THE POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF TURKEY
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I

Among many important transformations which have taken place in the political organization of the peoples of the world since the beginning of the twentieth Century, that effectuated by Turkey has been one of the most complete and most significant in its historical importance. During these years three distinct forms of actual government have been used: The first was a despotic imperial system, which derived from the original powerful organization of the great imperial days, with substantial modifications in the course of the nineteenth Century; the second, which prevailed from 1908 to 1919, with a partial prolongation until 1922, was a constitutional monarchy headed by a sultan who exercised very limited power, and a cabinet of older and younger statesmen who worked with a Parliament elected by two stages; the third form of government, which started in 1919 and became fully effective in 1923, was an extremely democratic republic, with the theoretical concentration of all powers in an elected National Assembly, modified, however, progressively in the direction of actual monarchy by the supreme influence of President Mustapha Kemal Pasha.

In spite of these apparently radical changes, a high degree of continuity prevailed, based upon old fixed characteristics of the Turkish people. It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that Turkey originated at the close of the thirteenth Century from a nucleus of Turkish-speaking nomads who came from Central Asia with the primitive organization of a tribe under a chief. A Turkish people grew from this through natural increase, the addition from time to time of Turkish and Turcoman groups newly arrived from the East, and the incorporation of non-Turkish individuals and groups who took the Turkish language and the Mohammedan religion. The adoption of this religion by the Turks affected their character, mental outlook, and national organization profoundly. In fact their government soon became practically a double one, with two great parallel institutions, corresponding generally to church and state in mediaeval Western Europe. The Ruling Institution carried on the duties of civil and military government, while the Moslem Institution took care of religion, law, and education. At the head of
both was an emir who later became sultan, and who from the time and fact of the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks attained quite consciously a position of imperial dignity.

From the beginning of their organization, the Turks had to reckon with other peoples, differing in language or religion or both, who were brought in through subordinate relationships. Such groups were allowed a considerable degree of autonomy, regulating their internal quarrels and such questions as concern religion, marriage, and inheritance. Recognized groups were known as Millets, which may be translated as “nationalities.”

This system is usually considered to have reached its best development and most successful operation in the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520 to 1566). The period from this great sovereign’s death to 1683 was on the whole a time of equilibrium, although it was marked by very considerable vicissitudes of upheaval and pacification. The form of the government was not greatly changed before the nineteenth Century, although there was a considerable modification of spirit, in such directions as growing conservatism in both the Moslem population and the subject peoples: decline in military effectiveness in comparison with other powers; economic division of labor with active business more and more controlled by Greeks, Armenians, and Jews; a growing consciousness of practical inferiority; and a relative hopelessness of adequate recovery. The officials of both great institutions were drawn more and more exclusively from the Turkish population. Their system of training, extraordinarily advanced in the Sixteenth Century, failed to take into account progressively the changes in world affairs, alike military, political, and intellectual.

In spite of settled conservatism, the more active minds in Turkey became convinced early in the Nineteenth Century that the Empire’s destruction lay no great distance ahead, unless considerable adjustments to the rest of the world could be effected. This idea came to expression in the various “Reforms,” which were pushed both by the sovereigns, in particular Mahmud II (1807 to 1839), and by the party of “Young Turks,” who exercised much influence from the time of Mahmud to the beginning of the reign of Abdul Hamid II (1876 to 1909). Various opinions have been held of the effectiveness of these reforms. Undoubtedly legislation ran well ahead of practice, so that the aspect on paper of Turkish institutions was regularly considerably more than actual practice.
Nevertheless in the fifty years from 1826 to 1876 a very great practical transformation of Turkish institutions was effected. The old Ruling Institution, including practically the army organization of Spahis and Janissaries, was destroyed. In its place a Council of State and an army of modern type were organized. Local government was also thoroughly reorganized, so that governors and mayors, assisted by councils, controlled public affairs. The Moslem Institution of the Turks and the parallel Millets were far less easily modified.

A great group of changes in the Nineteenth Century was related to the world-wide movement toward nationalism, which appeared successively among the peoples of Turkey, reaching the Turks themselves last. The Christian groups in particular advanced by various methods of revolution and foreign aid through the phases of autonomy to independence. Thus Servia, Greece, Rumania, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Albania appeared. The Moslem nationalities were similarly detached in Algeria, Tunis, Egypt, Tripoli, and Arabia. The Kurds alone have so far failed to complete the process.

The reign of Abdul Hamid II in a number of ways delayed the process of change. While the "Young Turks" succeeded in the first month of his reign, with the negative assistance of a Conference of Ambassadors at Constantinople, in drawing up and proclaiming a Constitution, this document was suppressed with the outbreak of war against Russia in 1877, and remained mere paper until 1908. Abdul Hamid supported the Moslem institution, maintained the status quo as regards the remaining Millets, and while retaining the forms of the Council of State and local government, built up a system of personal government through secretaries and spies. By emphasizing skillfully the differences between small neighboring powers and also between the great powers of Europe, he retarded visibly the disintegration of the Turkish Empire. It was a time of little progress, during which, however, there was a considerable accumulation of forces pushing toward modernization of government and of life generally.

II

Among the forces working for improvement in Turkey was a continuation under the same name of the "Young Turk" group of the time of Abdul Mejid and Abdul Aziz. Late in 1907 Turks of this ilk and moderate Armenian reformers agreed in Paris to or-
ganize a "Committee of Union and Progress" (later called for short "C. U. P."). A central executive committee was established at Salonika, and affiliates were built up from materials already known and recruits in various parts of the Empire. The army corps in Macedonia and Thrace were particularly labored with, and many young officers joined the movement. In the summer of 1908 the Sultan extended his spy system into the Army. The time moreover was very critical, because in the previous year the ten-year understanding between Russia and Austria had expired, while a new understanding had been reached between Russia and England. Various utterances led to the belief that fresh measures were contemplated looking toward the withdrawal of Macedonia from Turkish control. The two majors, Niazi Bey and Enver Bey, raised the standard of revolt. The army at Salonika accepted their point of view, and on July 24 a telegram was sent to the Sultan, requesting him to put into force the Constitution of 1876. The Sultan was wise enough to realize that he must yield or fall, and so he consented to the request.

Thus began the ten years' rule of the "Young Turks," a time of great vicissitudes. The Constitution required to be brought up to date, because in particular the responsibility of ministers was rather to the Sultan than to the Chamber of Deputies. This was corrected. An important question was where the actual guiding will should reside. For nine months it remained with the executive committee of about seven persons residing at Salonika. A "Party of Union and Progress" was organized in the Parliament to express the will of the Committee. In April of 1909 a Conservative "Liberal Unionist" Party, supported by the Sultan, inspired certain soldiers to surround Parliament House and compel a change of Cabinet. The C. U. P. members of Parliament fled. Within three weeks the armies of Salonika and Adrianople were brought up to the capital. The rule of the C. U. P. was restored, the executive committee moved to Constantinople, and the policy of "Ottomanization" was changed to one of "Turkification." Abdul Hamid was deposed and his brother became Sultan under the name Mohammed V. The change was of large importance because the new Sultan, though about sixty years old, was possessed of no political experience. He wished benevolently that his people might all be free and happy. The "Young Turks" decided and controlled policies, gradually introducing some of their own members into the Cabinet.
TURKISH MINIATURE PAINTING XVI CENTURY

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
An Italian ultimatum in October, 1911, led to war, which brought about the downfall of government by the C. U. P. in July, 1912. Another group thus guided Turkey into the first Balkan War, claiming to be more constitutional than the "Young Turks" had been. Their rule, however, was overthrown by a coup d' état in January, 1913. Enver Bey later became Minister of War. Talaat Bey was first Minister of the Interior and later Grand Vizier, while Jemal was Minister of Marine. These three men were largely responsible for bringing Turkey into the Great War, after which, although the Constitution was nominally enforced and Parliament functioning, power was more and more centralized in their hands. Turkey's defeat and surrender in October, 1918, caused the triumvirate to flee the country, but the form of government was not changed. Sultan Mohammed VI, who had succeeded his brother in 1917, worked with a cabinet, which presently arranged for the election of a new Parliament in order to make peace with the victorious powers. The Sultan remained in Constantinople as nominal head of the State until November, 1922.

But another system of government for Turkey had its beginning in 1919. Mustapha Kemal Pasha, already distinguished as a military commander and administrator, was sent in May to disband Turkish troops in the interior. At the same time the "Big Three" at Paris authorized the Greek government of M. Venizelos to occupy Smyrna. This action, accompanied as it was by some unnecessary violence, sent a thrill through all Turkey, which provoked distrust of the victorious powers, revival of hatred toward the Greeks, and a firm resolve to resist threatened national destruction. With Mustapha Kemal as leader, conferences were held at Erzerum and Sivas, and an army began to be gathered at Ankara. Early in 1920 the Parliament of Constantinople adopted the "Turkish Pact" which had been formulated at Erzerum. The British occupational authorities then decided to arrest nationalists. A number of these and many deputies from the interior of Asia Minor escaped from Constantinople and gathered at Ankara. They took the position that the Sultan and his government at Constantinople were under coercion and so were not to be obeyed. But acting in the name of the Sultan, a new constitution began to be formed and national resistance was organized apace. By September of 1922 the Ankara Government was able to defeat the Greeks and to turn toward Constantinople. In November the Sultan, alarmed at the growing
strength of the new Government, fled on a British warship. Ankara declared him deposed and his office abolished. Fifteen months later the Caliphate was also legislated out of existence and the way was clear for a republic of very liberal character.

III

It is perhaps the case that the leading principles of the present government of Turkey have been determined from the first by the political ideas of Mustapha Kemal Pasha. Certainly the government began to take shape from the time of the conference at Erzerum in July, 1919. The theory is extraordinarily simple. All power rests primarily with the Turkish people, of whom males of eighteen years and above, possessing no special disqualifications, have the right to vote. Women were later admitted to voting in local elections and the hope has been held out of establishing complete female suffrage. The voters choose either directly or by two stages a Grand National Assembly, in which resides all powers of government of the Turkish State. The Assembly makes the laws, elects a president of the nation as chief executive during its term, and creates courts of justice. It possesses and has exercised authority over all individual citizens and over all organized groups, not excepting the Mohammedan, Moslem, and Christian church organizations.

The Constitution, gradually built up during five years and promulgated in complete form on April 20, 1924, replaced completely the Constitution of 1876. The first article declared that "The Turkish State is a Republic": this article alone is not subject to amendment. Article Two formerly provided that the religion of the State was Islam, but this provision was rescinded in 1928. The one official language is Turkish: this was, in 1924, written in Arabic characters; since 1928, it must be written in Roman characters. The seat of government was established by fundamental law in Ankara, Constantinople, officially styled Istanbul, lost its preëminence primarily because by the peace settlement the straits are open to all warships of all nations, whose cannon might control the government if located there, but obviously cannot reach as far as Ankara; furthermore the new capital is centrally located for all national purposes, whereas the former capital was practically on the circumference of Turkey proper.

The Constitution declares that sovereignty belongs without re-
striction to the nation, and is exercised by the Grand National Assembly as the sole lawful representative of the nation. Deputies may be chosen from all citizens over the age of thirty, with usual exceptions, such as persons condemned to penal servitude or for fraudulent bankruptcy, persons of foreign nationality or in service of a foreign power, and citizens who cannot read and write the Turkish language. Elections are held regularly every four years. For the election of 1927, the People's Party, which alone is recognized, chose a committee to nominate candidates for the Assembly. This Committee transferred all its powers to President Mustapha Kemal Pasha, and the slate he made was elected in toto. In 1931, after the President had made a tour of the country, the Assembly voted a new election six months before the expiration of its term. For this election thirty places were left open for free choice by the voters, but they actually filled only twenty of these places. Deputies are held to represent not only the constituency which elects them but also the whole nation. The Assembly must sit during at least six months of each year. Deputies have complete immunity, except that a vote of the Assembly may surrender to judicial authority a member accused of flagrant crime. Debates are public and reported to the public without modification, except that the Assembly may vote to meet in secret session and may withhold the proceedings of such meetings. Deputies may hold no other office.

A number of powers are reserved to be exercised only by the Assembly. Among these, besides complete power over legislation (except for the President's suspensive veto), are the right to declare war and conclude treaties of all sorts, to pass on all concessions involving financial responsibility, to grant pardons, and to expedite judicial investigations. The Assembly may impeach one of its own members by a vote of two thirds or more. A deputy loses his seat if he absents himself from sessions for two months without permission.

The President of the Republic is chosen by the Assembly from among its own membership. He is eligible for re-election. He is considered as head of the State and in this capacity may preside over the Assembly on ceremonial occasions. But he may not take part in the discussions of the Assembly and may not vote. In case of his death or disability, the president of the Assembly takes up his duties provisionally. The President is required to promulgate laws within ten days of their enactment, except that he may before
the expiration of that time return a law for reconsideration, stating his objections. If the Assembly again passes the law by a majority vote, the President must promulgate it. He presents an annual message upon the opening of Parliament in each year. His decrees require to be signed by two designated officials. He is not specifically declared Commander-in-Chief of the Army: "Supreme Command of the Army is vested in the Grand National Assembly, which is represented by the President of the Republic." He is responsible to the Assembly only in case of high treason.

The President designates a President of the Council of Commissioners, or Premier of the Cabinet, from among the deputies. The President of the Council selects the other commissioners subject to the approval of the President of the Republic. The government must present its program within a week if the Assembly is in session, and may then remain in office only if given a vote of confidence. The members of the Cabinet or Council are responsible collectively and individually to the Assembly. A Council of State is also established, chosen from among the deputies, "to decide administrative controversies and to give its advice on contracts, concessions, and proposed laws drafted and presented by the government."

Courts of justice are to be organized and regulated by law. Judges are subject only to the law. They may hold no other office. A High Court may be constituted for trying great officials on questions arising as regards the performance of their duties.

The constitutional provisions in section five ("Public Law of the Turks") are of very great interest, inasmuch as they represent a wide departure from general custom in Moslem lands and particularly in the old Ottoman Empire. Among the "natural rights of Turks" are held to be: "Inviolability of person; freedom of conscience, of thought, of speech, of press; freedom of travel and of contract; freedom of labor; freedom of private property, of assembly, of association; freedom of incorporation." All privileges are abolished. Life, property, honor, and the home are declared inviolable. There shall be no torture, corporal punishment, confiscation, or extortion. While the right of eminent domain is reserved, actual value must be paid for all property taken. "No one may be molested on account of his religion, his sect, his ritual, or his philosophic convictions." In order however that individuals may not be considered entirely outside the power of the State, it is provided
that the Assembly may by law limit the liberties of the individual "in the interest of the rights and liberties of others": in particular religious observances must not disturb public peace or violate law. Law may control the press and in special circumstances the
government may restrict freedom of travel. Law determines conditions of contract, labor, property, assembly, association, and incorporation. Letters, documents, and packages may be opened upon order from the Attorney General and approval by a competent court. All Turks have the right of petition to competent authority or to the Assembly and are entitled to a written reply. The Cabinet may decree martial law in appropriate circumstances but not for more than one month at a time. The Assembly may prolong or diminish the duration of martial law. Martial law suspends the inviolability of the person, the home, freedom of the press, correspondence, association, and incorporation. Education is regarded as free except that it must conform to the law and be subject to the supervision and control of the State. Primary education is obligatory and gratuitous in the government schools.

Evidently considerable inconsistency appears in the declaration of rights and the reservations on behalf of the law. It may be said that in this Constitution a theory of extreme liberty of the individual is in conflict with practical rules to retain a full measure of social control for the State. Laws are not to be made in contradiction to the Constitution, but no Supreme Court is set up to decide such questions as may arise. Amendments may be made to any part of the Constitution (except Article 1) by a simple process: at least one third of the total number of deputies must sign a proposal to amend; after adequate discussion two thirds of the total number of deputies may adopt the amendment.

IV

Mustapha Kemal Pasha has been the central figure in Turkey since 1919. From the time of his graduation from military school in 1902, he was a reformer and an organizer of secret societies in the interest of governmental improvement. He worked his way up in the army, and distinguished himself in the defense of the Dardanelles. He was not in favor with the C. U. P. and the "Young Turks," because, it appears, of a greater uprightness of character and a superior integrity of purpose. His leadership was confirmed by the victory at the Sakaria River in August, 1922. It was but natural that he should be made the first President of the Turkish Republic. The people had been accustomed to monarchy during their whole existence. Their experience with Parliamentary and Constitutional government had been limited in time and badly
broken up by warfare. The guidance of a strong benevolent hand suited their circumstances well. Mustapha Kemal was then made not only President of the Republic, but President of the Assembly, and of the Council of State, and of the People's Party. The Triumvirate of the C. U. P. had disappeared after the Armistice of 1918. Less selfish leaders remained, such as Javid, Rauf, Adnan, and Madame Halide Edib (wife of Adnan, but in her own right feminist, novelist, patriot, and statesman). Some of these and others desired a two party system and made some efforts toward the organization of an opposition party. The result was fatal to Javid: his name was connected in 1926 with a plot against the life of the President, and he was tried, convicted, and hanged. Adnan and Madame Halide Edib found security in exile. The attempt in 1930 to start another opposition party with the approval of the President was not successful.

The President has had the services of a number of devoted and competent men, among whom Ismet Pasha stands out prominently. A Colonel and then a General in the war against Greece, Ismet was appointed chief of the delegation to negotiate peace at Lausanne in 1922 and 1923. Since his laurel-crowned return he has usually been premier. While theoretically the whole governing power of Turkey rests in the Grand National Assembly, practically it has been confided to President Mustapha Kemal Pasha, who has in effect personally appointed not merely the members of the Cabinet, but nearly all the members of the Assembly. All important laws and regulations have emanated from him. Nor has he proved unworthy of the nation's confidence. He has lived in only moderate comfort, without any accusation of amassing wealth for himself, and he has given all his time and energy toward improving the political and economic condition of his people. Being childless, the question of heredity of office has not arisen. He has not followed the example of George Washington in laying down the Presidential office after two four-year terms. If this he made a charge against him, the rejoinder may be made that he is not surrounded by as large a group of capable substitutes as was the first American President, and that he was only fifty-one years of age as against Washington's sixty-five upon the completion of the second term. In pursuing the comparison further, he leads a people about twice as numerous as those in George Washington's America, with a greater foreign trade. On the other hand, instead of leading a
new people, expanding over a comparatively empty country, Mustapha Kemal is the head of an old people in a much older land.

From their origin (if the previous story of Asia Minor be taken into account) until the last ten years, the Ottoman Turks had been the controlling people in an empire, but now they have become a national state. Thus in a sense their nation is as new as was the United States after 1789. The results of ten years of warfare have been on the one hand to lose territories in which a non-Turkish majority dwelt, and on the other hand to expel from the remaining territories nearly all of the non-Turks. The new Turkey is therefore well above the average of modern states in homogeneity of population. It suffered serious disadvantages from the loss of young manhood in the recent wars and from the fact that the Turks themselves, except for the peasantry of Anatolia, have been largely a people specializing in government and war. They were obliged to take up industry and commerce as unfamiliar tasks. Another serious handicap was the age-old tradition of corrupt government. The relative hypocrisy of the "Reform Period" had established habits of wide discrepancy between the texts of laws and their observance. The incapacity of the former Turkish government to establish and maintain a financial system by which salaries might be paid regularly, made difficult a transition from the old system of government by personal payments hardly distinguishable from bribery, to a modern régime by whose theory officials paid regularly by the State, put their ability at the service of the public.

The new Turkey inherited from the old a readiness to borrow and promulgate laws which might be only partly applicable to the local situation. The old government had translated large portions of the Code Napoléon, and made these the law of the land. The new Turkey similarly took the Civil Law of Switzerland, the Commercial Law of Germany, and the Criminal Law of Italy, and translated them into Turkish and made them the law of the land. This process was of course much quicker and more systematic than an attempt to codify and modify the Turkish law. The adoption of the Swiss Civil Law solved speedily two serious problems of social reorganization. The ethics of Islam sanctioned plurality of marriage on the part of men, and personal slavery. Natural evolution had greatly reduced polygamy, and slavery had been declared illegal. But the Swiss Code immediately eliminated the possibility of lawful polygamy and likewise omitted slavery. Adjustment in
the former case was made by recognizing that plural marriages already in existence were not invalidated, but no more could be contracted.

The new Turkey has replaced its old political system by an incomparably superior governmental machine. In fact, the new Turkish government challenges comparison with any in the world at a number of points, such as simplicity of theory and practice, ease of amendment, adaptation to the circumstances of the nation, and freedom from entanglement of political with economic regulations. As regards the last item, the Constitution does not hinder the Assembly from any action it pleases to take for the economic reorganization and advancement of the country. Control of education and religion is restricted only by provisions emphasizing individual freedom.

The government has worked steadily toward the establishment of good relations with other nations. Treaties of amity and commerce have been concluded with neighboring and distant powers. Non-aggression pacts have been signed with some. While not a member of the League of Nations, Turkey joined in the Briand-Kellogg pact. Turkey likewise took the lead lately in organizing a Balkan Conference, which promises to replace the vanished forcible maintenance of unity by voluntary agreements, so as to take advantage of permanent geographical and economic features common to the Balkan and Turkish countries.

Among the great tasks at which Turkish statesmen must continue to labor are the political education of the people, comprehension and assimilation of the best Western political ideas, recovery from the damages of war, utilization of the resources of a varied land, emergence from the effects of the world-wide depression, leadership of less advanced Islamic peoples, and the building up of a more and more respectable place among modern nations.