruction des Janissaires.... Lorsque malgré la considération, si forte du voisinage, l'Autriche et la Russie, quelqu'en soit le motif, permettent à la Walachie et à la Servie, d'adopter une constitution, aucune puissance ne saurait-elle jamais vouloir empêcher que les populations musulmans obtiennent rien que de simples sûretés pour leur [sic] vies et pour leur fortune."[1]

A further revolutionary element in the document was the extension of the guarantees in it to all subjects. Later, in 1846, the sultan could confirm these principles in a speech saying: "The differences of religion and sect among the subjects is something concerning only their persons and not affecting their rights of citizenship. As we are living all in the same country under the same government, it is wrong to make discriminations among us." The revolt of the

[1] F. E. Bailey, *British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942, p. 275.

Greeks and the European crusade for Greek independence had taught a severe lesson to the Ottomans. Now, possessing equality before the law, the non-Muslim subjects would, it was expected, no longer feel that they were a segregated and oppressed element in the state and would no longer strive for independence from it. The Western powers, too, would appreciate this change in favor of the Christians in the empire. It must be noted that with their demands for equality, freedom, home rule, reforms in taxation, and land ownership the non-Muslim subjects were contributing to the Westernization of the Ottoman-Turkish state. Perceiving their peculiar position and the intervention of the West on their behalf, the sultan was moved increasingly to secularize public institutions. As sultan-caliph, he began to distinguish as best he could between his offices as ruler of all Ottoman citizens equally and his office as caliph of only the Muslims in accordance with the *sharī'a*. The significant concession made to the non-Muslims caused apprehensions among the Muslims in general, who regarded it as the destruction of the caliphate and denounced the Westernization movement as a whole. The fanatical ones stigmatized it as apostasy. The division thereby brought into focus between Westernizers with chiefly secular views and conservatives attached to the rule of the *sharī'a* remained for many years the principal schism in Turkish political life.

In brief, equality before the law and the securing of life, honor, and property for all subjects were the revolutionary ideas in the rescript. Reşid himself asserted that the *Tanzimat*, the reforms introduced with the rescript, would change the imperial regime completely. The change in the concept of the state was further visible in the various decrees in which the sultan announced that the laws were made solely for the subjects' benefit.

We can ascertain the sincerity of Reşid's professions when we study the measures by which he undertook to put into effect the principles proclaimed in the rescript. Reşid showed his zeal to make the rule of law a reality by the haste with which he published a penal code.

In the provinces, administrative councils were established, the members of which were the governor, his two secretaries, the local judge, the mufti, the local military commander, four notables, and, if there was a Christian community in the province, the *metropolit* and two Christian notables. The notables were to be elected by the people. The provincial councils and smaller councils in the dependent towns were freely to discuss all administrative matters and were to sit as criminal courts. The High Council of Reforms in the capital constituted a court of appeal for them. With the establishment of the provincial councils, Ottoman subjects, non-Muslims in particular, may be said to have received for the first time a voice in the local administration, though in actual fact these councils were composed of the local high officials, *ulema*, and notables, and differed little from the old councils of notables under the judge. Sometimes,

paradoxically enough, the local *âyan* and *eşraf* used their new positions in local administration to obstruct the Tanzimat and incite the conservative masses against it.

Introduced with the intention of protecting both the peasants and the public treasury, financial reforms followed soon after the proclamation of the rescript. To secure greater justice in taxation Reşid abolished the tax immunities and exemptions affecting such influential groups as *âyan*, *ağas*, *ulema*, and the military, as well as the exemptions connected with religious endowments. The affected groups started an intense propaganda campaign against the reforms. The survey and census embarked upon for purposes of the reform gave them an opportunity to incite the conservative masses, and they spread rumors variously that the government had determined to double the taxes or to abolish them altogether. The abolition of tax farming affected the large group of tax farmers and credit agents and the substantial number of officials profiting from it in dubious ways. It must be recalled that most of the tax farmers were local notables who had gained wealth and influence through this activity. Again in order to extend the state's protection over the peasantry Reşid abolished forced labor and usury. One of the first decisions of the High Council of Reforms read: "In the Balkans most of the notables used to think that the peasants were their serfs, and employed them for their own services without any compensation. Also they did not permit them to leave their estates to work elsewhere and they interfered even in their marriages. Now the sultan has never accepted such abuses, and those who oppose this order [abolishing them] will be punished according to the provisions of the penal code recently published." Another decree pointed out that the usurers were getting twenty per cent per month for the money they lent to the peasants. Never able to pay their debts, these were eventually deprived of all their possessions. The usurers also used to appropriate the peasants' crops at below market prices. Now the government reduced the rates of interest and permitted the peasantry to pay their accumulated debts in installments.

The government had ordered the officials in the provinces to explain to the people in mass meetings the principles embodied in the Rescript of Gülhane. In some areas in the Balkans the peasants became so impatient to see the results of the reforms that they attempted desperate actions. Seeing that the Tanzimat had not brought any immediate relief in their tax burden, for example, and that they were still subject to forced labor, the Bulgarian peasants around Nish rose up under their own lesser notables. Further uprisings in 1849 and 1850 in the Vidin area were even more serious. Most of the agricultural lands in this area were originally state-owned. But local Muslim *ağas* had the exclusive rights to lease them and in fact possessed them as their own estates. Rejecting the popular demands and organizing a local militia (*başıbozuks*), the *ağas* fell upon the rebels, and it required regular government forces to end the struggle. The High Council of Reforms in Istanbul decided first to abolish the existing

administrative council and granted the Christian peasants the right to lease the state-owned lands themselves. These radical decisions proved impracticable, however, and the situation did not change much subsequently. Similar reactions occurred in Anatolia. The *âyan* of Bala near Ankara, for example, was prosecuted before the High Council of Reforms for evading tax payments, subjecting the peasants to forced labor, inciting people to rise against the government. The difference here was that the Muslim population, under the influence of the local *ulema* and *âyan*, were extremely conservative, whereas the Christian subjects in the Balkans, under the influence of nationalist leaders, were in a mood to rebel.

These examples indicate how difficult it was for Reşid to effect his reforms and how various were the social forces arrayed against him. The privileged classes of the old regime, especially *ağas* in collaboration with the *ulema*, were asserting that the grant of civil equality to the non-Muslims and the "infidel" disregard of the *sharī'a* would ruin the state and religion. To control them, Reşid had hastily published his penal code so that he might legally prosecute offenders against the government's reform measures. Many reactionaries in the capital as well as in the provinces, including even old Hüsrev, were punished. In Ankara a mufti, a member of the administrative council, was condemned for inciting people to rebel against the reforms.

In line with his efforts to introduce a Western system of administration, Reşid decided to entrust public service in the provinces exclusively to salaried civil servants appointed by the central government and to abolish all the forms of dues and bribes which the *âyan* and officials of all degrees had been accustomed to accept. In seeking to create a corps of civil servants to implement the reforms, Reşid was directly threatening the position of the provincial *âyan* who, as agents of the governors-general, then occupied most of the local administrative posts in Anatolia. Reşid was intent on changing those features of the organization of the empire which were inherited from feudalism. His administrative reform meant, in the last analysis, profound social reform. One of his radical measures after the abolition of tax farming was to appoint revenue collectors (*muhassıls*) in the provinces who were attached directly to the central government. But he failed to find enough civil servants trained for the job and was forced after all to employ local notables, who often followed the old practices.

It was later decided to found special secular schools to supply the civil servants so urgently needed. In these schools and in the military academies a body of Westernized officials were trained who were destined to play a decisive part in the modernization of Turkey. The resistance to Reşid's reforms caused his fall in 1841 (he was then foreign minister). The newly introduced institutions had not worked well; the new system of tax collection in especial was a failure. Reşid had relied solely on the sultan's favor, which he had gained through his services in solving the Egyptian question. His successor in power was Rıza

Pasha, the Minister of War, who like many old-type reformers believed chiefly in military reorganization as a means of resuscitating the empire. Tax farming came back with him, and radical reforms in the administration generally were judged ill-timed. When in 1845 Reşid came back to power he gave priority to training the bureaucrats needed to implement his reforms; to this end he created a High Council of Public Education and projected the foundation of a university.

In the same year the government took the bold step of asking each province to elect two delegates and send them to Istanbul to consult on the reforms to be undertaken. These delegates were "elected from among the prominent and respected people." The assembly seemed in concert to be simply an extension of the provincial administrative councils. Yet it remains the first representative assembly ever convoked in the Ottoman capital. Though the *âyan* who appeared at the sultan's Porte were timid enough and soon returned home, the conservatives were appalled. Serasker Said Pasha went so far as to denounce Reşid for intending to proclaim a republic. Perhaps more significant in its consequence was the promulgation of a commercial code borrowed from France which established tribunals of commerce, the first secular tribunals of the Ottoman state.

For two principal reasons the bold steps taken by Reşid remained without effect. In the first place, the current severe economic depression was identified in the popular mind with the West and its ways—not improperly, since the cheap and plentiful products of Western industry, invading the Turkish market under the capitulatory regime, were ruining the native industries. Of these happenings the contemporary consular reports give us vivid descriptions. In the second place, disgruntled persons were accusing the reformist Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861) of letting Reşid abuse the power of the sultanate. The highly centralist and authoritarian system of government espoused by Reşid and his followers became the particular target of the rising Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia, who saw in it a despotism harmful to the empire. Organized as the secret society of the Young Ottomans in 1867, these intellectuals embraced the romantic nationalism then prevalent in Europe and advocated a constitutional regime which would introduce elements of Western civilization while preserving traditional Islamic-Turkish culture. For the first time we find a group of progressives acting independently of the government and opposing the official reform program. The Young Ottomans were the real forerunners of the nationalist and democratic movement in Turkey.

The major characteristics of modernization in this early period can be succinctly summarized.

A program of modernization was first adopted by the state as a measure of self-defense against an aggressive and imperialistic Europe. The superiority of European military techniques and organization was recognized as early as the end

of the seventeenth century. This perception was a necessary psychological preparation for the later cultural borrowings from the West.

Second, systematic modernization started with military reforms in the eighteenth century, especially under Selim III. From 1830 on, the process was extended to administration and public institutions, a trend which culminated in the proclamation of the Ottoman constitution of 1876.

Third, in the modernization movement the state was the initiator, and changes were imposed from above, the sultan using his absolute power to create the bureaucratic machinery necessary to effect changes.

Fourth, the masses, the great majority of whom were living in a closed rural economy, were generally dependent on the *âyan, ağa*s, and clerics, who were vitally interested in keeping them attached to the traditional institutions. Even in the period between 1800 and 1850 these groups actively resisted the reforms imposed by the state; the Turkish-Muslim population of the empire remained in general indifferent or even refractory in the face of change.

Fifth, a desire to satisfy non-Muslim subjects and the Western powers definitely encouraged the Ottoman state to adopt secular laws and institutions. The Western powers were interested in furnishing the empire with liberal institutions, which they thought would guarantee at once the integrity of the empire and their own economic interests in it.

Sixth, around 1860 a small group of Turkish patriots with Western outlook emerged and carried out, in the newly introduced press and in a number of literary periodicals, a vigorous campaign against the sultan's absolutism. His reform measures were, they believed, both arbitrary and contrary to the real interests of the Turkish-Muslim population.

In the Turkish modernization movement, finally, the principal difficulties stemmed from the religious basis of the traditional society and state. In general, the Tanzimat reformers and intellectuals, though wanting to Westernize the administration and to borrow modern techniques, believed it desirable to preserve such basic traditional institutions as the *shari'a*, the religious courts, and the religious schools. It was thought that these might be taken out of public affairs and relegated to their own sphere. Later, radicals who wanted wholesale Westernization and a national sovereignty like that of European states were to blame the failure of the Tanzimat upon this dualism. But no concept of the nation-state was in fact realized until Atatürk called the Turkish Republic into being after the dissolution of the empire in 1919.

©The Isis Press

Published by
The Isis Press
Şemsibey Sokak 10
Beylerbeyi, 81210 Istanbul

ISBN: 975-428-080-0

First Printing 1995

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XIX

Halil İNALCIK

FROM EMPIRE TO REPUBLIC

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Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History

THE ISIS PRESS
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