

8 · The Second Constitutional Period, 1912–18

The constitutional revolution of 1908

The revolution of July 1908 was the result of the actions of the Unionist officers of the Third (Macedonian) and Second (Thracian) Army. In the European provinces of the empire this was clear enough, because the CUP sent delegations to every major town to announce the reinstatement of the constitutional regime and to explain its benefits to the population. The Unionist officers who headed these delegations took pains to explain that it was the Committee and not the sultan that was responsible for the change. In the Asiatic provinces and in the capital, Istanbul, the situation looked very different, however. The Hamidian regime's strict censorship had prevented the news from Macedonia from reaching the public. Hence, the sultan could successfully present his own version of events, which was that treacherous advisors had misled him into thinking that the country was not ready for constitutional rule, but that he now, and of his own accord, had come to the conclusion that the time was ripe.

Once the news had sunk in (this took some time because the first announcement in the capital was an unobtrusive, unheaded three-line item in the newspapers announcing new elections),¹ public reaction in Istanbul and Asia was similar to that in Macedonia – tremendous joy and relief, with people from all walks of life and every community, Muslim, Jewish and Christian, fraternizing and celebrating in the streets. There was a general, but unarticulated, expectation that somehow life would now change for the better. At the same time, in many places, including the capital, the people took revenge on the representatives of the old regime, forcing the dismissal of officials and hunting down known members of the espionage system.

The freedom of thought, of expression and of association brought about by the constitutional revolution resulted not only in political demonstrations of either joy or anger but also in widespread labour unrest. Workers demanded wage rises to compensate for rising prices

(inflation was a staggering 20 per cent in the first two months after the revolution), and when their demands were not met a wave of strikes swept across the empire: there were more than 100 in six months.² The government, which had been content for the public to let off steam in political demonstrations, was alarmed by the strikes and, with the support of the CUP, reacted by enacting labour legislation that banned trade unions in the public sector, introduced compulsory arbitration and made strike action extremely difficult. This legislation effectively suppressed the labour movement and there were hardly any strikes during the rest of the second constitutional period. The role of the CUP in the defeat of the strikers is interesting because it shows that the Committee – the champion *par excellence* of constitutional liberty – sided unequivocally with the capitalists in suppressing the freedom, such as it was, of organized labour.

The leaders of the *émigré* movement, as well as those exiled within the empire, returned to Istanbul to a heroes' welcome. Except for Bahaettin Şakir and Dr Nazım, the two party organizers who had been most in touch with the internal movement in the empire before the revolution, they did not gain positions of real influence. Political power within the CUP remained in the hands of the men from Salonica.

Surprisingly, in this atmosphere of elation the CUP did not take power in its own hands or even depose the sultan whom it had so strenuously opposed and vilified for 20 years. One reason was that, because he manipulated public opinion, many people saw the sultan as the hero of the situation. Even though the CUP leaders distrusted him, they felt unable to remove him. They felt even less able to take the reins of government into their own hands. Age and seniority were important preconditions for authority in Ottoman society and the Young Turks, being for the most part captains and majors or minor bureaucrats in their late twenties and early thirties, had neither. The Committee therefore chose to leave politics in the hands of the existing cabinet under Grand Vizier Sait Pasha. In the meantime it set itself up as a watchdog with a mission to guard the newfound constitutional freedom, interfering in politics whenever it saw fit. In the following years the CUP's position as a secret society exerting pressure and holding political power without any formal responsibility was to prove a destabilizing factor.

The first conflict in which the CUP intervened was caused by the sultan's insistence on the right to appoint the ministers of war and the navy directly, instead of merely approving his grand vizier's choice for these positions. This was a clear violation of the letter, as well as of the spirit, of the constitution and when Sait Pasha supported the sultan, the Committee forced his resignation after only five days. *Kıbrısli*

(Cypriot) Kâmil Pasha, who had a reputation as a pro-British liberal, was appointed in his stead on 6 August.³

The main event of the months after the revolution was the first elections in 30 years. Before the revolution, the CUP had only had a strong provincial organization in the European provinces. It now endeavoured to spread its organization over the Asiatic provinces and North Africa. Sometimes new branches were established by converting existing local opposition groups, formed by people who had been sent into internal exile by Abdülhamit, into CUP organizations. Generally, the CUP's branches consisted of a coalition of professionals (teachers, lawyers, doctors), Muslim merchants and guild leaders and large landowners. While the Committee was almost exclusively Muslim and largely Turkish, it actively sought the cooperation of the other nationalities, guaranteeing them a number of seats in the new parliament. Eventually, Turks held slightly more than 50 per cent of the 288 seats.⁴

The only organization to contest the elections, besides the CUP was the new party founded by the followers of Prens Sabahattin (who had also returned) in September, the *Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası* (Party of Ottoman Liberals). This, however, did not have a serious nationwide organization and managed to win only one seat.

Despite their complete victory, the Unionists' influence remained indirect rather than direct because in many parts of the empire they had to rely on local notables who allowed their names to be put forward as candidates on the Unionist list rather than on members of the CUP itself. This meant that party discipline in parliament was weak.

Thus, after the revolution and the elections the power of the palace was curbed but not eliminated and the leading bureaucrats of the Porte re-emerged as an independent political factor for the first time since 1878, while the CUP stayed in the background, relying on its majority in parliament to control the government.

The counterrevolution of April 1909

Although after the astounding success of the revolution, the CUP was the most powerful force in the country, increasingly through 1908 and the early months of 1909 it had to contend with two types of opposition. One was that of the *Ahrar Fırkası*, which had done badly in the elections and felt increasingly frustrated. Kâmil Pasha, who, like the Liberals, resented the pressure of the CUP, allied himself with this group and relations between him and the CUP became increasingly strained. On 14 February the CUP succeeded in having the pasha voted out of office in parliament and having him replaced with Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, who was close to the Committee. The opposition launched a

bitter press campaign, which was answered by the Unionist organs in kind. On 6 April Hasan Fehmi, editor of one of the fiercest anti-Unionist papers, was killed, probably by a Unionist agent. His funeral the next day turned into a mass demonstration against the Committee.

The second type of opposition the CUP faced was from conservative religious circles, notably the lower *ulema* and sheikhs of the dervish orders. During the month of Ramadan, which coincided with October 1908, a number of incidents and at least two serious and violent demonstrations occurred, during which the closure of bars and theatres, the prohibition of photography and restrictions on the freedom of movement of women were demanded. On 3 April the religious extremists, who were already active as a group around the newspaper *Volkan* of the Nakşibendi sheikh *Derviş Vahdeti*, organized themselves as the *İttihad-i Muhammedi* (Muhammadan Union). This group organized large-scale propaganda against the policies and secularism of the Young Turks.

Despite all this political infighting and the rising tensions of the past months, it came as a complete surprise to Unionists and foreign observers alike, when, on the night of 12 April 1909, an armed insurrection broke out in the capital in the name of the restoration of Islam and *şeriat*. That night the battalions of Macedonian troops at Taşkışla barracks, which the CUP had brought in only a week before to replace the supposedly less reliable Arab and Albanian contingents, mutinied, taking their officers prisoner. The next morning, together with a large number of *softas*, students from the religious schools, they marched to the parliament building. During the morning, more and more troops and *ulema* joined them. The government was in disarray. It dared not send in the loyal troops but instead sent the chief of police to listen to the mob's demands. The spokesmen of the troops presented six demands:

- dismissal of the grand vizier and the ministers of war and of the navy;
- replacement of a number of Unionist officers;
- replacement of the Unionist president of the Chamber of Deputies (Ahmet Rıza);
- banishing of a number of Unionist deputies from Istanbul;
- restoration of the *şeriat*; and
- an amnesty for the rebellious troops.

The most curious of these demands is that for restoration of the Islamic law. While the introduction of specific European-style laws and regulations had eroded the position of the *şeriat*, it had never been abolished and continued to hold sway in the field of family law.

Faced with these demands, the grand vizier went to the palace in the

afternoon and tendered his resignation, which the sultan accepted. The next morning, it was announced that the colourless diplomat Tevfik Pasha (Okday) had been appointed grand vizier. The war minister in the new cabinet, Marshal Ethem Pasha, visited the soldiers, praised them and promised them that all their demands would be met. The troops and the *softas* celebrated their victory extensively. At the same time, a pogrom against well-known Unionists developed, resulting in the deaths of at least 20 people, mostly officers, but also two deputies, who were mistaken for leading Unionists.

The Unionists went underground or fled the capital. As a result, the Chamber of Deputies, in which the CUP held the majority, did not have a quorum. Nevertheless, the deputies who did attend accepted the soldiers' demands and at the same time issued a proclamation saying that *şeriat* and the constitution would be maintained.

From the first day on, the leaders of the *Ahrar* tried without success to turn the rebellion into a purely anti-CUP affair and to prevent it from moving into a reactionary, anti-constitutionalist and pro-Abdülhamit direction. The higher-ranking *ulema* united in the *Cemiyet-i İlmîye-i İslamiye* (Society of Islamic Scholars), meanwhile never supported the insurrection and, from 16 April onwards, openly denounced it.

The CUP had been driven out of Istanbul, but it had kept its position in the provinces, notably in Macedonia, and it immediately started to take countermeasures. It organized public demonstrations in provincial towns and showered the parliament and the palace with telegrams. In Macedonia especially it easily won the propaganda battle, convincing the population that the constitution was in danger. From 15 April the CUP started the organization of a military campaign against the rebels. The Action Army (*Hareket Ordusu*) put together for this campaign consisted of regular units led by the commander of the Third Army, Mahmut Şevket Pasha, reinforced by volunteer units, mostly Albanians, led by Niyazi Bey, one of the heroes of the revolution of 1908. By train, these troops were moved to the outskirts of Istanbul.

The Chamber of Deputies sent a delegation to army headquarters to try to prevent it from taking the city by force, but meeting no positive response, the delegation members decided to stay with the army and issued a call to their colleagues to join them. From 22 April onwards both chambers of parliament sat together in San Stefano (modern Yeşilköy) as a general national assembly (*meclis-i umumi-i millî*).

In the early morning of 24 April, the Action Army occupied the city without encountering much resistance. After the suppression of the revolt, and under martial law, two courts martial were instituted, which convicted and executed a large number of the rebels, including *Derviş*

Vahdeti. A number of *Ahrar* leaders were arrested, but set free again under British pressure. On 27 April, the two chambers of parliament, still sitting together, deposed Sultan Abdülhamit, who was succeeded by his younger brother Mehmet Reşit, who now ascended the throne as Sultan Mehmet V, a name chosen to bring to mind that of Mehmet II (who reigned from 1451 to 1481), the conqueror of Istanbul, the new sultan being a 'second conqueror' of the capital thanks to the actions of the Action Army.

Several different causes for the events of April 1909 can be discerned. Different groups had become disenchanted with the constitutional regime for different reasons. The overthrow of the old regime had hurt those who had earned a living or enjoyed status as members of the Hamidian apparatus, including the thousands of government spies active in Istanbul, who had supplied the sultan with their *journals*. The rationalizing policies of the new government aimed at ending the overstaffing of the government departments, which had been the result of the favouritism of the old regime. Thousands of civil servants of all ranks had already lost their jobs. In a city like Istanbul where government was the main source of income this had far-reaching consequences.

In the army, the main source of trouble was the friction between the *mektepli* officers, who had been trained in the military schools and academy, and the *alaylı* officers, who had risen through the ranks. The latter had been favoured by the old regime, being paid regularly and stationed in the First Army in and around Istanbul, while the former had been mistrusted (rightly so, because it was these modern educated officers who brought about the constitutional revolution of 1908). Now the *mektepli* officers had taken over. Many of the *alaylı* officers had been dismissed or demoted and worse: the whole system of promotion from the ranks was discontinued. The troops, too, had reason for discontent. They had been used to the slack discipline and relaxed atmosphere of the old army and were now confronted with young officers who wanted to impose Prussian training methods, among other things abolishing pauses for ablutions and prayers during exercises.

While no explicitly secularist legislation had been enacted in the eight months since the constitutional revolution, the lower *ulema* clearly felt threatened by the change in atmosphere, which the constitutional revolution had brought about. One particular measure that aroused feeling among this group was that students at religious schools who did not pass their exams in time were no longer exempted from military service.

The discord within the Young Turk ranks, with the *Ahrar* opposing what they saw as the Unionists' irresponsible policies and monopoly of power also helped to create the atmosphere in which the revolt could take place.

As to the question of who instigated the counter-revolution; the CUP laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of Sultan Abdülhamit and the religious opposition of the *İttihad-i Muhammadi* of Sheikh Vahdeti. At the time, the hand of the sultan was also seen in the fact that the insurgents had ample funds and that the soldiers had apparently been paid in gold. For the same reason some people suspected British involvement, pointing to the close relations between Britain and the Ottoman Liberals. Nevertheless, it is clear that all through the 11 days of the revolt, the sultan acted with extreme caution. While he did not openly disavow the soldiers, he never openly supported their demands or tried to lead their movement. When the Action Army entered the city, he apparently greeted it with relief and ordered the palace troops not to offer resistance. In his memoirs, he later denied having had anything to do with the revolt.

The demands formulated by the insurgents, and the evidence given before the courts martial and in the memoirs of opposition leaders, point to the political opposition, the *Ahrar*, as the prime movers. The selective way in which the insurgents attacked Unionist individuals and offices also supports this view. At the same time, it is clear that the religious opposition around Sheikh Vahdeti and the *İttihad-i Muhammedi* played an important part in organizing the uprising and in rousing the troops. Most probably the liberal opposition was the original instigator of the revolt. Overestimating its own strength, it thought it could use the religious groups, but soon after the start of the revolt it became clear that it was in no position to exert control.⁵

The counter-revolution of 1909 did not really spread to the provinces. There was, however, one instance of violence that can be linked to it. In the province of Adana a number of supporters of the *ancien régime* took the opportunity of the breakdown of central control to attack the Unionist representatives. The riot turned into a pogrom and a large number (possibly 20,000) of Armenian citizens were massacred. A parliamentary commission of enquiry was sent to Adana and 124 Muslims and seven Armenians were executed for their role in the riots.⁶

Political competition in 1909–13

The Committee had been badly shaken. The counter-revolution had shown up the fragility of the constitutional regime and of the type of modernizing policies the Committee stood for. In that sense it was both a traumatic experience and a lesson that would not be forgotten by the Unionists or by their successors after 1918.

The suppression of the counter-revolution left power in the hands of the army and more specifically in the hands of the commander in chief,

Mahmut Şevket Pasha, who was made inspector of the three main armies, the First (Istanbul), Second (Edirne) and Third (Monastir). Neither the cabinet of Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, nor that of his successor from December 1909, Hakkı Pasha, nor even the CUP was in a position to challenge his authority. The result was that for the next few years to all intents and purposes the army stood above the law (which in any case was martial law until July 1912). On the other hand, the Committee was given a free hand to carry through the legislative changes it desired as long as it left the army alone.

As a result, the Unionist-dominated chamber embarked on a programme of legislation that aimed at the consolidation of the constitutional order. In August 1909 a number of articles in the constitution were changed, finally establishing a really constitutional and parliamentary regime. From now on the sultan only had the right to appoint the grand vizier and the *şeyhülislam*. Parliament could now be dissolved only if the cabinet lost a vote of confidence and, in the event of dissolution, elections would have to take place within three months. Legislation and the conclusion of treaties became the prerogative of the parliament.

Following these constitutional changes, a number of laws were passed in the following months to strengthen central authority and to curb individual and collective freedoms. This was true of the new laws on public meetings, on associations, on brigandage, on strikes and of the new – and restrictive – press law. A new law on military service now imposed a duty to serve on all male Ottoman subjects, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Among the minorities, especially those of Greek descent, this change induced many young men to leave the country either physically or formally (by adopting foreign, mainly Greek, nationality).

The palace's diminished influence was apparent from the new budget in which expenditure on the royal family was cut by two-thirds. Finally, both the bureaucracy and the officer corps were trimmed and reorganized (the latter with Mahmut Şevket's consent), leading to cuts in salaries, early retirements and demotions. In the army, most of the officers who had risen from the ranks under Abdülhamit were now purged. All in all, more than 10,000, or roughly one-third, of the officers were removed over the next few years.⁷ All ranks were also reconsidered and many officers demoted.

Two problems that kept cropping up between 1909 and 1913 were the role of the military, namely the officers, in politics and the relationship between the – still secret – committee and the parliament it dominated.

The fact that relatively junior officers wielded great political influence through their position in the CUP played havoc with army discipline because the political hierarchy cut right through the military

hierarchy of the officer corps. Mahmut Şevket Pasha, who made it clear that in his view the army had intervened in April to save the constitution, not the Committee, urged the officers to devote themselves exclusively to their military work or else leave the army. In principle, the CUP agreed. Motions to the effect that officers should stay out of politics were adopted at CUP congresses more than once.

At the same time, however, the events of April had shown that the CUP eventually depended on its military members and its influence over the army for its political position. In spite of the fact that it clearly contravened the constitution, serving officers were allowed to sit in parliament. The interference of military men in politics and the politicization of the army were among the chief grudges of the opposition that re-emerged after 1910, but when it could not get its way, that same opposition organized an anti-Unionist movement within the army and threatened an armed insurrection. The dilemma was never solved during the second constitutional period. The same is true for the second problem, that of the relationship between the Committee and the parliament. The opposition reproached the CUP for exercising power without responsibility. In a reaction, the CUP decided to form a political party at its first congress in the autumn of 1908.

This party, however, which consisted of the Unionist members of parliament, did not replace the Committee but existed side by side with it. Because of its poor party discipline, the parliamentary faction was not fully trusted by the CUP leadership and as a result the CUP's internal regulations ensured that real power remained with the central committee and its secretary-general. The parliamentary party was given a greater say only after 1914, when parliament had anyhow become a rubber stamp institution.

The opposition, which had been crushed in April 1909, slowly re-emerged in the following years. Between 1909 and 1911 a number of new parties were formed, some by the CUP's old-established enemies and others by dissident Unionists who favoured a more liberal or more conservative line. In the first category were the *Mütedil Hürriyet-perveran Fırkası* (Party of Moderate Liberals) and the *İslahat-i Esasiye-i Osmaniye Fırkası* (Party of Fundamental Ottoman Reforms), founded towards the end of 1909. The second of these had its headquarters in Paris. The *Ahali Fırkası* (People's Party), founded in the spring of 1910 and the *Hizb-i Cedid* (New Party), founded early in 1911, belong to the second category. A former Unionist, Colonel Sadık, who had become disenchanted with the radical nationalist policies and secularist tendencies of the CUP, formed the last named party. Paradoxically, one of Sadık's main political demands was that the officers

should refrain from interfering in politics. He also demanded that the CUP should cease to be a secret society.

This period also saw the first emergence of organized socialist activity in the empire. There was a small circle of leftist intellectuals in Istanbul who opposed the way in which the Unionists had suppressed the trade unions and strike action after the constitutional revolution. The main figure in this group was the editor of the periodical *İştirak* (Participation), *Sosyalist* Hüseyin Hilmi. It was he who founded the *Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası* (Ottoman Socialist Party) in September 1910.

In spite of its name it was a progressive, liberal party rather than a real socialist one. It was a tiny group without representatives in parliament and without real influence. The Paris branch of the party, led by Dr Refik Nevzat, received some support from the French socialists.

The growth of opposition was given new impetus in 1910 with the outbreak of a large-scale insurrection in Albania and with the murder, on 9 June, of a prominent opposition journalist, Ahmet Samim. This was almost a repeat performance of the murder of Hasan Fehmi in 1909 and the Committee, fearing a repeat of the counter-revolution, had a number of leading opposition figures arrested in July on the pretext that a plot had been discovered. The opposition continued to grow, however, and by early 1911 the situation had become so serious that the CUP tried to placate the opposition by taking up a conciliatory position. A number of Unionist hardliners, among them Talât, resigned from the government and a new ten-point programme published on 23 April conceded the opposition's demands, as formulated by the increasingly influential Colonel Sadık. For the moment this seemed to placate the opposition and Hakkı Pasha's cabinet received a clear vote of confidence on 27 April, but the differences had only been papered over.

On 29 September Hakkı Pasha had to resign when Italy declared war and started to occupy Tripolitania, the last Ottoman province in Africa, and his cabinet had to shoulder the responsibility. He was succeeded by the veteran Sait Pasha, who now became grand vizier for the eighth time.

The opposition to the CUP was now gathering strength fast. In November almost all the opposition groups and parties united in one new party, called the *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası* (Party of Freedom and Understanding, or, by its French title, *Entente libérale*). This was a conglomerate of conservatives and liberals with hardly anything in common apart from their hatred for the CUP, but in the short term it was no less effective for that. Three weeks after its foundation, and to the surprise of all concerned, it managed to win a by-election in Istanbul, defeating the CUP candidate.

The Committee now decided that the time for action had come.

Where it had relied on parliament as its main weapon to control the government, the palace and the bureaucracy since 1908, it now saw it was losing its grip on parliament and it engineered its dissolution. The elections that followed in the spring of 1912 are known in Turkish history as the *sopalı seçim* (election with the stick), because of the violence and intimidation with which the CUP made sure of its majority. As a result, the new chamber was an obedient instrument of the Committee, only a handful of opposition candidates being elected. It lacked any legitimacy in the eyes of the opposition, which now took extra-parliamentary measures. In May and June 1912, Colonel Sadık and his friends demanded the resignation of the government and threatened armed intervention by a group called the *Halâskar Zabitan* (Saviour Officers) unless it complied. The Unionist-dominated chamber gave Sait Pasha a vote of confidence, but the old statesman resigned anyway because, as he said, he no longer had any confidence in the chamber.⁸ Almost simultaneously, Mahmut Şevket resigned in disgust over the continued political infighting within the army.

Sait Pasha was succeeded by a cabinet of national unity, also known as the 'Great Cabinet' because of the number of elder statesmen who figured in it. This new cabinet saw the political interference by officers and the CUP's irresponsible policies as the causes of the political chaos in the empire, and it made breaking the power of the Unionists, especially of the Unionist officers, its top priority. In this it was in agreement with Colonel Sadık and when he demanded the dissolution of parliament, it went along with him. The chamber tried to forestall dissolution by adjourning of its own accord, but it was dissolved nonetheless. On the home front, the following months saw the persecution of leading Unionists by the government, with many being sent into internal exile and others going underground or abroad. Bitter as they were, however, these party political struggles by the autumn of 1912 were completely overshadowed by the worst international crisis the empire had faced since 1878.

International politics: still the Eastern Question

The Young Turks had expected the re-establishment of the constitutional regime in the empire to earn it credibility and support in the liberal states of Western Europe. Britain was still the great example for the Young Turks and immediately after the revolution there were popular demonstrations of support for the British ambassador. Their expectations, however, were dashed almost immediately. In the days after the revolution, Austria-Hungary announced it was formally annexing the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina it had occupied

militarily in 1876; Bulgaria announced the union of Eastern Rumelia (the autonomous province created in 1876) with Bulgaria proper, which now also abrogated its (entirely theoretical) links with the Ottoman Empire and declared itself an independent kingdom; and Crete was united with Greece. Britain cold-shouldered the Unionists and together with the other great powers declined to intervene on behalf of the Ottomans. There was little the Ottomans could do. In the event, they organized a boycott of Austrian goods, which was quite effective (although it hit the Greek and Armenian importers of Austrian goods as much as it hit Austria) and earned the Ottomans financial compensation. The boycott is also interesting because it is the first example of a new style of politics, in which the leaders tried large-scale mobilization of the civil population.⁹

After these first blows, the pressure continued unabated for the rest of the decade. As in previous decades the pressures were both external (the designs of rival imperialist powers on Ottoman territory and the irredentism of the new Balkan states) and internal (the separatist movements among the non-Turkish communities of the empire).

Regional insurrections were of course nothing new. Indeed, they had become part of the normal state of things in the nineteenth century. What made the new regime more sensitive to these troubles was its ideological character. It had come to power claiming to represent all Ottoman communities, and the fact that the agitation of the guerrilla groups in, for instance, Macedonia continued as before meant a further disillusion for the CUP.

The greatest setback in this respect was the series of uprisings that broke out from March 1910 onwards among the Albanians. This community had a Muslim majority and some of its members had played an important role in the Ottoman administration and in the CUP itself (one of the foremost heroes of the revolution of 1908 and of the Action Army in 1909 had been an Albanian, Niyazi Bey). The insurrections in Kosovo in 1910, around the southern border of Montenegro in 1911 and again in Kosovo in 1912 had to do with the traditional causes of resistance to taxation and recruiting, but they were also a protest against the centralizing policies of the CUP. One particular problem was that of Unionist opposition to the introduction of the Latin script in Albanian schools. Most Muslim Albanians did not want to cut the ties with Istanbul completely at this time, but they did want far-reaching autonomy. In an attempt to regain the loyalty of the Albanians, the CUP sent Sultan Mehmet on a goodwill tour of Macedonia and Kosovo, on which he was accompanied by Niyazi Bey, in June 1911. After the long years of seclusion of Sultan Abdülhamit, this type of public relations

effort was quite a novel experience and one, which, as on the occasion of the new sultan's visits to the old Ottoman capitals of Bursa and Edirne the year before, was much appreciated by the public. Quite large numbers of Albanians turned up to meet the sultan and to pray with him at the gravesite of Sultan Murat I (who had died in 1389) in the plain of Kosovo,¹⁰ but the trip did not change anything about the fundamentals. As events of a year later would show, the Albanians could not be turned into a buttress of Ottoman power in the face of separatist pressures.

The second major revolt was in the Yemen. This mountainous corner of the Arabian peninsula had been under nominal Ottoman sovereignty since the mid-nineteenth century. The empire's hold over this far-away province was always tenuous, however, and by 1904 the hereditary ruler Imam Yahya had again revolted. Many Ottoman soldiers lost their lives in the endless small-scale warfare in the Yemen (indeed, 'Yemen' became synonymous with the plight of the Ottoman soldier in folklore, as the many sad 'Yemen songs' show), but in 1911 the two parties reached an agreement whereby the Yemen returned to nominal Ottoman control and the imam kept his autonomy. Thereafter, the Yemen remained loyal to the empire until the very end.

The pressure of imperialist expansion made itself felt in the competing projects of the British, French and German governments for economic spheres of influence in Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia, respectively, but the most immediate threat was Italian ambitions in North Africa. The province of Tripolitania (modern-day Libya) was economically and strategically insignificant, but it was also the last remaining part of the Ottoman Empire in Africa that had not been occupied by Britain or France. Expansion in Africa and in the eastern Mediterranean was seen in Italy as a precondition for the achievement of great power status and Italian diplomacy had persistently sought international approval of this expansion for two decades. By 1911 it had secured the tacit agreement of Britain, France and Russia and at least neutrality on the part of Germany and Austria and it went into action. On 28 September 1911 it presented the Ottoman government with an ultimatum, demanding Ottoman consent to the occupation of Tripolitania, on the pretext that Italian citizens there were being threatened by Muslim fanatics.

The Ottoman government rejected the ultimatum but gave a conciliatory reply. In spite of this Italy declared war the next day. The province was almost completely undefended and the Italian troops had little difficulty in occupying the coastal area. The Ottomans could not send an expeditionary force because of Italian control of the seas. While the government could or would do very little, the CUP demanded that countermeasures be taken, not so much because of any intrinsic value

of Tripolitania as because the loss of the province would seriously affect the credibility of the sultan's government in the eyes of its Arab subjects further east. When nothing was done, the Unionist officers within the CUP, led by Major Enver, decided to act. Some 50 officers went as volunteers (*fedai*) to Tripolitania via Egypt or Tunisia to galvanize the Arab resistance, which had already started under the leadership of the militant Sanusiya religious order. During the next year the bedouin troops led by these officers successfully harassed the Italians and prevented them from making much headway inland.

In the ensuing stalemate the Italians tried to force the issue by enlarging the scope of the struggle. In April 1912 they bombarded the Dardanelles. When actions in this area alarmed the great powers, they occupied the islands of the Dodecanese in May. The war dragged on until the Ottomans agreed to conclude peace, leaving both Tripolitania and the Dodecanese in Italian hands, on 17 October 1912, because by then a far more threatening situation had developed in the Balkans.

The point of no return: the Balkan War and the Bab-ı Ali coup

The new national states in the Balkans agreed on very little, but one thing they did agree on was the desirability of removing the Ottomans from Europe. What had kept them from effective action in this direction was disagreement over the division of the spoils and fear of the Ottoman army (after all, the last war in the Balkans, that of 1897, had ended in a resounding Ottoman victory). But in 1911–12 this situation changed. In March 1912, Serbia and Bulgaria, on the initiative of the former, concluded an alliance that was officially defensive in character but in reality aimed at the conquest of European Turkey. In May 1912, a very similar agreement was reached between Greece and Bulgaria. Montenegro and Serbia concluded an alliance by the beginning of October. In the meantime, the Ottoman–Italian war had shown up the political and military weakness of the empire, thus encouraging the Balkan states to act.

On 2 October 1912 the allied Balkan states (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria) issued a joint ultimatum to the Porte, demanding far-reaching reforms under foreign control in Macedonia. At the same time, they mobilized for war. The Ottoman government declared itself ready to implement all the reforms it had agreed to earlier, but it refused the kind of renunciation of its sovereignty the ultimatum implied. Thereupon Montenegro declared war on 8 October, followed by the other states. None of the great powers supported the war, but they were too divided to exert much influence in order to stop it.

The Ottoman plan of operations in the event of an attack such as had

occurred now envisaged a defensive war with the (heavily outnumbered) army withdrawing to eastern Thrace in the east and greater Albania in the west, while the troops in the Asiatic provinces were being mobilized. The new war minister, Nazim Pasha, however, was unfamiliar with the plans, while the former chief of staff who had drawn them up, Ahmet İzzet Pasha, was now serving in the Yemen.¹¹ As a result, the Ottoman army did not withdraw but fought the Serbians and the Bulgarians simultaneously and with disastrous results. After losing the battles of Kırkkilise (modern Kırklareli) and Lüleburgaz against the Bulgarians and Kumanovo against the Serbians, the army had to withdraw to the Çatalca lines just outside Istanbul. To the west, only a few fortress towns still held out: Yanina (modern Ioannina), Scutari (Üsküdar, modern Skhodër) and Edirne.

By November the situation was hopeless and on 3 December the Ottoman government agreed to an armistice. Ten days later two diplomatic conferences assembled in London, one of the belligerents and one of the great powers. The latter agreed on two points: the Ottomans were to remain in possession of Istanbul and the straits (in this context, both the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), and a new independent state of Albania was to be created – mainly at the insistence of Austria, whose primary policy objective was to prevent Serbia from gaining an outlet on the Adriatic Sea. The conferences could agree on precious little else, however, least of all on the division of the spoils in Europe and the new boundaries in Macedonia and Thrace. Negotiations were therefore pretty much deadlocked when news reached London of an armed coup d'état in Istanbul on 23 January 1913.

The Bab-ı Ali coup and the second phase of the Balkan War

The inner circle of the CUP, led by Enver and Talât, had probably already decided by the end of 1912 to force the government out of office for purely domestic reasons.¹² The persecution of the Unionists by the government was gathering pace in November when Kâmil Pasha, the CUP's old enemy, had taken over as grand vizier and the Committee's continued existence seemed under threat. The London conference gave it the chance to act, not in the name of party political interests but for patriotic reasons. The great power proposals, communicated to the Porte on 17 January, included handing over the town of Edirne to the Bulgarians.

This was an issue of great emotional importance since Edirne was a largely Muslim town and a former capital of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Bulgarians had been surrounding the town since October, but it was still holding out. When it became clear on 22 January that the

government would give in to the great powers, the Unionists had found their justification and so launched their coup the next day. A group of Unionist officers rode to the Porte, burst into the room where the cabinet was in session, shot the war minister and took the members of the cabinet prisoner, forcing Kâmil Pasha to resign. A new cabinet was formed and Mahmut Şevket Pasha returned as grand vizier and war minister.

Almost immediately after the coup the Balkan states announced the resumption of hostilities. The CUP insisted on an aggressive policy with counter-attacks from the Çatalca lines, but the state of the army and the state of the roads in the winter made this impossible. An attempt to land forces in the rear of the Bulgarian army at Şarköy to coincide with a breakout from the Gallipoli peninsula (which was still in Ottoman hands) failed through lack of coordination, leading to bitter recriminations among the military.¹³ A Bulgarian onslaught on the Çatalca lines was repulsed but on 26 March, starving Edirne fell. By May, even the Unionists had to recognize that the empire had no choice but to negotiate for peace. On 16 April, a new armistice was concluded. The Treaty of London, signed on 10 June, meant the loss of all territory to the north and west of a line from Enoz on the Aegean to Midye on the Black Sea, including Edirne.

In the meantime tension had been mounting between the different Balkan states. Romania, which had not taken part in the war, demanded compensation for the Bulgarian territorial gains. Serbia and Greece, dissatisfied with the division of the spoils in Macedonia, agreed on an anti-Bulgarian alliance. The Bulgarians, who were well aware of these combinations, decided on a pre-emptive strike against Serbia, which completely miscarried. It meant the start of a second Balkan war, in which Bulgaria was attacked from all sides. The CUP leadership pressed the government and the chief of staff to resume the offensive and when they hesitated and urged caution, a group of junior officers led by Enver, with the backing of the CUP, took the initiative and launched an attack on Edirne in July. Edirne was retaken and the Bulgarians were forced to sign the Constantinople peace agreement (29 September 1913), which restored the province of Edirne to the Ottoman Empire.

Nevertheless, the importance of the Ottoman losses in the Balkan War cannot be overstated. It was a disaster in human, economic and cultural terms. The empire lost nearly all its European territories, over 60,000 square miles in all, with nearly four million inhabitants. Again, as in 1878, Istanbul was deluged with Muslim refugees who had lost everything.¹⁴ There were severe outbreaks of typhus and cholera and a very high mortality rate among the refugees. Their resettlement caused enormous problems and many spent the next few years in squatter

towns. But the significance went even deeper: the areas lost (Macedonia, Albania, Thrace) had been core areas of the empire for over 500 years. They were the richest and most developed provinces and a disproportionate part of the Ottoman ruling elite hailed from them. Salonica, after all, had been the cradle of the CUP. A side effect of the losses was that now, for the first time in Ottoman history, ethnic Turks became a majority of the population.

The Teşkilat-i Mahsusa

An important role in the liberation of Edirne was played by a group of officers who had been known within the CUP as *fedais* (volunteers) since before the revolution of 1908. They can be seen as the Unionist shock troops who did the Committee's dirty work (such as political assassinations) and rallied to its defence in times of crisis. They were prominent in the episode of the Action Army in 1909 and many of them had served in Tripolitania, organizing the Arab guerrillas against the Italians. This circle was very close to Enver, who seems to have acted as their leader.¹⁵ After the retaking of Edirne, Enver directed members of the group to start a guerrilla movement in western Thrace, the area west of the Maritza River that was (and is) inhabited by Turkish-speaking Muslims. For this purpose they founded the Temporary Government of Western Thrace (*Garbi Trakya Hükümet-i Muvakatası*). Although it lasted for only two months (the Ottomans used it to put pressure on the Bulgarians at the peace talks and it was terminated once the desired concessions had been received), it served as an important 'laboratory' for the national resistance movement that would develop in Anatolia after the First World War.

The group of volunteer officers around Enver seems to have been known informally as the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* (Special Organization) in 1913. Its organization was formalized under that name in 1914 and put under the direct control of Enver as minister of war (as he had become by then). In the First World War it played an important behind-the-scenes role both in the suppression of separatist movements, especially in the Arab provinces, and also in the terror campaigns against Greek businesses in western Asia Minor. Its role in the Armenian question will be discussed separately. The *Teşkilât* also operated outside the empire, where it tried to fan Muslim resistance to the Russian, French and British administrations in their respective colonial empires. Though romantic and adventurous, these activities of Ottoman 'Lawrences' seem to have had little effect.

Little is known about the organizational structure of the *Teşkilât*, but it later had a political bureau, closely connected to the central com-

mittee of the CUP and led by Bahaettin Şakir. This part of the organization seems to have been to some degree separate from the military group under Enver.

The consolidation of Unionist power

After the January 1913 coup d'état the CUP was in complete control of the internal political situation. At first, the Liberal opposition was not persecuted. Its leaders were just told privately to stay out of politics. This changed when a supporter of the *Hürriyet ve İtilâf* assassinated the grand vizier, Mahmut Şevket Pasha, on 11 June 1913. There were widespread arrests and a number of people were sentenced to death. The Unionists now tightened their hold on the government even further: Talât entered the cabinet as minister of interior; Enver was promoted twice in quick succession and made a pasha and minister of war. Cemal, the military governor of the capital, was also promoted and given the rank of pasha. The new grand vizier was an Egyptian prince, Sait Halim Pasha, who was a member of the inner circle of the CUP but nevertheless wielded little real influence.

The regime that now developed has often been called the 'Triumvirate' of Enver, Cemal and Talât. This, however, is a simplification. The three men were certainly powerful: Enver controlled the army and Talât had great power within the Committee. Cemal was influential in national politics as long as he was governor of Istanbul, but less so after mid-1914. But Enver had his rivals in the army (not least of whom was Cemal). Within the Committee, local party bosses (called 'responsible secretaries' or 'inspectors') and Unionist provincial governors were often powerful and independent. The CUP was led by an inner circle of some 50 men, who belonged to a number of factions. In fact, Talât's great influence derived precisely from his recognized ability to reconcile the leaders of these factions.

During the period 1913–18, the inner councils of the CUP counted for much more in the conduct of policy than the cabinet, which was quite often faced with accomplished facts. Elections for a new parliament were held in the winter of 1913–14. The Liberal opposition party (the *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası*) had not been officially dissolved, but it did not participate and the parliament that emerged after the elections was a docile instrument of the CUP.

The entry of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War

Barely a year after the end of the Balkan War, the Ottoman Empire was at war again – for the last time. Ever since the First World War a debate has raged in Turkey over how and why the Unionist government of the

day decided to join the central powers in that war. The facts (and chronology) of the matter are as follows.

In the atmosphere of quickly rising international tension after the murder of the Austrian crown prince, Archduke Ferdinand, by Serbian nationalists in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, the Unionist government of the Ottoman Empire tried to interest the major powers in the conclusion of an alliance. The Balkan War had shown up the empire's diplomatic isolation and the Unionists were convinced that continued isolation would mean the end of the empire. Basically, they were prepared to accept any alliance rather than continued isolation.

First, Cemal Pasha approached the government in Paris, but was brushed off. France and Britain had good relations with Russia at the top of their agendas and, as far as the Levant was concerned, after the Balkan War they expected more from collaboration with an alliance of Balkan states than from an Ottoman connection. The Unionists then turned their eyes to the central powers. Austria-Hungary had sent out feelers about the possibilities of an anti-Serbian alliance with the Ottomans and both Talât and Enver had responded encouragingly. On 28 July Enver, in a conversation with German ambassador Wangenheim, openly proposed a defensive alliance with Germany. When relayed to Berlin, this proposal received Kaiser Wilhelm II's personal support.

In the days that followed a small circle of Young Turk leaders (Grand Vizier Sait Halim Pasha, Enver Pasha, Talât Pasha, President of the Chamber Halil) negotiated in deepest secrecy with the Germans on the details of an agreement. Not even the other cabinet members, including leading figures like Finance Minister Cavit, Cemal Pasha or *Şeyhülislam* Hayri Efendi were informed. On 2 August 1914 the agreement was signed at the private residence of Sait Halim Pasha on the Bosphorus. The eight articles of this momentous document are as follows:

1. Both parties would remain neutral in any Austro-Serbian conflict.
2. If Russia entered the conflict and forced Germany to do so too, the Ottoman Empire would join the central powers.
3. The German military mission would remain in Turkey and be given an effective role to play under the Ottoman high command.
4. Germany would protect Ottoman territory.
5. The agreement would enter into effect immediately and remain in force until 31 December 1918.
6. The agreement would automatically be renewed for five years unless one of the parties decided otherwise.
7. The sultan and the kaiser would ratify the agreement within a month.
8. The agreement would remain secret.¹⁶

It is important to note that this agreement was concluded one day after Russia had mobilized against both Austria and Germany. It must be assumed that the Ottoman leaders were aware of this, so the question arises of what induced them to sign an agreement that they knew must lead to war? Apart from the fear of isolation mentioned earlier, two other factors probably played a part. The first was that, alone among the great powers, the German Empire was ready to sign an agreement with the Ottomans as equal partners – a very important point for the Unionists who had been trying to emancipate the country from its semi-colonial status. The second was a miscalculation. The Ottomans were unaware that German strategic planning was dependent on knocking Russia's ally France out of the war first, by means of an enveloping movement through Belgium – something that would bring not only France, but almost certainly also Britain into the war. They probably expected a war with Russia only, and in that war they could expect Germany and Austria to win. Victory over Russia in turn could be expected to yield concrete results in the Caucasus and the Balkans. When the conflict turned out to be much wider, the pro-German faction among the Unionists decided to take the plunge anyway.

The Ottoman Empire was in no condition to fight a serious war, militarily, economically or in terms of internal communications. The Germans were well aware of this, but for them the attraction of the Ottoman alliance lay not in the contribution of the Ottoman army to the war, which was generally expected to be over in a few months, but in its effect on Muslims in the colonial empires of France and Britain and on the Balkan states. In addition, the Ottomans could effectively block Russian ship movements through the Straits.

Immediately after the signing of the secret treaty, parliament was adjourned and the government began to prepare public opinion for war. In this, it was handed a trump card by the British government.

To counter the growing force of the Greek navy, the Ottomans had ordered two modern battleships from Britain in 1911. By mid-1914 the two ships, which had been paid for in part by popular subscription through the *Donanma Cemiyeti* (Fleet Society) all over the empire, were ready, but delivery was delayed because of extra tests and because of problems with the final payments. A party of Ottoman officers and seamen was already in England to take delivery and the final payments had been made when, on 1 August, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, requisitioned them on behalf of the British government (something that would have been legal had Britain been at war, which it was not). This gave rise to intense indignation in the Ottoman Empire, something the Germans exploited adroitly by ordering their

Mediterranean squadron, consisting of the battleship *Goeben* and the light cruiser *Breslau* to set sail for the Dardanelles. After an epic journey, being hunted by the whole French and British Mediterranean fleets, the ships reached the Straits on 10 August. On the orders of Enver Pasha they were let through the minefields. When Britain demanded their extradition (the Ottoman Empire after all was still neutral at this time), they were bought by the Ottoman government from the Germans for a nominal sum and incorporated into the Ottoman navy.

With the Russian entry into the war, the *casus foederis* had arisen and the Ottomans were under a clear obligation to join in the fighting, but the Unionist government managed to postpone a declaration of war on the grounds that the empire was unprepared and could not go to war without first receiving sizeable German subsidies and armaments. In fact, Enver Pasha would have preferred to delay the declaration of war until the spring of 1915, but when the German government increased its pressure and gave the necessary financial guarantees, the war could no longer be postponed. The decision to fight was taken on 25 October¹⁷ and two days later an Ottoman naval squadron, led by the German admiral Souchon on the *Yavuz Sultan Selim* (as the *Goeben* was now called), set sail with explicit orders from Enver to attack the Russian fleet and achieve naval superiority in the Black Sea. By 11 November the Ottoman Empire was at war with Russia, France and Britain.

The Ottoman Empire during the First World War

When expectations of a short war proved unfounded and the campaign on the western front developed into trench warfare by late 1914, the importance of the Ottoman contribution in German eyes increased. The sultan officially declared Holy War (*Cihat*) after consulting the *şeyhülislam* on 14 November. Expectations about the effect of this declaration on the Muslim inhabitants of the colonies of the Entente (and of Russian Central Asia) were very high among the Germans (though less so among most Ottomans), but in spite of a considerable propaganda effort by the Ottoman government, mainly through the *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa*, its effect was negligible. Despite their doubts about the Ottomans' military strength, the Germans encouraged an offensive strategy. The operational plans developed by the German chief of the Ottoman general staff, Bronsart von Schellendorf, envisaged attacks on the Suez Canal and on Russian Transcaucasia. Enver Pasha enthusiastically embraced these plans.

On the Caucasus front, the Russians were the first to attack in November, but the Ottoman army managed to stop them. A counter-offensive under the personal command of Enver Pasha started at the

end of December. After a successful start, the Ottomans were heavily defeated at Sarıkamış, on the road to Kars, in January. Only 12,000 out of 90,000 troops survived, most of the others dying of cold and exhaustion crossing a mountain ridge in the dead of winter.

The Armenian question

This military fiasco left eastern Anatolia open to a Russian advance, which duly materialized when the weather improved. It also marked the beginning of the suppression of the Ottoman Armenians, still a controversial issue 75 years later.

The Armenian community formed an important part of the population of the eastern Anatolian provinces although in no province did they constitute a majority or even a plurality (unless one counts Turks, Kurds and other Muslim communities separately, something the Ottomans never did). Estimates of the total number of Armenians in the empire vary, but a number of around 1,500,000, some 10 per cent of the population of Ottoman Anatolia, is probably a reasonable estimate.

After the troubles of 1896, the situation in the east had normalized to some extent, but relations between the local Armenians and Muslims, especially the Kurds, remained tense and there were frequent clashes. In May 1913, representatives of the *Dashnakzutioun* had demanded the establishment of a foreign gendarmerie to protect the Armenians in eastern Anatolia. The CUP government had approached the British about this matter and the latter had discussed it with the French and Russian governments. In February 1914 agreement was reached about the establishment of two inspectorates with far-reaching powers in eastern Anatolia and a Norwegian and a Dutch inspector were appointed in May. The outbreak of war prevented the scheme from being put into operation.

At the outbreak of the war, Armenian nationalists saw in a Russian victory their chance to achieve the establishment of an Armenian state in eastern Anatolia. Russian propaganda encouraged these aspirations. A few thousand Armenians joined the Russian army; there were Armenian desertions from the Ottoman army and guerrilla activity behind the Ottoman lines. Confronted with this situation, the Ottoman army started sporadic deportations in the area behind the front. A number of relatively small-scale massacres occurred. By the end of March, the central committee of the CUP in all probability took a decision to relocate the entire Armenian population of the war zone to Zor in the heart of the Syrian desert, and eventually from there to southern Syria and Mesopotamia. An uprising by the Armenians in the provincial capital Van, to the rear of the retreat, heightened the sense of urgency. Deportations started in earnest in May. They were then

sanctioned retrospectively by official cabinet decisions on 27 and 30 May 1915. By the summer of 1915 eastern and central Anatolia had been cleared of Armenians. This was followed by the deportation of the Armenians in the west, which took until the late summer of 1916 to complete. Although in broad terms the deportations followed a very similar pattern, the execution varied from place to place. In some places, the families were given 24 hours notice, in others several days. In some they were allowed to sell their possessions, in others these were ‘taken into custody’ by the authorities. In some places carts and donkeys were allowed, in others everyone had to go on foot. The caravans of Armenian deportees were guarded by *gendarmerie* troops, who often acted very brutally. Although the numbers of *gendarmes* accompanying the caravans was tiny, the victims apparently were so shocked into submission that we find almost no instances of resistance.

These deportations (officially called relocation – *tehcir*) resulted in the deaths of enormous numbers of Armenians. So much is undisputed historical fact. The controversies rage on three points. The first is the military necessity of the operation. Turkish historians and their supporters point to the treasonable activities of many Armenians during the war and to the difficulty of knowing which Armenians would remain loyal and which would side with the Russians. The other side has – correctly – pointed out that the deportations were not limited to the war zone but took place all over the empire.

The second controversy is over numbers: Turkish historians have put the number of deaths as low as 200,000, while the Armenians have sometimes claimed ten times as many. The reason for the discrepancy, propaganda apart, lies in the differing estimates of the number of Armenians who lived in the empire before the war and of the numbers who emigrated. Between 600,000 and 800,000 deaths seems most likely.¹⁸

The third and most important controversy concerns intent, and whether genocide was committed. The Turkish side and its supporters claim that the situation in eastern Anatolia was one of inter-communal warfare, in which Armenian bands (supported by the Russian army) and Kurdish tribes (supported by Turkish *gendarmes*) struggled for control. They also recognize that the local Muslim population (especially the Kurds) subjected the Armenians sent to Syria to vicious attacks, but they attribute this to lack of control on the part of the Ottoman government rather than to its policies. They point out that the official records of the Ottoman government do not, as far as is known, contain any documents that demonstrate government involvement in the killings. The Armenian side has tried to demonstrate this involvement, but some of the documents it has produced (the so-called Andonian papers) have

been shown to be forgeries. Many of the British and American publications on this issue from the time of the First World War that purport to prove government involvement also bear a heavy stamp of wartime propaganda. On the other hand, the same cannot be said of wartime German sources that also report government involvement. Many Germans were shocked at what they saw and tried to convince the government in Berlin that it should act, but the *raison d'état* dictated that the German imperial government moved very cautiously in order not to endanger the alliance and, anyhow, the Ottoman government made it very clear that it brooked no interference in this matter.

What, then, are we to conclude? From the eyewitness reports not only of German, Austrian, American and Swiss missionaries but also of German and Austrian officers and diplomats who were in constant touch with the Ottoman authorities, from the evidence given to the postwar Ottoman tribunal investigating the Armenian massacres and even, to a certain extent, from memoirs of Unionist officers and administrators, we have to conclude that even if the Ottoman *government* as such was not involved in genocide, an inner circle within the Committee of Union and Progress under the direction of Talât wanted to 'solve' the Eastern Question by the extermination of the Armenians and that it used the relocation as a cloak for this policy. A number of provincial party chiefs assisted in this extermination, which was organized primarily through the *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa* under the direction of its political director (and CUP central committee member) Bahaettin Şakir. Some provincial governors, like Dr Mehmet Reşit in Diyarbakır, were themselves instigators of large-scale persecutions, but there were also governors and army officers who refused to cooperate. These, however, were overruled or replaced. The party bosses took the real decisions 'on the ground' in this matter.

The fact that the records of the *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa* have been destroyed and those of the CUP lost makes it hard, if not impossible, to prove the exact extent of the involvement of the different persons and institutions, but it can no longer be denied that the CUP instigated a centrally controlled policy of extermination.

The pattern of this extermination was roughly the same everywhere (in itself a powerful argument for the existence of a coordinated policy). The men and boys (except the very young and the very old) were separated from the women right at the start of the deportation. The men were then killed either directly outside the town of departure or in 'killing fields' somewhere further along the route. The men recruited into the army were especially vulnerable. On 25 February, after the disaster at Sarıkamış, desertions had increased and an order had gone out to disarm all Armenian soldiers. These had then been assigned to

the labour battalions in which most Armenians served already. Once the killings started these were, of course, sitting ducks.

The deportees were generally treated very harshly during their marches to the Syrian desert and those who survived the marches were interned in camps along the Euphrates River, without any provisioning whatsoever. Most of them died of exposure, starvation or disease. The attitude of the population in the areas the caravans had to cross, differed from time to time and from place to place. Sometimes the Armenians were attacked by villagers or tribes and robbed of their remaining possessions or even killed, but equally there are instances of poor peasants sharing their food with the deportees or of tribes rescuing them. Quite large numbers of Armenian girls ended up in Muslim households and converted. Although the motives for taking them in were often far from altruistic, this undoubtedly saved many lives.¹⁹

If we accept that at least a group within the CUP consciously strove for the extermination of what was, after all, part of their own population, we also have to ask why. The main reason was without doubt nationalistic, but not, as many Armenian scholars believe, pan-Turkist ambition. Clearing the road to Central Asia may have been a motive for some, but pan-Turkism remained a fairly marginal movement at least until 1917. Ottoman Muslim nationalism became very strong, however, after 1912. The fact that at least a quarter of the Muslim population of Anatolia now consisted of *muhaçirs*, refugees – or children of refugees – from areas in the Balkans, the Black Sea region or the Caucasus that Christian states had conquered, added bitterness to the ethnic tensions. These people remembered how they or their parents had been forced to leave their ancestral homes, often more than once, and were determined not to let this happen again.

The massacres were not motivated by any kind of bogus racial theory (this is a major difference with the Nazi persecution of the Jews during the Second World War). It is true, however, that many Young Turks had come under the influence of biological materialism and social Darwinism and saw the world in terms of a struggle for survival between different nations. In this worldview, the Ottoman Armenians and Greeks could easily be viewed as ‘microbes’ or ‘tumours’ endangering the health and survival of the Ottoman ‘body’ and it is significant that we encounter this kind of terminology in the statements of those involved in the persecutions.²⁰

Attacks on the Suez Canal

In January 1915 there was a first attempt to take the Suez Canal when 20,000 troops crossed the Sinai desert in ten days, but their attempt to

cross or cut off the canal was defeated. Nor was there an anti-British insurrection in Egypt to support the 'holy war', as had been expected. The Ottoman army withdrew to southern Palestine with relatively light casualties. A second attempt to attack the canal, in 1916, also failed.

Offensives by the Entente

After these first Ottoman attempts, the initiative lay squarely with the Entente. The first offensive action by the British was the landing of two Indian divisions at the top of the Persian Gulf to protect British oil installations in the Gulf (which had gained in importance after the British navy started its conversion from coal to oil). On the Sinai front, the Ottoman attempts on the Suez Canal had awakened the British government to its vulnerability and 1915–16 saw a gradual building-up of the forces there in preparation for an offensive.

The main thrust of the Entente, however, was aimed at the Dardanelles. The – strategically undoubtedly correct – assumption was that forcing the Straits and occupying Istanbul would at one stroke cut off the Ottoman Empire from German aid and make it possible to supply and strengthen the Russian front. It would also probably convince the wavering Balkan states to join the Entente. After deadlock had been reached on the western front, this seemed a golden opportunity to defeat Germany through the back door.

A first attempt to force the Straits was made during February and March of 1915. This was a purely naval operation, in which French and British warships tried to silence the Ottoman batteries and then to sweep the minefields in the Dardanelles. But when heavy losses were sustained on 18 March, the operation was cancelled and it was decided to launch an amphibious attack, involving landings on the coast of Asia Minor and on the Gallipoli peninsula. The first landings took place on 25 April. British and Australian troops occupied a number of beaches but they were fought to a standstill before they could reach the top of the ridges that dominate the peninsula. New landings in August brought no breakthrough either and, by January 1916, the Entente troops had evacuated their positions. For the Ottomans this victory over Britain was a source of tremendous national pride, but at the same time the battles at Gallipoli were by far the most costly of the war for them. They had perhaps as many as 300,000 casualties.²¹

The other major success for the Ottoman armies also came in 1916. The British Indian expeditionary force, which had been moving up the Tigris in the direction of Baghdad, was surrounded and forced to surrender at Kut al-Amara in July and 13,000 prisoners of war were interned. The commander, General Townshend, spent the rest of the

war in Istanbul; his soldiers spent it in prisoner camps in Anatolia, where they were often employed in forced labour.

Ottoman divisions did not only fight on Ottoman territory. At the request of the German general staff they were also sent to assist the Germans and Austrians in Romania and Galicia and the Bulgarians in Macedonia. Sending these troops to Europe was a luxury the empire could ill afford, because from the second half of 1916 things began to go wrong on all fronts. The Russians continued to advance into Anatolia, eventually taking Trabzon, Erzurum and Van and supplies of weapons and gold and promises of independence from Britain induced the hereditary Ottoman governor of Mecca, Sharif Huseyn, to start an Arab war of independence. At first this was no more than a nuisance, but with the help of British officers and equipment it gradually grew into a serious menace over the next two years; at the same time, British armies were methodically building up their strength in Mesopotamia and on the Palestinian front.

In March 1917, the British expeditionary force took Baghdad and moved on upstream. In Palestine, two attempts by the British to break through at Gaza failed in the spring. The Ottoman army suffered from hunger and disease. In winter, lice in hair and clothing carried typhus. It could be eradicated, but only through effective cleaning of the men and heating of the clothes, for which both water and fuel were often lacking. Malaria struck in summer, particularly in the wetter coastal plains or in places with stagnant water. In late summer and early autumn, cholera, caused by contaminated drinking water, was the greatest killer. In addition, lack of vitamins caused widespread scurvy. The army on the whole was relatively well armed (by the Germans, partly with Belgian and Russian weapons), but otherwise its equipment was dismal. By 1917, the soldiers were dressed in rags and they often went barefoot. Conditions were so bad that soldiers deserted in droves. It was not unusual for divisions to lose half their strength or more on the way from Istanbul to the front (often a journey of a month and a half) and by the end of the war there were more than half a million deserters.²² The army reached a maximum strength of 800,000 in 1916. By 1917 its strength was halved and by October 1918 only 100,000 men remained in the field. Its main problem was the complete lack of transport facilities. The railways were single-track and they did not yet run through the Taurus and Amanos ranges, so there was no direct rail link between Anatolia (and the capital) and the front. This meant that, to take one example, ammunition imported from Germany had to be loaded and unloaded a total of twelve times to reach the front in Palestine. Instead of strengthening the existing fronts, the German

reaction to the reversals was to prepare a counter offensive against Baghdad, for which a new army group called *Yıldırım* (Lightning) was formed in Aleppo under the former German chief of staff, von Falkenhayn. More than 13,000 German troops were sent to Aleppo, but by the time they arrived, the situation in Palestine had become so threatening that they were sent there instead of to Baghdad. Despite this, the British army broke through the lines at Gaza in December and took Jerusalem just before Christmas 1917.

The only positive development of the year from the Ottoman point of view was that after the Russian revolution of November 1917 the Russian government asked for an armistice. At the following peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk (December-March 1918), the Russians agreed to evacuate eastern Anatolia, including the areas they had conquered in 1878, but while negotiations were going on at Brest, the Russian army in Anatolia was collapsing and Turkish forces retook the area. The most stubborn resistance was offered by Armenian troops, whom the Russians had now deserted. Thousands of other Armenians retreated with the Russian troops to the east.

After the Russian revolution, in December 1917, anti-Bolshevik groups in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan had formed the Republic of Transcaucasia with its capital in Tblisi. This republic refused to recognize the restoration of the border of 1876, whereupon Ottoman troops forcibly occupied the area and the Ottoman government raised its territorial demands beyond what had been agreed at Brest-Litovsk. The Russian revolution had given a new impetus to pan-Turkist ideas, and Enver Pasha himself now strongly favoured the idea of a new empire built on a union with the Turkic areas in Central Asia to replace the areas lost in the Near East. In spite of the dangerous situation on the Mesopotamian and Palestinian fronts, he sent the divisions that returned from Galicia to the Caucasus instead of to the south. When the Transcaucasian republic collapsed in May 1918, the Germans, who were primarily interested in access to the Baku oilfields, tried to restrain the Ottomans, but Enver pressed on and Ottoman troops occupied Azerbaijan in September. The Bolsheviks repudiated the Brest-Litovsk treaty in protest, but there was little they could do in practice.

By the time the Ottoman army entered Baku, the war had already been lost. From 8 August onwards the German army in France was slowly but relentlessly forced to retreat. On 20 September the British army made its decisive breakthrough on the Palestinian front in the battle of Megiddo and the remnants of the Ottoman army retreated to the north. A British-French expeditionary force from Salonica defeated Bulgaria, which had joined the central powers in 1915 and had formed

a vital link between Germany, Austria and the Ottoman Empire, on 29 September. It surrendered on 2 October.

The Unionist government now realized that it had no choice but to sue for an armistice. It also foresaw that negotiations involving the wartime leadership (whose members the Entente had branded as war criminals) would be difficult. The cabinet therefore resigned and was replaced with one led by General Ahmet İzzet Pasha. After some preliminary talks in which General Townshend was the intermediary, an armistice was signed between an Ottoman delegation led by Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay) and the commander of the British squadron anchored in Moudros in the Aegean, Admiral Calthorpe, on 31 October 1918.

Reform policies 1913–18: social and cultural change

The CUP used the monopoly of power it acquired in January 1913 and the fact that, through the abolition of the capitulations in October 1914, it was master in its own house for the first time during these years, to force through a programme of political and social reforms.

Part of this programme was concerned with administrative reform, first of all in the army. As we have seen, in January 1914 Enver, the hero of the liberation of Edirne, was promoted twice, given the title of pasha and made war minister. As soon as he was appointed he embarked on a massive reorganization of the army. A large part of the older officer corps was purged and a German military mission of 70 officers led by General Liman von Sanders was given the task of reforming the army. In contrast to earlier military missions, the members of this one were given actual commands and, especially during the First World War when their number increased tenfold to more than 700 officers,²³ they wielded great influence. A German officer, Bronsart von Schellendorf, was even appointed chief of general staff directly under Enver.

There were also renewed attempts to reform the provincial administration, making it more effective, while introducing a measure of decentralization. In this respect, the policies of the CUP in 1913–14 contrasted with those of the previous five years. The decentralization policies were aimed primarily at winning over the Arabs, now by far the largest minority of the empire, to the side of the regime. These policies were only partly successful. While many Arab notables supported the Unionists, Arab separatist groups, such as *al-Ahd* (the Oath), led by former Unionist officer Aziz Ali al-Misri, continued their agitation.

Another aspect was the further secularization of the judicial and educational systems and the further undermining of the position of the *ulema*. In 1916, the *şeyhülislam*, the highest religious dignitary, was removed from the cabinet and during the next year his jurisdiction was

limited on all sides. In 1917 the *şeri* (religious law) courts were brought under the control of the (secular) Ministry of Justice, the religious colleges (*medreses*) were brought under the Ministry of Education and a new Ministry of Religious Foundations was created to administer the *evkaf* (charitable foundations). At the same time the curriculum of the higher *medreses* was modernized, even the study of European languages being made compulsory.

Family law remained the territory of the *şeriat*; but inroads were made even in this stronghold of the Islamic state. In 1913 a new law of inheritance, based on the German code, had been introduced. In 1911 a law regulating the court procedure in religious courts had been introduced and a decree had laid down a uniform family law for all Ottoman subjects, based on a modernist selection of regulations from all four of the orthodox Muslim schools of law. The law included a number of special arrangements for non-Muslims.

Partly due to the policies of the CUP and partly as a result of the effects of the First World War, the position of women changed, at least of middle and upper class women in the cities. Their right to take the initiative for divorce was expanded, but polygamy was never prohibited. Under the family law of 1917, marriages had to be concluded before a magistrate and brides had to be aged over 16 (although the magistrate could grant exemptions). The Young Turks encouraged women to take part in social life and middle and upper class women started to appear in public with their husbands and to go to theatres and musical performances. At the Turkish nationalist clubs of the Turkish Hearth movement (see ideological debates on page 127 below), women not only listened to speeches, but also gave them. Most important of all perhaps were the educational opportunities the Unionist regime created. Girls profited from the growing number of schools on different levels. Furthermore, primary education was made compulsory for girls in 1913. With respect to higher education, this was at first limited to teacher training colleges (which were expanded rapidly after 1913), though from 1914 onwards a number of courses were opened to women at the University of Istanbul.

Before the First World War few Ottoman women had paid jobs, though a relatively high percentage of the small industrial labour force consisted of women and children. As in other belligerent countries, the lack of manpower caused by the mobilization of the men had to be compensated for by women and this hastened the entry of women into the labour market. The Unionists even founded a Society for the Employment of Women (*Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti*), which tried to recruit women for service in industry and to regulate their working conditions.²⁴

Quite apart from the content of their policies, the whole style of politics was much altered during these last five years of CUP rule. The Unionists tried to mobilize all the country's available resources through the establishment of nationalist organizations – with the word *millî* (national) in their names – the most important of which was the Committee of National Defence (*Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*) established in 1913 to create a strong 'home front' during the Balkan War. Participation in politics became much wider. The political game became less elitist. At the same time it also became more brutal. Finally, an important part of the reform programme executed after 1913 consisted of efforts to free the economy from the control of foreigners and Ottoman Christians.

Finance and economics: from liberalism to nationalism

It was no coincidence that the first real Unionist to enter the cabinet was the financial expert Mehmet Cavit Bey, who became minister of finance in June 1909. One of the reasons for the emergence of the Young Turk movement had been the anger of younger members of the ruling elite at the almost colonial economic situation to which the empire had sunk. The CUP was very conscious of the need to attain economic independence if the revolution was to yield meaningful results. In the period between the revolution and the Balkan War, they tried to achieve this through reforms and negotiations.

The Unionists approached the economic situation from a classically liberal point of view. They aimed to encourage the growth of trade and industry by removing traditional barriers and modernizing legislation on transactions and ownership (for instance the land law of 1911 and the inheritance law of 1913). The CUP supported free trade and did not yet see the Ottoman Empire's position as a peripheral producer of raw materials, in a fundamentally weaker situation than the liberal states of Western Europe or America, as a reason for protectionism. In Cavit's eyes foreign investment and imported foreign management skills were crucial and he did his best to encourage them whenever he could, even approaching the Japanese government (Japan being the great example for many Young Turks) with a request for experts.

Internally the CUP sided with the capitalists. This is clear from the way it suppressed social unrest and strike actions in the years after 1908 and from the labour-relations legislation it enacted, which favoured the entrepreneurs. In the countryside, the Unionists protected the property rights of the landowners and while they actively encouraged modernization and investment in agriculture (through irrigation projects, infrastructural works and credit facilities), they never attempted to redistribute land or to end the practice of sharecropping.

While encouraging foreign trade and investment, the government also tried to put its own financial house in order, improving the inspection and collection of taxes. As a result government revenue went up by nearly 25 per cent. In December 1909 Cavit published the first realistic and modern budget of the Ottoman Empire, without any attempt to disguise the country's financial problems. This meant, of course, that estimates of expenditure also had to go up. The Unionists hoped and even expected that the combination of liberalism and responsible financial policies would earn them the respect and cooperation of the European powers, which would then be prepared to relinquish the privileges they had under the capitulations and deal with the Ottomans on equal terms.

In these expectations they were disappointed. Foreign investment did not rise spectacularly with the introduction of the constitution. On the contrary, foreigners were frightened by the nationalism of the new regime. Negotiations with the European powers on modification or gradual abolishment of the capitulations led nowhere and even attempts to raise the customs tariffs by 4 per cent were at first frustrated by the powers. The greatest setback was the refusal of France and Great Britain to grant the Ottoman Empire a loan on acceptable terms in 1910. Most of the Ottoman loans had been placed in the European markets, primarily that of Paris, by consortia led by the Anglo-French Ottoman Bank. Since 1881 all of them had been guaranteed by the board of the Public Debt Administration, which was considered much more reliable than the Ottoman government.

In 1909–10 the Ottoman government again needed to borrow money. Pensioning off of large numbers of civil servants, which accompanied the reduction of the overstaffing in government departments, was expensive in the short run and Mahmut Şevket Pasha's unassailable position as *generalissimo* meant that Cavit was powerless to curb the steeply rising military expenditure. So he went to France to seek a loan of about 11 million Turkish pounds, but he refused as contrary to the dignity and independence of the empire the conditions of the Ottoman Bank, which meant having the loan guaranteed by the Public Debt Administration and allowing French supervision of the Ottoman finances. As a result, the negotiations with the Ottoman Bank broke down. Shortly afterwards, Cavit managed to reach agreement with another French consortium, but the French government wanted to make a point of putting the Young Turks in their place and refused to let the loan be floated on the Paris stock exchange. In this, it was backed by Britain. At this crucial moment in the showdown the Deutsche Bank, on instructions of the German government, intervened to let the Ottomans know that they were prepared to offer a loan without strings attached.

An agreement was duly signed, saving Cavit's position and earning the Germans a great deal of goodwill in Istanbul.

There were a few people who drew attention to the semi-colonial position of the Ottoman Empire and to the naiveté of Young Turk economic policies, advocating a much more nationalist economic policy. Chief among them was Alexander Helphand, also known by his pen name Parvus. Helphand was a Russian Jew who had emigrated to Germany as a young man and joined the socialist movement there.

After the 1905 revolution in Russia, he had returned and served on the St Petersburg soviet together with Trotsky. After 1912 he combined the functions of journalist, German agent, arms dealer and Marxist intellectual, settling in Istanbul. As an orthodox Marxist, he did not advocate a socialist revolution for the empire (seeing it as irrelevant for a country without an industrial proletariat), but he advocated nationalist economic policies and the building of an indigenous merchant and industrial bourgeoisie in a number of influential articles in the journal *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish homeland).

Parvus's ideas gained in influence from 1913 onwards. In the context of the national mobilization after the Bab-ı Ali coup, the state, now completely dominated by the CUP, began to intervene more actively in the economy. In the following years this new direction evolved into the policies of *Millî İktisat* (National Economy), in which nineteenth century German industrialization served as an example. Any nationalist economic programme could, of course, be fully implemented only if the government were master in its own house first and abolished the capitulations that kept it in a subordinate position to Europe. This chance came with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Immediately after the signing of the secret Ottoman–German pact, on 2 August 1914, the Ottoman government announced that it had suspended payment on the national debt.

With the great powers occupied elsewhere, the Unionist government announced in September 1914 that it would unilaterally abolish the capitulations from 1 October. The powers reacted furiously, but there was little they could do about it. Germany first joined in the protest, but later reached an agreement with the Ottomans, recognizing the abolition. Two years later the government unilaterally changed the system of import duties, finally replacing the old system of *ad valorem* taxation, based exclusively on the money value of the imported goods, with specific tariffs for the different imported goods – a further protectionist measure that gave the government more room to pursue an economic policy.

Even before the war, in June 1914, a Law on the Encouragement of Industry had been promulgated, which stipulated that products of

Ottoman industry would be preferred, even if they were as much as 10 per cent more expensive than the imported equivalent. A national consumer society was also founded. Echoing Parvus's ideas, the government sought to build a strong national bourgeoisie by forming entrepreneurial cadres; candidates for these cadres were recruited from among Muslim traders in the provincial towns, from the guilds and even from among bureaucrats. The government encouraged the members of this embryonic bourgeoisie to accumulate capital by making use of the exceptional market conditions during the war, which made profiteering possible.

The victims of these policies were the consumers in the cities and above all the Greek and Armenian entrepreneurs, who were not only obliged to use Turkish in their administration and on their shop windows and to take Turks onto the boards of their companies, but were also subjected to discrimination. A campaign of threats and intimidation, orchestrated by İzmir's CUP secretary (and later president of the Turkish republic) Mahmut Celâl (Bayar) drove at least 130,000 Greeks from the Western coastal regions into exile in Greece.²⁵ Their companies were given to the new Muslim entrepreneurs, who in many cases proved incapable of making a go of them, deprived as they were of overseas contacts, markets and management skills.

The programme of the National Economy gained impetus after the unexpected triumph at Gallipoli, which, of course, gave Turkish morale – and nationalism – a great boost. Its architect was the Unionist party boss in Istanbul and former steward of the guild of bearers, *Kara* ('Black') Kemal Bey, who controlled the newly formed 'national' companies through the *Heyet-i Mahsusa-i Ticariye* (Special Trade Commission). Over 80 new joint stock companies were founded between 1916 and 1918 with active support from the CUP.²⁶ One of the most important developments in this respect was the establishment of the *Esnaf Cemiyeti* (Society of Artisans and Shopkeepers), in which a number of important trades in the capital were united. They were encouraged to invest their profits in the new companies. This was in a sense a reversal of official policy because as recently as 1913 the government, in an effort to liberalize the economy, had announced the abolition of the old Ottoman guilds.

The war created an extraordinary demand for all kinds of goods, especially foodstuffs. Traditionally the Ukraine, Russia and Romania had been the sources of Istanbul's wheat. Now it had been cut off from these sources and Anatolia, the Turkish heartland, had to replace them. Besides, the empire's allies, Austria and Germany, were also in need of food. The rising demand created new wealth in the countryside, but not through the operation of market forces alone.

After mobilization, the CUP government had a monopoly of railway transport, so it was provincial merchants with good CUP connections who managed to get the necessary freight cars to transport their wheat to Istanbul or to the army. Through the Committee of National Defence and the Artisans' Society, CUP trustees controlled the sale and distribution in the towns and the sale of wheat to the allies was also government-controlled. This led to the intended capital accumulation by the Muslim traders, the large landowners and the guilds, but also to favouritism and corruption on a grand scale. The 'rich of 1916', in other words the war profiteers, became infamous. The wage earners in the towns, of course, bore the cost and at hugely inflated prices (these rose by more than 400 per cent during the war on the official market and by as much as 1885 per cent if the black market were included).²⁷ Government attempts to ban profiteering and to set up distribution systems were half-hearted and unsuccessful.

In another sense the small farmers and sharecroppers of Anatolia paid the price, for they were not in a position to profit from the higher prices for their products. This was because they not only depended on the large landowners and town merchants for transport and access to the market and but also had to provide the manpower for the Ottoman armies. Manpower shortages became an ever more acute problem as the sons of Anatolia's farmers died in the hundreds of thousands in Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, the Dardanelles and Palestine. By the end of the war, the empire's economy was in ruins.

Ideological debates

The year 1913 marked a turnaround in the influence of ideological currents in the empire, just as it did in political and economic developments. After the suffocating atmosphere of the later years of the reign of Sultan Abdülhamit, with its censorship and intolerance, the start of the constitutional period in 1908 witnessed an explosion of public debate on all kinds of political and social questions. The intensity of the debate was reflected in the number of new publications that appeared. The number of periodicals, which by the end of the old regime had dwindled to barely a dozen, increased thirtyfold in the year after the revolution.

The political and social debate has often been described as going on between three competing ideologies: Ottomanism, the old Young Ottoman ideal of a union of the different communities around the Ottoman throne; (pan) Islamism, which sought to regenerate the empire on the basis of Islamic practices and of solidarity within the Islamic *Ümmet* (Community); and (pan) Turkism, which sought the union of

the Turkic peoples under the Ottoman flag. Later authors have sometimes added a fourth current in their descriptions of the intellectual life of the period: Westernism, the movement to adopt European techniques and ideas, which they contrast with Islamic traditionalism.

Such a description fails to bring to life the reality of the debates, which were much more multi-faceted. The basic problems that concerned the publicists of the second constitutional period were the regeneration of state and society. For most of the Young Turks, being the bureaucrats and officers that they were, the state was the logical, indeed the only, means to achieve change. Those who emphasized society rather than the state and who saw in decentralization, private initiative and education the means for regeneration were a much smaller group, centred on Prens Sabahattin.

Two constantly recurring themes in the debates on this fundamental problem of regeneration were the measure of Westernization needed or acceptable and the question of what was to be the basis for identification with and loyalty to the future Ottoman state. It was on this second aspect that Ottomanists, Turkists and Islamists differed. On the first, the divisions were less clear-cut and ran through the three main currents. Some extreme Westernizers, such as Dr Abdullah Cevdet, were in favour of discarding traditional Ottoman civilization completely and adopting the ways of Europe in *toto* in its stead. On the other hand, some religious activists rejected any adoption of Western techniques or ideas. They, however, were the exceptions. The large majority of intellectuals favoured adopting what was seen as the useful elements of European civilization. They believed deeply in the power of science and technology and, for most of them, the most difficult and urgent question, and the one on which most of their debates centred, was the one that Namik Kemal had tried to answer: how to bring about a synthesis of these European elements with Muslim Ottoman civilization; in other words how to become modern while remaining oneself.

The ideological currents were not mutually exclusive either: many Young Turks rationally supported the idea of Ottomanism, were emotionally attached to a romantic pan-Turkish nationalism and were devout Muslims at the same time.

Ottomanism, the idea that all subjects, irrespective of creed or language, would become loyal citizens with equal rights in the new constitutional state, was the official ideology of the revolution of 1908 and it remained so until all Ottomanist illusions were shattered in 1913. Although there were a number of people, for instance in the circle around Prens Sabahattin, who genuinely believed in the concept, its fundamental weakness was that nationalism had already established its

hold on all the major communities of the empire. After the euphoria of the revolution, it was soon clear that Greeks, Macedonians, Bulgarians and Armenians continued to further their particularist goals. From 1910 onwards, it became evident that even most Muslim Albanians preferred Albanian rather than Ottoman identity, if the latter implied giving up the autonomy most of Albania had enjoyed in practice under the old regime. At the same time it is true that the CUP itself was already in the grip of Turkish or at least Muslim nationalism, even before the revolution of 1908. While the Committee officially supported Ottomanism (and, indeed, how could it have done otherwise, without voluntarily shedding two-thirds or more of the empire's territory), its interpretation of Ottomanism came close to Turkification of the non-Turkish elements. This did not go unobserved and undermined the credibility of Ottomanism even further.

Turkish, as opposed to Ottoman, nationalism, was a relative late-comer. It had first emerged as a cultural movement in the last two decades of Sultan Abdülhamit's rule. Its origins went back to the work of European Orientalists, such as the Frenchmen de Guignes and Cahun and the Hungarian Vambery, who had started to study the Turks of Central Asia in the nineteenth century, and to the influence of Turks from the Russian Empire, notably the Tatars and the Azeris (also known as 'Tatars' at the time).

Among these peoples a native bourgeoisie had come into being in the latter half of the nineteenth century, sending its sons to Russian schools and universities, where they became acutely aware of the Russian and pan-Slav threat to their own communities. Chief among the Turkists from Russia who were active in the Ottoman Empire were the Azeris Hüseyinzade Ali (Turan) and Ağaoğlu Ahmet and the Tatar Yusuf Akçura, whose family had emigrated to Istanbul.

Akçura studied at the War Academy in Istanbul, where like so many of his contemporaries he was caught disseminating Young Turk propaganda and banished to Tripolitania in 1897. From there he escaped to Paris, from where he went back to Kazan on the Volga, his native city. He became active in Russian politics, but at the same time he published a long article in the Young Turk *émigré* paper *Türk* (The Turk), which appeared in Cairo in 1904. This article, which has been called the 'Communist Manifesto of Turkism', was titled *Üç Tarz-i Siyaset* (Three Types of Policy). It compared the relative merits of Islamist, Ottomanist and Turkist policies, advocating the last. It can be considered the first coherent statement of pan-Turkist political aims. It pointed out that forging an Ottoman nation out of the diverse elements of the empire was an illusion, that the colonial powers would block any attempt at

political union by the Muslims of the world, but that, by contrast, pan-Turkism – the union of the Turkish and Turkic peoples – would have the support of all the Turkic peoples of Asia and would encounter opposition only from Russia.

Pan-Turkism gained a certain amount of support among Young Turk intellectuals, but it received no official blessing until the Balkan War of 1913 had made Ottomanism a dead letter anyway. Even then, however, it remained more of a romantic dream offering an escape from the disasters of day-to-day politics than a concrete policy. From 1911 onwards, the (pan) Turkist movement's platform was the Unionist social and cultural organization *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth). This organization founded clubs all over the empire, where lectures, discussions, theatrical and musical performances and exhibitions spread Turkish nationalist ideology. Its journal *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland) was widely read.

During the First World War the Unionists stimulated pan-Turkism in the context of the struggle with Russia. It received a boost with the collapse of the Russian army in 1917 and the occupation (or liberation) of Azerbaijan. A booklet entitled *Türkler bu Muharebede Ne Kazanabilirler?* (What can the Turks win in this struggle?), which Unionist writer Tekin Alp (a pseudonym of Moise Cohen of Seres) published in 1914, was the best-known formulation of pan-Turkist political aims in this period. Under the title *Turkism and Panturkism* it gained fame in Europe as a supposed statement of Ottoman war aims, but Tekin Alp was never influential in CUP circles. At the same time a second type of Turkish nationalism, which concentrated on Anatolia as the Turkish heartland and idealized the culture of the Turkish peasant population, developed side by side – and in competition with – pan-Turkism. It was a city-bred romantic movement that did nothing to improve the appalling living conditions of the Anatolian peasants, but its doctrine of populism (*halkçılık*) aimed to create national solidarity at a time when the economic developments of the war years were creating social tensions that had to be subdued. Not surprisingly, therefore, the organization that represented this type of nationalism, *Halka Doğru* (Towards the People), which was founded in Izmir in 1917, was a creation of the CUP itself.

The (pan) Islamic current had of course had its heyday during the second half of Sultan Abdülhamit's reign. During the second constitutional period, and especially after the failed counter-revolution of April 1909, the Unionists were deeply suspicious of Islamic activism. They saw it as a threat, both to the continued existence of the multinational empire and to themselves. Only when political expediency

demanded it, were the Unionists prepared to emphasize the Islamic character of the state, as they did in 1914–16 in an effort to gain the loyalty of the Arabs and the support of Muslim inhabitants of the colonies. This policy, the clearest expression of which was the declaration of holy war (*Cihat*) in 1914, in the end failed in both its aims.

It would be wrong, however, to identify the Islamic current of this era solely with conservatism or reaction. There were Islamic reactionaries such as the group that had gathered around the newspaper *Volkan* and participated in the counter-revolution of 1909, but much more important was the large group of Islamic modernists or reformists who supported the constitution. The leading organ of this group, which included people like Sait Halim Pasha, Mehmet Akif (Ersoy) and Eşref Edip (Fergan), was the *Sirat-i Müstakim* (the Straight Path), from 1912 known as the *Sebilürreşat* (Path of Righteousness). For them, social regeneration was to be found in a return to Islamic values. Many advocated a return to the *şeriat* law, arguing that it was compatible with the adoption of modernization (as Namık Kemal had done). In their view, the solidarity of Muslims outside the empire, but in the Islamic *ümmet* (community), could be an added strength to the empire.

One important Islamic movement that had its roots in the second constitutional period was that of Nurculuk (the adherents of *Nur* or the Light), founded by a Kurdish *alim* and member of the modernist wing of the Nakşibendi mystical order, Sait Nursi. He had joined the Muhammadan Union in 1909, but at the same time was close to leading Unionists and later served as a CUP propagandist with the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*. The real growth of his movement belongs to a later period, however, and is best treated there.

Mehmet Ziya (Gökalp) made the most creative and consistent attempt at a synthesis of the various elements of the Ottoman heritage (Islam, Turkish ethnicity, Ottoman state) with European-style modernization. Gökalp was a follower of the French sociologist Durkheim, whose ideas on the supremacy of society over the individual he took up, though he replaced 'society' with 'nation': an ardent nationalist, Gökalp believed the nation (*millet*) to be the natural social and political unit. Gökalp's most influential contribution, however, was not owed to Durkheim. Drawing on the ideas of the German sociologist Tönnies, he made a distinction between 'culture' (*hars*), the set of values and habits current within a community, and 'civilization' (*medeniyet*), a rational international system of knowledge, science and technology. According to Gökalp, the Turkish nation had its own strong culture, which had become submerged within a mediaeval civilization that was partly Islamic/Arabian and partly Byzantine. The road to salvation lay in

replacing this civilization with a modern European one, while holding on to Turkish culture (of which he considered a purely religious Islam a part). The fault of the *Tanzimat* reformers in his eyes was that in joining European civilization they lost touch with the culture of their own people. In this he echoed the ideas Young Ottomans such as Namık Kemal had put forward fifty years earlier.

Whatever the merits of Gökalp's ideas as theories, their great attraction was that they allowed national pride to be reconciled with the adoption of European ways. Both in the Turkish Hearth movement and in the CUP itself (where he was for a time a member of the central committee and more or less the party ideologue), Gökalp enjoyed considerable influence.

In reviewing these intellectual currents of the second constitutional period it is remarkable that, like the CUP itself, which had its origins in the ethnically mixed region of Macedonia, most of the important thinkers and writers who took part in the debates were from peripheral or mixed areas. Apart from those who came from the Turkic areas of the Russian Empire (Akçura, Ağaoğlu, Hüseyinzade, the nationalist poet Mehmet Emin), the most ardent Turkish nationalist Tekin Alp was a Jew from Seres, the Westernizer Abdullah Cevdet a Kurd from Arapkir, Ziya Gökalp half Kurdish and from Diyarbakır, and Sait Nursi a Kurd from Bitlis. It seems that direct confrontation with the multi-ethnic character of the empire in these regions made them more acutely aware of the fundamental problems of Ottoman society.

While it is important to have an understanding of the ideological debates of the Young Turks, it is also important to remember that the men who actually wielded power, the leaders of the CUP, were not ideologues but men of action. They were ideologically eclectic and their common denominator was a shared set of attitudes rather than a common ideological programme. Important elements in this set of attitudes were nationalism, a positivist belief in the value of objective scientific truth, a great (and somewhat naive) faith in the power of education to spread this truth and elevate the people, implicit belief in the role of the central state as the prime mover in society and a certain activism, a belief in change, in progress, which contrasted sharply with the cautious conservatism prevailing in the Hamidian era.