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ARAB TURKISH RELATIONS

1908-1918

By

Tadeusz Swietochowski

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
for the requirements of the degree  
of Master of Arts in Arab Studies  
at the American University of Beirut

1961

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## ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is Arab-Turkish relations in the ten years from 1908 to 1918. This was the most decisive decade in the history of the Ottoman Empire; it began with the Young Turkish revolution, witnessed the growing disintegration of the state, and ended with its final collapse. It is also an extremely important period in the national history of the Arabs as well as the Turks, for in the course of these few years both these nations after sharing a common destiny during four centuries chose to follow the paths of separate national development.

This study is limited to an analysis of certain principal aspects of the relations between Arabs and Turks which emerged in this particular period. I also found it necessary to give a short outline of the historical background prior to 1908. The method I chose was not so much a chronological review as an investigation of particular issues--which, however, do correspond to the chronological development. I tried in particular to account for the factors which linked both nations together and those which made it difficult and, in the last analysis, impossible for them to remain in a common state. I tried also to show the diversity of ties between the Arabs and Turks, such as the contacts between the Young Turks and the Arabs as well as the relations between the Arab leaders and the Turkish opposition.

Relations between any two nations are always influenced to a greater or lesser extent by social and economic factors. Investigation from this angle was not my purpose, especially in view of the paucity

of relevant sources. Nevertheless, I tried occasionally to take into consideration what effects these two factors did have. For instance, the Arab attitude to the Young Turks' policy and particularly to the problem of centralization was influenced on the one hand by the aspirations of the progressive nationalist elements aiming at a fuller expression of national life and on the other hand there was a fairly strong conservative and feudalist opposition.

Arab-Turkish relations were not isolated, of course, from the broader international framework and especially in the later phases of the period under consideration they were more and more influenced by the policy of other countries. However, in order to deep strictly to the essential theme, I only touched on the problem of French and especially British influence when this had a vital effect on the development of Arab-Turkish relations.

For the information in this thesis I drew on a number of publications, a complete list of which can be found at the end. Among several works connected in some way with the present subject, there is none entirely devoted to it, with the exception of "Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism" by Prof. Zeine N. Zeine (Beirut, 1958).

Documents concerning the Young Turks' policy in the first post-revolutionary period are included in "La Jeune Turquie" by A. Sarrou (Paris, 1912). Extracts from contemporary newspapers, and selections of correspondence and declarations related to the Arab Question are

contained in "La Revolte Arabe" by E. Jung (Paris, 192 ). A book by Georges Samne, "La Syrie" (Paris, 1920), although written with a strong pro-French bias, gives many quotations in full, documents, declarations, press articles and interesting details which are of some help in this work.

The problem of Arab Federalism, in its broad historical background, is dealt with by Hassan Saab in "The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire" (Amsterdam, 1958). Much detailed information about the Arab political societies in the years 1908-191 are given in the article by Richard Hartmann: "Arabische Politische Gesellschaften bis 191" published in "Beitrage zur Arabistik, Semitistik und Islamwissenschaft" (Leipzig 19 ). The history of World War I in Turkey is dealt with from various angles in an exhaustive work by Emin Ahmet, "Turkey in the World War" (New Haven, 1930).

Four valuable books were written by participants in the events relating to the present subject, who were therefore in a position to give first-hand information and interpretations. These are Djemal Pasha: "Memories of a Turkish Statesman" (London n.d.); T.E. Lawrence: "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" (Oxford, 1925); Limon von Sanders: "Cinq Ans de Turquie" (Paris, 1925); and R. Storrs: "Orientalism" (London 1937).

An interesting account of the first years following the 1908 Revolution is given by a witness of the events, Abbott C.F.: "Turkey in Transition" (London, 1909).

The most valuable collections of documents relating to the Arab national movement in this period are the following: "Document sull Origine e gli Sviluppi della Questione Araba"; Rossi Ettore (Rome 1944); "Le Verite sur la Question Syrienne" (Istambul, 1916), published by the IVth Army Command; "Les Regions Arabes Liberees" (Paris, 1919), K.T. Khairallah.

There were also many other documents to be found in various publications. These included an exhaustive history of Turkey from the Young Turkish Revolution till 1917, "Le Sort de l'Empire Ottoman", by A. Mandelstam (Paris, 1917), which was especially valuable for its study of the Young Turks' policy, although not unbiased. Numerous documents relating to the history of political parties in Turkey are included in "Turkiyede Syasi Partiler 1859-1952", by Z. Tunaya Tarik (Istambul, 1952).

Apart from the above-mentioned, I made use of a number of other publications which proved useful in various respects.

## CHAPTER ONE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Of the two greatest nations of the Ottoman Empire, the ideas of modern nationalism awoke first among the Arabs. The origins of Arab nationalism were various and numerous. But when it started expanding among the Arabs in the second half of the 19th century it was certainly under the strong impact of the West in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. This began with the development of educational and missionary activities by European countries. From the middle of the century onwards there was a steadily increasing number of schools run by the French, British, Americans, Germans and Russians. The new Arab intelligentsia was educated in the French and American universities in Beirut. The general raising of educational standards on modern lines awoke interest in general problems of the society. There was an increasing demand for newspapers and literature; the literary revival of the Arabs began with such names as Yazidji or Bustani; the first Arab learned societies were created.

At the same time a new social force came into being. In the large commercial cities of Lebanon and Syria a class of prosperous merchants was gradually growing up. These people, well-to-do, became the clientele for the developing culture and education. And as usually is the case in the newly-born middle classes, which aspire to occupy a leading position in society, it was among them that the national ideas found the most favourable response. It is noteworthy

that this new class to a great extent consisted of Christians. By virtue of the Ottoman laws, which until 1856 forbade the Christians to acquire land, out of necessity they were confined to the towns and occupied themselves with trade.<sup>1</sup>

A special role in promoting the development of nationalist ideas was played by the Lebanese Maronites. They were the first to encourage actively anti-Turkish sentiments, and their objective was to achieve complete separation from the Ottoman Empire, against which they harboured definite hostility from the time of the 1860 massacres.<sup>2</sup>

While the idea of a nation in its Western sense expanded rapidly among the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, it did not do so among the vast majority of Moslem Arabs. The reason for this was a number of political, historical, social and above all, religious factors. The Moslem Arabs could not have espoused blindly the ideas of the Syrian and Lebanese Christians who wanted to rise against the Moslem Turks. Being Arabs, they were at the same time Moslems; perhaps they considered themselves more Moslem than Arab. The first steps towards solving the delicate problem of relationship between the nationalist ideas and the philosophy of Islam were undertaken by a few prominent Arab intellectuals and writers in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Zeine: Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism, p. 40.

2 Ibid., p. 39.

3 Colombe: Islam et Nationalisme Arabe; Revue Historique, Tome 228, p. 88.



The first and the greatest among them was Jamal-al-Din al-Afgani, the spiritual leader of the Panislamism doctrine, though of a different brand than that professed by Abdulhamid II. The main idea influencing all his activities was to provide the Moslems with the means and weapons for resisting the pressure of the West, against whose threat he called for unity of all Moslems. At the same time he was aware of the awakening forces of nationalism in various Moslem countries and he tried to use these forces for the principal cause. During his stay in Egypt he reminded the Egyptians their glorious pharaonic past, whose inspiration should strengthen them for resistance against British aggression.<sup>1</sup> He also brought to the eyes of the Arabs the role they had performed in spreading and strengthening the Islam. It is of interest from the point of view of our subject, that al-Afgani discussed the merits of the Arabs and Turks for the history of Islam, and that the comparison was not favourable for the Turks.<sup>2</sup>

Another Arab reformer Rashid Rida also preached nationalistic ideas based on religion. He was severely critical of the role the Turks had played in the history of Islam: "They are a nation of warriors, but they cannot be considered as more important than the Arabs. And they did not serve the cause of Islam as much as the Arabs did. Is it not true that Islam took deepest roots in the countries which were conquered by the Arabs whereas the conquests made by the Turks brought only disasters for Moslems and the Islam?"<sup>3</sup> Rashid Rida who preached the renaissance of the Moslem world, considered Islam as

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1 M. Colombe: op.cit., p. 89.

2 Ibid., p. 90.

3 Cited by: Sylvia G. Haim: Intorno alle Origini della teoria del Panarabism, Oriente Moderno, 1956.

inseparably connected with the cause of the Arab nation.

A further progress towards Arab nationalism was represented by Al Kawakibi. He drew a clear distinction "between the Arab movement and the general Panislamic revival preached by Jamal al Din al-Afgani."<sup>1</sup> He was also the first among modern Arab thinkers to suggest instituting in Mecca an Arab Caliphate in the hands of the Quraishite family, with the authority limited to the region of Hedjaz, and exercising only spiritual power. The idea launched by Kawakibi evolved later into the theory of usurpation of the Caliphate by the Ottoman dynasty.<sup>2</sup>

The characteristic feature for the Arab nationalist trends became its identification with the cause of Islam and on the other hand, apprehensions and mistrust of the West. At the same time the Arab thinkers of this period showed a good deal of criticism with the Turks.

However their criticism had never brought them so far as to share the ideas of Negib Azoury. He was a political refugee from Abdulhamid's oppression and in the first years of this century founded in Paris a nationalist organization called 'La Ligue de la Patrie Arabe' (in 1905). This league issued two manifestos which expressed the Arab desire to "detach themselves from the worm-eaten Ottoman trunk", to create an independent state between Suez and the sea of Oman, from the Mediterranean to the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, with an Arab-Moslem sovereign. There was also an idea borrowed from Kawakibi that "the present vilayat of Hedjaz, together with the territory of Medina would form an independent empire whose monarch would be the Caliph of all the Moslems."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Antonius: The Arab Awakening, p. 97.

2 Colombe: op.cit., p. 95.

3 Azoury Negib: Reveil de la Nation Arabe, p. i-iv.

At the same time when Arab writers and intellectuals were developing national Arab ideas, among the Turks nationalism still lay dormant. "The ideal of nationalism appeared first among the non-Moslems, then among the Albanians and Arabs, and finally among the Turks. The fact that it appeared last among the Turks was not coincidental; the Ottoman state was formed by Turks themselves...with intuitive cautiousness the Turks were reluctant in the beginning to endanger a reality for the sake of an ideal."<sup>1</sup> Even the word "Turk" was not used in the sense of determining a nationality. For the educated inhabitants of Anatolian towns, this very word had a meaning akin to rudeness and barbarism, and was applied only to the low class people and particularly to the peasants. The Turks called themselves "Ottomans", their country "the land of Ottomans" their state "the Ottoman State" and the language they used "the Ottoman language".<sup>2</sup> Turkish patriotism before the 1908 Revolution did not express itself by any element of racial or social solidarity. It was only an attachment to land and to religion, a pride in Ottoman and Moslem history, and a collective consciousness of not being like foreigners.

First signs of nationalism before 1908 began to appear in Turkish literature, and this trend was represented by a few writers among whom was poet writing in pure Turkish-Mehmet Emin or novelist Aka Gunduz who discreetly attempted at awakening the national ideal in their compatriots. However, for the emergence of Turkish nationalism the decisive moment was to become the 1908 Young Turks Revolution.

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1 Ziya Gökalp: Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization, p. 78.

2 Emin Ahmet: Turkey in the World War. p 206

## CHAPTER TWO

### 1908 REVOLUTION AND ITS PROBLEMS

The period of common history of Turks and Arabs covered four centuries and began in the 16th century when the Arab countries were conquered by the Ottoman Sultans. From this time on both nationalities lived within the Ottoman Empire which possessed the character of a religious commonwealth under the rule of the highest and accepted by all Moslems leader of Islamic world--the Sultan residing in Constantinople.

The Ottoman state was a theocratic one, and as such did not recognize the conception of nationality with regard to its subjects. Everybody was considered simply as an "Ottoman" and the only distinction towards him was based on criteria of confession, i.e. Moslem, Christian or Jew.

It goes without saying that such an attitude could not prevent the national problem in the Empire from taking its natural course and especially in modern times, reaching points of great tension. However Sultan Abdul-hamid's Panislamic state doctrine,<sup>1</sup> and even more his system of oppression artificially concealed this problem till the 1908 Revolution revealed abruptly whole its complexity. This revolution

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1 For a full discussion of Panislamism see: Gabriel Charmes: "L'Avenir de la Turquie, le Panislamisme" (Paris 1885); Dwight E. Lee: "Origins of Panislamism" American Historical Review, January 1942; H.A.R. Gibb: "Whither Islam" (London 1932).

known as the Young Turkish, was brought about by a secret or semi-secret movement, founded in the last decades of 19th century, among the refugees from Abdulhamid's despotism, residing in various countries of Europe.<sup>1</sup> In a few years prior to 1908 the Young Turks began quickly to win influence among the Ottoman army officers garrisoning Macedonia. A branch of the Young Turks called the Committee of Union and Progress came definitely to the head of the movement. It was the C.U.P. and connected with it military groups which executed the coup d'etat of 24 July 1908.

When the Young Turks came to power, facing the fundamental issue "how to save the state,"<sup>2</sup> the key to this issue laid in finding a solution to the national question, i.e. in resolving the problem of coexistence and cooperation between various nationalities and creeds of which the Empire was composed. The new rulers sought the answer in the old Ottoman formula applied to the new situation. The best solution appeared to them in fusion of all nationalities and races into a new "Ottoman nation." However this time the ideal was to be achieved, contrary to Sultan Abdulhamid's practice, by means of freedom, democracy and equality. "We shall no longer be conquerors and slaves, but a new nation of free men" said the most prominent spokesman of this ideal, Ahmed Riza.<sup>3</sup> The first loyalty of the Turk, Arab, Bulgar, Greek or Armenian ought not to be to his ethnical group but to the common

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1 See; Ramsaur "The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908".

2 Lewis: The Emergence of Modern Turkey, p. 228

3 Ramsaur, op.cit., p. 82.

fatherland. It did not require much time to prove that the idea was not workable.<sup>1</sup> Peoples making up the Ottoman Empire had attained already a high degree of national consciousness. There were many forces at work in directions pointing away from centre, especially among the Balkan nationalities, which aimed at achieving full independence. Others, like the Armenians and Arabs, were more anxious to preserve and develop their own national individuality than to lose it in all embracing ottomanism.

As early as 1910 the Young Turks had to admit failure of their ottomanizing policy in a speech delivered by Talaat Pasha at the Salonika Congress of the Committee of Union and Progress. The Young Turkish leader saw an "impenetrable barrier to the establishment of real equality" in historical and religious factors opposing Moslems to Christians and above all the "agitation and propaganda of the independent Balkan states."<sup>2</sup>

The principal doctrine of the Abdulhamidian state--Panislamism--in the first period of Revolution had rather periferic significance in comparison with Ottomanism. Officially it was even rejected as an ideal antagonizing the non-Moslem peoples and principally contradictory to Ottomanism. The more so as there existed strong Free-Masonic and Jewish influences within the leadership of the C.U.P.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 Zeine: Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism, p. 75; quoted from Gooch and Temperley Vol. IX, Part I (No. 38) Confidential enclosure in F.O. 371/1019 pp. 208-209.
  - 2 "Already during the Marindian period there were some among the Young Turks with sufficient perception and sufficient frankness to reject Ottomanism as an impossible fantasy. Their judgement was amply confirmed by the conduct both of the Turks and of their subjects during the years following the revolution." See: Bernard Lewis: The Emergence of Modern Turkey.
  3. Zeine, op.cit., p. 77.

Nevertheless a limited but influential group within the C.U.P. leading bodies, were convinced followers of Panislamism and saw in it a suitable political instrument. The most prominent representative of this tendency soon became Enver Pasha.<sup>1</sup> The importance of Panislamism increased gradually as the failure to rally the Balkan peoples to the program of Ottomanism was more and more apparent. On the other hand, in view of the preponderance of the Moslem element in the Empire, the need for some binding force developed as a matter of course. Besides, considerations of the foreign policy also played an essential role. Panislamism could have secured for Turkey support from the outside Moslem world, it could also have served as a weapon against France, Britain and Russia, whose possessions contained many millions of Moslems. In this regard the group of Enver Pasha met with wholehearted support and encouragement from Germans. By 1911 the formerly unpopular Panislamism with the Young Turks, was definitely accepted as a "program by the C.U.P., in their foreign policy at any rate."<sup>2</sup>

Besides these two tendencies, within the C.U.P. there already existed an embryo of Panturanism, which although at the beginning was represented by a very small number of followers, within a couple of years was to become the predominant trend among the Young Turks.

It was in general a striking feature about the Young Turkish movement that it did not have a determined and uniform character, what

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1 Halide Edib: Turkey Faces West, p. 123.

2 Zeine, op.cit., p. 76 quoted from: Handbooks of F.O. No. 96 a & b, p. 68.

was testified by splits and rivalry among particular groups and leaders. It seems that in the pre-revolutionary period the main link between its various tendencies was hostility to the Abdul-hamidian despotism. Apart from this it was characterized by a variety of composing its trends and elements.

The early stage of the movement was a continuation of the Tanizmat spirit, represented by the older generation of the Young Turks, among whom were people like Ahmed Riza, Halil Ganem, Denver Pasha, etc.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the C.U.P. was composed mostly of the younger generation which showed more inclination towards nationalism than their older colleagues who considered that the Turks must avoid nationalism to keep the Empire together.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the potential tendencies towards Turkish nationalism, this ideal was not yet prevailing in any of its major groups. The movement comprised various racial elements, and apart from the Turks the most numerously represented were the Jews and then came almost all nationalities inhabiting the Empire, also including the Arabs.

The participation of the Arabs in the Young Turkish movement although can be traced from the very early period, was always on a rather limited scale. In the pre-revolutionary period there was a society, called the "Turco-Syrian Reform Committee" connected with the Young Turks.<sup>3</sup> This committee aimed at achieving certain reforms

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1 Ramsaur, p. 63.

2 Ibid., p. 93.

3 Ibid., p. 63.



for Syrians, which would enable them to live more easily in the Empire. In general however Arabs did not show much willingness to join the Young Turkish ranks, and preferred to stick with their own small circles like that of Asuri in Paris. Nevertheless one of the most prominent leaders of the Young Turkish movement and one of its founders was an Arab, the Syrian Christian<sup>1</sup> Halil Ganem with whom the history of the movement is closely connected. Of the Arab origin was also an outstanding leader of the military circles Mahmud Shevket Pasha, who rendered great services to C.U.P. by crushing the 1909 counterrevolution and hold important appointments in the government including the post of Grand Vizier.<sup>2</sup> Another Arab follower of C.U.P. of high standing was well known writer and translator Suleiman Bustani, who as the representative of the Young Turks on the official mission to France and England and later was the member of government.

The proclamation of the Constitution was accepted in Arab provinces with various feelings. It is true that the reaction of the greater part of the population was that of joy and enthusiasm. The witnesses of these events give descriptions of spontaneous popular demonstrations during which people of different races and religions were seen embracing each other. There was a great eruption of jubilation and optimism. The young generation of educated Arabs from the towns of Syria, Lebanon and Iraq attached great hopes to the future promised

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1 Ibid., pp. 22-24.

2 Halide Edib, Conflict of East and West in Turkey, p. 98.

by the Revolution. Equality and brotherhood of all Ottomans, freedom of speech, press and associations, led the Arab elite to expect better prospects for self expression of national life within the Ottoman community.

However in this general situation the attitude of Lebanese Christians differed by its skepticism and reserve; they were traditionally hostile to the Ottoman Empire under any form. Some Arab intellectuals realized also that there was a need for deeper rooted democratic traditions to make such an experiment a success.<sup>1</sup>

The most conservative of the Arab Moslems and those who were won over to Abdulhamidian Panislamism showed rather hostile attitude. Many of the Arab notables occupied high positions in the Sultan's court, administration and army.<sup>2</sup> Powerful feudal and tribal chiefs saw in the new centralized government a danger to their autonomy.<sup>3</sup> There was also a good deal mistrust of the Young Turks, caused by their atheistic views or notorious Free Masonic connections. The apprehensions of the Western influences coming through the new regime also had some effect among the conservatives. It was no wonder that these circles had felt an attachment to Abdulhamid's system as the truly Islamic one and some of

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1 Saab, The Arab Federalist of the Ottoman Empire, p. 216.

2 Saab, op.cit., (Beyhum Kawafil el-Uruba Wamawakibuha, II 17)

"There were among these officials...Abdul Huda Alrifai, Mohammed Zafir, the Sherifs Hussein, Ali Moudar (and other sherifs). There were also...Izzet Pasha el-Abed. Najib Bey and Selim by Mahhama... There were also in the army the commanders Mohammed Pasha and Muhi-din Pasha, sons of Abdul Kader El-Jazairi. Two professors of the military colleges were from Lebanon, Shafic Pasha and Wahib Pasha... He also had among Arabs a corps of propagandists called "Dawreji". He showed his confidence in Arabs by forming a special Arab imperial guard, all wearing green turbans."

3 Saab, op.cit., p. 217.

the religious leaders in the provinces showed reluctance to recognize the new rulers. "The name of Abdulhamid is still mentioned in prayers in the mosques of Arabia as that of the legitimate Sultan"<sup>1</sup> in spite of his being deposed.

One more factor which might have contributed to the unfavourable reaction of this part of the Arab population was the immediate failure of the Young Turks to cope with the local problems of the Arab provinces. "The revolution had brought no blessing to any of the districts from the Mediterranean to Mesopotamia; poverty and anarchy are prevailing characteristics of the regions bordering the desert road."<sup>2</sup> Even in this respect some Arabs, especially the Syrians, could draw certain comparisons with the old regime detrimental to the Young Turkish government.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Abbott, 302. On page 178 the author relates that even the construction of the Hijaz Railway was exploited against the new regime. This "accursed fruit of infidelity had deprived the poor inhabitant of the barren regions which it traversed, of their main source of subsistence: the transport, entertainment and spoilation of pilgrims. The disaffection arising from these two causes (another cause is the Turks' being bad Moslems) was no doubt tormented by the numerous ministers of Abdulhamid's regime who after the Revolution had been banished to the cities of Arabia.

2 Abbott, *op.cit.*, pp. 177-179.

3 "Taken as a whole, the Hamidian regime in Syria marked imperial progress, and is open to less criticism than elsewhere in Turkey. There were of course the same bad features; repressive atmosphere, suspicious and jealous system of administration. But there was no general sense of oppression and terror. No racial hatred was recorded. General development and increase in population took place. Thanks to the influence of Syrians like Izzet Pasha el Abed, in Abdulhamid's secret council, the province got something more than its share of government's help and the opportunity of advancement, with the result that it was by no means ripe for the revolt in 1908, and that Abdulhamid's is not held accursed at this day", Handbook of F.O., Syria, pp. 45-46.

Taking into account all these factors, one cannot exclude that some seeds of the Arabo-Turkish conflict which was to develop during the next years, existed already in the attitude of certain Arab groups against the very fact of revolution and its character.

However the politically articulate and progressive Arab groups greeted the Revolution with hope and joy. On the new of the revolt Azury in Paris immediately published a statement expressing on behalf of his society, full approval and readiness to cooperate with the new regime.<sup>1</sup>

His political rival, Shukri Ganem, who created in October 1908 in Paris the society called La Ligue Ottomane<sup>2</sup> declared also his full support and took upon his group to propagate the ideas of the Revolution among the emigres of Syrian origin.

One of the first acts of the victorious Revolution was to administer the elections, which even before their conducting provoked a resentment among some Syrians as the electoral law provided that only candidates with knowledge of Turkish would be eligible. The difficulties arose with finding suitable candidates and there were voices raised asking for the recognition of the Arabic as an official language used in Parliament.<sup>3</sup> Much greater dissatisfaction caused the results of the elections, which were organized by C.U.P. Although the Turks were outnumbered by Arabs in a ratio of three to two, out of the total number of 245 representatives, the Turks obtained 150 and Arabs only 60.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Jung, Revolte Arabe, p. 23.

2 Correspondance d'Orient, Nov. 1, 1908.

3 Samne, La Syrie, p. 59.

4 Antonius, op.cit., p. 104.

Two thirds of the deputies were followers of C.U.P. while the remaining ones soon joined the ranks of opposition led by a new formed Liberal Party (Al-Ahrar). Parliamentary opposition was mostly composed of Greeks, Armenians and Arabs who without concluding among themselves any agreement voted usually against the Young Turks. However the Arabs began to support C.U.P. when with the creation of the anti-Young Turkish government of Kamil Pasha the danger of overthrowing the C.U.P. power arose in January 1909.<sup>1</sup>

The first Arab society created after the Revolution on the Ottoman soil under the auspices of C.U.P. was Al-Ikha-al-Arabi founded in Constantinople in September 1908 by Shafik be al Mueyyed and Nadra Mutran. It was based on the principles of Ottomanism and was apparently meant to protect the Constitution, promote the welfare of the Arab provinces and spread education and Arab culture. However the Ottoman authorities found in the activities of Al-Ikha-al-Arabi some grounds accuse it for separatist tendencies as well as for the favourable disposition towards the reactionary forces. Accordingly to the Redbook "Al Ikha cooperated with the opposition to the C.U.P. and contributed to the coup d'etat against the constitution of March 1909..."<sup>2</sup> Some illegal acts were committed by the local committees of the society in Syria to the benefit of the reactionary movement and this caused the government to dissolve Al Ikha Al Arabi in spring, 1909.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Samné, op.cit., p. 61.

2 La Vérité sur la Question Syrienne, p. 13.

3 Ibid., p. 14.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GROWTH OF NATIONALISM AMONG THE YOUNG TURKS AND ARAB REACTIONS

April 1909 when the short-lived reactionary counter-revolution of Abdulhamid was crushed, is also the date from which the Young Turks took the rule of Empire directly into their own hands. Until then the C.U.P. had preferred to refrain from assuming the responsibility of executive power. The government was composed mainly of people of the old regime with long administrative experience which the Young Turks were lacking.<sup>1</sup> The C.U.P. in the period between July 1908 and April 1909 limited its action to indirectly influencing the affairs of the state by various means. The problems the new regime had to face from its very outset were exceptionally difficult and complex. The Young Turks' rule coincides with the most crucial period in the Ottoman Empire's history. Almost immediately after the July revolution the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina took place, in October 1908, simultaneously occurred the secession of Bulgaria, in 1911 Italy invaded Libya and in the next year the disastrous Balkan War started. "In a few years the Empire lost almost all its possessions in Europe, Libya, Crete and the Dodecanese Islands."<sup>2</sup> Apart from this uprisings broke out in the Moslem provinces of Yemen<sup>3</sup> and Albania.<sup>4</sup> There was a general

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1 Mandelstam, *Le Sort de l'Empire Ottoman*, p. 11.

2 Antonius, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

3 See: Antonius, *op.cit.*, p. 124. Jung: *La Revolte Arabe*, p. 38.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Woods: *Danger Zone in Europe*; p. 81  
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4 Woods; p. 173

restlessness among all the non-Turkish nationalities of the Empire and gradually the Young Turkish leaders came to realize that their Ottoman principle as well as that of Panislamism had failed. Although Ottomanism was still maintained as the official state doctrine until the end of the Ottoman state, it soon became a dead letter. "The Committee of Union and Progress found that the Turks were the only element in the Empire that was not opposed to centralization and had no political ideal incompatible with the Ottoman idea."<sup>1</sup>

The first isolated, although public manifestations of new nationalistic tendencies within the C.U.P. date back as early as the first months after the Revolution of 1908 when the rather irritating behaviour of some groups of Greeks during the elections caused some bitter feeling among the Young Turks.<sup>2</sup> One of their prominent spokesmen Djahid Bey published at that time an article in "Tanin" in which he stated that "after all the Turkish nation is the dominant one in the Empire."<sup>3</sup> At this moment however, such a declaration provoked a strong criticism on the part of many Young Turks who considered it too violent. The speed with which the attitude within the C.U.P. had changed in this respect is brought out by the fact that when in 1910 the Young Turkish senator Ferid Pasha delivered a report full of nationalistic pronouncements, it was tacitly accepted as the expression of views prevailing among the bulk of the C.U.P. leaders.<sup>4</sup>

The evolution of ideas among them corresponded with the awakening of political nationalism among the Turkish people. One type of

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1 Handbooks of F.O. No. 96 c & d, pp. 21-22; as quoted by Zeine; Arab-Turkish Relations, p. 74.

2 Mandelstan, op.cit., p. 16.

3 Ibid., p. 16.

4 Correspondance d'Orient, 1.3.1910.

this nationalism which soon gained support within the C.U.P. ranks is known as Turanism or Panturanism. The word Panturanism resembles Pan-slavism or Pangermanism, and in fact this doctrine was an equivalent of these European ideologies. It was also greatly influenced by European racialist theories. Panturanism originated even before the Young Turkish Revolution, and its first apostles were not the Ottoman Turks but the Russian Tatars of the Crimea and the Volga, like Ak Chura Oglu, Ilminski and Gasprinski.<sup>1</sup> They pointed to the links of language and culture common to all Turkish peoples. In the years 1910-11 the ideas of Turanism and Panturanism were espoused by some intellectuals of the Young generation in Turkey. This group led by Ziya Gok Alp, Mahmud Fuad Kpruluzade and Omer Seyfeddin proclaimed the birth of a new language a new literature and a new purely Turkish civilization.<sup>2</sup> The Salonika review "Gench Kalemler" announced struggle for a new language ("Yeni Lisan"). Like most of the nationalistic movements in any country the Turanists started also from linguistical side. Their objective was to purify Osmanli Turkish, the official and literary language of Turkey, which was saturated with Arabic words and Persian constructions to the extent that it would become unintelligible to anybody without a high degree of education. The campaign for removing the Arabic words and replacing them by Turkish neologisms was endorsed by the following characteristic statement: "If we do not want to allow the foreigners to rule in our country, how can we tolerate the foreign words in our language."<sup>3</sup> The argument that a particular word is improper because

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1 Kohn: History of Nationalism in the East, p. 237.

2 Sauley: La Litterature Turque Moderne, p. 7.

3 Omer Seyfeddin: Kulliyat. Vol. II, p. 82, Article: "Yeni Lisan".



of its Arabic origin entailed general discussions on the prejudicial influence of Arab culture which had deprived the national culture of the Turks of its original individuality.<sup>1</sup> The plan to translate the Quran into Turkish caused a conflict with the ecclesiastics.<sup>2</sup> This gave the "Gench Kalemler" group an excuse for an attack of Islam conducted on the lines of the European struggle with clericalism. The authors connected with the Turanian movement began to express opinions that Islam prevented the cultural development of the Turks as a nation and frustrated in general progress.<sup>3</sup> They began to advocate a spiritual return to the pre-Islamic epoch in which the pure elements of national life and civilization were in their heyday. This task, together with the raising of the level of education and national consciousness, was carried out by the mass organizations, among which the "Turk Ojagi" was the best known.

There were also attempts, rather unsuccessful, to initiate a return to the old gods and to revive the old religion of the Asiatic Turkish nomads-Shamanism.

No evidence is available that C.U.P. policy ever contemplated full support for all ideas propagated by the Turanian intellectuals. In fact it tried to tone them down in view of the repercussions among the non-Turkish peoples or Moslem public opinion.

It was however the political side of Turanism or rather Panturanism, that deserved special attention within the C.U.P. Panturanist ideology advocated uniting of all peoples, speaking Turkish languages of which the greatest part--more than 20 millions lived within

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1 Ibid., p. 83.

2 Zeine, op.cit., p. 78, quoted from Handbook of F.O.N. 96 c & d, pp. 45-47.

3 Sancey, op.cit., p. 8.

the borders of Russia. Therefore the Young Turks saw in the promotion of Panturanism propaganda a useful weapon against the traditional and potentially most dangerous enemy of Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

Another trend of Turkish nationalism which also came into being at this time deserves some of our attention as its supporters in the years to come proved to be in favour of the dual Turko-Arab state. They called themselves simply the Turkish Nationalist and were the forerunners of the ideology adopted later by the Turkish Republic.<sup>2</sup> The Nationalists, who after some time were joined even by Ziya Gök Alp himself, opposed all activities on the part of the Turkish nation in favour of any ideal but the interests of the Turks living inside Turkey. They were therefore against the role of the Turks as defenders of the Islam or as the champion of the Turkish peoples in Russia, arguing realistically enough that it would be waste of national energy in a not very promising cause.

"One can rightly say that the seeds of the Arab separatist movement began to sprout from the soil of Turkish nationalism from 1909 onwards" says Prof. Zeine.<sup>3</sup> Soon after the first post revolutionary period relations between the new Turkey and the Arabs started developing

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1 Ch. Hostler: *Turkism and the Soviets*, pp. 146-156.

2 Halide Edib: *Turkey Faces West*, p. 124.

3 Zeine: op.cit., p. 77.

in the climate of mistrust and resentment. We mentioned previously that on the occasion of first parliamentary elections the problem of having Turkish as the language of debates caused already some dissatisfaction among the Arabs. (As a matter of fact it is difficult to share the Arab attitude in this respect since in all multi-national states there is always one language accepted in the parliament and it is usually of the nation which built this state; for example German was used in the Austro-Hungarian Parliament. However this fact eloquently illustrated Arab sensitivity on the question of their language.) The problem of language became the first and one of the most irritating of all Arab grievances against the Young Turks. The more so as the C.U.P. showed an increasing inclination toward the policy of "Turkifying". As early as the very first months after the Revolution, on September 23, 1908, the political program published by the C.U.P.<sup>1</sup> stated as follows: "All schools shall be placed under state control. Mixed government schools shall be opened to all elements of the population, with the object of giving to all Ottoman subjects a uniform educational system. Turkish shall be an obligatory subject in the primary schools. The government primary schools shall prepare pupils for secondary and higher education with Turkish as the medium of instruction." The same program in its article 7 stated that Turkish shall be the official language of the state and "official correspondence and discussion shall be held in this language."<sup>2</sup>

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1 A. Sarrou; La Jeune Turquie et la Revolution, p. 42.

2 Ibid., p. 41.

This act already provoked alarm and resentment in all non-Turkish communities, which later grew in proportion with the increase of nationalist tendencies within the C.U.P. The attempts of Turkification caused a particularly strong reaction among the Arabs. (They) "boast a language which is the sacred language, and a literature which is the classical literature of Islam. So far from wishing to exchange their own, for the speech of the Turks, the Arabs are loudly protesting against the official pre-eminence which the latter arrogates to itself in the Ottoman Empire. "Why should Turkish be the official language--they say--when we form so considerable a portion of the Moslems in Empire, and moreover speak the language in which the holy books of our common faith are written?"<sup>1</sup>

From this time on the endeavour to defend the Arabic language and to secure for it full rights will be a characteristic feature of almost every program or declaration of any Arab political movement. This issue assumed a special significance in view of anti-Islamic pronouncements made by some Turkish extremists and in the opinion of many Arabs the defense of their language was inseparable from the defense of Islam and its tradition. For this reason the project of translating the Quran into Turkish provoked additional unfriendly reactions and apprehension among the Arabs, still further aggravated by the fact that the C.U.P. did not dissociate themselves expressly from these ideas.

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1 Abbott: Turkey in Transition, p. 91.

At the same time when the policy of Turkifying in its linguistic aspect was under way a similar process took place in the field of administration where the Young Turks were working systematically to secure a predominant position for the Turkish element. The Arab grievances on this account were exposed in public in an article published by Shukri Ganem in the French periodical "Correspondance d'Orient".<sup>1</sup> This article confirmed the following facts: The Arabs were systematically removed from the authorities, out of the 50 seats in the Senate only 5 were allotted to the Arabs; no Arab was appointed a governor of province and most of the Arab functionaires were removed from the positions they occupied before the Revolution, in the new administration the proportion of Arabs among the new appointees was 1 to 100. Finally it protested once more against the recognition of Turkish as the only official language of the Empire.

The Arab bitterness was also strengthened by the sentiments of the Syrian Christians, who added to their traditional hostility a new grievance: extension of the military service on all the citizens of the Empire.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Young Turks, being well aware of the feeling prevailing among the Syrian Christians and suspicious of the separatist tendencies, promulgated in 1912 a law which replaced the principle of proportional representation by universal suffrage of two degrees in elections to the Administrative Councils of Vilayets.<sup>3</sup> This device reduced significantly the number of Christian deputies in all constituencies where they did not form a majority, being one reason more for their hostility.

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1 15.6.1910. Characteristically the Turkish newspaper "Tanin" refused to publish this article.

2 Same: La Syrie, p. 82.

An additional reason for dissatisfaction on the part of the Syrians was the economic situation of the country under the Young Turkish regime. War expenses and armaments caused a remarkable increase in taxation. The cost of living also rose considerably. Customs duties went up and in some cases reached 20-25 per cent of the value of imported goods.<sup>1</sup> Bribery and corruption was widespread, excessive taxation, the high cost of living and attempts by the C.U.P. to abolish the privileges of the Druse tribes and to impose on them military service caused serious disturbances in Hauran.<sup>2</sup> In September 1910 the Druses descended into the Bekaa Valley and the Government was compelled to dispatch troops who got involved in prolonged fighting. The disturbances soon spread to large areas of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.<sup>3</sup>

"The situation is critical in Hauran, Palestine and in the North of Arabia. Most of the Beduin and Druse tribes are in open revolt, in many places the Christians have been obliged to make common cause with the rebels. Telegraph wires are cut. Numerous functionaries, especially railway-workers, have been massacred. Others have disappeared, among them Shakir Pasha. Trains have been derailed, stations destroyed, trucks burnt."<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, news of disturbances among the tribes was reported from Mesopotamia;<sup>5</sup> but the most drastic events took place in Yemen in

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1 Ibid., p. 71

2 Samne, op.cit., p. 72

3 Jung, op.cit., p. 25.

4 Ibid., quoted from a press dispatch from Beirut on 13 Dec. 1910.

5 Abbott, op.cit., p. 177.

the years 1910 and 1911. The policy of violence pursued by the Turkish commander Muhammad Ali Pasha and his refusal to ratify the agreement with Imam Yahya produced a general rising which became more dangerous when Sayyid Idriss of Asir also attacked the Turks.<sup>1</sup> The rebels occupied Sanaa and held it for over a year. Substantial Turkish forces amounting to 36 batallions suffered heavy losses through fighting and disease.<sup>2</sup>

The struggle temporarily subsided in 1911 but resumed again the same year. It was finally brought to an end with the agreement of 1913, which recognized the internal independence of Imam Mahmud Yahya. But perhaps the greatest of all Arab grievances against the C.U.P. regime was its refusal to adopt the policy of decentralization, which could have given the Arab provinces a larger measure of home rule and freedom to pursue their political and cultural development. "The policy followed by the C.U.P. was the very opposite. They proceeded to tighten instead of relaxing the hold of central bureaucracy."<sup>3</sup> The Young Turkish followers of Ottomanism, considered centralization as an indispensable condition for implementing their program, and the only way to control centrifugal tendencies. On the other hand, a strong centralized government on the French model was believed to facilitate the task of modernization of the state. The new law of vilayets, passed in 1910<sup>4</sup> not only left the old administrative divisions unchanged but also increased authority of the valis. The only innovation, imposed

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1 Antonius, op.cit., p. 124.

2 Jung, op.cit., p. 26.

3 Antonius, op.cit., p. 107.

4 Samne, op.cit., p. 73.

rather by weakness of the budgetary system of the Empire, was granting of the financial autonomy to the vilayets.<sup>1</sup>

The official program of the C.U.P. published in 192, provided for some insignificant "extention of the rights of local and provincial authorities."<sup>2</sup> But at the same time it rejected an idea of concessions to nationalities. Article 13 of this program stated: "The Committee rejects any kind of tendencies which aim at the granting to the vilayets a political or administrative autonomy."<sup>3</sup>

This policy caused a general resentment among the Arabs as it was a great blow to their national aspirations. However the struggle for decentralization continued for almost all period of the Young Turkish rule and it became the main of conflict between the Arabs and the C.U.P.

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1 Ibid., p. 73.

2 Ibid., p. 76.

3 Samne, op.cit., p. 76.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### TURKS, ARABS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DECENTRALISATION

Several years before the first demands for decentralization were formulated by the Arabs, this issue had revealed itself as one of the most controversial in the history of the Young Turkish movement. It was the most debated item of the Young Turks 1902 Congress and its participants never could reach an agreement on this problem.<sup>1</sup> It was at this time that two principal schools of thought among the Young Turks came into being. One found its most outspoken representative in Ahmed Riza, and his views and those of his group were later accepted by the C.U.P. They believed that their principal ideal--to Ottomanize all elements of the Empire--could be achieved only by a system of strongly centralized democratic government, based on the French model. Ahmet Riza was strongly opposed to any idea of autonomy, which he considered as a decisive step towards separation.<sup>2</sup> And when during the next Young Turks Congress the delegates were discussing the crucial issue--how to save the state from its final collapse--the majority agreed that the solution lay in the principle of centralization.<sup>3</sup> However another group of the Young Turks, the answer to this question saw right in the opposite solution. Arguing that the

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1 Ramsaur: The Young Turks, pp. 66-76.

2 Ibid., p. 93.

3 Ibid., pp. 122-126.

Ottoman Empire is composed, racially, linguistically and religiously of so many different elements, they considered that the only chance for preserving the state would be to secure unity by granting autonomy and the chances of a full national development to all concerned. This point of view was represented by Abdulhamid's nephew living in Paris as a refugee--Prince Sabaheddin. After the 1902 Congress he formed a group of followers, among whom were Turks as well as the other nationalities, in order to propagate the ideal of decentralization.<sup>1</sup> Their program was to apply the Constitution in its broadest sense--that is on the basis of the cooperation of all races and creeds. Being much influenced by British ideas at Home-Rule, Prince Sahabeddin and his friends advocated a large measure of autonomy for the non-Turkish provinces. It would secure the actual equality of races and not the superiority of the Turks which was in practice favoured by the C.U.P. although denied in theory. This group, which later styled itself the Committee of Decentralization and Private Initiative (Tesebbus Sahsi ve Aderni Merkeziyet Cemiyeti), had its headquarters in Paris and a few secret local branches in the Empire, one of them in Damascus led by an Arab, Hakki Al-Azim.<sup>2</sup> The Committee met with violent criticism and dissatisfaction from the C.U.P. immediately after the 1908 revolution. Prince Sabaheddin, who enjoyed great popularity among the non-Turks, was attacked as an opponent of the ideal of Ottomanism.<sup>3</sup> For fear that he and his group might have had too much of influence on the trend

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1 Tarik Z. Tunaya: Turkiyede Siyasi Partiler, p. 143.

2 Ibid., p. 143.

3 Mandelstern, op.cit., p. 15.

toward provincial autonomy which already existed among various nationalities, the C.U.P. took care to nip society in the bud. Sabaheddin, being somewhat of a theoretician and idealist, gave in to the pressure and publicly declared his support of the C.U.P. program on decentralization, which in fact included nothing more than "the extension of competences" already provided by the 1876 Constitution.<sup>1</sup> This group disintegrated as a political society. However, the remarkable fact is that the idea of decentralization revived in various forms in Turkish political organizations. Many politicians realized how the future of state was endangered by the Young Turks' attitude towards the non-Turkish nationalities. Tarik Z. Tunaya stresses that the common feature of the programs of most of the Turkish opposition parties was then severe criticism of the Young Turks' centralization policy.<sup>2</sup>

Very soon after the dissolution of the Decentralization Committee a new Liberal Party (Al-Ahrar), opposed to the Young Turks, was created in September 1908. Among its founders were people from Sabaheddin's entourage and the prince himself became one of the spiritual leaders of the party, which undoubtedly was inspired by his ideas. Among the leaders of "Al-Ahrar" were some prominent personalities from the Turkish political scene like Kiamil Pasha, Ahmet Pasha, Riza Nur, Mevlan Zade Rifat, Hassan Fehim.<sup>3</sup> They took care to elaborate a program which outwardly was not much different from that of the C.U.P. "What mattered for "Al-Ahrar" was, however, not the program but its execution. And in the execution of the C.U.P. program they saw a lack of liberalism and tolerance, and a tendency towards the Turkish nationalism."<sup>4</sup>

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1 Mandelstam, op.cit., p. 15.

2 Tunaya, op.cit., p. 239.

3 Ibid., p. 239.

4 Mandelstan, op.cit., p. 15.

"Al-Ahrar" as a party did not have a chance to play an important role in politics. In parliament it secured for itself only one seat, later however it organized for its purposes a group of deputies composed of Arabs, Albanians, Greeks and Armenians.<sup>1</sup> As a result of regulations issued after April 1909 transferred its activities to Paris, and was finally dissolved in 1910.<sup>2</sup>

Some former members of "al-Ahrar" helped form a new political party "Hurriyet ve Itihat Firkasi" (Entent Liberale) which came into being in April 1911.<sup>3</sup> It was the first opposition party under the Young Turkish regime of any real importance and influence. "Hurriyet ve Itihat" emerged from the union of some smaller parties, dissatisfied national groups in the Parliament, old conservatives and former members of "Al-Ahrar". The common voice of these various elements was mainly their opposition to the Young Turks. The new party failed to work out a positive and constructive program. However, within "Hurriyet ve Itihat" there were two cardinal political principles. 1) Ottomanism, but understood in different way than by the C.U.P. "The party aims at encouraging the policy of commonwealth and mutual recognition of the various races, nationalities, religious and linguistic groups make up the state. Therefore it is decisively opposed to nationalism and Panislamism, which will bring about the downfall of the Fatherland."<sup>4</sup> As a result of this principle, another one arose; 2) Decentralization; this issue, which once caused a split in the Young Turkish movement,

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1 Tunaya, op.cit., p. 239.

2 Ibid., p. 318.

3 Ibid., p. 318.

4 Ibid., p. 319.

and was later put forward by "Al-Ahrar" emerged again as a fundamental point in the policy of "Entente Liberale." The concept of the Ottoman state included the idea of a commonwealth of different elements, enjoying full autonomy and freedom of development and tied by a few aspects of common interest such as foreign policy, defence, the monetary system, parliament, etc. A paragraph from the official program of the party puts its ideas on decentralization policy in the following terms:

"The autonomy of vilayets and Home-Rule ought to be developed and the division of authority and responsibilities defined. Education public works and all matters connected with agriculture, industry and commerce should be left to the local authorities. Exception is made for matters concerning the defense of the Ottoman Fatherland, fundamental interest of the country or those likely to prejudice the interests of other vilayets. In those cases intervention of the Central Government is justified.

The scope of the local administration should be defined and appropriate regulations prepared and published. On the other hand the powers and responsibilities of the heads of the central administration departments should be clearly laid down."<sup>1</sup>

The "Hirriyet ve Itilaf" party, by virtue of its ideas and size might have become a counterbalance to the Young Turks, and in its creation some were inclined to see the birth of a two-party system on Anglo-Saxon lines.<sup>2</sup> However its activities were too much affected by the diversity and conflicts of various political tendencies and personal

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1 Ibid., p. 340.

2 Ibid., p. 342.

ambitions. Instead of concentrating on the ideal of decentralization great exertions were expended on the immediate objective of its leaders: the overthrow of the Young Turkish regime.

Among the leaders of the party, which gathered around itself a number of prominent Ottoman politicians, were also Arabs, some of them even known to be former sympathizers of the C.U.P. This fact indicated the change of attitude which had taken place in Arab circles. Disappointed with the Young Turks' nationalistic policy, some of them gradually came to attach their hopes to the liberal opposition. According to Tarik Z. Tunaya<sup>1</sup> the leadership of the "Hurriyet ve Itilaf" party included also the deputy of Hama, Abdulhamid Zahrawi, deputy of Damascus Shukri Al-Asali, deputy of Jerusalem Said Al-Husseini, deputy of Mosul, Daud Yusfani. Among the party leaders was also Damat Ferid Pasha who was known for his cooperation with the Arab national aspirations. "Hurriyet ve Itilaf" had its branches all over the Ottoman Empire and among them a number in the Arab provinces. It also printed its publications in Arabic.

There is evidence that the creation of the first Arab political party "La-Markaziya" was also connected with the History of "Hurriyet ve Itilaf". According to the Redbook people who later formed "La-Markaziya" originally founded local clubs of the "ententists" and these clubs were later to become branches of "La Markaziya".<sup>2</sup>

The Turkish opposition party not only encouraged and supported foundation of "La-Markaziya" but it even appears that the very idea

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1 Ibid., p. 340.

2 Zahrawi was also one of the party's founders. La Verite sur le Question Syrienne, p. 63.

originated with the Turkish opposition party, as is indicated in the following passage from a letter of Refik-ul-Azm.

"You are aware that on your departure from here I entrusted you with a letter to be delivered to Shukri Effendi, a letter which I had written at the request of Sadik Bey, President of the Ententist Party and in which I promised to work for the foundation of a corresponding party in Egypt."<sup>1</sup>

On the subject of the connection between "La Markaziya" and "Hurriyet ve Itilaf" the Redbook says: "The objective of the Decentralizers was to take power into their hands in concert with the Ententists."<sup>2</sup>

"La-Markaziya" tried first to make a common cause with the Turkish Ententist Party."<sup>3</sup>

Among those who founded "La Markaziya" in 1912 in Cairo, was also Abdulhamid Zahrawi, one of the leaders of Entente Liberale.

"La-Markaziya" whose official name was "The Ottoman Party of Decnetralization" was a completely legal and well organized society. Its permanent headquarters were in Egypt and branches were established all over Syrian territory.

The character of the party was reflected in the main features of its program which were: 1) Recognition of the Ottoman State, 2) Activities for the cause of the administrative decentralization which would give the Arabs freedom to pursue their cultural development and

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1 Ibid., p. 59.

2 La Verite sur la Question Syrienne, p. 58.

3 Ibid., p. 59.

secure a larger measure of home-rule. 3) Conviction that decentralization was the only way for preserving the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

The demand for decentralization put forward by "La Markaziya" was the most representative expression of the Arab ambitions between 1908 and 1914. Undoubtedly the rapid development of the Arab decentralization movement was connected with the general situation of the Ottoman Empire at this particular moment. The war with Italy that had begun in 1911, the growth of opposition, the split within the C.U.P.-- all brought about the temporary downfall of the Young Turkish regime in August 1912. Thus began a new period during which the opposition led by "Hurriyet ve Itilaf" acquired influence in the government, and under their influence two successive cabinets of Hilmi Pasha and Kiamil Pasha were generally better disposed towards the Arab aspirations than the Young Turks had been.<sup>2</sup>

An important impetus to the movement for decentralization was the Balkan War which broke out in September 1912 at the moment when the peace negotiations with Italy were under way. The disaster inflicted on the Turkish army by Bulgarians at Burgas and Kirk Kilise, by the Serbs at Uskub and Monastyr, the occupation of Salonika by Greeks made a profound impact on the Moslem population of the Empire. The weakness of Turkey was brought to the eyes of all Ottomans as well as all foreign powers. In diplomatic chancelleries discussions were resumed on the question of partition of the remnants of the Empire that

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1 Rossi: Documenti sull'origine e gli sviluppi della questione araba, p. 10.

2 Hartmann, Beitrage zur Arabistik; p. 455.



were left after the disaster, i.e. the Asiatic provinces. It was at this time that Europe suddenly "became conscious of the Arab question."<sup>1</sup> French and British cruisers paid visits to the Syrian coasts, with the apparent purpose of protecting the interests of the citizens of France and Britain in case of troubles or massacres.<sup>2</sup> The atmosphere became strained. Rumours of imminent developments such as British or French intervention, establishing, of Western protectorates, etc. were circulating. The French President of Republic, Poincare issued a declaration stressing France's particular interest in Syria and especially in the protection of local Christians. At the same time he gave to understand that Britain would leave a free hand for a French action in this area.<sup>3</sup> This situation had a great impact on the attitude of the Syrians. While the pro-French Lebanese Maronites were awaiting the installation of the French rule and the removal of the Turkish yoke, and a small number of Moslems was in favour of a British protectorate, the bulk of politically articulate opinion viewed the prospect of any Western intervention with concern and apprehensions.

A delegation of the "La-Markaziya" party "called on the Ottoman representative in Cairo to warn him against a French attack on Syria similar to the Italian attack on Libya."<sup>4</sup> It seems that the members of this delegation thought that the whole Empire, including of course Syria,

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1 Zeine, op.cit., p. 87.

2 Jung, op.cit., p. 45 and 53.

3 Samne, op.cit., see full text of Poincare's declaration on p. 80.

4 Saab, op.cit., p. 229.

could be better defended if it were ruled on the basis of decentralization."<sup>1</sup> The people of each province provided with arms by the central government would certainly more sturdily defend their homes if they owned them. The appeal for decentralization immediately found a strong echo in Beirut, where, in cooperation with "La Markaziya", a Beirut society for Reforms was created by the end of 1912. Al-Islahiya came into being during a time of popular unrest in Syria.

"The country is subjected to different influences. To improve this situation which has become intolerable a part of the population is looking to England or France. If we do not take the initiative with reforms, the country will escape us" cabled the Vali of Beirut to the government in December 1912.<sup>2</sup> Consequently the Grand Vizier Kiamil Pasha who had already had conversations with the leaders of "La-Markaziya" when he promised them his support<sup>3</sup> officially invited the Syrians to formulate their demands.<sup>4</sup>

The people of Beirut elected then 80 representatives among whom 25 were chosen to draw up the reform plan.<sup>5</sup> This program, although originally conceived in the city of Beirut, had a special significance as an expression of aspirations common to most of the Arabs in Syria and Iraq who were forming other Reform Societies. The document consisted of 8 characteristic demands, presented to the Ottoman authorities.

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1 Ibid., p. 229.

2 Khairallah, Les Regions Arabes Liberes, p. 39.

3 La Verite, op.cit., p. 76.

4 Samne, op.cit., p. 79.

5 La Verite, op.cit., p. 81.

1) Recognition of the Arabic as the official language of the province in all offices and courts, while Turkish would remain as the official language of correspondence with Constantinople.

2) Only functionaries with a knowledge of Arabic should be appointed to posts in Syria. Provisionally an exception should be made for valis, for a period of six years.

3) Local authorities should be consulted on the appointment of civil and judicial functionaries and officers of the gendarmery.

4) A high Court should be set up to hear appeals against the judgements delivered in the provinces of Jerusalem, Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo.

5) In peace time military service should be regional.

6) Provincial revenues should be divided into two categories:

a) Customs, post and telegraph revenue earmarked for central government use and military taxes.

b) All other income earmarked for the use of local government to be spent on the needs of the province.

7) The councils of vilayets should be created and given administrative and to a certain extent legislative powers. All the matters other than those of general policy and national defense reserved for the central government, should be left to the competence of these councils.

8) Foreign experts should be appointed to organize the gendarmery, police, justice and finances.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jung, op.cit., p. 62.

However the Coup d'Etat of January 1913 and the return of the Young Turks to power destroyed all hopes of cooperation between the government and the reform movement. The C.U.P. were inclined to consider this movement as an act of treason against the Empire.<sup>1</sup> The Vali of Beirut, Edhem Pasha who proved to be sympathetic to Arab aspirations and cooperated with the Reform Committee was replaced, and his successor, after trying to provoke disagreement within the Committee, finally decided on its suspension on April 3, 1913.<sup>2</sup>

This caused great excitement and anger among the people, who went on a protest strike. Eventually the government decided to undertake some conciliatory steps. A few persons arrested during the strike were released and an Arab minister of the C.U.P. government Suleiman Bustani Effendi was selected to give an interview to the daily newspaper "Jeune Turc"<sup>3</sup> in which he revealed that the Young Turks intended to introduce some important reforms in the Arab provinces, however he did not mention decentralization.

In this respect the C.U.P. policy was still based on its official program published in 1912 which provided for some extension of the competence of the local authorities but at the same time rejected any idea of concessions for nationalities. The article 13 of this program stated: "The Committee rejects any kind of demands which aim at granting to the vilayets a political and administrative autonomy as is provided, moreover, by the constitution."<sup>4</sup>

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1 Samne, op.cit., p. 82.

2 Ibid., p. 82.

3 Ibid., p. 86.

4 Ibid., p. 76.

In the meantime the Syrian and Lebanese press expounded the demands in terms that were often which in turn caused renewed repressive steps against some leading papers as Al-Muktabas, Al-Carmel, Al-Mufid.<sup>1</sup>

It was in this atmosphere that the idea of holding the Arab Congress was launched. The initiative according to Antonius, came from a group of Arab residents in Paris who created a society called "Al-Jamiya al-Arabiya al-Fatat".<sup>2</sup> However on the letters of invitation were also the signature of some better known people than the young members of al-Fatat, and who had no connection with this group, such as Shukri Ganem, a naturalised French citizen,<sup>3</sup> and brothers Mutran known for their previous activities in the society Al-Ikha-al-Arabi. In the words of Azuri they were the real organizers of the Congress.<sup>4</sup> Various Arab societies sent their delegates to Paris where the Congress began in June 1913 attended by 24 delegates half of them Christians. Particularly strong representation had Lebanon, if one takes into account also the emigrants from America. Two delegates came from Iraq,<sup>5</sup> and the rest came from Syria. In spite of the efforts to present a unanimous front, undoubtedly there were some differences of opinion among the delegates partly because of personal animosities.<sup>6</sup>

The agenda of the Congress included 4 items:

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- 1 Samné, op.cit., p. 87.
  - 2 The Arab Awakening, p. 114.
  - 3 Hartmann, Beitrage zur Arabistik, p. 459.
  - 4 Jung, op.cit., p. 67.
  - 5 Antonius, op.cit., p. 115 (Jung says that there were no delegates from outside Syria and Lebanon).
  - 6 See: Hartmann, op.cit., p. 460.

- 1) National life and the rejection of the occupation.
- 2) Rights of the Arab in the Ottoman Empire.
- 3) Necessity for reforms on the basis of decentralization.
- 4) Problems of immigration and emigration in Syria.<sup>1</sup>

The debates were presided over by Abdulhamid Zohrowi, who delivered the opening speech stressing the determination of his compatriots "to demand their share in the responsibility for the public affairs of Empire" in order to save what was left as a result of "exclusive rule exercised by Turks."<sup>2</sup>

The proceedings which lasted several days went on in a rather conciliatory atmosphere with regard to the government. The Congress ended with a resolution which in general restated the principles of the decentralization movement, the demands for a fulfillment of the Lebanese aspirations, and the recognition of Arabic as one of the official languages in the Ottoman Parliament.

The appendix attached to the resolution included a threat of Arab refusal to assume any administrative positions unless their demands were met. The resolution passed at the Congress was accepted as the political program of Ottoman "Syrians and Arabs".<sup>3</sup>

The proceedings of the Congress were accompanied by the hostile campaign of the press controlled by the C.U.P. which was naturally concerned about the event. The general secretary of the C.U.P. Midhat Shukri was sent to Paris to conclude an agreement with the Arab leaders.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Rossi: Documenti sull'origine e gli sviluppi della questione arabe, p. 11.

2 Samne, p. 88.

3 Full text in Zeine, op.cit., p. 136.

4 Mandestan, op.cit., p. 50.

In the course of secret negotiations, important concessions were granted to the Arabs, covering such points as regional military service, recognition of Arabic as the official language in Arab provinces, and language of instruction in schools, appointment of European experts to carry out the reforms and the appointments of a number of Arabs to governmental posts, such as 3 ministerial portfolios and nominations to the Senate.<sup>1</sup> This last concession was granted with the express purpose of causing dissension among the Arab politicians, and soon nominations as senators were offered to five persons,<sup>2</sup> including Abdulhamid Zahrawi himself. This acceptance caused a good deal of resentment among his compatriots, when within a short time it became clear that the C.U.P. did not intend to carry out its promises. However at first it seemed that the Arab-Turkish relations entered a phase of cooperation and understanding. The delegation of the Congress was received by the leaders of the C.U.P. in Constantinople. At the banquet given for celebration of the "Arab-Turkish" brotherhood, the Arab delegate Ahmad Tubara "affirmed the loyalty to the Empire".<sup>3</sup> Talaat Bey answered on behalf of the C.U.P. declaring that "he always was a partisan of the complete agreement between the Turks and Arabs."<sup>4</sup> The delegates were also received by the Crown prince who expressed his sympathy for the Arab demands. However, the Imperial decree of 18th August caused amazement and depression as most of the given concessions were withdrawn. This decree still allowed the Arabs to use their language in schools and provided for appointing in their

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1 Ibid., p. 51.

2 Samne, op.cit., p. 58.

3 Saab, op.cit., p. 234.

4 Jung, op.cit., p. 20.

provinces functionaries with a knowledge of Arabic, but its terms were vague and it contained reservations. The main reason behind such a sudden change of the C.U.P. attitude seems to have been "the immediate effect of the retaking of Adrianopol, which again arose their arrogance and self confidence."<sup>1</sup>

The more profound reason is suggested by Kohn:<sup>2</sup> "The victory of the Balkan states in 1913 almost drove Turkey altogether out of Europe. Her centre of gravity was transferred to Asia, to Anatolia, and this turned her attention to the Caucasus and Turkistan inhabited by peoples of Turkish race and speech...The Young Turks...had realized that the ideal of Ottoman unity...was not only illogical but impracticable." The Panturanism became the prevailing trend within the C.U.P.

In the last period before the outbreak of World War I the relations between Turks and Arabs were deteriorating rapidly. On the one hand the Arab disillusionment with the Young Turkish rule in general, and bitterness caused by the failure of their attempts at decentralization in particular, strengthened considerably their nationalistic tendencies. On the other hand the Young Turks now energetically proceeded in the policy of ruthless Turkification, which was even more increased by their awareness of the Arab attitude. An eloquent illustration of C.U.P. policy against the Arab national movement at this time is given by a record of the conference of the Ottoman government, held on January 24, 1914 and devoted entirely to the discussion of Arab problems. In the course of this conference the following decisions were taken.

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1 Mandelstan, op.cit., p. 50.

2 Kohn, Nationalism in the East, p. 236.



1) The arab officers residing in Constantinople and who according to informations of the war Ministry are mostly under influence of the secret society Al-Ahd will be sent to the Turkish regions (Anatolia and Thrace).

2) The military command in the Arab countries will be entrusted to Turkish officers and the Arab officers will be removed.

3) The policy of Turkifying of the elements (of the Empire) will be accelerated.

4) Djemal Pasha is appointed to prepare the program of Turkification.

5) The reform movements originating from Paris and Beirut will be resisted.

6) All Arab political parties will be abolished and in the Ministry of Internal Affairs a special Political Section will be created to deal with the supervision of Arab affairs and to study appropriate methods of combatting the propagandists of separation. The movements of these propagandists must be attentively watched.

7) The Arabs residing in Constantinople who pursue activities directed against the Turks will be removed from the capital.

8) Actions to increase the influence of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Arab countries should be taken, and the number of the C.U.P. followers in these provinces increased."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Rossi, op.cit., p. 15.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SEPARATISM AND FEDERALISM

The significance of the congress was not only in what was said in the proceedings but also in what was omitted although understood by implications. Many of the delegates voting for decentralization realized that their demands had slim chances of fulfillment. The alternative seemed to be either resignation or separatism.

Although certainly by no means all the conferees were supporters of the last solution, the mere fact that about half of the participants were Christians,<sup>1</sup> mostly Lebanese, should have indicated that the idea of separatism played an important role in the lobby of the Congress.

The tendency toward separatism from the Ottoman state, undoubtedly developed somewhat among the Arabs in the last period preceding the World War I, due to the disappointing events of the years 1912 and 1913. Some isolated appeals to overthrow the Turkish rule were heard even earlier. Among documents included in the Red Book is a manifesto formulated in strongly emotional terms and issued by a Secret Arab Revolutionary Committee<sup>2</sup> around 1911. It called for an armed struggle against the "Ottoman oppressors" and among the many violently anti-Turkish passages appeared: "We do not want reforms on the basis of decentralization...Our program provides for an Arab state, independent of anything and of anybody."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Antonius, op.cit., p. 115.

2 La Verite sur la Questionne Syrienne, p. 65.

3 Ibid., p. 65.

However, it would be misleading to overestimate the importance of acts of this kind, as they showed the attitude only of some rather insignificant groups, while the great majority of the population was passive and non-committed, and most of the politically articulate elements supported the trends advocating the idea of decentralization within the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless as the time went on, and no prospect of achieving this goal appeared, even within the most representative and rather moderate, of Arab societies, "La-Markaziya", certain signs of controversies with regard to the alternative policy began to show some of their leaders who came to realize how little hope there was of implementing the schemes for decentralization, conceived the idea of an alliance among the rulers of the Peninsula, which would create a nucleus for the future Arab liberation.<sup>1</sup> Others thought of the creation of an independent Egyptian-Syrian kingdom under the sceptre of Muhamed Ali's grandson, Syrian leader Shukri Al-Assali who has already been mentioned, is reported to have said:<sup>2</sup> "Syria and Egypt are two sisters. The two countries are connected each to other by ties of language, blood and creed..." Then pointing to Ibrahim's stature he added: "by this gesture Ibrahim Pasha assigns you Syria." The correspondence of the French consulate in Beirut intercepted by the Turks gives some indications of the separatist ideas cherished by members of "La-Markaziya" in Beirut.<sup>3</sup> All members of the committee including the Moslems, agreed that the most desired solution for the Syrian question would be the following: formation of an autonomous principality

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1 La Verite, pp. 101-107.

2 Ibid., p. 80.

3 Ibid., p. 73.

of Syria ruled by a freely elected Moslem prince and placed under the protection of France.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly at this period the situation in Arab circles was characterized by confusion, contradictory aims, uncertainty and apprehensions. Politically developed opinion faced an essential dilemma: how to attain full freedom of national life and at the same time to defend this freedom from the danger threatening from the schemes of the Western Powers. It was on this background that the concept of the federal solutions assumed a special significance.

This concept, at least on the Arab side, was first conceived by a secret society "Al-Qahtaniya", founded at the end of 1909. Its founders were considered as the "men of bolder stamp" who "promoted a new and daring project--that of turning the Ottoman Empire into a dual monarchy. This was yet another attempt to grapple with the problem created by the C.U.P. centralising policy. The Arab provinces were to form a single kingdom with its own parliament and local government and with Arabic as the language of its institutions. The kingdom was to be a part of a Turko-Arab Empire similar in architecture to the Austro-Hungarian edifice, and the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople would wear in addition to his own Turkish crown the crown of the Arab kingdom, as the Hapsburg emperor in Vienna wore the crown of Hungary. Thus unity could be reached through separation, and the destinies of Arabs and Turks linked together on a more lasting because more realistic basis."<sup>2</sup>

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1 La Verite, op.cit., p. 73.

2 Antonius, op.cit., p. 110.

"Al Qahtaniya" was created by Arab officers in the Ottoman army although it included also some civilians. It was dissolved after some time and recreated under a new shape of another secret organization called "Al-Ahd." "Al-Ahd" was founded by an Ottoman Arab officer Aziz Ali Misri, who soon made a name for himself in the Arab national movement. The difference between this organization and its predecessor was that it was limited to the military men.<sup>1</sup> It may be considered as an Arab equivalent of the secret political society of officers, on the pattern of similar groups within the C.U.P. It marked also the introduction of the military into modern Arab politics which was to become a tradition from then on. "Al-Ahd" embraced the greater part of all Arab officers serving in the Ottoman army, most of them originating from Iraq as the Iraqi element was most numerous in this army. The federalism of "al-Ahd" was as new Arab reaction to the C.U.P. policy and at the same time the last attempt to save the islamic unity of Arabs and Turks within the Ottoman state. Its best definition seems to be in the above quoted words of Antonius: Unity through separation.

The ideology of "Al-Ahd" was explained in the program which contained the following characteristic paragraphs.

1) The purpose of the organization is to achieve the internal independence of the Arabs united with Turkey as Hungary is united with Austria.

2) It is believed that the Khalifa should be maintained in the hands of the Ottoman family.

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1 According to Antonius, the society had also two civilians; one of them was Amir Adel Arslan (op.cit., p. 119). La Verite, says that there were more (op.cit., p. 11) it is also difficult to establish a precise date for the creation of Al-Ahd.

3) The association is particularly concerned with defending the East which head is Constantinople, against the West.

4) Arabs must provide the reserve force for the first line of defense against the West which is held by Turks.<sup>1</sup>

This program constituted at the time the most developed Arab political initiative. It expressed in the largest measure the national aspirations of Arabs, taking also into account the common interest of both nations against the danger from the West as well as the links of common religion. These were three considerations which at this time faced every responsible Arab politician.

It is remarkable that the leaders of "Al-Ahd" chose Austro-Hungary as a pattern for the reconstruction of the Ottoman state, since it was an example of a direct borrowing from a Western institution, with the purpose of applying it to an Eastern Islamic ideal.<sup>2</sup> This could be explained by the proximity of the Hapsburgian Empire together with the similar multinational structure; and there was in Turkey always a general familiarity with Austro-Hungarian affairs. The program of Al-Ahd provided, then, for reforms on Austro-Hungarian lines: a kingdom composed of Arab provinces was to be set up, having its own parliament, government and with Arabic as an official language. Only finance, defence and foreign policy would be reserved for the central government in Constantinople.

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1 Saab, op.cit., p. 236.

2 Saab quotes the memorandum written by Baron Von Sturner on the morrow of Muhammed Ali's crisis, and saying: "Les principes administratifs et la legislation de l'Autriche conviendrait aux pays et aux sujets de la Porte.

Another of the societies which came into existence in this period and similar to "Al-Qahtaniya" for its secret character was "al-Djamiyya al-Arabiyya al-Fatat". "Al-Fatat" was founded by a group of students in Paris in 1911.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Antonius "no other society had played as determining a part in the history of the national movement."<sup>2</sup> The exact information about this society had never been disclosed to the authorities, therefore its name was not mentioned in the Red-book. However the Turks were aware of the existence of an "Arab secret society in Paris" composed of student and of the role played by some of its founders especially by Tawfiq al-Natur.<sup>3</sup> The society worked for an Arab independence which at least at the beginning was conceived within the frame: work of the Ottoman Empire. Prof. Zeine in his book quotes the words of Tawfiq al-Natur on the ideals the society had in view. "The idea of Arab nationalism or Arabism, was not yet strong in us. All that we, as Arabs, wanted, was to have the same rights and obligations in the Ottoman Empire, as the Turks themselves and to have the Empire composed of two great nationalities: the Turks and the Arabs."<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the idea of federation came originally from the Arab or Turkish side, but it certainly existed also among some prominent Turkish personalities. It seems that one of the first supporters of this solution was the well known Young

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1 Antonius, op.cit., p. 111.

2 Ibid., p. 111.

3 La Verite; op.cit., p. 64.

4 Zeine; Arab-Turkish Relations, op.cit., p. 82.

Turkish military leader Mahmud Shevket Pasha who himself was an Arab by origin brought up in Turkish environment, and therefore in a way was a personification of Turko-Arab unity. His idea was the creation of an Arabo-Turkish dual monarchy with the seat in Aleppo.<sup>1</sup> As the same idea was held by another Arab officer Aziz Ali Al-Misri, one cannot exclude the possibility that it had some popularity in certain circles and more or less secret groups of the Ottoman Army officers.

Judging by pieces of informations and rather desultory allusions in various sources, it appears however that the idea of federalism was existing as well in some fractions of the C.U.P. as among the opposition. According to Prof. Zeine<sup>2</sup> in favour of the federal solution was also the "Hurriyet ve Itilaf" party. Saab says: "We suggest... that "Al-Ahd's" leaders attempted first to cooperate secretly with those Turkish leaders of the opposition who stood for federal settlement of the problem of the Empire in general, and of the Turko-Arab problems in particular. This explains Ali Aziz's opposition to an agreement between the Arabs and the Union and Progress Committee leaders."<sup>3</sup> This idea was supported also by some circles of the Turkish Nationalists, the group which was connected with C.U.P. movement but disapproved of political Panturanism as much as Panislamism. "They seemed to possess a more workable and moderate policy in trying to confine all Turkish energies to Turkey herself within her own territorial boundaries. There was even a reasonably strong desire to come to an understanding with the

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1 Halide Edib: Conflict of East and West in Turkey, p. 98.

2 Zeine: Arab Turkish Relations, op.cit., p. 82.

3 Saab, op.cit., p. 237.



Arabs and create a dual monarchy with separate parliaments under the Sultan Caliph on the model of Austria and Hungary. It was this last idea which set the Turks to talking about a new capital, Aleppo was suggested as being on the Arabo-Turkish border lines."<sup>1</sup>

The intellectual leader of New Turkey, Ziya Gok Alp, and the most prominent spokesman of the above mentioned nationalistic trend, was also in favour of Arab-Turkish federation. In one of his essays published shortly before the beginning of World War I in the review *Yeni Mecma* "he suggested the establishment of a bi-national state under the Ottoman Caliph." On this occasion Ziya Gok Alp stressed the benefits of such a union for the Arabs, who were lacking military and administrative tradition. He had recourse to the same scheme in 1918,<sup>2</sup> however by this time the project must have appeared already out of date.

The outbreak of the war, at once prevented the development of this idea and, the events which followed permanently it disqualified. It is extremely difficult to speculate on what would have happened to the concept of Arabo-Turkish federation if the general situation had developed in another way. Federalism was a new and not deeply rooted ideal among both the Arabs and Turks, hardly discussed in public, and there were strong forces working just in the opposite direction. The final decision would have fallen to the Young Turks, and it does not seem that their leaders would have been inclined to such a solution. Most of them were already under spell of Panturanian ideal, in which

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1 Halide Edib: Turkey Faces West, p. 124.

2 Heyd: Foundations of Turkish Nationalism, p. 131.

they had been systematically encouraged by their German ally.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand they were aware of the real situation existing among the Syrians. The Arab grievances, often caused by the Young Turks themselves, signs of separatism, French agitation, all these could have hardly induced them to believe in the success of such an experiment.

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1 Halide Edib: Turkey Faces West, p. 122.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ARABS AND TURKS DURING THE WORLD WAR I

The three months of Turkish neutrality from August to November 1914 were the most decisive period in the history of the Ottoman Empire as it then that its destiny was sealed. At this time when feverish negotiations on Turkey's maintaining her neutrality, were under way, the Young Turkish government proclaimed general mobilisation as early as 2 August and on the 7th martial law was introduced to the vilayets of Syria.<sup>1</sup> All men between 25 and 45 years of age were called to arms, however with regard to Christian Syrians mobilisation covered only those between 20 and 30.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time the military clique within the C.U.P. which was under leadership of Enver Pasha, proceeded with their war preparations. The first objective of Turkish military action was to be an invasion on Egypt, this was a matter of special insistence on the part of the German command<sup>3</sup> which was anxious to strike the communications system of British Empire at its most vulnerable point. From the middle of September began the secret concentration of troops organized with the purpose of landing an attack on the Suez Canal. A German group of officers headed by General Kress von Kressenstein arrived to the Fourth Army headquarters, to direct the General Staff preparation for the future offensive.

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1 Jung, p. 105.

2 Ibid., p. 105.

3 Liman von Sanders: Cinq ans de Turquie, pp. 35-37.

At the end of October after many hesitations and internal disputes within the C.U.P. the final decision was taken. On October 29 the Ottoman navy which now also included the German warships "Goeben" and "Breslau" attacked Odessa. The Ottoman Empire had started the last of numerous wars in its history.

This war, for the only time in the modern history was announced as a "Holy War" in defence of Islam. Undoubtedly there was a strong German influence behind the fact that this war was given a character of a "Holy" one. The Germans for many years had seen in Islam a useful political instrument in their struggle against Britain, France and Russia. The Kaiser was always anxious to be considered by the Moslems as their protector and friend. When the Emperor, William II, visited Damascus on November 8, 1898, he delivered a speech at the end of which he made the following statement: "Let his Imperial Majesty the Sultan Abdulhamid Khan II rest assured, as well as the 300 millions of Moslems who scattered as they are all over the world, are united with the closest bonds with the Turkish sovereign in his character of Caliph, that the German Emperor will be their friend for ever."<sup>1</sup> Long before Turkey entered the war, William II had issued on September 9, 1914 a proclamation which declared that Germany did not consider Moslems as belligerent and that Moslem soldiers taken prisoners by the German forces would be sent to Turkey and put at the disposal of the Khalif.<sup>2</sup>

A few days after Turkey entered the war (7th November) a fetva

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1 From Prof. Zeine's unpublished notes based on Foreign Office document No. 55 of Nov. 19, 1898, "Turkey F.O. 195/2024.

2 Ahmed Emin: Turkey in the World War, p. 181.

was proclaimed by Sheikh el-Islam, calling the Moslems of the world to take up arms against the 3 Allied Powers.<sup>1</sup> On the November 11 the Sultan issued a proclamation to the Ottoman Army and Fleet, in which he called them to fight for the liberation of enslaved Islam as well as in defence of the Empire. The Proclamation of the "Holy War" was announced on November 23, 1914 by the Great Council of Ulemas, and signed by the Sultan who ordered publication of this proclamation" in all parts of the Moslem world.<sup>2</sup>

It called again upon all Moslems, including those who were living under rule of the Entents Powers to participate in the defence of Islam and the Kaliphath.

The outbreak of World War I brought about some revival of Pan-Islamism in the Empire, at least superficially.<sup>3</sup> The Young Turkish government set up with the efficient German support an extensive machinery of propaganda and agitation. An enormous number of leaflets, pamphlets and every sort of printed matter were published in all languages of Islamic world and sent or smuggled even to the most distant countries. Emissaries were dispatched to Libya, India, Afganistan, Yemen and Egypt, to excite the anti-British feeling. German military agents and sabotage experts went to Persia and Afganistan with the task of preparing uprisings of the local population.

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1 Antonius, op.cit., p. 141.

2 Ibid., p. 141.

3 "For the general public in Turkey a Holy War meant no more than one of the endless street demonstrations of the time. The procession which ended in the proclamation of the Holy War in the court at Fatih mosque in Stambul was neither very numerous nor very enthusiastic." Ahmed Emin: Ibid., p. 178.

The same Panislamic agitation was carried out within the Empire, with the purpose of winning the Moslems and especially the Arabs over to the Holy War and to weaken the effects of nationalism. Some associations like the Beirut League of Moslem Fraternity were created with substantial German support in many localities of Syria.<sup>1</sup> There were also initiatives to organize the Moslem subjects of the countries under Russian, French or British domination.

These large-scale activities proved to be a failure in the long run. Within the Ottoman Empire Panislamic propoganda had some temporary success in stirring up religious feeling among some Kurdish and Beduin Arab tribes, only in the first year of War.<sup>2</sup> But, as Gen. Liman von Sanders in his book states: "The Proclamation of the Holy War was not sufficient to make up for a deeply rooted antagonism towards the Turks, and general dissatisfaction with the Turkish administration, existing among the Moslem Arabs... Besides in the present case to declare a Holy War was in fact implausible, as Turkey was allied to the Christian states and German and Austrian officers and soldiers were fighting in Turkish armies..."<sup>3</sup>

However the Holy War proclamation did not fail to provoke a good deal of concern and apprehension among the Entente Powers, of whom each one had a large number of Moslems under its domination. Not long before, events such as the Mahdist rebellion in the Sudan and the determined

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1 Jung, p. 85.

2 Ahmed Emin: Turkey in the World War, p. 178.

3 Cinq Ans de Turquie, p. 45.

resistance of the Moslem population in Morocco, Algeria and Libya to the French and Italians showed that the invocation of the religious motive still played an important role. In India there were some pro-Turkish sympathies and Moslem solidarity with the Kaliphate. These sympathies even further increased by anti-British feelings, were also in existence in the most vital point of British Empire in Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

Under the impact of the proclamation of the Holy War the Entente Powers had to take some precautions to prevent any disturbances in their Moslem-populated areas. They saw the necessity of keeping reinforced garrisons in the Moslem territories, comprising some half million of soldiers.<sup>2</sup> Also they did not enlist large numbers of Moslems in the first period of War. For example in 1915 France enlisted only 2,500 men in Algeria, but this number increased to 50,000 in 1918.<sup>3</sup>

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1 See Storrs; Orientations, p. 156, 171.

2 See Ahmed Emin, p. 178.

3 Ahmed Emin, op.cit., pp. 177-178.

The German and Turkish activity in North Africa are described in a report delivered by Louis Marin on behalf of the Budgetary Commission of the French Parliament in 1917, cited by Samne, op.cit., p. 456. "North Africa, the well stocked granary and recruiting ground of the Allies attracted special attention from the enemy... Through Abyssinia they dispatched money, munitions and some Turkish officers, not to mention considerable supplies for the Sanussis, in order to cause an uprising in Sudan and to support the resistance against the Italians in Tripoli... Propaganda for Morocco and Algeria was cared for by the Germans almost to excess. They tried to corrupt them from Spain and Spanish Morocco. From Madrid, Sevilla and Malaga went out with unflagging persistence for the whole of 1915 and a good part of 1916, leaflets in Arabic, several in Maghreb script and some in Berber, all composed with devilish craft and rare impudence to incite the Algerians and particularly the Moroccans to drive us into the sea. Thanks to our squadrons, thanks to meticulous supervision of our borders instituted by General Lyautey, few of these dispatches to the noble "inhabitants of Shariya", on the infamies of France, reached their destination."

Arab political opinion at the time of the outbreak of the World War I was generally under the influence of 2 dominant factors: newly awakening nationalism directed against the Turkish rule and traditional distrust of the West, increased enormously since the Italian invasion of Libya and consequent unmasking of the Western schemes against provinces of the Ottoman Empire. At this decisive moment for the destinies of the Empire, which after all had been theirs as well as the Turks' the Arab nationalists chose solidarity with Turkey in defence of the Caliphate and resistance to the West, while not renouncing their aspirations for emancipation. This attitude was expressly stated in the resolution adopted by the higher committee of al-Fatat at the end of 1914 or at the beginning of 1915.<sup>1</sup>

"In consequence of Turkey's entry into the war, the fate of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire is seriously imperilled and every effort is to be made to secure their liberation and independence, it being also resolved that, in the event of European designs appearing to materialise, the society shall be bound to work on the side of Turkey in order to resist foreign penetration in whatever kind or form."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly Aziz Al-Misri, who was now living in Egypt, sent a warning to the leaders of "al-Ahd". He stressed that they were on no account tempted into hostile action against Turkey, as the fact of her becoming belligerent would expose her Arab provinces to foreign conquest. He said their duty was to stand by Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Date given by Rossi, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

2 Antonius, *op.cit.*, p. 153.

3 "We know from personal discussions with Aziz Ali, the founder of al-Ahd that he sincerely sought Turko-Arab conciliation. He was convinced that such conciliation was for the good of Turks, Arabs and Islam." See Saeb, *op.cit.*, p. 241.



However, the leaders of "al-Ahd" and "al-Fatat" realized also the probability of the final downfall of the Empire and did not exclude the possibility of a change of attitude in case suitable offers from the West were made, which would include full guarantees for independence and security from European designs.

The attitude of al-Ahd and al-Fatat was the most typical of the bulk of Arab nationalist opinion, and was also shared by Faisal who originally had been known to be in favour of cooperation with the Turks out of fear of Europe.<sup>1</sup> But at the same time the minority composed of Christians, particularly Maronites were eager to have French rule installed in Syria. A group of Syrian and Lebanese emigres in Paris led by Shukri Ganem and George Samne made many efforts in order to bring about the liberation from the "Turkish yoke" under France's guidance. They developed their propaganda mainly "in the Correspondence d'Orient", and in the French-sponsored "Comite Central pour la Syrie".<sup>2</sup> Azuri now residing in Cairo, in the very first days of the war contacted the British Commander in Chief in Egypt Gen. Maxwell, about his projects for starting the anti-Turkish armed movement of Arabs.<sup>3</sup> However without producing any positive reaction on the part of British who already began to put into effect their own schemes connected with this matter.

From the beginning of the War, the Young Turks' policy with regard to the Arabs, was entrusted to one of the members of the ruling triumvirat in Turkey, Ahmed Djemal Pasha. Apparently he was considered

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1 Antonius, op.cit., pp. 152-153.

2 Samne, op.cit., p. 490.

3 Jung, op.cit., p. 108.

as the most suitable person to execute awaiting him tasks. He represented rather Panislamic tendencies within the C.U.P. and was known as a keen and energetic administrator.<sup>1</sup> On his arrival in Damascus on 22 of November in his capacity as the commander of the Fourth Army and a kind of viceroy of Syria, Djemal Pasha faced the double task; on the one hand to lead the attack on the Suez Canal, on the other to deal with the Arab nationalist movement.<sup>2</sup> His first steps were intended to win Arab support for Turkey's war efforts. He followed the policy of inspiring confidence and stressing Arab-Turkish solidarity in the Holy War. His first declarations produced rather favorable reaction among the Arab public. "Today I am in a position to assure you that the Turkish and Arab ideals do not conflict; they are brothers in their national strivings and perhaps their efforts are complimentary..." said Djemal Pasha. "I turn to the youth of Turkey and Arabia, and say these two nations will be doomed to destruction the moment they separate. Discord between these two great pillars of the Islam religion will bring with it the downfall of the Moslem power and ultimately it will be impossible to avert slavery under the Slavs."<sup>3</sup> It seems that Djemal Pasha's attitude against the Sionism must have been even more favourably welcomed by the Arabs. In an interview given to a German newspaper, he stated: "I think that the

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1 Antonius, op.cit., p. 151.

2 "The news from Syria points to general disturbance in the country and great activity on the part of the revolutionary Arabs. In these circumstances I have wondered whether Your Excellency would not give a further proof of your patriotism by taking over the command of the 4th army," said to Djemal Pasha, Enver before his nomination to this post. See Djemal Pasha; Memoires of a Turkish Statesman, p. 138.

3 Djemal Pasha; op.cit., p. 200.

Jewish colonisation is prejudicial to the Turkish Government. I am opposed to Sionism, and of the Jewish immigration to Palestine. I fight and will be fighting against this movement by all means at my disposal."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time he made energetic efforts calculated to impress the local population by such measures as improving municipal conditions in the large towns, laying down of new streets, installing new water supplies, establishing orphanages and schools.<sup>2</sup> It was also with the same purpose of winning over the Arabs, that he did not proceed for some time to make use of the correspondence incriminating many well known Arab personalities which was seized by the police in the French consulate.

One of the most characteristic Arab declarations representing the tendency to cooperation with Turkey was an article written by the Druse leader Emir Shakib Arslan and published in the Berlin magazine "Neue Orient". This article, entitled "What Syria expects from the War" begins with the statement: "From all that has been said about Syria, it is clear that she wants to remain Ottoman." However "...it would be unjust to say that the (Syrian) supporters of the Sultan's Empire are supporters of the present status quo and that they don't desire any changes... Some are demanding a political autonomy, others want only administrative independence, others yet would be satisfied with an extension of the power of local authorities... There is also one item on which all Syrians agree: that is the restoration of the Arabic language and Arabism. It would be deceiving our dear brothers the Turks, to leave the slightest doubt in this respect. On this everybody agrees, even the most Turkophile elements. But there is a great difference between the partisans

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1 Samne, *op.cit.*, p. 451.

2 Ahmed Emin *op.cit.* p. 206.

of these demands, and the separatists... The majority of the Syrian Moslems who together with the Moslem sects form almost 4/5 of the population want to remain. Ottomans, with certain modifications of the regime. They consider it as the only way to conciliate the possibility of happy and prosperous life with the legal power of the Islam. That is what they expect from the War."

The Christian population of Lebanon was affected during the very first days of the war by abolition of its internal autonomy and <sup>the privileges</sup> connected with it. ~~privileges~~. However it seems that this move was not meant as a measure against the Christians, but was rather implementation of the Young Turks' policy, which aimed at the exploitation of the Great War for purpose of liberating Turkey from the international tutelage. The first and decisive step in this direction was made just before Turkey entered the War on September 1914, when the Ottoman Government unilaterally renounced all capitulatory agreements. Consequently the Governor of Lebanon Kuyumdjiyan was recalled and replaced by a Moslem Ali Munif Bey. The Administrative Council created under provisions of the "Organic Law" prepared by the representatives of six powers, was dissolved and a general assembly based on the proportional suffrage was instituted in its stead. However, conscription was still not applied to the Lebanese,<sup>1</sup> and some administrative privileges were retained.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Samne, op.cit., p. 436.

2 Mandlestam, op.cit., p. 338.

A new factor began to exercise a vital influence on the problem of Arab-Turkish relations since the outbreak of the war. If these relations had developed so far rather in the bilateral plane, being mainly an issue between the Arabs and Turks from now on the new factor became the policy of the Allies and particularly Great Britain's. Until Turkey's entry into the war, Britain principally followed the policy of maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. It is true that in the last years before 1914, as a result of the alliance between England and Russia and after the Balkan Wars there was some hesitation over this policy in British diplomatic circles; however, the general line was still preserved. The British attitude changed radically after Turkey, in spite of Allied efforts decided to join the war on the side of Central Powers. Thereupon the express objective of British diplomacy was to cause a substantial disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and to secure for Britain essential positions in some of its areas vital for her interests or for the protection of her system of Imperial communications. There were two schools of British policy with regard to these areas situated in the Arab countries.<sup>1</sup> One, represented by the India Office, viewed the problem from the angle of strengthening British influence in the Persian Gulf and considered occupation of at least Southern Mesopotamia as a means of affording better protection for the British owned oil fields in Persia. In pursuit of this policy, the British expeditionary forces landed in Bassrah and Mesopotamia in the

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1 Kohn: op.cit., p. 271.

very first period of war. At the same time, emissaries of India Office started negotiations with the Arab leaders of Peninsula.<sup>1</sup> Consequently a treaty was concluded between the Government of India and Ibn Saud and another one also with Idrissi in April 1915.<sup>2</sup> However these agreements were only limited to matters of local concern and provided not for co-operation with Britain, but rather for preventing the Turks from allying themselves with both Arab leaders, and exploiting their territories for enemy operations.

The idea of exploiting emancipation tendencies existing among the Arabs in order to attack the enemy from inside was espoused by another school of British policy represented by the officials residing in Cairo.

The first initiative to this effect came not from the British but from the Arab side. A few months before the outbreak of the War, Emir Abdallah, son of the Grand Sharif of Mecca, approached the British representatives in Cairo asking if Britain would give any support for the Sharif against the Turks.<sup>3</sup> Sharif Hussein was an Arab feudal leader who ruled the Holy Places on medieval theocratic lines and on this account he was opposed to the Young Turkish centralisation policy under which he was subordinated to the Vali appointed by the Government. He was also against the plans for extending the railway to Mecca seeing in

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1 Antonius, op.cit., p. 161.

2 Ibid., p. 161.

3 Storrs, Orientalism, p. 143.

this another threat to his authority. However at this time (April 1914) the British reply to Abdullah's question was negative.<sup>1</sup> But before long the British officials returned to this idea. In October of the same year Sharif Hussein received a letter from Ronald Storrs asking if in case of war he would follow Turkey's cause or join Britain against her.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time (October 1914) Gilbert Clayton and Storrs approached Aziz Ali al-Misri and some other leaders about the possibility of starting an Arab revolt;<sup>3</sup> but these nationalists insisted on guarantees of Arab independence as an indispensable preliminary. This condition could not be fulfilled by the British at this time and the conversations were discontinued.

Storr's letter to Sharif Hussein entailed a lengthy correspondence and also personal contacts. From the British point of view Hussein represented important assets. As a custodian of the Holy Places and descendant of the Prophet he possessed a unique position in the Moslem World. His joining the Allied side could have helped to neutralise the "Holy War" appeal.

Sharif Hussein undoubtedly enjoyed already certain prestige in some Arab circles outside of Hedjaz. As early as in 1911 a deputy from Basra, Talib Bey, wrote him a letter in which, on behalf of 35 other Arab deputies he expressed willingness to recognize the Sherif as the Khalif and a leader in the struggle against Turkish oppression.<sup>4</sup>

Azury and his friends who were anxious to bring about the return of Khalifat to the Arabs also saw in him the most suitable person

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1 Ibid., p. 143.

2 Ibid., p. 175.

3 Storrs Orientations, p. 214.

to hold this dignity, and suggested his nomination in a letter sent to the French President of the Republic.<sup>1</sup> This idea was accepted by some French newspapers and corresponded also to the British intention to create a new centre of the Moslem world after overthrowing of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Strategically, Hussein had the advantage of occupying the areas at the centre of the Turkish rule in Peninsula, and military action on his part could sever communications between the North and Turkish garrisons in Yemen and Asir.

Meanwhile, as the correspondence was being exchanged and contacts between two sides established during which mutual obligations and demand were discussed, Hussein's son Emir Faisal got in touch with the members of "al-Fatat" and "al-Ahd" in Damascus. Thus a link between two centres of Arab action was established.<sup>3</sup> The leaders al-Fatat and al-Ahd seemed to have undergone a certain change of attitude in the sense that now they were more inclined to cooperation with a Western Power, however--characteristically--only with Britain, which they considered as a preferable counterbalance to the French threat. They prepared a document containing a list of demands whose fulfillment was a condition for Arab cooperation with Britain against the Turks. These demands provided for the recognition of the specific borders of the future Arab state, abolition of the capitulatory regime, conclusion of a defensive treaty between this state and Great Britain and granting economic preferences to Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> At the same time the leaders of

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1 Jung, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

2 See: Zeine, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

3 Antojius, *op.cit.*, p. 152.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 157.



both organizations agreed to recognize Sharif Hussein as the representative of Arab national aspirations.

When Djemal Pasha returned to Syria after his unsuccessful attack on Egypt, he soon changed his policy towards the Arabs. Instead of the "clemency and tolerance" of the first months of his rule he now instituted a reign of terror and oppression. Such a radical change of attitude is difficult to understand.<sup>1</sup> But it would appear that the apprehensions of a possible Arab revolt in Syria were an important factor. Djemal Pasha was aware of the underground movement among the army officers and civil population; he knew also about the contacts of many well-known Lebanese and Syrians with the enemy.

"At the same time the only troops in Syria were Arab regiments," wrote Djemal Pasha -- "and if these had mutinied I should have had nothing with which to quell the revolt. The battle at the Dardanelles was raging in all its fury and it was out of the question to take a battalion, let alone a division from that front."<sup>2</sup> There was also an increasing danger of the Allies landing in Syria, since their fleet had arrived in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean in connection with the Gallipoli operations. Therefore, from a purely military point of view, one can find some justification for a commander who, facing such a difficult strategical situation, takes steps to strike at those who are preparing an attack from within. It would be difficult to imagine a German officer would not have ordered preventive repressions in such a case; and Djemal Pasha was surrounded by German officers.

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1 There is some evidence that Djemal Pasha began his policy of repression in order to cover his secret negotiations with the Allies. See Zeine: "Arab-Turkish Relations". 103 and 114.

However, politically, these repressions turned out to be a major blunder. Persecutions were carried out ruthlessly and, be it noted, the death sentence was often passed on people whose crimes were absolutely incommensurable with such a punishment. Before the military court in Alep appeared those who were conspiring with France as well as partisans of separation and even those who were only demanding decentralization within the Ottoman Empire. Repressive measures were taken against all kinds of Arab political movements. The total number of persons affected by the death sentences, imprisonment or deportation reached two hundred.<sup>1</sup> A number of others were deported without a court decision. The accusations were based mainly on documents seized by the Turkish police in the French consulate. Undoubtedly the manner in which these repressions were carried out and their large scale indicate that they were meant to terrorise the Syrian population. And indeed, the general feelings aroused by two successive waves of executions in August 1915 and May 1916 were "horror and dismay. The remaining and undetected leaders went into hiding and refrained from any activities."<sup>2</sup> Therefore Djemal could say with satisfaction: "I am certain that to executions in April 1916 alone do we owe the fact that there was no rising in Syria during the two and half years following Sharif Hussein's declaration of independence."<sup>3</sup> But another effect of his policy of repression was that this recourse to violence, more than anything else, deepened the breach between Arabs and Turks. "Indeed, it may not be an exaggeration to say that Djemal

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1 Samne, op.cit., p. 374.

2 Antonius, op.cit., p. 190.

3 Djemal Pasha, "Memories", p. 219.

Pasha's rule in Syria wa one of the determining factors which helped most of the Moslem Arab leaders to make up their minds once and for all to break away completely from the Turkish Empire."<sup>1</sup>

The plight of Syria from 1915 onwards was darkened by an acute famine, epidemics and economic crises. In 1915 the Syrian harvest was ruined by a plague of locusts. In spite of this the army authorities proceeded to collect crops for their needs and even to ship them to Germany. At the same time the Allied blockade of the Syrian coast was very strict and often even ships carrying food for the starving population were stopped. Moreover, in view of the famine, paper money was not accepted in exchange for food and war profiteering was in full swing, which Djemal Pasha tried to combat by deportations of influential businessmen.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the famine and epidemics the total number of dead in Syria was estimated at 100,000.<sup>3</sup> "During one year the number of dead in certain regions was so great that inhumations became impossible."<sup>4</sup>

After two years of negotiations with the British Sharif Hussein decided to begin the revolt against the Turks. What finally persuaded

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1 Zeine: "Arab-Turkish Relations", op.cit., p. 103.

2 See: Mandelstan, p. 341. It must be said that the Ottoman Government made considerable efforts to assist starving Syria. The army was ordered to avoid requisitios and to pay duly for purchased goods, which did not happen in other parts of the Empire. According to Ahmet Emin (op.cit., p. 128) a special fund of 250,000 Turkish pounds was set up in Syria and the army was authorized to spend 100,000 pounds in relieving the famine.

3 Mandelstan, op.cit., p. 341.

4 Samne: op.cit., p. 437.

him to take this step was the fact that in spring 1916 the Turks dispatched by the Hedjaz railway some strong reinforcements for their army fighting in Yemen.<sup>1</sup> The arrival of these troops in Medina in May 1916 caused the Sharif to suspect that his correspondence with the British had been intercepted by the Turks, and that this force was sent to act against him. On the other hand, Faisal, who was so far hesitant to break with Turkey, now made up his mind, after hearing of the executions in Syria.<sup>2</sup> In the first days of June 1916 the troops of the Sharif attacked the Turkish garrisons and the Hedjaz railway. Soon afterwards Sharif Hussein Ali, in a proclamation issued on 27 June explained to the Moslem world his reasons for opening the revolt against the Young Turkish government. These reasons are of a religious as well as a political character. On the one hand the Committee of Union and Progress, personified by Enver, Talaat and Djemal, having gained power over the Empire and destroyed the authority of the Sultan, had drawn the country into the war, thus bringing about a dangerous situation. Besides, the Young Turks had reduced the population of the Empire and particularly of the Hedjaz to a state of extreme misery; recently the Young Turkish government had executed a number of Syrian notables, exiled their innocent families and confiscated their properties. Also, the Young Turks were guilty of many deeds which showed their impiety and hatred of Islam. They had violated the rights of the Caliphate, changed the sacred law of the Sharia, released the troops from the

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1 Antonius, *op.cit.*, p. 191.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

obligation of observing Ramadan, and bombed the Holy Kasba.<sup>1</sup> For these reasons the Sharif rose against the Young Turks in defence of the religious and national rights of the Arabs and proclaimed his independence.

After delivering the greater part of the Hedjaz from the Turks Sharif Hussein proceeded energetically to organize his independent Arab state. "He created the local police, gendarmery, customs duty service and official journal. On 5 October he nominated by a decree his Prime Minister and the Arab Senate."<sup>2</sup>

However, the Revolt broke out on a smaller scale than was expected. It did not gain the support of the two rulers in the Peninsula - Ibn Rashid and Imam Yahya. There was no reaction on the part of the population of Syria, which was partly due to the effectiveness of Djemal Pasha's repressions. In Iraq it was due to the reluctant attitude of the Indian Army authorities, who were afraid of the unfavourable reactions among the Indian Moslems, and to their colonial schemes for Mesopotamia that ideas of independence were not encouraged among the local Arab population. T. E. Lawrence, who went to Iraq in order to prepare the military movement among the Iraqis, gives the following account of the disposition of the Indian Government. "(It) was adverse to any pledges to the Arab nationalists which might limit their ambitions to make the intended Mesopotamian colony play the self-sacrificing role of a Burma for the general good. It broke off negotiations, rejected Aziz, and interned Talib Bey, who had placed himself in our hands."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Full text in Djemal Pasha, op.cit., p. 226.

2 Mandelstan, op.cit., p. 359, quoted from: "Temps", December 31, 1916.

3 Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 59.

In Egypt the news of Sharif's rising did not provoke a favourable reaction. "(This news) produced among Egyptian intellectuals surprise and uneasiness. They declared the news was false and that the English had attempted to bluff the populace in order to discredit the Turks...Others, while accepting the rising as a fact, attempted to minimize its importance by describing it as a mere phase in the chronic state of revolution in the Arabian Peninsula...The Anglophobes, including nationalists, Khedivists, Turcophiles and Germanophiles threw discredit upon the Sharif by representing him as a rebel against the Caliph and the servile instrument of the English...<sup>1</sup>

On 2 November Sharif Hussein, during a special ceremony, was proclaimed the king of the Arab countries. This caused some embarrassment to the Allies, who could not accept his claim to be a spokesman for all the Arabs. They realized as well that a good many Arab provinces did not look forward to being ruled by the feudal and theocratic leader from the Hedjaz. Some simply called him a traitor to the Caliphate. Britain and France refused to recognize his title and a formula was invented by which Hussein was allowed to call himself the King of the Hedjaz.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the insufficiency of Hussein's claim to be a representative of the Arab national aspirations, his revolt gradually caught the attention of some Arab nationalist leaders. Aziz Ali came to Jedda to assume command over the Sharif's troops and a number of

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1 Storrs: Orientations, p. 190.

2 Kirk, Short History of the Middle East, p. 127.

3 Storrs, op.cit., p. 218.

Arab officers captured by the British were released to join the revolt. The forces of the revolt soon amounted to some 50,000 men, though their military quality was not very high. The strategic value of the Revolt was limited to the Arabian Peninsula, where it cut the enemy's communication with the south and prevented German action from the coast of the Red Sea. In the fighting in Palestine the Arab troops accompanied the British Army serving as auxiliary forces. General Liman von Sanders says of Arab help for the British operations: "The British found in the Arabs valuable helpers whom they could win over to their policy...at the same time the Turks were faced with a decidedly hostile population."<sup>1</sup> Arab troops led by Faisal entered Damascus in triumph side by side with the British on October 1, 1918. The last Turkish forces, "surrounded by general hostility, left Syria hastily and without regret."<sup>2</sup> The end of the Ottoman Empire became a fact.

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1 Cinq Ans de la Turquie, p. 171.

2 Halide Edib: Turkey Faces West, p. 159.

## CONCLUSION

The unconditional capitulation of Turkey in 1918 closed the history of the Ottoman Empire. It also closed the last chapter in the common history of the Turks and Arabs living side by side within this Empire. The period between 1908 and 1918, from the point of view of Arab-Turkish relations is characterized by an exceptional historical dynamism. In July 1908 both nations were swathed in an atmosphere of brotherhood and looked forward to a prospect of co-existence in freedom. In 1918 Arab and Turkish soldiers stood opposed on the field of conflict.

The history of Arab-Turkish relations during the period under review is marked by a few distinctive stages. In the first, the policy of Ottomanism was energetically pursued by the C.U.P. There is much speculation among authors on what political line would have been more effective and could have saved the Empire. However, while some maintain that only the granting of autonomy for various racial groups could have provided a solution, others are not blind to the reasons which prevented the C.U.P. from choosing this course. In fact, the Young Turks were rather realistically-minded. They were only too well aware of the centrifugal tendencies existing among the Christian nations of the Empire. Judging from their own standpoint one can understand why they did not believe in the effectiveness of any other policy than that of Ottomanism. And Ottomanism tacitly recognized the fundamental importance of the Turkish element, since



the Turks were more than the others interested in maintaining the entity of the state. Consequently, the C.U.P. began to be more and more influenced by Turkish nationalistic tendencies. This caused strong reactions on the part of the Arabs. Moreover, they started demanding rights of cultural and political development. The best solution appeared to be the principle of decentralization, which was contrary to the Young Turks' centralization policy. The goal of Arab politicians--or most of them--was for home-rule within the framework of the Ottoman state. There was no question of separation from the Empire. On the contrary people demanding decentralization viewed it as a means of strengthening the state. However, while for them this problem fell naturally into a bilateral perspective--Arabs vis-a-vis Ottoman Government--the same matter looked more complicated to their opposite number. By giving autonomy to the Arabs, the Young Turks would be obliged to act similarly with regard to all other ethnic groups, including those which were definitely hostile to Turkish dominion under any form. It would mean opening the door to Russian penetration via the Balkan nations. However, a suitable moment for safely implementing the idea of decentralization came when, as a result of the Balkan disaster, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its non-Moslem elements. But at this time, the Young Turks were not confident enough in their policy towards the Arabs, and moreover they were swayed by their new ideology of Panturanism.

For many Arabs, the failure of the idea of decentralization brought a dilemma--separation or federation. The concept of federalism might be considered as the highest point of the development of

Arab political ideas before the battle for complete independence was joined. Federalism, or Dualism, provided for the creation of a separate Arab state in union with Turkey. The idea of the union, which emerged from the tradition of the Moslem community, aimed at organizing a modern bi-national state. At the same time it would strengthen resistance to Western encroachments.

When the outbreak of World War I created a new situation for the Ottoman Empire the majority of the Arab population and political leaders primarily remained loyal to their Sultan and Caliph. The decisive turning-point was caused by Djemal Pasha's oppressions and British encouragement of the revolt. The last stage of the developments generated by the 1908 Revolution was the armed struggle for Arab independence, directed against Turkey and supported by the Western powers. The end of the war, which the warriors of Faisal greeted as victors side by side with the Allied powers, brought about the final collapse of the Ottoman state. Of this state Ziya Gökalp said: "Two great nations, the Turks and the Arabs, by their number as well as by their culture and learning, served as the basis of the Ottoman Empire in such a way that it might even be called a Turco-Arab state."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization, p. 78.

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