

CENTRALIZATION AND LOCALISM: ASPECTS OF OTTOMAN
POLICY IN EASTERN ANATOLIA 1878-1908

by

Stephen Ralph Duguid

B.A. University of Illinois, 1966

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

HISTORY

© STEPHEN RALPH DUGUID 1970
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

APRIL, 1970

EXAMINING COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Allan Cunningham
Senior Supervisor

William Cleveland
Examining Committee

A.H. Somjee
Examining Committee

Name: Stephen Ralph Duguid

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of Thesis: Centralization and Localism: Aspects of Ottoman
Policy in Eastern Anatolia 1878-1908

Date Approved: 2 April 1970

ABSTRACT

The primary rationale behind this thesis is that the greatest need in the study of the Ottoman Empire is for detailed analyses of specific areas and aspects of that Empire. The trend of late in Ottoman historiography is a general testing of generalizations made in the past about the Empire in the light of more thorough research and, indeed, a calling into question of whether any generalization about such a multi-national, multi-religious, and complicated state is practicable or possible.

Both the area and the period of this study were chosen because of the lack of interest shown in them by most other historians and because they contain examples of many of the crucial problems faced by the Ottomans in the nineteenth century. One must avoid the conclusion, however, that eastern Anatolia is meant to be a model for Ottoman policy in other parts of the Empire where the problems, the local forces, and the policy were in many cases quite different.

The thesis is primarily concerned with examining the political and social groups, both traditional and 'modern', within eastern Anatolia; the relationships between these groups (such as nomads and villagers, Muslims and Armenians, notables and Kurds, and so on) and their reaction to the policies of the central government. The complex nature of society in the region, how it was affected

by the growing influence of the government in Constantinople and by European interest in the area, and how it reacted to these outside pressures are all emphasized.

The second major aspect of the thesis is the policy and character of the central government during the Hamidian period. The introductory chapter traces certain strains of reform in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, demonstrating the 'radical', for the Ottomans, nature of many of the changes and the imbalance they created between the government and the mass of the Muslim population. The Hamidian period is portrayed as a 'breathing spell' for the Ottomans; a time to relax from the overt pressure of mass adoption of western type reforms. The label 'period of reaction', which is commonly given the Hamidian regime is dismissed as most probably inaccurate since in fact most of the reforms did continue and the government was actually more representative of the wishes and feelings of the population than those more 'liberal' governments of earlier decades. The Hamidian government's policy of basing the state more firmly on the Muslim elements of the population had a crucial impact on eastern Anatolia since it led to a favoring of the Kurds at the expense of the Armenians and many other Muslims. This policy also blunted the governments attempts at centralization, since it could not afford to alienate the very elements of the population it was relying on through too much central control.

The Armenian question and to a lesser extent the role of

the British in the region are important sub-topics of the thesis. The latter is implicit throughout the study due to the reliance on the British consuls for most of the information about the region. The Armenians are dealt with both as an aspect of the local struggles in the region and as victims of the Hamidian governments Islamic policy. Concerning the whole Armenian question, about which so much has been written, an attempt is made to provide a more realistic analysis of the problem than is found in most studies.

While no attempt is made to diagnose the factors leading to the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, and in fact very little evidence of Young Turk activity or influence in the region is found, there is a definite shift in the governments attitude toward the region after about 1903. Dissatisfaction with the Hamidian regime originated primarily with the more conservative elements of the society, such as the urban notables and several Kurdish leaders and the influence of the central government is shown to decline rapidly relative to local forces after 1906.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: The Historical Background	12
CHAPTER TWO: An Introduction to Eastern Anatolia ...	63
CHAPTER THREE: Government and the Notables	95
CHAPTER FOUR: The Aftermath of War	132
CHAPTER FIVE: Hamidian Reform, the First Attempts .	165
CHAPTER SIX: The Central Government and Eastern Anatolia	205
CHAPTER SEVEN: The Development of the Armenian Revolutionary Movement, 1880-1893 ..	229
CHAPTER EIGHT: Stability, Tranquility, and Disaster 1884-1894	259
CHAPTER NINE: Reaction and Reform, 1895-97	284
CHAPTER TEN: The Army and the Kurds	324
CHAPTER ELEVEN: The Decline of Ottoman Influence, 1901-08	336
CONCLUSION.....	363
GLOSSARY	368
BIBLIOGRAPHY	374

INTRODUCTION

The study of the Ottoman Empire has for long suffered from excessive generalization on the part of western historians. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the primary reason for this failure to produce basic research was lack of sufficient source materials and the concomitant problem, the lack of training in oriental languages among European and American historians. This lack of basic research was also the result of a feeling among western historians, especially in the nineteenth century, that the study of a decadent and still declining culture would be of little value. This generalized approach to Ottoman history included the study of the nineteenth century, when sources were more available, as well as the earlier period.

The lack of a firm foundation of monographic, biographic, and statistical works concerning the Empire became critical after 1945, when western interest in areas such as the Middle East increased dramatically. As more universities began to include the Middle East in their curriculums, a demand for reading material was created which had to be satisfied within a short period of time. The works which were written during this period, while generally of high quality, were forced to depend to a large degree on the insufficiently researched and generalized accounts of the previous era of historical writing.

This situation has led to several theories or concepts being accepted by contemporary scholars without sufficient analysis, perhaps the most well known being the Lybyer-Gibb and Bowen thesis of the Ottoman 'Ruling Institution and Muslim Institution'.¹ The works of Bernard Lewis, Niyazi Berkes, and others are examples of the excellent general studies of Ottoman history which cover extensive chronological periods and themes, but which have had a limited number of detailed studies upon which to draw.² In addition to these there are several works on specific topics or periods in nineteenth century Ottoman history, which while not general, can by no means be a complete examination of the subject.³ Besides these, there are works by political scientists and sociologists that deal with the problems of traditional societies and modernization which claim to be applicable to the Ottoman Empire.⁴ These too suffer from a lack of preparatory research and their theories must therefore remain scholarly speculation until tested. The trend in Ottoman history

¹Albert K. Lybyer, The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent (Cambridge, Mass., 1913), and H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, Islamic Society and the West, Vol. I (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1950). For an explanation of the thesis and a criticism of it, see N. Itzkowitz, "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities", Studia Islamica, Vol. 16, 1962.

²Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), Niyazi Berkes, The Development of Turkish Secularism (Montreal: McGill Univ. Press, 1964).

³R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire: 1856-1876 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), Sherif Mardin, The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), and Charles Issawi, The Economic History of the Middle East (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968).

⁴R. Ward and D. Rustow, Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), as well as virtually any other work on modernization and social change.

and in all of Middle Eastern studies, now seems to be to begin the testing of these original theories and generalizations through detailed studies of particular areas, themes, and time periods.⁵ This thesis will attempt to contribute to this process.

The subject of this thesis is the thirty year period in Ottoman history from 1878 to 1908, usually labelled a period of reaction by historians. In this study it shall be called the Hamidian period after its chief personality, Sultan Abdulhamid II, even though this opens the door to speculation (unnecessary in this case) on the author's bias toward the 'Great Man' interpretation of history. The Hamidian period in its entirety is much too broad for a study of this nature and therefore will be approached through a detailed examination of one area of the Ottoman Empire, eastern Anatolia or Kurdistan.⁶ Through this study of one part of the Empire some aspects of Ottoman policy toward the provinces and government policy and thinking about the Empire as a whole should become more clear. No attempt will be made, however, to apply conclusions reached for eastern Anatolia to the Balkans, the Arab lands, or western Anatolia.

The Hamidian period was chosen for this study for two basic reasons. The first is that most Ottoman historians have

⁵Examples of this type of research are books by William Polk, The Opening of South Lebanon (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963) and Moshe Ma'oz, Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1840-1861 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968).

⁶The vilayets of eastern Anatolia were officially referred to as Kurdistan by the British Government prior to the despatching of military consuls to Asiatic Turkey in 1878.

passed lightly over these thirty years in their examination of Ottoman history. They either dismiss them as a period of reaction, simply a reversion to past practices, or view them strictly as a preparatory period for future political activity, and concentrate on those preparations. Thus Bernard Lewis in The Emergence of Modern Turkey has a relatively short chapter on the subject, half of which is given over to the development of the Young Turk opposition.⁷ Other works on the period concentrate on the origins of Arab, Armenian, or Balkan nationalisms and examine the Hamidian regime only as it is relevant to these developments. In recent years most of the prominent western Ottoman scholars (Bernard Lewis, Kemal Karpat, Stanford Shaw, and especially Niyazi Berkes) have been emphasizing the importance of understanding the Hamidian period, but have as yet gone into it in very little detail, the Tanzimat, Young Ottoman, and Young Turk periods being more attractive and workable fields of historical research. They recognize that the Hamidian period represents the culmination of almost a hundred years of Ottoman reform and was essential preparation for the emergence of the Turkish state in the twentieth century. It was not simply a period of rest, an aberration in the march of history, or a sterile and futile reversion to the past.

The second reason this period was chosen was the belief on the author's part that it was the crucial stage in a momentus

⁷That this attitude among western historians is changing is evidenced by R. Davison's treatment of the Hamidian period in a much shorter and less all-inclusive book on Ottoman history published in 1968. R. Davison, Turkey (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 91-108.

shift in Ottoman thinking concerning the Empire, a shift away from the European provinces as the government's most important concern and toward the Asiatic provinces.⁸ For centuries the Ottomans had seen themselves as a European power, their Asiatic possessions and troubles continually taking second place. The Ottoman state had from the beginning relied on the ghazi image, the warrior for the Faith, and the main battleground for the ghazis had at first been Anatolia and from the fourteenth century on was the Balkans and Central Europe. By the nineteenth century the struggle against Christendom had long since ceased to be the basis for the Ottoman state, but it had played the crucial role in forming the Ottoman self-view. The Balkans had been conquered before most of the Asian territories of the Empire and the original capital had been in the Balkans, prior to the capture of Constantinople. The most intense conflicts and most rewarding conquests, materially and psychologically, had been in Europe and it was in this territory that wealthy and important Ottomans had their estates.

The tremendous loss of European territory in the seventeenth century and the subsequent erosion of the Ottoman position in the Balkans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, coupled with the rise of aspirations for independence among Balkan Christians was, by 1878, a clear and present danger to the Ottoman self-view. There had been parallel losses in Asia,

⁸This shift is by no means an 'accepted' theory among Ottoman historians and has not been adequately documented or researched. It seems to this author that the loss of most of the European territory of the Empire made the shift in thinking inevitable. What concerns us here is not so much the reason for the shift but its consequences on the character of the Empire and its implications for eastern Anatolia.

particularly in the north and east to Russian imperialism and in Africa with the growing independence of Egypt and the breaking away of other North African dependencies, but the European losses were felt more severely. The Congress of Berlin and its resultant territorial adjustments in the Balkans, was a turning point in Ottoman history, forcing the government to look seriously to Asia, to the Anatolian and Arab areas, as the true heartland of the Empire. This is not meant to imply there was a public pronouncement informing the population of the shift in interest, on the contrary there is little evidence to indicate Ottoman statesmen were even aware of it. This study may provide some further evidence of the shift through the examination of Ottoman policy toward a particular part of Asia, but parallel studies of the Arab areas, the rest of Anatolia, and the Balkans will be necessary to provide full documentation upon which conclusions may be based.

The supposition behind this study is that the Hamidian period, and Ottoman society in general, can only be understood by analyzing in the greatest possible detail the internal workings of the society, the emergence of various social groups, their interrelations, and their impact on the society and government. Thus, village-nomad relations can be studied in a particular area over a thirty-year period to record any transformation which should, if the process of modernization and change is indeed taking place, be occurring. In the same manner the balance of power within cities and provinces, the identification

of social groups and their influence within their respective communities, the recognition of important families and individuals and their role in the community, and important events in local history such as a particular Kurdish rebellion, Armenian revolutionary activity, a famine, or a massacre can all be examined and yield results which may well transcend their local significance.

Superimposed on this setting is an Ottoman administration, the examination of which should give an indication of Ottoman policy toward the provinces. For instance, the role of taxation, reforms, and the actual administrative organization as it evolved over the years as well as the changing degree of isolation of the provinces from the capital will indicate government attitudes and changes of policy.

The presence of the large Armenian population in eastern Anatolia is doubly useful for the purposes of this study. It is an excellent indicator of the rise of nationalist aspirations on the part of the Christian population of the Empire and the reaction of the Ottoman government to Armenian activity provides insights into Ottoman policy. Ottoman attempts to build a new foundation for the Empire based on the loyalty of the various Muslim nationalities is evident in their relations with the Kurds and Turks of the eastern Anatolian region. In addition to these aspects of society, a general review of economic conditions in this relatively isolated and undeveloped part of the Empire will be useful in recording any increased Ottoman interest in

the Asiatic provinces and in better understanding the attitude of the population toward the central government.

Obviously, in all of the aspects of society discussed above, the factor of change will be the key. Changes in official Ottoman policy over the thirty year period should come through clearly by following specific themes, such as the handling of the Armenian question or policy toward the Kurds. The process of modernization will not be dealt with at length since this study is primarily concerned with Ottoman policy and because in an area as isolated as eastern Anatolia, where even the railroads, the great precursors of change, failed to penetrate, there is little evidence of modernization.⁹ This lack of indications of modernization emphasizes the fact that as late as the early 1900's all change was not modern in nature, but on the contrary was simply the continuation of the process of change operating continuously within the traditional society of the region.

Besides these reasons for selecting eastern Anatolia for this study, the area also serves as a microcosm in many respects for viewing conflicts and problems which were present throughout the Empire. It had the Muslim-Christian confrontation that was evident in the Balkans and part of the Arab lands, and in addition had a large non-Turkish Muslim population, the Kurds, who were more potentially disloyal during the Hamidian period

⁹In a section of his book on Ottoman history, Niyazi Berkes describes some of the economic-industrial advances of the Hamidian period. He mentions the names of many cities and towns in connection with increased contact with the West and the growth of an industrial working class, none of which were in eastern Anatolia. N. Berkes, op.cit., p. 273.

than were the Arabs and thus were a good gauge of the Ottoman policy of basing the Empire firmly on its Muslim members.¹⁰

Eastern Anatolia was also chosen because compared to most parts of the Empire it was relatively isolated from direct outside interference, especially in the form of European intervention.¹¹ Because of this we should be able to attain a truer insight into Ottoman policy toward the Asiatic provinces in general than could be done in Syria, for example, where the vested interests of the European Powers were great and the threat of military intervention very real and constantly in back of the Ottoman administrator's minds, both in the provinces and in the capital. While certainly not operating in a vacuum in eastern Anatolia, the Ottomans still had a much freer hand than in the Balkans, the Arab provinces, or even in western Anatolia.

The final reason that this area was chosen was that very little work has been done on this part of the Empire in the past. What few works are in existence are virtually all concerned with the Armenian question and generally contain an

¹⁰"Abdul Hamid need not have had any worries about his Arab subjects as far as the Caliphate was concerned. In his days, it was inconceivable to the vast majority of Muslim Arabs not to support the Caliphate, because the support of the Caliphate was the support of Islam." Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence of Arab Nationalism (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), p.57.

¹¹This advantage of eastern Anatolia was recognized long before this study was begun. In the nineteenth century an article on Turkey noted the following: "To the provinces, then, and above all to those least subject to foreign influence--least modified by stranger contact--where Turkish development, Turkish manners, Turkish institutions, have their freest play; to the land which was the birthplace and still is the strong tower of the Turkish Empire, the provinces of Asia Minor, the Anatolia of our day. Here, if anywhere, we can take a just measurement of Turkish progress or decline." Quarterly Review, "Provincial Turkey", Vol. 137, Oct. 1874, p. 315.

excessively strong bias against the Ottoman government. Alongside this dearth of research is a wealth of potential information in the British Foreign Office documents. The military consuls sent to Anatolia and Kurdistan following the Congress of Berlin in 1878 have provided an excellent record for the historian to examine. Though primarily interested in the Ottoman reform attempts and the plight of the Christian population, their reports are also rich in details of the entire spectrum of society.

An important subsidiary benefit of this study will be an examination of the influence and policy of the British in Asiatic Turkey. This will be reflected in the various British inspired reform programs, the attitudes of the consuls, and the attitude of the British toward the aspirations of the Armenian revolutionaries. The consuls provide us with an interesting insight into the by now classic case of the imposition of an outside western force on a tradition-oriented, slowly evolving, non-Christian society, with its own economic, social, and political intricacies and relationships. Though a few of the consuls founder in attempts to apply their concepts of justice, morality, and political behavior to the Ottoman society, quite a few of the others were remarkably astute observers. The contrasts and examples of the various consul's perceptions of the region and the events are a fascinating subject in their own right.

Finally, some of the problems connected with this topic must be mentioned. The primary problem is brought about by the

author's own limitations in the area of language. Only part of the potential source materials for this type of study have been utilized, namely those in western languages. These consist of British Foreign Office documents of the 424 series, contemporary traveller accounts, and secondary sources. The Ottoman archives were not available due to language and distance and many of the British documents available only in London were also beyond my reach. The other main difficulty was the distraction of the Armenian question. While an examination of this subject is important for studying Ottoman policy during this period, virtually all the sources dealing specifically with this area of Anatolia concentrate solely on this one aspect of that area's history. A constant effort has been made in this study to keep the Armenian question in a proper perspective, given the goals of the thesis.

The thesis will begin with an introductory chapter on pertinent aspects of Ottoman history from the beginning of the nineteenth century through the early years of the Hamidian period. This will provide the necessary background information to better understand the situation of the Empire in 1878 and the reasons for the changes which begin to manifest themselves in eastern Anatolia after that date. The remainder of the study will be concerned primarily with eastern Anatolia, with references to events and policies affecting the entire Empire where relevant. The approach will emphasize the development of specific aspects of Ottoman policy and their results within a general chronological framework.

CHAPTER ONE: The Historical Background

Part I

"At its height in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire was probably the best governed state the world had seen since the decline of Rome."¹

If this statement is true or even approximate, and many scholars would support it, then the predominance of the word 'reform' in the vocabulary of the nineteenth century Ottomans indicates either a serious deterioration of the Empire during the intervening centuries or a change in the Ottoman view of the nature of society and the role of the state in that society. Most authors would agree that the word 'decline' is most indicative of the process at work in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, but this can be a somewhat dangerous term. When the Ottomans of the nineteenth century spoke of reform, most of them were thinking in terms of bringing the Empire up to standards set by nineteenth century Western Europe. The modern transformation that began in the West during the Renaissance left not only the Ottoman Empire far behind, but also all other non-western civilizations and most of eastern and southern Europe. The fact that the Ottomans did not change in the same manner as, or keep pace with, the West does not necessarily indicate decline, it merely indicates a different kind of change. However,

¹Charles Issawi, The Economic History of the Middle East (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 23.

the transformation of the West was unique in the sense that for the first time in history one particular part of the world was able to change to such a degree (one is tempted to say progress, or at the very least, advance) that no other part could either resist it or remain isolated from it. Thus by the nineteenth century the West had become all-pervasive and all changes in other parts of the world came to be seen, both by the West and in these areas, as a decline, relative to the changes in the West.

While this study is not the place for the question of the European transformation to be examined thoroughly, some understanding of its uniqueness, its power, and its attraction must be conveyed. It is important to emphasize that as late as the sixteenth century this transformation was not yet evident in the world and its effect was not really felt until late in the eighteenth century. The various regions of the world still existed in a type of equilibrium, none gaining permanent dominance over the other. The Ottomans were able to continue to win victories in Europe and the establishment of Portuguese dominance in the Indian Ocean in the fifteenth century was ended in the sixteenth by a reassertion of Muslim superiority. Up to this time various regions had been able to make cultural and technological advances which gave them temporary control over their neighbor or another region, but the pace of change was so liesurely that the essential elements of the changes, usually the military, could be copied by others and thus the

advances neutralized. By the end of the eighteenth century this was no longer the case. The technical advances of the West, encouraged by a process which may be called the 'institutionalization of innovation', had created a system of technical specialization so complicated and on such a vast scale that it could not be copied piecemeal by others. Through a combination of intellectual, economic, and technical changes people in the West had come to rely on, plan for, and work for a continuous process of technical change. The set of environmental, cultural, and historical attributes of this transformation were so complex that it was no wonder that they had never occurred before and could not easily be copied. The changes, once they passed a certain point beyond which they continued on their own, began to occur at a geometric rate of progression so that the pace of change increased dramatically, which widened the 'gap' between the West and the other regions. It was this 'gap' which was to determine much of Ottoman history throughout the nineteenth century because another essential feature of the Western transformation was that it could not be limited by geography.

The key to the transformation can probably be found in the concept of innovation as a continuous process, both technical and cultural. Thus not only was the Ottoman Empire at a severe disadvantage because it had not become aware of the transformation until it had long been at work, but it had to start at the beginning to even hope to 'catch up'.²

²Much of this discussion I owe to conversations and readings with Dr. Reuben Smith of the Middle East Center of the University of Chicago.

Those Ottomans who recognized the need for change within the Empire after the initial contact with the new power of the West were by no means unanimous in their proposals for change. The initial response of most Muslims was to return to the forms and practices of the fifteenth century, when the Empire had been supreme. On the other hand, a significant group of Ottomans in the nineteenth century, especially those in the bureaucracy, were urging a different response. They saw the role of the state as the West had defined that role and saw that the Ottoman Empire of 1800 did not meet these criteria.

Many changes had taken place between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries which made the preservation of the fifteenth century Ottoman ideal impossible. The halting of the Ottoman advance in Europe and the consequent cessation of the acquisition of new territories and spoils of war meant the end of the ghazi ideal for the Ottomans. Military technology in the Empire had changed also, though not to the degree it was changing in the West, and the result was the forced abandonment of reliance on 'feudal' type cavalry based on a 'landed gentry'. In addition to these changes, there was an influx of precious metals from America causing severe inflation, a change in world trade patterns caused by the circumnavigation of Africa by European traders, and a general decline in agriculture and industry.³ The solidification of the Islamic religion which had taken place several centuries earlier was not altered by the Ottomans and the inhibition of innovation it caused prevented the adoption

³Charles Issawi, op.cit., p.23 and B. Lewis, op.cit., p26.

of many western ideas such as the printing press. All of these changes significantly altered the character of the Ottoman Empire. The primary alteration was the weakening of the power of the central government relative to that of the provinces. This is, of course, viewed as a decline since the concurrent development in the West was the consolidation of political and economic power by the central authority.

By the eighteenth century most of these changes had made themselves felt and Ottoman society was adjusting accordingly. In order to fully comprehend the reforms of the nineteenth century, we must have an understanding of at least the basic aspects of eighteenth century Ottoman society. Since this study is concerned primarily with Ottoman policy toward the various parts of the Empire, and especially its Asiatic parts, we will concentrate on those aspects of the society which most affect this policy. The most important of these was the struggle between the Palace and the Porte on the one hand and the provinces on the other for the control of the land and local populations.⁴ In an agricultural Empire like the Ottoman, control of the land and thus of the peasant population was the equivalent of power; power to maintain the status quo or to effect change.

The eighteenth century saw the Ottoman Empire in the last stages of a long period of decentralization. The breakdown of the traditional Ottoman system of government as it had existed in the fifteenth century had resulted in a loss of control by

⁴The word Porte is used for 'Sublime Porte', the French and English term for the Ottoman government, based on the Turkish words for 'high gate' where the vizier received visitors.

the central government over the provinces, culminating in the virtual independence of many areas by the 1700's. The traditional Ottoman system had been highly centralized, with the bulk of the land belonging to the state (miri land) and was managed under what was called the timar system.⁵ The breakdown of this timar system is one of the more prominent examples of the process of decentralization.

The timar system, simply stated, was the grant of the use of a particular piece of land (usually containing several villages) to military officers, or sipahis, for the period of their life. They received the tithe, usually ten to twelve per cent of the produce of the land, from the villages included in their grant, sent the other taxes on to the central government, and generally managed affairs within their districts. In return for this, they and their retainers, the villagers, would place themselves at the Sultan's service in case of war or other need. These grants of land became informally hereditary as it became general practice for a son to succeed his father as a sipahi and thus as master of the timar. Since these grants were for use only, the state maintained a firm hold on the land, reserving the right to dismiss a sipahi at will. This system effectively prevented the rise of a permanent landed aristocracy with vested interests to oppose those of the central government.⁶

⁵The only private property was in urban areas and consisted mainly of houses, small plots of land adjacent to town or village, etc. Agricultural land was not included as miri if it was attached to a mosque, school, or religious foundation.

⁶The limits of the sipahis authority and the details of their income were clearly defined in Ottoman regulations. They could

In addition, it prevented the growth of large estates and gave the peasantry a master who was unlikely to be too harsh, since his prosperity was tied to the continued prosperity of the land.⁷ It thus had the advantage of creating a ruling class in the provinces who lived on the land but didn't own it and who were directly dependent on the central authority.

As was stated above, however, by the eighteenth century these sipahi as a military force were obsolete. The system itself had degenerated over the years, with sipahis sending unqualified substitutes and ill-trained, ill-equipped troops to the army; but the basic cause of their demise was that due to the large scale use of firearms by the eighteenth century they were no longer needed on the battlefield. The well disciplined Janissaries were now the strength of the Ottoman army.⁸ The collapse of the timar system was to have grave consequences for the Empire:

".....the gradual collapse of the timar system led to the deterioration of the food-producing and tax-yielding sources as well as to the annihilation of a social apparatus which maintained equilibrium, order, and stability among the peasantry."⁹

By the eighteenth century land ceased to be assigned to sipahis or their descendants, but it still had to be managed not themselves cultivate the lands of the peasants and any disagreements between them and the peasants were to be settled by the government. Halil Inalcik, "Land Problems in Turkish History", Muslim World, 1953, p.223.

⁷R. Davison, op.cit., p. 11.

⁸The Ottoman elite infantry corps, once formed from conscripted young Christians converted to Islam.

⁹Kemal Karpat, "Land Regime, Social Structure, and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire", in W. Bolk and R. Chambers, Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p.74.

and taxes still had to be collected. To accomplish this, tax collecting rights were granted to individuals, either courtiers from the capital or the local notables in the provinces, with no requirements for service to the state. This system was called tax-farming, or iltizam.¹⁰ While this solved the problem of tax collection for the central government and increased their income since the tithes were now included, at the same time it immeasurably weakened the government's control over the provinces. This grant of power to these officials in the provinces, soon to come under the general title of ayan, came during a period of growing weakness at the center. This all led to the development of a kind of 'feudal aristocracy' among the ayan, with large sections of land under their control with no ties to Constantinople other than the remission of a portion of the taxes.¹¹

The term ayan is a general one, including men from varied backgrounds and social positions. The large majority of them were the traditional local notables of the cities and towns who, along with many ex-sipahis, were the logical choice for tax-collection duties. In many cases, however, they were men from humble origins; villagers or townsmen who had raised enough

¹⁰A tax-farmer, or possessor of an iltizam, is a multazim.

¹¹One of the most important powers of the ayan was that he was able to assign state lands to the peasants, thus having a powerful influence with the people. The sipahi had never been able to interfere with the peasant's lease to his land. Theoretically the ayan would be forced to renew the tax-farm each year, but this was seldom enforced. See article cited above by K. Karpat for further details on the ayan.

money to buy tax collecting rights and gradually worked themselves up to the status of an ayan position.¹² By the end of the eighteenth century these ayan were very powerful in many areas, having private armies and only the most tenuous connection with the central government.

In Anatolia the situation was somewhat different. Here, and especially in areas populated by Kurds, the derebeys, or valley lords, were the most powerful group.¹³ They were similar in many respects to the sheikhs of the Arab lands, leaders who had struck roots among the people they ruled and from whom they had sprung. They formed genuine local dynasties with strong local traditions and loyalties. They had a somewhat closer relation to the Porte than many of the ayan and in fact developed a regular system of suzerainty and vassalage. Their close and intimate relationship with their territories and peoples made their rule generally less harsh than that of the ayan.¹⁴ The derebeys, who can more accurately be called feudal, made eastern Anatolia more of a dependency of the Empire than a part, a fact which had repercussions throughout the nineteenth century.

The most important figures among the ayan of the eighteenth century were the urban notables. This group had always been

¹²K. Karpat, op.cit., p.78.

¹³The term 'lords of the valley' was given to them because of their usual position at the heads of valleys, the entrances to mountain gorges or defile roads, from which they levied tolls on travellers and caravans. Quarterly Review, op.cit., p.18.

¹⁴B. Lewis, op.cit., and R. Davison, op.cit., p.18.

present in Ottoman society, and its role within that society varied according to the power exercised by the central government. The term notable encompassed a wide variety of people. The various classifications of ulema in the cities, the muftis and qadis as well as the teachers in the mādrases and leaders of the Sufi orders (tariqas), were one of the most important groups of notables in terms of influence with the population and importance to the government. They were the traditional spokesmen of the Islamic city and were usually drawn from local families. The same principle held true for the Christian population with the priests, teachers, and patriarchs.

There were other 'secular' notables in the cities and countryside coming under such classifications as ayan, agha, amir, ashraf, or sheikh.¹⁵ These were all individuals, groups, or families whose power might be based on some political or military tradition of the city, the memory of some ancestor or predecessor, or in the solidarity of the family or group. An example of this latter case could be the solidarity of the merchant guilds or corporations which in many cities made them a power to be reckoned with and the leader of the corporation a highly influential man.¹⁶ In many cases, especially in the

¹⁵Agha was the title bestowed on the Kurdish tribal leaders, amir was at one time a military title and later given as an honor to important people, ashraf was applied to those who claimed descent from Muhammed, and sheikh was a leader of an Arab tribe or a religious official.

¹⁶Each industrial and merchant corporation had its own sheikh or leader with administrative and taxing function. He dealt with the relevant officer of the government either directly or through a superior sheikh possessing jurisdiction over a number of corporations. Gibb and Bowen, op.cit., Vol. I, Part 1, p. 213.

eighteenth century, the power of the notable ensued from his control of agricultural production through the acquisition of tax-farms or supervision of waqfs (religious endowments). This control was important, not so much because of the wealth it gave the notable, but because it enabled him to control the food supply of the city and thus indirectly to affect public order and put pressure on the government.¹⁷ In many of the Arab cities and in western Anatolia members of the Janissary detachments filled this latter role.¹⁸

The notable that achieved his position through control of the land had much more than simply permission from the central government to collect the taxes. The peasant was virtually in perpetual debt to the notables due to the chronic uncertainty of the grain yields and lack of any form of banking. One or two years of bad harvests would force the peasant, no longer the vassal of a benevolent sipahi, to borrow money at high interest rates from the notable, usually the same man who collected his taxes. Eventually the peasant was obliged to turn over his claim to the use of the land to the notable and become simply a tenant to the city-based landlord. The landlord himself seldom farmed, but rather supplied the seed when necessary and collected taxes. The village in many cases continued to operate on a communal basis even though each plot of land was

¹⁷Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of the Notables" in Polk and Chambers, op.cit., p.49. See this article for a more complete analysis of the role of the notables.

¹⁸For more on the role of the Janissaries and notables in general in the Arab setting, see H. Bodman, Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826 (Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1963).

owned separately by one or more landlord.¹⁹

The primary function of the notable was to act as an intermediary between the government, both local and central, and the people. This function was fulfilled on a religious, political, and socio-economic level. The leaders of the Sufi orders were especially important in Anatolia, where most of the population had long been linked to one or another of the orders and felt little connection with the brand of Sunni orthodoxy practised in Constantinople. The larger Sufi orders had had their origin in Anatolia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and were firmly entrenched in the Janissaries and the craft guilds.²⁰ The ulema, while orthodox, were nevertheless usually local men and could exercise a powerful influence on the central government and locally could wield power through their positions of interpreters of the law. The political role of the notables varied with the power exercised by the central government. If the central government was weak, the notables took over as much of the direction of local affairs as they could. Their power was based on their relationship to the people, both urban and rural. Because of the power vested in these men, the eighteenth century must be viewed in terms of a 'politics of notables rather than in traditional terms. The balance between the local and central authorities had been tipped in favor of the former.

¹⁹C. Issawi, op.cit., p. 75.

²⁰The Bektashi order was closely tied to the Janissaries and when the latter were abolished in 1826, the Bektashis were proscribed along with them. Despite this official disapproval, the orders continued to thrive well into the twentieth century.

There was, of course, an official government presence in the provinces during the eighteenth century, consisting of the governors (valis) of the various provinces and their administrative hierarchies. This element of local government was also relatively independent of the central authority in Constantinople. In many cases the valis were themselves ayan who had become so powerful that the government's only way of maintaining even minimal control was to make them its official representatives. In other cases the valis were strangers to the area and had to work out a system of cooperation with the local notables in order to govern. In either case, it was virtually impossible in the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries to differentiate between the provincial governments, which were supposedly responsible directly to Constantinople, and the local political groups.

The organization of Ottoman society made it possible for the people to withstand the usually oppressive rule of the valis, who were interested mainly in making as much money as possible in the shortest period of time, the notables, and the pressure from outside groups, mainly the nomadic Arabs and Kurds. The society was divided into two co-existing groups, whose relations with each other were for the most part formal and superficial. One group formed the governing class of soldiers and officials, the other the governed and their leaders; the merchants, artisans, notables, and cultivators. Each group was organized on independent lines and in most cases neither group interfered with the

internal organization of the other. The ruling group depended upon receiving a percentage of the produce of the other, in cash or kind, to support itself, and the governed, by accomodating themselves to this situation, was left alone. Stability was ensured because the only changes that occurred were changes in the composition of the ruling group. Each of these successive ruling groups demanded essentially the same thing from the governed and did not disturb the internal organization which made possible the supply of produce and taxes.²¹

The stability of the structure was aided by the general reverence for tradition prevalent at the time, the feeling that the old ways should be preserved and followed. This reverence for tradition was the doctrine ".....most characteristic of and most strongly stressed in Islamic teaching."²² Islam had never adopted the belief in progress prevalent in the West and innovation (bid'a) of any kind was generally frowned upon by the ulema and by society in general. Conservatism, that is, belief in the validity and correctness of traditional usages, was the accepted social ideal.²³ The prevalence and popularity of the sufi orders in the area contributed to the general conservatism of Islamic society by emphasizing man's personal relation to God and minimizing the importance of state and society. Membership in an order protected the individual from much of the harshness of the society and at the same time provided him with

²¹Gibb and Bowen, op.cit., pp. 209-210.

²²Ibid., p. 214.

²³William R. Polk, The Opening of South Lebanon, op.cit., p. 64.

a sure path to heaven.

A considerable amount of time has been spent discussing eighteenth century Ottoman society, a discussion made necessary for two reasons. First, all the reforms of the nineteenth century act upon this eighteenth century society and therefore the significance of the reforms and the problems faced by the reformers can only be understood with this background in mind. Secondly, the area which this study will be primarily interested in, eastern Anatolia, was such an isolated part of the Empire that many of the attributes of eighteenth century Ottoman society were still very much in evidence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in that area.

Before the discussion of the restoration of centralized authority in the nineteenth century begins, a brief recapitulation of events is in order. The breakdown of the traditional Ottoman system of government, as it had existed in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, had led to a loss of control by the central government over the provinces. By the eighteenth century many parts of the Empire were virtually independent; Arab tribes had reclaimed large areas of the Fertile Crescent which had only recently been agricultural land, and the Kurds had done the same in eastern Anatolia. In the case of the Kurds, agriculture was usually allowed to proceed under their tutelage. The ulema emerged as the spokesmen of the wealthy urban element, who felt the demands of the government for money

the hardest. The Janissaries, no longer efficient, no longer slaves, no longer drawn from Christian boys, and for the most part no longer soldiers, became the ruling element in many cities, being the only group with a minimal degree of organization. The rise of the ayan completed the picture. These tax-farmers turned feudal aristocracy and transformed sipahis controlled most of the agricultural areas not claimed by Kurdish derebeys and Arab sheikhs, and they usually ruled from the cities.²⁴

From this system a kind of equilibrium had been established between the various social and political groups in the Empire. The government officials who exploited the population and manipulated the sultan, and the various groups behind the officials, had a vested interest in the system which made them want to preserve the Empire. A balance was worked out between the officials of the Palace and the Porte, the Janissaries, who sometimes spoke as the voice of the people, and the ayan and other notables who retained most of the economic power.²⁵

²⁴Albert Hourani, "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the Eighteenth Century", Studia Islamica, VIII, 1957.

²⁵R. Davison, op.cit., p. 19.

PART II

The recognition by the central government of the need for change occurred long before the nineteenth century. Much of the preceding century had been taken up with disputes within the government as to what type of change was needed or permissible and how it was to be implemented. The few reform-minded officials of the government were virtually powerless in the face of the ulema and the Janissaries in the capital and the ayan in the provinces, all of whom were jealous of any infringement on their powers and therefore opposed most attempts at reform at the center. There were attempts by the Sultans and various Grand Viziers to break out of the grip they were held in by the various groups of the Empire, such as attempts at military reform, but they all failed in the face of stiff opposition.

The first really significant attempt by the central government to reassert its authority came during the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807). Selim came to the throne in the middle of a war with Russia which the Ottomans eventually lost in 1792. The decisive loss to Russia, coupled with the increased interest in western ideas triggered by some of the ideas of the French Revolution which had managed to penetrate certain parts of both the Palace and the Porte, plus the advent of a strong-willed and western-oriented Sultan, laid the groundwork for the attempts at internal reform during this period. Selim saw the problems of the Empire primarily in military terms, which to

him was the Empire's most obvious deficiency. He encouraged free discussion among his advisors, urged them to submit briefs about the ills of the Empire, and sought out Europeans to aid in the implementation of the reforms.²⁶ The Sultan and his advisors realized that all reform in the Empire hinged on the government establishing a military body independent of and superior to the Janissaries. Selim and his growing number of supporters in the Porte recognized the problems created by the decline of the timar system and subsequent rise of the ayan and derebeys, and they were determined to stop the growing independence of the provinces and once again administer the state lands.²⁷

There was general recognition on the part of most Ottoman officials in the capital that change was necessary, however, most of the suggestions were for change within the traditional framework. Selim was evidently strongly influenced by the French, both by ideas and advisors, a fact held against him by the ulema and their allies, the Janissaries. Selim's military innovations, the creation of a 'new army' on a European model, were a direct threat to the dominate position of the Janissaries and as a result his reforms were crushed in their early stages and he was replaced as sultan in 1807.

²⁶In 1793 the Ottoman government sent to Paris a list of the officer and technician positions it wished to fill from France. A similar but longer list was sent in 1795. (One of those who applied was Napoleon Bonaparte). N. Berkes, op.cit., p. 75.

²⁷Ibid., pp.74-81.

The most important contribution of this period was the creation of a group of officials in the government that believed in reform, were convinced Europe offered most of the answers to the Empire's problems, and were determined to carry out these reforms in spite of opposition. The battle lines had been drawn between the first two groups to clash over the problems of reform in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century; the westernized reformers of the Porte allied to the Palace, and the traditionalists. The reaction of the latter to the rather blatant imitation of the Christian West inherent in most of Selim's reforms was momentarily triumphant.

The next important period of reform came during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839). Mahmud had been influenced by Selim's attempts at reform and was determined to emulate him, though with more caution. Though this attitude of the Sultan's was an important factor in the subsequent events of his reign, of equal or greater importance was the growing influence and impatience of many of the officials of the government, who were anxious to rebuild the Empire along formulas they were by this time confident would succeed.

The role of the Sultan in the Ottoman reform movement is a complicated subject and at times can be dangerously misleading. The overt role of the Sultan changed according to the personality of the man and the quality and aggressiveness of the officials beneath him, but one must conclude that it was the

conditions that made the man in most cases. The previous discussion of the western transformation should have made it obvious that change of some type was clearly necessary, and that by Selim's time if not earlier most Ottomans realized this. That the changes assumed the character they did was not so much due to the personality of Selim or Mahmud but to conditions in Europe and the Empire that made a westernist-oriented, reform-minded Ottoman government necessary. The character of the reforms were moulded primarily by the various Ottoman officials who advised the Sultan, who were in turn moulded by western ideas seen through the prism of their own past experiences and their understanding of the Ottoman past. Thus the rather superficial nature of many of the early reforms and the belief that military technology could simply be copied in a vacuum were natural developments, not the shallowness of one man or a group. There were 'forces' at work within the Empire which made reform inevitable and dictated, to a large extent, the type of reform undertaken. The greatest effect the personality of the Sultan was to have was in determining who was to execute the reforms, the Palace or the Porte.

The reforms of Mahmud's reign were not to begin in 1808, nor for many years after. The Janissaries, ulema, and other traditionalist elements of the Empire had dethroned Selim III and had appointed another Sultan, Mustapha IV, who was more amenable to their control. The reform-minded element made a

comeback in the following year by succeeding in having Mustapha dismissed and Mahmud made Sultan, but their position was still very insecure. Mahmud was not trusted by the traditionalists and was tolerated only because he was the last of the Ottoman line. In the face of this insecurity, the Porte called on the ayan, the only other military force in the Empire. In 1808, many of the ayan came to Constantinople with their private armies and gave Mahmud the support he and the officials of the Porte needed to at least neutralize the conservative element in the capital and provide the government with a degree of stability.

The ayan did not perform this service free of charge, but exacted an agreement from the Porte called the 'Pact of Alliance.' There is little legal significance to the pact since only a few of the ayan signed it and it was soon made irrelevant by government action, but it nevertheless is important. The Porte and the ayan delineated their separate powers and jurisdictions within the Empire. The ayan, always insecure because of the ad hoc nature of their seizure of power in the provinces, gained a degree of legitimacy and, more important for future events, the Porte began the process of asserting itself as a power to be reckoned with.²⁸

The next few years were spent in relatively silent struggle between the new bureaucrats of the Porte, who were becoming more and more westernized (or at least considered themselves to be

²⁸B. Lewis, op.cit., p.75 and K. Karpat, op.cit., p.83/

westernized), and the traditionalists in the capital on the one hand and the ayan on the other. The government managed to severely weaken the ulema in the capital during this period through a process of institutionalization. Instead of being separate from the central government, the ulema were given official positions in the government hierarchy. The muftis and qadis now held court in government offices instead of their homes. The provision of offices for the ulema was but the first step towards the bureaucratization of the ulema, which undermined their popular and effective power by placing barriers between themselves and the people and thus weakened considerably their ability to resist change.²⁹

The Janissaries were dealt with in a very different manner. Mahmud and his officials had long realized that the only way to modernize the administration and army of the Empire was:

".....the centralization of all power in his own hands and the elimination of all intermediate authorities, both in the capital and in the provinces. All power deriving from inheritance, from tradition, from usage, or from popular or local assent was to be suppressed, and the sovereign power alone was to remain as the sole source of authority in the Empire."³⁰

The key to this process of centralization was power and the first essential ingredient of power for Mahmud was a new, modern army. The development of this army was blocked by the Janissaries who correctly saw it as a fatal threat to their

²⁹B. Lewis, op.cit., p.96.

³⁰Ibid., p. 88.

position. In spite of this constant opposition, by 1826 Mahmud had been able to create enough of an independent military force to destroy the Janissary organization in the capital. The Janissaries were formally disbanded, most of the members in Constantinople killed, and the detachments in the provinces gradually done away with. This 'auspicious event', as many Turks called it, is rightly seen by most historians as the key to the subsequent reforms of Mahmud's period and for many years after.

"Between the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826 and his death in 1839, Mahmud II embarked on a great programme of reforms; in them he laid down the main lines along which later Turkish reformers, in the nineteenth and to some extent in the twentieth century, were to follow. In each field of reform, the creation of a new order was preceded by the destruction of an old one -- and all these preliminary demolitions were made possible by the destruction of the Janissary corps, the central repository of military power of the traditional order."³¹

Thus, by 1826 the ulema and the Janissaries had been either neutralized or destroyed and two of the factors in the equilibrium described in the previous section on eighteenth century Ottoman society were gone. Another factor in the balance, the central government, had been immeasurably strengthened.

The other element of power which Mahmud needed in order to carry out his program of centralization was control of the land. This meant that the ayan had to be crushed, since the very basis for their existence was control of the land. The campaign

³¹Ibid., p.79.

against the ayan, which was in most respects a military campaign, had begun as early as 1815 as the power of Mahmud's small new army, strengthened by arms obtained for the war of 1812 against Russia, began to grow. After 1826, events proceeded more rapidly. The ayan were aided in some ways by the alliance with the Janissaries in the provinces, but neither was a match for Mahmud's new army. In 1831, all the remaining timars in the Empire were abolished by government decree and campaigns in the Balkans, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia succeeded in defeating most of the ayans and derebeys. The Egyptian war of 1831-9 finally ended this phase of Mahmud's reforms.

A writer in the journal Quarterly Review in 1874, commenting on Mahmud's reforms, said:

"Turkey was now a Tabula Rasa and Sultan Mahmud, as though to the manner born, proceeded eagerly to inscribe on it where it lay passive before him, the Alpha and Omega of despotism -- a standing army and a centralized bureaucratic administration."³²

Despite the above quotation, things were not to go so easily for the reformers of the nineteenth century. The ayan lost most of their feudal powers and a controlled system of tax-farming was instituted in their place. The aim was to establish a direct link between the government and the peasants by doing away with intermediaries, but this aim was not to be realized. The ayan, as they existed in the eighteenth century, were gone, but the various groups, such as the local notables and provincial elema

³²Quarterly Review, op.cit., p. 326.

who had provided the base for the ayan, had not been destroyed. The struggle of these groups to maintain their traditional prerogatives against the increasing encroachments of the central authority, manifested through reforms, was to occupy the rest of the century.³³

The government, both the Palace and the Porte, had emerged during this period as the prime mover, the agency of change and progress.³⁴ This was a new conception of the role of the state in the Ottoman tradition and was largely the result of the development of a westernized bureaucracy. This political transformation was not the product of the aspirations of a rising

³³K. Karpat, op.cit., p. 83.

³⁴There are of course many who did and still argue that centralization was not necessarily progress. F. Geffcken, writing in the Nineteenth Century, said of Mahmud: "...he successfully destroyed the Dereg-Begs, and by a stroke of the pen confiscated all the property of the Timarlis. Thus the whole provincial organization of the Empire was overthrown and replaced by the naked absolutism of the central government--a step of fatal consequences. The administration of the Begs and Timarlis was, perhaps, not exemplary according to European ideas; but, on the whole, it corresponded to the local wants, and was limited by communal self-government; the taxes were moderate, and, with the exception of the fixed tribute to the Sultan, the money remained in the country. Mahmoud introduced the infamous institution of the iltizam, the farming out of provincial taxes to the highest bidder. Thus universal corruption became the rule; the pashas paid highly for their places, and endeavoured to suck out the double from the unfortunate provinces, as they were every moment in danger of being recalled....." F.H. Geffcken, "The Turkish Reforms in Armenia", Nineteenth Century, Vol. 38, 1895, p. 995. Bernard Lewis also speaks in the same vein when he writes of corruption becoming more prevalent under the reformed administration than under the old regime. He notes the increasing gulf between the rulers and the ruled due to the increase of a westernized style of life among the bureaucrats, the insecurity of tenure and property, the chronic financial disorders of the reformist ministries, and the breakdown of traditional moral standards, all of which helped to make the new civil servants cynical and venal. B. Lewis, op.cit., p. 102.

middle class or of a dissatisfied peasant population, but rather the creation of a traditional ruling authority in its struggle to maintain its existence.³⁵ Mahmud's desire for change and his admiration for the West were the product of traditional motives. He, along with his contemporary Muhammed Ali of Egypt, were defensive modernizers, men whose most ardent desire was to muster such military strength as would enable them to resist the threat by modern powers to the integrity and independence of their states. Thus, for Mahmud the purpose of reform was not the transformation of society in any modern image, but on the contrary, resistance to modern conquest and the strengthening of his position; not deliberate modernization but the forcible reassertion of tradition against the modern challenge.³⁶ It was clear by the 1830's, however, that the same view of change was not held by the bureaucrats at the Porte. They had gone beyond the Sultan and his advisors in the absorption and acceptance of western ideas and were in fact becoming committed to the ideal of westernization of the Ottoman Empire, with its component part, secularization. Now that the overt struggle between the Palace and the Porte against the provinces was over, the next generation of reform was to be marked by the inevitable struggle between the former allies.³⁷

³⁵N. Berkes, op.cit., p. 112.

³⁶Dankwart Rustow, A World of Nations (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1967), p.112.

³⁷One always seems to regret the use of the word 'inevitable' sooner or later, but there is apparently no other conclusion to be drawn. The officials in the bureaucracy were well on their way to becoming confirmed secularizers and occasionally republicans of a sort. They were soon to be convinced that secularism was the integral part of the success of the West and that parliamentary democracy was essential to progress. The Palace, however, could never afford to abandon its Islamic foundation.

PART III

It is significant that the first two periods of reform discussed in this chapter are generally identified by historians through the name of the ruling Sultan. In the next major era of reform, the names of the sultans are hardly mentioned and are never used to identify the period. Instead the period is known as the Tanzimat, roughly translated as 'reorganization'. For the purpose of this study, the Tanzimat will include the years from 1839 to 1871.

The work of destruction under Mahmud's reign was now replaced by work of feverish construction. The reforms initiated by the late Sultan were for the most part continued and many new programs begun. The bureaucrats of the Porte, the most important being Reshid Pasha, Fuad Pasha, and Ali Pasha, took over the direction of the reform movement.³⁸ The policy of defensive modernization was replaced by one of virtual westernization, still limited by the subdued but still active traditionalist opposition and the absolutist tendencies of the chief bureaucrats. The keynote of the reform movement was still power, the power created through centralization of authority in the capital.

There were several reasons for the change from Palace to Porte. Mahmud's successor, Abdul Mejid, was a relatively young man when he came to the throne and was neither as able nor as

³⁸These three men dominated most of the ministries between 1839 and Ali's death in 1871. Reshid was the first great minister of the Tanzimat, being largely responsible for initiating the new series of reforms in 1839, but the other two were the real powers of the last two decades of the period.

interested in government as his predecessors. The quality of the ministers of the Tanzimat and their fellow bureaucrats was considerably higher than in previous decades. Most of them had come up through the new bureaucracy, many knew a European language and had spent time in the West, and were therefore more aware of the problems involved in reform and more sure of the methods and solutions. As important as these factors was the fact that there were simply more of them. Besides this, the administration of the reforms had become much more complicated, involving greater amounts of money, constant dealings with Europeans and a greater knowledge of the West than a Sultan could be expected to have. The reforms of the Tanzimat period were more easily handled by the Porte than by the Palace and Abdul Mejid did not oppose the usurpation of authority by his ministers but quickly became reconciled to a relatively non-political role.

The actual reforms of the Tanzimat were so numerous and so varied that this study cannot even begin to consider them all and will therefore concentrate on those affecting the provincial administration and the status of the Christian minorities. It was reforms in these two areas that was to have the greatest impact upon eastern Anatolia.

The system of provincial administration was in a state of flux resulting from Mahmud's destruction of the ayan and derebeys with no firm idea of a substitute. The authority of the valis increased or decreased as the Porte vacillated between giving them enough latitude to efficiently govern or

restricted them to assure central control. In the 1840's the vali was under strict control, with most of the provincial officials appointed by the Porte and a provincial council (majliss), established by Reshid Pasha, to watch over him. During the 1850's the powers of the vali were increased somewhat in the light of the complete inefficiency resulting from the overly centralized approach.³⁹

These changes in the government's approach to the provinces had little actual effect on the problems that continually plagued provincial administration. The quality of the provincial officials was notoriously bad, both the local officials and those sent from Constantinople.⁴⁰ Agricultural commodities were speculated in by officials, causing artificial price changes and high profits and the practice of with-holding grain from the market to drive up prices was widespread. Taxes became excessively high due to competitive bidding for tax-farms, causing hardship for the peasant and revolts by nomadic tribes. The political intrigue in the provincial capitals and the connections of many local officials with important people in Constantinople made the position of the vali constantly insecure. The valis themselves were generally of poor quality

³⁹R. Davison, op.cit., p. 137.

⁴⁰Despite the increase in the number of 'westernized' bureaucrats in the Empire during the Tanzimat, these men seldom filtered into the provinces. Most were needed to handle the tremendous increase in paperwork, etc., caused by a centralized administration. Besides this, the bureaucrats had little wish to leave the comforts of life in Constantinople for the harsh and isolated life of the provinces. Those who were sent were either opportunists or potential exiles.

in many cases men who had been exiled from Constantinople. All of these ills made implementation of the new reforms promised by the Tanzimat statesmen not only difficult, but in many cases impossible.⁴¹

The first major attempt to 'rationalize' provincial administration came with the Vilayet Reform Law of 1864, which was implemented in 1867. The Law was drafted by Fuad Pasha and by another famous reformer of the Tanzimat who achieved his most brilliant successes in provincial administration, Midhat Pasha. The old administrative structure, the eyalets, was replaced by a smaller and more compact one called the vilayet. The vilayet, or province, was organized on the French model with several similar layers of administrative divisions. Below the vilayet was the sandjak, headed by a mutesarraf (a vilayet would usually be divided into three sandjaks); next was the kaza, headed by a kaimakam. These officials were all appointed by the Porte. The kazas were further subdivided into communes, or nahiyes, which were administered by elected officials. This administrative system and its operation will be examined in greater detail later in the study.

In addition to the physical and heirarchical reorganization, a new system of councils was instituted in the vilayets. Administrative and judicial councils were established in the first three

⁴¹ Another factor which must be kept in mind when considering the implementation of the reforms is the vast distances, both geographic and cultural, between Constantinople and many of the provincial centers.

layers of the organization, the vilayet, sandjak, and kaza. Membership in these councils included certain local officials such as the kadi or mufti, the representative of the local government, as well as elected members. The councils were primarily advisory in nature. They included members from all the important social, political, religious, and economic interests in the district or town. The electoral system for the Muslim and Christian members who were elected by their respective communities was devised to provide the upper classes of each with the power to decide who would represent their interests. The elections were extremely indirect, with strict property qualifications for voting and the lists of candidates being prepared by the executive of the district, but they were nevertheless elections.⁴² Some authorities see the institution of this electoral process as extremely important for the future of reform in the Empire. Speaking of the reform movement as a whole, Roderic Davison asserts that:

"The balance it attempted between centralization and decentralization -- between Istanbul appointed officials and local representatives -- could breed friction, inefficiency or collusion. The representative element within the system was often, depending on the locality and the appointed officials at any given moment, more shadow than substance. But there is no question that the law itself was fundamental in establishing the representative principle in Ottoman government and in linking it to an electoral process, however indirect."⁴³

⁴²Stanford Shaw, "Nineteenth Century Ottoman Reformers", Polk and Chambers, op.cit., p. 35.

⁴³R. Davison, "The Advent of the Principle of Representation in the Government of the Ottoman Empire", Polk and Chambers, op.cit., p. 103.

The actual operation of these councils will be discussed in a later chapter in the context of eastern Anatolia.

The Vilayet Reform Law failed to live up to its originators' expectations. In the two vilayets in which it was administered by Midhat Pasha, the Danube and Baghdad vilayets, it achieved striking successes, but its broad effects were slight. The quality of the officials was not improved by the law, money was as scarce as ever (in fact the increase in the number of officials in the vilayet required by the new law made money even more scarce), and local intrigue continued unabated.⁴⁴

The local notables in the larger towns retained their power over events despite the assertion of control by the central government during the Tanzimat. The ulema, a rich and landed group, retained their power through prestige and control over education. The cities were still divided into semi-independent quarters which defied efforts by the local government to monopolize power and the craft guilds were still powerful. The urban notables, who controlled both the quarter and the guilds, still retained their commercial connections with the nomadic tribes and dominated the tax-farming system. Besides this, the new Ottoman governors needed the cooperation of the notables. They were usually sent to their vilayets for short periods and were given totally inadequate budgets and military protection, which prevented them from establishing an independent power

⁴⁴R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p.167.

base. In many cases they were disaffected officials who were against the reforms and had been sent to the provinces as a form of punishment. The presence of new regulations, taxes, duties, and obligations tended to increase the peasant's reliance on the notable for both advice and protection.⁴⁵ All of these factors ensured the survival of the influence of the notables and prevented the Tanzimat reformers from achieving one of their primary goals, the direct connection between the government and the peasant.⁴⁶

The primary goal of the reformers we have been discussing had been the centralization of power. The Tanzimat did much to further this goal, but it had another goal which the westernized reformers regarded as equally important; political and social equality for all citizens of the Ottoman Empire. The trend in

⁴⁵The Ottoman Land Law of 1858 provides a good example of this increased reliance of the peasant on the notable. The law was intended to eliminate the intermediary function of the notable by having the peasant cultivator register his land holdings with the central government, thus creating an important direct link. Instead of working out in this way, the peasants in most cases distrusted the motives of the government, thinking the registration was a device to increase taxes or provide better conscription lists, and therefore had the local notable register the land in his name. This was especially true in areas where tribal ties were strong.

⁴⁶The provincial councils provide a good example of how the notables exercised influence under the Tanzimat. In many cases the council was simply a rubber stamp of a strong vali, but in most it managed to control the vali. An oligarchy of local notables usually controlled the administration of the vilayet, sandjak, and kaza. To each of these notables a section of the population contributed goods and services for protection. The position on the council was not salaried and thus only those who were independently wealthy or paid by a notable could afford to sit on the council. The Christian members were usually no better than the Muslims, being notables within their own community and subject to the same pressures. R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p. 141 and A. Hourani, op.cit., p. 62.

governmental reorganization was away from the classical Islamic concept that the status, rights, and duties of the individual were rooted in his membership in a religious community, be it Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, and toward the western secular concept that his status derived from his citizenship in the Ottoman Empire and from allegiances to the government of that Empire.⁴⁷

The various religious groups within the Empire had always been organized under what was called the millet system, a mixture of Islamic and Byzantine political theory. The millet was ".....a political organization which granted to the non-Muslim the right to organize into communities possessing certain delegated powers, under their own ecclesiastical heads."⁴⁸ The Patriarch (or Rabbi) had extensive powers in matters of internal millet administration. His authority rested on the assumption that law was personal rather than territorial or national and that religion rather than political allegiance determined the law under which the individual lived.⁴⁹ The effect of the millet system was to separate the various parts of the Ottoman population and place a religious hierarchy between its members and the state.⁵⁰ Thus it was a hindrance to centralization and a violation of the principle of equality of all citizens, the new western ideal.

⁴⁷R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p.8.

⁴⁸Kamal Abu Jaber, "The Millet System in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire", The Muslim World, Vol. 57, #3, July 1967, p.13.

⁴⁹R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p.13.

⁵⁰This system was ideal for a decentralized state wishing its population to administer itself, but is a prime example of one Islamic institution which was too weighted with vested interests to change with changing conditions.

There were several attempts by the Tanzimat reformers to reform the existing millets. By merely reforming the millets, however, they were giving the millet principle de facto recognition and thus defeating their original purpose. In addition, most of the reforms centered around limiting the power of the Christian clergy and thereby increasing the influence of the laymen in millet administration. This eventually led to an influx of more modern, secular and nationalist ideas into the millets and their educational systems, something the tradition-minded clergy would have resisted in order to preserve their own positions and remain true to their principles.⁵¹

The attempts to impose equality from above seldom had the desired results. A law was passed in 1856 admitting Christians into the army, but few wanted to join or serve. The military exemption tax, or jizya, which had been paid by all non-Muslims for centuries, had been dropped as an obvious example of inequality, but a new exemption tax had to be instituted because of Christian pressure. The new tax was ostensibly for all Ottomans who wanted to avoid military service, but the tax was so much higher for Muslims that only Christians could afford

⁵¹R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p.133. The Ottoman government had counted on the group of rich Armenian bankers and businessmen in Constantinople to take over direction of the Armenian millet after it reorganized itself with government help, a group which would probably have cooperated with the authorities. But after an internal struggle within the community, a less governable group of laymen emerged as the leaders of the millet, an event the government could not control.

to avail themselves of it.⁵² There was a continuous under-current of opposition to the equality principle among Muslims and among those Christians who felt that it jeopardized their special, and in many cases advantageous, position in the Empire. A decree by the vali of Ankara in 1865 sums up in many respects the difficulties inherent in the policy:

"It is commanded by the ruling authorities that all subjects cease to deride one another as Moslems and Rayahs, as Armenians and Protestants, since all are equally the dependent subjects of the Royal Government, and it is further commanded that mutually respecting and honouring one another, all shall dwell together in brotherly love."⁵³

The Tanzimat reformers saw the religious differentiation within the Empire as the primary cleavage between the people and the main obstacle to national progress. The aim of the Tanzimat was to accumulate power at the center through the attraction of popular loyalty from the provincial centers and from the millet organizations. Religious loyalty, by both Christians and Muslims, was seen as a competitor for the national loyalty the reformers were trying to inspire. While this view was certainly true, the problem was to go even deeper than the reformers expected, especially in the case of Islam. Besides a natural aversion to change and a reluctance to admit the superiority of the West, opposition to the Tanzimat by

⁵² Ibid., p. 94. Most Christians preferred to stay at home while their Muslim neighbors went into the army. This enabled them to better their trade and buy up land otherwise unavailable.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 97.

Muslims was generated by the practical fact that the reform meant copying the ways of the second class citizens of the Empire, the Christian minorities, who were in many instances ahead of the Muslims in the assimilation of western ideas and patterns of life, even if only in a superficial way. Pride in Islam was a factor with which few of the Tanzimat reformers were prepared to deal.⁵⁴

The primary differentiation in Ottoman society during the Tanzimat period was between the rulers and the ruled. The millet system had always generated a degree of tension in the society by confusing the issue of class identification. A Christian could attain considerable wealth and influence within Ottoman society, but because of his affiliation with a non-Muslim millet, he was denied certain attributes of his class. On top of this confusion and sometime frustration was placed the differentiation between the new governing elite and the mass of the population, the peasants, artisans, townsmen, notables, and non-Muslim hierarchy. This separation of the government from the population during the Tanzimat was its greatest weakness.⁵⁵

"The 'Men of the Tanzimat' were, or at least thought they were, Europeans in spirit, dress, and ideal. As

⁵⁴Ibid., p.79. Besides pride, there were other factors in Islam which worked against the Tanzimat; a strong prejudice against innovation which had developed since medieval times, the strength of the shari'a which worked against legal reform, and the ulema whose quality had declined but whose influence was still strong.

⁵⁵Class position was not as important in Ottoman society as it had been in pre-revolutionary or contemporary Europe. There were few major economic grievances, no rigid social barriers, and the undeveloped economy limited the opportunities for acquiring and spending wealth, thus preventing glaring disparities between rich and poor. B. Lewis, op.cit., p. 55.

a result, not only did they fail to understand and consider the mass of Ottoman subjects in carrying out their duties, but they largely scorned and ignored them, and were met with equal scorn in return. The 'Men of the Tanzimat' felt that they alone had the enlightenment and knowledge necessary to reform the Ottoman system. They felt that so long as their goals were justified the interests and desires of the older ruling class and also of their subjects need not be considered. As in identifying the reforms so much with Europe while ignoring popular feeling, they created much unnecessary opposition to modernization which almost destroyed their efforts....."56

The laws and tone of the period led to the re-invigoration of the non-Muslim millets of the Empire, making them more self-contained and more community minded, thus laying necessary groundwork for the development of nationalism. The Muslim population, on the other hand, did not develop a millet-type organization but continued to place themselves directly under the state, which was no longer an Islamic state, but one which proclaimed equality. Thus the Muslim element became more and more dissatisfied with this political machine, a dissatisfaction which manifested itself first in the Young Ottoman movement and finally culminated in the Hamidian regime.⁵⁷

PART IV

While most historians extend the Tanzimat reform period to 1876 and the promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution, this study will treat the years 1871-6 as a separate period. The

⁵⁶S. Shaw, op.cit., p. 37.

⁵⁷N. Berkes, op.cit., p. 159.

death of the Grand Vizier Ali Pasha in 1871, the last of the great ministers of the Tanzimat, ended the era of the dominance of the Porte in the operations of the government. The Sultan, Abdulaziz, was able to gradually reassert the power of the Palace, a trend which was to culminate in the Hamidian period.

This discussion of this period (1871-6) will be more complicated than that of the preceding ones because of the necessity of examining not only the increase of despotism under Abdulaziz, but also the Young Ottoman movement, which originated during the Tanzimat and reached its zenith in 1876.

During the 1860's, the main conflict among the leaders of reform in the Empire, and among officials and intellectuals in general, was not over whether or not to accept the reforms of the westernizers, but rather over the issue of the autocratic power of the state which was aided by these reforms. The group most identified with the 'liberal' opposition to the steady increase in the power of the central government was the Young Ottomans. They were a loosely connected group of individualistic bureaucrats and intellectuals who had common attitudes toward the situation of the Empire in the mid-1860's.⁵⁸ Most of these men (initially a group of six in 1865 and never a large organization) had come up through the Ottoman bureaucracy, mainly in the translation bureau, thus being exposed to the maximum western influence available in the Empire. They were

⁵⁸R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p.175.

imbued with western ideas, much as the earlier reformers, but were also under the influence of a reaction to the political and economic manifestations of the West in the Empire which resulted in a kind of Ottoman and Islamic patriotism. Their anger was partly directed at Fuad and Ali Pashas, particularly the latter, as the archtypes of the tyrannical, centralized bureaucracy which they blamed for many of the ills of the Empire, particularly the growing alienation of the Muslim population. Even more than this, their anger was directed toward the ever present European interference in the internal affairs of the Empire and the diminution of Ottoman strength.

It was their position in the bureaucracy which gave the Young Ottoman's most of their influence. They were important to the government, the very type of men the Tanzimat had been trying to cultivate, though a little too independent for the higher bureaucrats of the Porte. This position in the bureaucracy was also a weakness for the Young Ottomans in that it made them more susceptible to co-option by the government. While they had many ideas about how government should be changed and disagreed in very fundamental ways with the trend of Ottoman government, one of their biggest complaints was lack of opportunity for advancement to the higher echelons of the administration. During the Hamidian period some of these men lived in exile, unable to accept the rejection of western liberalism, but many others were absorbed into the system.

The Young Ottomans' prescription for the ills of the Empire involved popular sovereignty, representative government, and some form of constitutional monarchy. The legislative body was to be their brake on the executive authority.⁵⁹ This was the prime example of their devotion to the western example, but their motives were more complicated than the simple desire to imitate. They were convinced that only by adopting the 'liberal', essentially West European approach to government could the Ottoman Empire survive, and the survival of that Empire was their overriding concern. Their patriotism, the concept of which they may have borrowed from nineteenth century European patriotism and nationalism, was traditional in many respects. They were all Muslims and their complaint against the government echoed the complaint of the Muslim population. Their patriotism was fired by a pride in Ottoman history, a pride in Ottoman religious tolerance, and a pride in Islam as the one true religion.⁶⁰ This 'liberal reaction' was thus in a very real sense a traditional reaction to secularism and economic and cultural imperialism.

While the Young Ottomans were agitating for their type of change in the Empire, a very different at at the same time similar movement was taking place in the Palace. The year 1871 was an important turning point in the Ottoman reform movement because of both the death of Ali Pasha and the defeat of France

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 223.

⁶⁰The chief spokesman for the Young Ottomans, Namik Kemal, was an advocate of Pan-Islamism, though in a cultural rather than a political sense. The Young Ottomans followed events in Central Asia carefully and were active in spreading Islamic propaganda, books, etc., all over the Empire. S. Lewis, op.cit., p. 335. See Sherif Mardin, op.cit. for complete details.

by Prussia. The latter event was a psychological blow to the westernized intellectuals and bureaucrats who had engineered the Tanzimat reforms and who had been raised in the French tradition of government and education. The defeat of France, always regarded as the example par excellence of western civilization, by a power relatively unknown to the Ottomans led many in the Empire to doubt the very basis of many of the reforms undertaken since 1839. A mood of reaction set in at Constantinople, with many Christians being dismissed from Government posts and greater stress being laid on the Islamic character of the Empire and the corresponding need for Islamic unity.

"Under Abdul Aziz the doctrine was more actively advanced that the Ottoman Sultan was not only the head of the Ottoman Empire but also the Caliph of all Muslims and the heir, in a sense not previously accepted, of the Caliphs of early times."⁶¹

There were many reasons for this resurgence of pan-Islamic sentiment after 1871, indeed it may have been inherent in the process of reform from the very beginning. The increased hostility toward the West, encouraged by the chaotic financial situation of the government which was blamed on western interference and imperialism, was the primary cause for its emergence in 1871.

As an aspect of this pan-Islamic reaction, concern for the Muslims, particularly in places where they were beyond Ottoman protection, revived greatly. Within the Empire there was a tremendous upsurge of interest in the plight of Muslims in

⁶¹B. Lewis, op.cit., p. 121.

Central Asia, especially Turkestan, who were coming under intense pressure from Russian imperialism. Emissaries from the Khanates came to Constantinople seeking aid and were enthusiastically received, though little substantial aid was given. Much of the pan-Islamic sentiment was manufactured outside the Empire, by Arabs in Tunisia who were worried about the French, by Indians who wanted a jihad against the British, and by Indonesians who were fighting the Dutch. The Ottoman government was able to use this increased interest in Islamic unity not only in domestic politics, but also in holding the Empire together in the face of separatist pressures from areas such as Egypt. The Ottoman newspaper Basiret, reputedly the most popular in Constantinople, went so far as to call for a war against China in 1873 because of alleged mistreatment of Muslims.⁶²

With the death of Ali Pasha the Palace came into its own once again as the real leader of the Empire. The officials at the Porte, none of whom had been trained or were able to fill Ali's place, all competed with each other for favors from the Sultan. Abdulaziz had no trouble adjusting to the new situation, as he had chafed under Ali's control since his accession to the throne in 1861. However, he soon showed himself to suffer from periodic fits of insanity, spent money wildly, and with the cooperation of his favorite minister, Mahmud Nedim Pasha, began to attempt to undo many of the Tanzimat reforms. Officials, both

⁶²R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p.270.

provincial and central, were juggled so frequently and erratically that none had even a semblance of security. The vilayet system was tampered with, smaller units being created by Mahmud Nedim, thus decreasing their potential independence from the central government.⁶³

"In the seventies.....the tendency to curtail the powers of the valis was gradually developing in the policies of the central government which was alarmed by growing centrifugal tendencies in the vilayets. The Grand Vizier, Mahmud Nedim, was the first to criticize the powers vested in the valis by the Vilayet system of 1864, and further extended and detailed by the revision of 1871. To him, those valis who, following the example of Midhat, were activating their provincial governments for carrying out local projects (reorganization of public services, construction of roads, publication of newspapers, etc.) were becoming 'quasi-independent vassal princes' setting up 'little absolute states'. He found, therefore, many ways to limit their power."⁶⁴

Mahmud Nedim's main changes in the provinces were the increase in the number of officials appointed by the central government. Besides the vali, mutesarraf, and kaimakam, the defterdar, the heads of each of the courts, the commander of the police and zaptiehs were each appointed by the respective Ministry in Constantinople. This meant that all these functionaries had a direct channel to the capital and could be effectively controlled by neither the vali nor the central government.

Material and economic conditions in the Empire during the 1870's must also be taken into account to avoid the impression

⁶³ Ibid., p. 290-2.

⁶⁴ S. Shamir, "The Modernization of Syria: Problems and Solutions in the Early Period of Abdulhamid", Polk and Chambers, op.cit., p. 354.

that the motivation for change of mood was not solely intellectual change and the political struggles of various power groups. The growing lack of confidence of the population in their government, which was one of the results of the Tanzimat period, dramatically increased with the economic disaster which occurred between 1872 and 1875. In 1872, central Anatolia suffered one of its worst droughts, producing a famine that spread over the entire region and affected Constantinople as well. The following winter was one of the worst in memory, producing extreme hardship for the peasant population. A bad harvest followed in 1873, making conditions in many parts of Anatolia virtually unbearable. Earthquakes in areas such as Kharput compounded the difficulties. Villages were abandoned and refugees flocked to the cities and large towns. The harvest of 1874 was again a failure and the beginning of the Balkan revolts in 1875 increased discontent since many of the Muslim peasants in Anatolia were forced into the army to deal with the uprisings. Even into the spring of 1876 many parts of Anatolia were filled with homeless and starving people who had abandoned their lands. The conservative tendency active among the Muslim peasant population made it unlikely that they would precipitate a revolt against the government, but it was also unlikely they would object too vociferously to its demise.

In addition to these difficulties, in 1875 the Ottoman government had been forced to partially repudiate the Ottoman

debt, due to the virtual bankruptcy of the finances. This not only affected European bankers, but more important for this study, it hurt many wealthy Turks and Armenians who had purchased Ottoman bonds.

The combination of peasant unrest and the dissatisfaction of many wealthy Ottomans in the capital, coupled with continuous Young Ottoman agitation for change, was a potent group for the weak government of Abdulaziz to face. The Young Ottomans took the lead in the opposition, with Namik Kemal as the chief ideologue and Midhat Pasha, who had ties with both the Tanzimat and the Young Ottomans, as political leader. The call for a constitution was now taken up by virtually all in the Empire who were dissatisfied with the government, except, of course, the traditionalists, who were just emerging from the forced silence of the Tanzimat.

The writings of Namik Kemal and other Young Ottomans had long urged the adoption of a constitution with provision for a parliament as necessary for further reform of the Empire. These ideas were gaining popularity with a great many of the bureaucrats in the Porte who were unhappy with the reversion to autocratic rule. The idea of a constitution was not seen as simply another imitation of the West, but as fully compatible with Islam, incorporating the concept of consultation popular in early Islam.⁶⁵ Another reason for the popularity of the constitutional idea among the bureaucrats was that they saw it

⁶⁵N. Berkes, op.cit., p. 225.

as a means of staving off western pressure for reform in the Empire. The Powers were not especially enthusiastic about the idea of a constitution or parliament for the Empire, feeling it was not prepared for such 'advanced' institutions, but the bureaucrats saw them as a means of guaranteeing their predominance in the government and at the same time showing Europe the Empire was indeed reformed.⁶⁶

The bankruptcy of 1875, the Balkan revolts and subsequent Bulgarian massacres, the weakness of France since 1871, and the open hostility of Britain and Russia made the Empire particularly vulnerable to western pressure at this time. There was increasing talk among western statesmen about the 'Eastern Question' and speculation about the division of the Empire among the Powers. Midhat hoped a 'liberal' regime would forestall any western intervention in the internal affairs or organization of the Empire. These were by no means Midhat's only motivations for being a constitutionalist. He also saw the necessity of curbing the powers of the Sultan, especially his spending powers, and of reasserting the Porte over the Palace. In fact, he wanted to go farther than this since the establishment of a parliament would act as a check on both the Palace and the Porte.⁶⁷

⁶⁶For more details on the British attitude toward Parliamentary rule, see H.W.V. Temperley, "British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914)", Cambridge Historical Journal IV, 1932-34,

⁶⁷R. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, op.cit., p.362.

The year 1876 has aptly been called the 'Year of the Three Sultans'.⁶⁸ Midhat and others allied with the Young Ottomans were able to engineer the deposition of Sultan Abdulaziz through the good offices of the sheikh ul-Islam and installed Murad V in his place, a young man who was evidently very much in favor of the constitutional idea. This, of course, was a coup from the top and while it may have been approved of by the population, they did not have a hand in carrying it out. Murad quickly proved to be unsatisfactory for Midhat's purposes, becoming somewhat deranged soon after his accession and thus in August 1876, he too was deposed by Midhat and his younger brother Abdulhamid made Sultan. An arrangement had apparently been made ahead of time between Midhat and Abdulhamid concerning the constitution, but the former was soon to be disappointed. As soon as he was firmly in power, Abdulhamid began to alter the meaning of Midhat's efforts and the resulting Constitution of 1876 was not the limit on despotism the Young Ottomans had expected.

"During the preliminary discussions, he (Abdul Hamid) succeeded in trapping the constitutionalists with their own inconsistencies and goaded the Muslim conservatives into vigorous opposition to them.....With-holding his trump card until they had thoroughly committed themselves, Abdul Hamid achieved at zero hour the sort of constitution to which he could happily put his signature. The ideological confusion and compromising haste of the constitutionalists produced a document whose dominant note was not the safeguarding of the rights of people, but the safeguarding of the rights of the sovereign and sacredness of the khalifa. It was this document which was to serve as the legal basis of the long era of Hamidianism."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 362.

⁶⁹ N. Berkes, op.cit., p. 231.

Following close on the declaration of the Constitution and the meeting of the first Ottoman parliament was the Russo-Turkish War of 1878-9 which resulted in the disastrous defeat of the Ottomans. The Constitution was soon forgotten, the parliament dismissed, not to be recalled for thirty years, and the last vestige of the spirit of 'liberal' reform in the Ottoman Empire disappeared. The Russians imposed a harsh peace on the Ottomans at San Stefano, which served to awaken the British to the danger of Russian hegemony in the Near East and Balkans. The resulting Congress of Berlin did little to soothe the blow on the Ottomans, though it and the Cyprus Convention made the Western Powers happier. The Young Ottomans either came over to Abdulhamid and joined the government or were exiled. Midhat himself was gradually eased out of the government, sent into exile and eventually killed. He had deposed too many Sultans for Abdulhamid to be able to tolerate him.

The central character of this study is now on the stage. But he was not yet the 'red Sultan' or the "evil nightmare brooding over Europe,"⁷⁰ that later writers were to decry. In fact, he appeared to many, including the British Ambassador Sir Henry Layard, as a reasonable man from whom the Powers could expect cooperation. He had cooperated on the Constitution, at least on the surface, and though he had dismissed the parliament, this could be excused on the grounds of the emergency caused by the war with Russia. He appeared to

⁷⁰Edwin Pears, Life of Abdul Hamid (London: Constable and Co., 1917), p. vi, preface.

cooperate with the British in their early attempts at finding the key to Ottoman reform, of which more will be said later. In fact, despite later cries to the contrary by Europeans and Ottomans, the reforms were in little danger. As Bernard Lewis has pointed out:

".....The reform had already gone far enough to make a simple policy of reversion to the past impracticable. The destruction of the old order had been too thorough for any resoration to be possible; for better or for worse, only one path lay before Turkey, that of modernization and Westernization. She could move fast or slow, straight or deviously; she could not go back."⁷¹

But Abdulhamid was anything but a Young Ottoman in Sultan's disguise. He was an absolutist in the tradition of Mahmud II and Abdulaziz. He recognized that the support the Young Ottomans and Midhat had received in 1876 was not ideological, but simply mobilized discontent. He saw that the Muslims of the Empire were weary of the fast pace of change, the forced equality of the Christians, the de-emphasis of Islam, and the increasing interference of the western Powers into internal Ottoman affairs. He used the patriotic sentiment brought alive by Namik Kemal, minus the constitutional qualification, and built a new basis of support. The conservatives of the Empire were now ready to come to the surface and Abdulhamid welcomed them back. This

⁷¹B. Lewis, op.cit., p. 125. One must agree with this statement as far as it goes. The Empire could never 'go back' in the literal sense, but it also seems to imply a kind of inevitability about the universality of the western model of civilization which all cultures, once they come into contact with it, must accept. While this may in fact have happened and be happening, its inevitability must be severely called into question.

was not simply another group imposing itself on the Empire, but rather a group which most accurately reflected the feelings of the majority of the population, especially the Muslim part of the population.

"The Hamidian regime took shape under conditions crying for its establishment. Several factors made the regime not an anomaly but a true reflection of conditions prevailing not only in Turkey, but throughout the Islamic world."⁷²

The study shall now move to discuss the Hamidian regime in some detail as it operated in the provinces of eastern Anatolia.

⁷²N. Berkes, op.cit., p. 253.

CHAPTER TWO: An Introduction to Eastern Anatolia.

Several issues will be raised in this initial discussion of eastern Anatolia which will not be treated in detail until later in the study. The chapter will begin with a short description of the significant aspects of the physical geography of the region and then to an examination of the various ethnic groups. On the latter subject, the social organization of the groups and their inter-relationships with one another will be of primary concern.

From this point on the primary source materials used for the study will be the reports of the British consuls in eastern Anatolia. These men, most of whom were military officers, were sent to this region and to western Anatolia as part of the fulfillment of promises made by the British at the Congress of Berlin concerning supervision of Ottoman reform. Their primary mission was to act as observers and to report to the British Government on conditions in the area, especially the plight of the local Christian population. The role of the consuls will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

PART I

Geographic factors play a crucial role in the economic, political, and social life of eastern Anatolia. The region is part of the great Anatolian plateau which stretches from the Bosphorus to Persia but which is at its most rugged and highest

elevation in the east. The dominant physical characteristics of the area are the many mountain ranges with fertile and populated valleys in between, the many rivers which have their source in the highlands of the region, and the high plateau areas, like that around Lake Van. The high elevation of the entire region results in great variation in climate, with as much as six feet of snow in the winter in many parts and semi-arid summers. This climatic factor and the mountainous nature of the area which precludes the existence of any large scale tracts of grazing land have had many social consequences, such as the annual migrations of the nomadic tribes from plateau to plain.

The mountainous plateau is bordered on the north by the Black Sea and the Caucasus mountains and continues into Persia towards the east. In the south, however, it slopes down to the Mesopotamian plain around the cities of Diarbekir and Sert, a change which in some areas is gradual and in others is quite abrupt. This 'line' is the division point between the Arabs and the peoples of the plateau and generally contains a very heterogenous population.

The abundance of rainfall in the spring and the great number of rivers and streams make agriculture the dominant occupation of the region, with seasonal grazing possible in limited areas. Some of the plains areas between the mountains, such as that in the Kharput area, are quite extensive and prosperous while in other areas agriculture must be carried on

under much more difficult circumstances, on the sides of mountains and in rocky soil.¹ As shall soon become evident, the population of the valleys and the hills developed social relationships to fit this type of varied environment.

The region we are concerned with is relatively sparsely settled, a condition due to both geographic and other factors.² Any estimates of population in the Ottoman Empire must be at best approximate, since no accurate census was ever taken and there were many motives for both concealment and exaggeration

¹The mountains are also an important factor in the agricultural nature of the area, since they act as a barrier to large scale immigration of nomadic elements. While the presence of water does not literally 'make' agriculture the dominant occupation of the region, it is more important a factor in the Middle East than it would be in most other regions of the world. The few areas in the Middle East where sufficient water is available, such as the Nile Delta, the Tigris-Euphrates river area, parts of Anatolia, and so forth are virtually always settled by agriculturists. The areas dependent on irrigation, such as the Nile Delta, are always somewhat precarious for extensive agriculture, being dependent on a strong government for maintenance of the irrigation system and protection from incursions of nomads. In addition they are susceptible to invasions which tend to cause extensive devastation. The area of eastern Anatolia, being protected by the mountains from too frequent invasions and from extensive nomadic incursions, thus was a natural refuge for those elements of the population of the entire region who wished to pursue agriculture. For this reason the origin of many of the ethnic groups in the area are obscure to this day.

²This problem will be considered later in the study. It is sufficient to note here that these factors include such things as the inhospitable nature of much of the terrain, the migration of some of the Christian population due to poor relations with local Muslims, and large scale conscription of Muslim men into the Ottoman army.

of numbers.³ The vilayets of Erzeroum, Sivas, Van, Diarbekir, Bitlis, and Kharput, which made up the region in 1880, contained approximately 3,000,000 people, or about fifteen per cent of the total population of the Ottoman Empire in Asia (approximately 20,000,000).⁴ The figures become even more

³Government statistics were generally taken from conscription lists for Muslims and from the numbers paying the exemption tax for the Christians, both of which provide obvious motives for generally lower figures. The government, however, always tried to inflate the figures for the Muslims. Thus in many cases Kurdish nomads who moved from Mosul to Van each year would be included in the Van figures, even though they were more properly residents of the southern area. The Armenian Patriarch, of course, tried the same kind of tactics in an effort to increase the Christian percentage. An example of this population manipulation can be seen in the following estimates of the population in the Van vilayet in 1881:

	<u>Cap. Clayton (consul)</u>	<u>Arm. Patriarch</u>	<u>Ottoman</u>
Kurds	134,078	88,047
Turks	21,629	18,929
Yezidis	2,500	5,860
	<u>156,207</u>	<u>112,836</u>	<u>174,408</u>
Armenians	112,536	133,859	78,036
Nestorians	71,337	88,338	58,700
Jews	1,328	1,328	2,050
	<u>185,201</u>	<u>223,525</u>	<u>138,184</u>

Vice-consul Captain E. Clayton, Van, to Ambassador Layard, No. 152 of 2 March 1880, enclo., Foreign Office Archives, Public Record Office, London, F.O., Turkey, 424 Series, Vol. 106. Hereafter Clayton to Layard, 152 of 2 March 1880, F.O., 424/106. See also, Consul Major Henry Trotter, Therapia, to Ambassador Dufferin, 154 of 29 September 1881, F.O., 424/123.

⁴The breakdown by vilayet was approximately as follows:

Bitlis.....450,000
 Diarbekir.....400,000
 Erzeroum.....520,000
 Kharput.....520,000
 Van.....350,000
 Sivas.....760,000

For more details on population figures see Vital Cuinet, La Turquie d'Asie (Paris, 1890-5), ii, pp.2-4, and the following consular reports: Consul Colonel C.W. Wilson to Ambassador Goschen, 90 of August 1880, F.O., 424/107; Trotter to Goschen, Constantinople, 104 of 7 September 1880, F.O., 424/107; Acting Vice-consul H. Barnham, Kharput, to Goschen, 182 of 7 October 1880, F.O., 424/107; Trotter, Therapia, to Dufferin, 154 of 29 September 1881, F.O., 424/123.

tentative and unreliable when one attempts to arrive at the numbers for the various groups within the region, especially the Muslims versus Christians. The most reliable source for data seems to be Major Trotter, the British consul for Kurdistan based in Erzeroum, who placed the Christian population at about twenty-eight per cent of the total in the above mentioned six vilayets. This is considerably lower than most estimates made by other Europeans and by Armenian writers.⁵

While the vilayet boundaries changed intermittently throughout the period under study, and new vilayets were created and then abolished, the six listed above provide us with a useful tool for regional differentiation. The Sivas vilayet was the largest of the group and the one which was most unique in relation to the others. It was farthest to the west, somewhat less mountainous, more prosperous, had a somewhat different racial mixture, and belonged to the region termed Anatolia by the Ottomans and the British, rather than Kurdistan; nevertheless, it had many of the same conditions and problems found in the other vilayets. It seems to have been in much closer contact, both politically and culturally, with the central government than the vilayets to the east, closer than simply its geographical position would warrant, and this is frequently a useful factor for comparison purposes. The Erzeroum vilayet was, in

⁵Trotter to Goschen, 132 of 14 September 1880, F.O., 424/107. One Armenian writer, Sarkis Atamian, The Armenian Community (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1955), puts the figure as high as forty per cent.

Ottoman eyes, the most important of the eastern vilayets due primarily to its position astride the traditional Russian invasion route. In addition, it contained the most important city in the region, Erzeroum, and was one of the more prosperous (tax-remitting) vilayets of the Empire. Kharput and Diarbekir both contained Arab and Kurdish nomad tribes and were thus always potentially volatile areas. Kharput escaped excessive violence due to extensive fertile areas which tended to make everyone a little more prosperous than their fellows in neighboring vilayets, but Diarbekir was relatively poor and therefore usually turbulent. Bitlis was probably the poorest of the six because of extensive mountainous terrain and a high proportion of Kurdish nomads and tribes in the population. It was in this vilayet that the worst of the clashes between the Armenians and the Kurds were to take place. The last of the vilayets, Van, had the highest percentage of Christians as well as a high proportion of nomad Kurds during parts of the year, plus warlike Kurdish tribes across the frontier in Persia. This vilayet and the eastern parts of Erzeroum were in a very real sense frontiers and the Ottoman presence was primarily a military one aimed more at defense than at internal administration.

PART II

With this review of the physical setting in mind, the study will now move on to examine, in some detail, the various races of the region. Of primary interest will be the different types of social organization, the tribe, village, and city, the various types of occupations, and the inter-relationships of the races. The Kurds will be dealt with first and then the Armenians, Turks, Nestorians, and Circassians. Before this can be done properly, however, a summary of the history of the region in the decades immediately preceding the 1880's will be necessary to make clear the changed circumstances in which these peoples found themselves during the Hamidian period.

Eastern Anatolia had been dominated for many years by the hereditary derebeys, who managed to keep the many nomadic and other tribal groups in at least a nominal form of subjection. Writing in 1880, after the demise of the old order, a British consul described their position:

"Almost from time immemorial the land had been theirs. Perched on craggy ledges above the winding rocky gorges of the Tigris and Bohtan, closing mountain defiles, commanding fords, dominating the little mountain villages that cling to the rocky hillsides, or conspicuous in the plain on some little eminence that overlooks the villages, are their little white castelets, mostly ruined now, but admirably defensible little buildings, with their large courtyards, loopholed walls, and, at times, parapetted roofs."⁶

The key phrase in the above is "mostly ruined now" for by 1880

⁶Consul Lt. Herbert Chermiside, Kharput, to Layard, 194 of 5 April 1880, F.O., 424/106.

the derebeys had been gone for nearly fifty years. As soon as the Janissaries had been defeated in 1826, Kurdistan was one of the first areas to which Mahmud II turned in his attempt to re-establish central control. In that same year, Reshid Muhammed Pasha of Sivas was given the commission of pacifying the Kurds and installing Turkish governors throughout eastern Anatolia. By 1830 most of the derebeys had been removed from their official positions, though no Ottoman force had yet occupied the region in strength.⁷

The result of these reforming activities was large scale open rebellion by the Kurdish tribes against the Ottoman authorities. The removal of the derebeys had taken away the only real stabilizing influence and the result was near chaos. By 1834 direct communications with Baghdad were cut because of Kurdish control of eastern Anatolia. Many of the Kurdish tribes were united under Bedr Khan, a chief of an influential Kurdish family, while others acted independently. Political order was restored in 1834 by an Ottoman army 20,000 strong, but rebellion continued sporadically until Osman Pasha defeated a large Kurdish coalition in 1847.⁸ The Bitlis area, which had been controlled for centuries by an independent Kurdish family, was not captured until 1849.

Open warfare erupted again in 1853 when the Ottoman government was distracted by the Crimean War. The action was centered

⁷V. Minorsky, "Kurds", EI (1), p. 1148.

⁸An important reason for the long delay in establishing control in Kurdistan was the war with Egypt from 1831 to 1840, which diverted Ottoman attention to matters of survival rather than pacification.

in the Hekkiari region south of Lake Van but spread as far south as Baghdad. By 1855 the Ottoman army once again proved its superiority over the tribal forces and a relative peace was restored.

The net result of these centralizing moves of the Ottoman government was the destruction of a system of 'feudal like' relations between Kurdish and Armenian notables and their Muslim and Christian peasants, at least a legal destruction. As shall be shown, the effectiveness of government action in areas as far removed from the center as eastern Anatolia left much to be desired from an administrator's point of view. What these moves actually accomplished was to disturb and dislocate a long established order of things without establishing a firm replacement. In some areas in which the Ottoman military presence was strong, the destruction was nearly complete and a new system imposed, in others compromises were made between old and new, and in yet others very little had changed between 1830 and 1880. Perhaps the most significant point for this study is that what few changes had been introduced in eastern Anatolia had been in operation for only a short time by the advent of the Hamidian regime. With this background in mind, we can now begin an investigation of the Kurds.

PART III

The Kurds have long enjoyed a rather poor reputation in the West and elsewhere, primarily because of their relations with

the Armenian Christians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A surprisingly typical summation of their qualities is the following: "...a wild and semi-barbarous race who dwell in the hills and live by plunder and depradation."⁹ Clearly, some work of rehabilitation is necessary.

Most observers and scholars classify the Kurds into the following groups: the nomadic, the pastoral, and the sedentary. Each has some similarities but many differences and each plays a distinct role in the society of eastern Anatolia.

The Kurds were all Muslims, though their orthodoxy was frequently called into question by European observers and the more orthodox Turkish administrators. Like most Muslims in mountainous terrain, they had never been exposed to prolonged rule by the orthodox Muslim Empires of the early years of Islam and were in fact converted to Islam by sufi (mystic) sheikhs in many cases and were strongly influenced by the theology and practices of the various Christian groups among whom they lived. In addition, many of the Kurds were Shi'ite, especially those in Persia and near the frontier.

The nomadic Kurds were the group which usually caused the more spectacular incidents of violence and turmoil in the region and caused the most trouble for the peasant population, both Christian and Muslim, with which they came into contact.¹⁰ These Kurds belonged to ashirets, roughly translated as tribes, and

⁹G.H. Cloud, "The Armenian Question from the Congress of Berlin to the Armenian Massacres, 1878-1894", Unpublished MA Thesis, Stanford University, California, 1923, p. 2.

¹⁰The nomads were in evidence in only limited parts of the region, those areas where they spent the summer months, usually deserted plateau land, and the areas through which they passed.

subsisted on their herds of animals and whatever they could steal or barter from the population whose lands they moved through each year. They spent the summer months in the highlands of Kurdistan and each fall made the migration to the south, some going to the Mesopotamian plain via Diarbekir, and others into Persia, passing through the Van area. It was during these migrations in the fall and spring that their effect was felt the hardest. The effect was not wholly negative, however, since they also brought products such as meat and wool to the merchants and villagers and bought other products in return. As a general rule these Kurds were wealthier than the settled Kurds, partly because they were not subject to conscription and were forced to pay only the sheep tax.¹¹

It was the negative aspects of these great tribal movements that received the most attention from the consuls and observers. The land occupied by these Kurds in the summers and winters was potentially good agricultural land, but no one could settle on it and hope to survive because each year the Kurds would return and demand their grazing rights. All the land in the path of the migrations was potential pasture for the herds and all crops had to be harvested before the movement began or they would be

¹¹Memo by Trotter on Races in Kurdistan, 201 of 30 October 1880, F.O., 424/107. Most of the nomads from the Mesopotamian plain crossed the Tigris on their way to central Kurdistan at Jezireh. It was at this point that the sheep tax was levied. While at Jezireh they disposed of wool and goats hair and sold excess sheep. These items, along with gall nuts, formed the principal trade of the region. Captain F.R. Maunsell, "Kurdistan", The Geographical Journal, Vol. iii, #2, February, 1891, p.87.

lost. While many villages prospered as a result of their commercial dealings with the nomads, others were destroyed or gradually depopulated because of a tribal war or the capriciousness of a particular chief. They made the establishment of any kind of permanent order virtually impossible and for this reason the consuls were unanimous in their feeling that one of the most important keys to establishing security in the region was the settling of the tribes on the land. As one consul said:

"It is quite evident that so long as a vast array of Kurdish tribes continue to make biennial peregrinations, and to graze their flocks in winter on land that would otherwise be cultivated, so long the revenues and inhabitants of the province must continue to suffer. No less than fifteen tribes descend from the Taurus every autumn to winter in the plains around Diarbekir, with ruinous consequences to the country."¹²

Again, it must be stressed that these tribes had a positive function as well in the society of the region. They generally had close relations with the merchants and notables of the cities and towns, taking part in the general trade of the area and providing markets for local artisans and agriculturists. They played an important role in the many political disputes within cities and vilayets, allying themselves with one side or the other and providing a potent military force.

More numerous than the nomad Kurds were those classified by the consuls as pastoral. These Kurds usually retained their

¹²Lt. Col., consul W. Everett, Erzeroum, to Mr. H. Wyndam, Embassy official, 19 of 30 January 1885, F.O., 424/142.

tribal affiliation and were probably nomads who had decided in the not too distant past to settle on the land. Most of the pastoral Kurds lived in villages in the winter and in the summer moved with their flocks to higher pasture lands where they lived in tents. The migration was usually not extensive, the summer camping area being only a few miles from the village when possible. Some of the Kurds remained in the village all year to tend the crops while the others were away. They retained the aggressive qualities of the nomads, were usually not subject to conscription or strict tax collection, and maintained an attitude of restrained contempt for the Ottoman government.¹³

The sedentary Kurds were probably the end result of the transition from nomad to agriculturist, though many were of doubtful Kurdish origin and may have simply declared themselves Kurdish in the hopes of gaining security from attack by the tribes. They had no tribal affiliation and were frequently known only by the name of their village. They were heavily taxed by the government and subject to the same exactions and oppressions of the tribal Kurds as their Armenian and Turkish neighbors.

The most important of the above groups of Kurds for this study are the pastoral. They were the most numerous and exercised the greatest influence over events in the region. The pastoral Kurdish ashiret was usually based on one or more clans, or kinship groups, called taifa. The ashiret was the political alliance

¹³Caplain, vice-consul G. Tyrrell to Ambassador O'Connor, 141 of 7 October 1902, F.O., 424/203.

of several taifa, which were in turn broken down into smaller family units.¹⁴ Villages were owned by agas (chiefs), who either lived in the village or if more than one were owned, appointed a headman for each. In theory the agas were absolute owners of the land and the villagers merely tenants, paying the aga fifty per cent of the produce of the land. His power over the villagers was tempered considerably by the fact that most of the tenants belonged to the aga's own taifa. This acted as a potent restraining force on the exercise of arbitrary power by the aga. The villagers were usually able to pass the land on to their descendants, with the approval of the aga.¹⁵ The village was a tightly-knit unit with no ties of loyalty outside the kinship group. "Within the village all are bound together to resist the aggressor, beyond it everyone is a potential enemy, the identity of interest between the family and the village is complete."¹⁶ Given this localism, it is easy to see the reasons for the lack of military success the Kurds had against the Ottoman armies.

It was this control of the aga, or local notable, over the peasant population, and other relationships like it, that all the centralizing governments in Constantinople were trying to break. The larger loyalties had been broken; that between the

¹⁴Much of this discussion is based on E.R. Leach, "Social and Economic Organization of the Rowanduz Kurds", Monographs on Social Anthropology, 73 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1940) and Derek Kinnane, The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964).

¹⁵Leach, op.cit., p. 15.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 55.

agas and the derebeys, and the large tribal confederations, but on the local level the efforts of the government were for the most part ineffectual. Only a few of the consuls were able to see under the surface and discuss these very local relationships:

"It is difficult to appreciate.....how deeply rooted and how firmly rivetted are the relations between chief, whether nomad or practically settled, and man; and though one hears but seldom of some instance of gross cruelty, injustice, or oppression which remains without redress, or even idea or desire of redress, the Beys, almost without exception, still keep up a severe discipline and exact prompt and implicit obedience. Less than half-a-century ago they had power of life and death over their men, and in many cases exerted it; the old order is changing and has nearly passed away, but the sentiments engendered under it, the faith and loyalty and perfect trust of the henchman in his protector, yet survive and will last long."¹⁷

In many instances the central government actually increased the power of the agas. Under the impact of modern administration the agas were frequently made government officials and were held responsible for the behavior of those under their jurisdiction. This gave them an even greater range of powers over the villagers and increased their economic importance and social position.¹⁸ This was a much easier way of maintaining order for the government than the stationing of troops in each district. While it was realized that this would increase the actual power of the agas, it was hoped that by making them officials of the government they would become alienated from the kinship group

¹⁷Vice consul G.P. Devey, Van, to Consul R.W. Graves, 205 of 2 July 1894, F.O., 424/178.

¹⁸Leach, op.cit., p. 18.

and thus dependent on government support. This seldom happened, since the government presence was so weak in the area as a whole that the aga seldom had to enforce regulations or maintain strict order, but rather carried on in the traditional manner.

In addition to the agas, the Kurdish sheikhs, or religious leaders, were very important in Kurdish society. Most of the Kurds were members of one of the many sufi orders in the region and there were sufi sheikhs in each of the cities and towns and representatives in most of the Kurdish villages. These sheikhs exercised a great deal of temporal as well as spiritual power among the tribal Kurds, in many cases being agas themselves.¹⁹

Judicial disputes between villagers were dealt with by the village aga, with little recourse to any government judicial organization. The aga usually acted as an arbitrator in small scale feuds, disputes between neighboring villages over grazing rights and water, divorce disputes, and so forth. For his services he would be suitably rewarded by the parties to the dispute. While these methods were usually arbitrary, they were at least quick and were less susceptible to corrupt practices than the elaborate system introduced by the Ottomans proved to be.²⁰

The discussion will now focus on one of the most important

¹⁹Kinnane, op.cit., p. 8. The consuls have very little to say in any of their reports about the influence of these sheikhs or religion in general among the Muslims, but in several Armenian petitions addressed to the British place the 'evil' influence of the ulema as the main cause of disorder..

²⁰Loach, op.cit., p. 17.

aspects of the Kurds as far as this study is concerned, their seeming constant lawlessness and perpetration of violence on their neighbors. It was this tendency which was to fill so many pages of consular reports and traveller's books and which the Ottomans were to so skillfully exploit. It is important to discover if the reasons for this activity are simply that the Kurds are a "wild and barbarous race" or are more complicated.

One of the first factors in the prevalence of violent activity which comes to light is the almost constant inter-tribal feuding among the Kurds. This type of conflict seems to be endemic to virtually all societies organized on a tribal basis and was certainly a prominent feature of Kurdish society.

"Intense particularism and excessive jealousy among the hereditary tribes and their leaders regarding precedence and rights have been the bane of the Kurdish race. The most trivial disputes, inseparable from the social life of a community which could be smoothed over in the face to face talk in a few minutes, have usually led to bloodshed and long drawn out hostilities between parties. Mutual rancour and intolerance have kept the wounds festering from generation to generation....Any tribe which considered itself aggrieved in any way would never feel satisfied until it had wrecked vengeance on the opposing party, very often a sub-branch of the same clan."²¹

The cause of the feuds were generally questions of personal jealousy or other private quarrels between agas which were usually known only to those involved. Due to geography and other factors, most of the tribes were small and relatively independent, living in isolated valleys or on hills and plateaus,

²¹ Arshak Safrastian, Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Harvill Press, 1948), p. 64.

thus not having to worry about cooperation with neighbors for existence. The destruction of the derebeys and the large tribal confederations by the Ottoman government increased the tendency toward many small feuds. The traditional leaders had been responsible for many larger upheavals involving great numbers of tribes and men but had been able to hold the small feuds between individuals and tribes to a minimum. Now that this check was gone the many descendants of these leaders were given free reign to create and settle their own disputes. The Ottoman government seldom intervened unless a feud got clearly out of hand or it was to their definite advantage to back one side against another. The Kurdish and Armenian peasantry, most of whom were subject in one way or another to various Kurdish agas, were inevitably affected by these constant clashes.

Another aspect of Kurdish violence was economic. Most observers agree that the Armenian peasantry usually occupied the most fertile land while the Kurds were found mostly in the mountains. In the fall, incidents of theft and extortion by pastoral Kurds against the villages, both Kurdish and Armenian, would regularly increase. Rather than practicing simple robbery and extortion, the Kurds were actually laying in essential supplies for the long winter, their land being unable to produce enough to last the season.²² Once the snow fell, the roads were closed and the Kurds were stranded in their

²²Acting vice-consul Boyadjian, Kharput, to Graves, 76 of 18 July 1892, F.O., 424/172.

mountains. The consuls recognized this situation to a certain extent, as is evidenced in the following from vice-consul Clayton:

"There is one observation I would like to make with regard to the Kurdish plunderings, namely, that no doubt the temptation is great. As a general rule the fertile lowlands are in the possession of the Armenians, while the Kurds have only the barren and unfruitful hills, and doubtless sometimes are suffering actual want."²³

More than a temptation, one may conclude that it was a necessity of life that the Armenians 'share' their produce. This is an excellent example of the kind of balance which all societies develop in the presence of varied social and economic groups with diverse aims, desires, and roles. The Kurds wanted the freedom of the mountains and the ability to continue raising their flocks and the Armenians wanted the fertile soil of the valleys. The Kurds made no attempt on any large scale to force the Armenians off the land, something they could have done, and in turn expected the Armenians to supply them with sufficient food to survive. We shall have more to say of this type of relationship later.²⁴

Another factor in the tendency toward violence, especially in the fall, was the migration of the nomadic Kurdish tribes. Moving their men and animals through agricultural lands was bound to produce great hardship at specific times of the year

²³Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 125 of 18 August 1881, F.O., 424/172.

²⁴An additional factor in the distribution of the two races may have been that the Kurds were apparently relative newcomers to the area and settled where they could, the better land being already occupied.

and in many cases resulted in violence against villages. Of more concern to the Ottomans were the raids of Kurdish tribes from Persia into Ottoman territory, especially in the Van and Baskala area.²⁵

All of these factors played an important part in establishing the Kurds' reputation as a lawless and 'barbarous' race, bent on the extermination of all their neighbors. But Professor Leach, in his study of Kurdish society, brings out another and perhaps even more important factor than those discussed above. He notes that most Kurdish tribes did freely resort to brigandage on every possible occasion, it being the socially approved aspect of inter-tribal life. The Kurds themselves lay great stress on this aspect of their lives in their folk-tales and traditions:

"But it is this very emphasis that has led to the fabulous distortions that appear in all accounts of Kurdish life either lay or official. To read the literature one must suppose that in former times the majority of Kurdish communities lived solely on the proceeds of plunder and ransom...But the unbiased observer cannot avoid the conclusion that most of the more spectacular exploits of Kurdish brigandage are the products of the Kurds' own imagination. See in their proper perspective these warlike activities can never have been more than an exciting gloss upon the normal balanced cycle of agricultural economics."²⁶

This is not meant to be a 'whitewash' of the Kurds and their frequent violent activity in the eastern Anatolian region, but is rather an attempt to put these activities in some kind of

²⁵Trotter, Memo on Races in Kurdistan, 201 of 30 October 1880, F.O., 424/107.

²⁶Leach, op.cit., p. 24.

perspective, an attempt made necessary by the excessive exaggeration in virtually all the literature on the subject.

As a final note on the Kurds, mention should be made of a particular group of that race living in an area called the Dersim. This is a highly mountainous and virtually impregnable region in the southwest part of the Erzeroum vilayet and parts of Kharput. It was made a vilayet itself for a short period but then reincorporated into Erzeroum. The region was inhabited almost entirely by Kurds who were known as kizilbash Kurds. The term denotes a religious distinction between these Kurds and the rest of the Kurds who were mostly Sunni, or orthodox. These kizilbash Kurds were classed as Muslims by the government but "niether practice the orthodox religion nor speak the same dialect as their neighbors."²⁷ Their religion was apparently a mixture of Islam, including Shi'ism, Sunnism, and sufism, Christianity, and paganism. The significance of this area was that it lay directly to the north of the great Kharput plain, an important agricultural area. In the summer and fall Kurds from the Dersim descended on the plain and levied tribute on the villages. Since this was an area that was supposedly under firm Ottoman control the authorities found this Kurdish activity extremely embarrassing. The Dersim was never subjugated by the Ottomans, however, and remained virtually independent throughout the Hamidian period. In the winter the area was

²⁷H.F.B. Lynch, Armenia, Travels and Studies, ii (Beirut: Khayats, 1965, original edition 1898), p. 418.

completely closed by snow, making military operations impossible and occupation impractical. When attacked, the Kurds simply fled to the higher mountains where they could not be pursued. Despite repeated efforts throughout the Hamidian period the Dersim remained a constant source of trouble for the Ottomans and was the greatest bastion of Kurdish 'feudalism'.

PART IV

The Armenians of the region, like the Kurds, were far from united. They were split into two major religious groups, the Gregorians and the Catholics, as well as a small but active Protestant group. Unlike the Kurds, the Armenians were also split into a rural and an urban group with frequently poor relations and communications between the two.

The great majority of the Armenians were peasants living in villages either wholly Armenian or more frequently a mixture of Muslims and Armenians. The villages were usually clustered around a 'mother-city' with a population ratio of about three to one in favor of the villages.²⁸ The peasants were generally docile, their only leaders being the ecclesiastic officers of the millet organization and their own priests, who were primarily interested in maintaining order and the status quo. Like the Kurds, the Armenian peasants were aware only of local affairs, having virtually no knowledge of the rest of the Empire or of

²⁸Atamian, op.cit., p. 46.

the government. Speaking of the peasants, one traveller said:

"Of the world which lies outside the sandjak in which they live, they know nothing. The Sultan is to them a splendid myth, to whom they owe, and are ready to pay, a loyal allegiance."²⁹

This intense localism plus the handling of most legal and administrative matters by the officials of the millet made it very difficult for the Ottoman government to establish any kind of direct relationship with the Armenian villagers.

The Armenian peasant, like his sedentary Kurdish counterpart, was closely linked to the Kurdish agas through a system which resembled European feudalism. Through this system the peasantry had for generations 'belonged' to one or another of the Kurdish agas, who protected the peasant from attacks by other agas or by nomads. This system was one of the first targets of the Ottoman administrators after the conquest of eastern Anatolia in the 1840's. These feudal relations were formally abolished and government officials sent to take the place of the agas in matters of tax-collection and protection. All of this had little effect. In most parts of the region the villages remained in the aga's hands and he continued to collect his percentage and provide the villagers with the only real protection available. As late as 1902, a consul was able to say the following about the status of the agas:

²⁹I.L. Bishop, "Shadow of the Kurd", Contemporary Review, lix, London, 1891, p. 653.

"The Christian villages all belong to some Kurd Agha, and so long as they satisfy him, they may or may not be well treated according to the disposition of the Agha; but as the Kurds are continually fighting amongst themselves, and it is their custom in case of a quarrel to attack each other's Christian villages, these latter are far from having a comfortable existence; if, however, they were not under some Agha's protection, they would not be able to exist at all."³⁰

With the exception of the areas around some of the larger cities and a few of the more extensive plains areas, the Ottomans were unable to maintain a consistent state of order in eastern Anatolia during the entire Hamidian period. The peasant either allied himself with an aga and thus ensured his existence, or faced the nomads and pastoral Kurds alone, an impossible task.

This feudal system did not operate during the Hamidian period in the same way that it had in the previous eras, but was changed considerably. The protection usually afforded by the aga was in the process of breaking down due to the splitting of the Kurdish tribes into smaller units, which was a direct result of Ottoman reforms. The quality of the protection which the peasants were forced to purchase was thus considerably lower while the incidents of violent activity by the Kurds, as outlined in the previous section, were increasing.³¹ In addition to this factor, the peasant was now forced to pay taxes to both

³⁰ Vice consul W.J. Anderson, Diarbekir, to O'Conor, 20 of 6 January 1902, F.O., 424/203.

³¹ Everett, Erzeroum, Report on Bitlis, 19 of 30 January 1895, F.O., 424/142. In many cases the family of an aga had ruled certain villages for many generations and felt honor bound to compensate the villagers for any loss incurred by them due to his inability to provide adequate protection.

the aga and the government. Usually the villages continued to pay directly to the aga, who then paid a percentage to the government, but in many cases this was not allowed and government officials would demand direct payment. Thus the villager was being squeezed from two directions and the percentage of his income he paid in taxes inevitably rose, while niether aga nor government got all that they demanded.³²

In the mountainous districts such as Dersim, the Sassoun area, most of the Bitlis vilayet, and others, the government presence was hardly felt and the powers of the agas remained much as they had been in previous decades. In these areas the villages were under the complete control of the Kurdish agas. They paid taxes to them and they had the right to sell the Armenian villages belonging to them to another aga. The villager

³²In spite of this, most observers agreed that taxes were generally low. They were assessed within the village according to ability to pay, thus seldom was anyone forced to starve. The following is an example of taxes paid to the agas:

Feudal taxes for one year in a group of villages in Bitlis -	
1 sheep.....	50 piastres
3 silver mejidehs.....	60
5 pairs of socks.....	15
1 bale of white cloth.....	30
woolens.....	25
3 godes of wheat.....	10
keep of ten sheep and 1 mule during winter..	150
1 load pears.....	20
30 days labor.....	90
	<u>450</u>

In addition to the above, each family paid its aga fifty piastres in the event of a birth, marriage, or death in the agas family and thirty piastres on the marriage of a daughter in the Armenian house. When two members of an Armenian family separate, each pays fifty piastres, and in the event of the death of either, the property goes to the aga unless there are children, in which case the aga takes half until the children can pay taxes. Vice consul F.E. Crow, Bitlis, to Ambassador Currie, 203 of 18 October 1897, F.O., 424/192.

could not buy or sell land, houses, and so on, without the consent of his aga. Marriage among villagers required the aga's consent and the presentation of suitable presents. If a villager wished to emigrate, all his property reverted to the aga.³³ In return for these privileges, the peasants of the more mountainous and isolated areas were usually much better protected than their fellows on the plains from both other Kurds and the government.

The Armenians in the cities and towns present quite a different picture. The urban Armenians dominated the merchant and artisan class and served as money-lenders to the Muslim population. The Armenian notables in the cities and towns were generally able to protect their fellow Christians against excessive exactions by the government and threats of massacre by their Muslim neighbors. Despite constant complaints by these Armenians and their ecclesiastic officials, most travellers in the area as well as the consuls portray them as being a comparatively wealthy and secure group. Speaking of these Armenians, one traveller in the area said:

"....the handsomest houses, the fairest gardens, the largest warehouses, the best-stocked shops...belong to Christians. One Christian is a tithe farmer, another a public accountant, a third a member of a Provincial Council...In a word, making all due allowance for the disgust which every well-intentioned mind feels for any form of worship other than his own, there is not normally more intolerance in Asiatic Turkey than there is in England or Prussia."³⁴

³³Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 125 of 13 August 1881, F.O., 424/123.

³⁴Quarterly Review, op.cit., p. 321.

Wealthy Armenians in the cities were frequently employed by the Ottoman government in administrative positions and other Armenians served as translators, accountants, and so forth. While the urban Armenians may have been threatened intermittently by Muslims who tended to use them as a scapegoat for their ills, they were in little real danger most of the time. Consul Clayton noted in 1881 in Van a dramatic increase in distrust and bitterness toward the Armenians on the part of the local Muslims. But he noted that the latter "...dare not openly show it except by occasional outbursts of opprobrious language in the bazaar or elsewhere when they think it will pass unnoticed."³⁵ Thus even in this isolated area the Armenians must have had a fairly secure position within the city and been protected by the local government.

The most 'notorious' aspect of the urban Armenians was their occupation of money-lending. Most observers report that they dominated this field in the urban areas and took wholesale advantage of their position. Speaking of a small town east of Sivas, one traveller notes the following:

"....most of the Christians were usurers. Any Mohammedan who chanced to require a loan had to pay his Armenian fellow-citizen a very high rate of interest. However, in this respect Divriki is not an exception to the towns in Anatolia, and in almost every district I visited I found that the leading Christians in the community had made their money by usurious dealings. In some instances, old Turkish families had been entirely ruined, their descendants were lying in gaol at the suit of Armenian money-lenders."³⁶

³⁵Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 26 of 27 June 1881, F.O., 424/123.

³⁶F. Burnaby, On Horseback Through Asia Minor (London: Sampson and Low, 1878), p. 131.

While this quotation may give a somewhat exaggerated view of the power of these men, it is probably close to the picture most Muslims had of the money-lenders. In fact, in an area with no banks and frequent famines, crop failures, earthquakes, and lawlessness, the money-lenders were an essential part of the society and must have frequently become very powerful. The peasants, both Muslim and Christian, were perpetually in debt, being pressured by the government for back taxes, the aga for tribute, and the money-lender for interest.³⁶ While usurious rates of interest were illegal, the peasants' and artisans' only recourse were the law courts, which were generally dominated by the wealthy class of the town and thus sided with the lender.³⁷

The governments of the vilayets were also frequently dependent on the Armenians for loans, both to operate the government and to meet special levies from Constantinople, which were a constant drain on provincial revenues. The Armenians were by no means at the mercy of a rapacious government, but in fact were able to use their wealth to great advantage.³⁸

³⁶Interest was usually three per cent per month and this, if unpaid, was added to the principal at the end of the year. Quarterly Review, op.cit., p. 338.

³⁷The workings of these notables and the courts will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

³⁸During a financial crisis in the Van Vilayet in 1883, the vali asked the Porte for an advance of 40,000 pounds, which was granted. He then summoned various Armenian merchants and explained to them his arrangement with the Porte, and asked for an advance of 5,000 pounds from them to tide the government over until the money arrived from Constantinople. The merchants demanded security of repayment and interest before they would discuss the loan. Vice consul H.C. Eyres, Van, to Everett, 83 of 16 October 1883, F.O., 424/140.

Thus while in the villages the Armenians were generally at the mercy of the Kurds, in the cities the wealth and influence of the Armenian merchants and notables enabled them to protect the poorer urban Armenians. This was destined to encourage the development of a split within the Armenian community between urban and rural areas and give each group a different perspective concerning their position in the Empire and what course of action the Armenian 'nation' should take.

The other Christian group with which we must deal are the Nestorians, known by some as the Assyrians. Like the Kurds, they were split into tribal and non-tribal groups, though few were nomadic. All of the Nestorians were then in the Hekkiari area of the Van vilayet, a remote and mountainous area seldom visited by representatives of the Ottoman government. The ashiret Nestorians did not acknowledge the authority of the Porte nor that of the Patriarch of the Nestorian church, who was the chief administrator of the millet. These Nestorians had maintained a relatively constant warfare with the nomadic and pastoral Kurds of the area, both sides being evenly matched.

The village Nestorians were dominated by the Kurdish agas and their tribes who lived in their midst in Hekkiari. Since they were not as docile as the Armenian peasants in other areas, the incidence and degree of oppression in Hekkiari was much greater.

The section of the Muslim population roughly classified as

Turks by observers made up about ten to fifteen per cent of the population of the region. They were the dominant peasant group in the Sivas vilayet, but in others they were concentrated in the cities, where they made up virtually all the Muslim part of the population. They were the artisans, merchants, administrators, and other functionaries, as well as the urban Muslim notables and were the element the Ottoman government felt it could most easily rely upon.

The Circassians, the other Muslim group in the region, were recent immigrants from areas occupied by Russia. They were similar in many respects to the pastoral Kurds, though their reputation as fighters was considerably higher. There were several colonies of Circassians in Sivas and Erzeroum and their role in the society depended on the degree to which they had been assimilated into the country and given an economic role to play.

PART V

Besides the feudal relationship described above, there were many other instances of Muslim-Christian relations which shed light on the workings of the society. In some cases the Armenians used the Kurds to settle their own internal differences. Vice-consul Boyadjian, an Armenian notable in Diarbekir, gives an example of this in a report in 1880 concerning a feud in an Armenian village. One of the parties to the feud eventually invited a Kurdish tribe to attack the village and kill his

opponents. The Kurds proceeded to sack the village, which brought another Kurdish tribe into the action to fight the first tribe for a share in the spoils.³⁹ In most cases this would have been reported as a typical Kurdish 'outrage' against an innocent Christian village. Another consul reported that among the Armenian and Nestorian villagers it was common for one party of a quarrel to pay a Kurd to rob or murder his adversary, a chance of which the Kurd would be only too happy to take advantage.⁴⁰ Both these examples should serve to indicate that the relationship between the Kurds and the peasant population of the region was much more complex than most observers indicate. Each fulfilled certain basic functions required by the other, such as protection and arbitration and supplies of food and other essentials.

As early as 1880 there were rumors of an alliance between the Kurds of the Dersim and the Armenians of the surrounding area, who were a particularly independent-minded group.⁴¹ This alliance would have been directed against the common foe, the Ottoman government, and would presumably have had connections with other anti-government forces at work at the time, which will be discussed in the next chapter. This extreme form of

³⁹Vice-consul Mr. Boyadjian, Diarbekir, to Chermiside, 81 of 10 August 1880, F.O., 424/162.

⁴⁰Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 267 of 25 May 1880, F.O., 424/106.

⁴¹Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 2 of 25 June 1880, F.O., 424/107. The Dersim Kurds were always quite friendly to the local Christians, while maintaining complete hatred for the Ottomans. Armenians were the people able to travel freely in the Dersim, where no Turkish soldier would dare set foot.

relationship, an active alliance, was the greatest fear of the Ottoman government in the area and something they worked against constantly.

The presence of such a varied population was to both complicate and facilitate Ottoman policy in the region and to generate much interest on the part of Europeans. The conflicts within each group and between groups was an important cause of frequent civil disorders of the region, which was an important factor in preventing any kind of real control of the area by the Ottomans. At the same time the competitive nature of many of these conflicts made it possible for the government to use one group against another at various times and thus at least maintain a government presence without actually being the dominant military and civil force in the area. A persecuted Christian population, which was the common view in the West of the fate of the Armenians and Nestorians, and the presence of many missionaries working within the Christian communities, made European involvement in the internal affairs of the region all but inevitable.

CHAPTER THREE: Government and the Notables

In the last chapter the relative positions and roles of the various population groups in eastern Anatolia were discussed. The Kurds emerged as the most important of these groups, both in relation to the Ottoman government and in local affairs. In this chapter the discussion will center on the role of another segment of the population, the notables, and the aspects of local government through which they made their influence felt. Membership in this group was not based on race, but on social and economic position within the society. Thus the notables included the Kurdish tribal leaders, the Armenian and Muslim merchants, religious leaders and dignitaries, and men whose position in the community was based on traditional and inherited prestige.¹ It was this group, with its varied and often conflicting interests, which provided the leadership in the opposition to centralized control of the provinces. The notables used the institutions of local government as their most common mode of expression, and it is to these institutions that we must first turn.

PART I

The main ingredient in the program of centralization

¹The importance of the traditional and inherited prestige must be stressed to avoid equating the notables with a class based on economic position within the community. While the great majority of wealthy men were considered to be notables, possession of wealth was not the crucial criterion.

initiated by the Ottoman government in the nineteenth century was the maintenance of firm control over the administration of the vilayets. The primary loyalty of provincial officials was to be to the central government and not to local interests as had been the pattern in the past in eastern Anatolia. One of the key factors in maintaining this kind of loyalty was the administrative system established by the Ottoman government during the Tanzimat period. The essential element of this system was the creation of a hierarchical structure, which made each official dependent upon his immediate superior for tenure, promotion, and support, with the apex of the structure in Constantinople. Through this system the Sultan and the Porte would presumably have a direct link with the vilayet officials, from the vali to the headman of the smallest group of villages.

As discussed in Chapter One, the vilayet administration of the Empire had been reorganized in the 1860's, the old eyalets being replaced by the smaller vilayets. Thus Erzeroum, which had been an eyalet of considerable size, was divided into five vilayets; Erzeroum, Hekkiari, Bitlis, Dersim, and Kars.² The vilayets were further rearranged in 1880 with Kharput becoming a separate vilayet. In creating these new vilayets the old ones were obviously being made even smaller; for example, the sandjak of Mush was taken from Erzeroum in 1880 and assigned to Bitlis, and Sert taken from Diarbekir and given to Kharput. By making

²The latter was lost to the Russians in 1879 and in 1880 Hekkiari was united with Van and Dersim with Kharput. V. Cuinet, op.cit., i, p. 133.

the vilayets smaller and more numerous the central government accomplished several of its goals. Being smaller, they were less powerful in relation to the central government, that is, the valis had less wealth and resources at their disposal and were thus more dependent on support from Constantinople. The ruler of an area the size of the old eyalet of Erzeroum had control over vast resources in the form of manpower, material goods, weapons, and wealth, and he could frequently use his position to great personal advantage. In comparison, the vali of the much smaller vilayet of Erzeroum was hard pressed to meet his financial obligations to the Porte and his province. In addition, there were many more administrative positions to fill in the provinces after the reorganization which meant that the valis and other officials could be transferred to other areas with greater ease and thus be prevented from building local support. Because of the multiplicity of officials and the decreased wealth and power attached to the position of vali, their prestige was considerably weakened. Another factor in Ottoman reorganization of the provinces was the necessity of finding administrative positions for Ottoman officials who were unemployed as a result of the loss of areas such as Kars. These men, plus the growing number of courtiers at the Palace, were given positions in the new vilayets.³

The system of vilayets, sandjaks, and kazas created

³Trotter, Erzeroum, to Foreign Secretary Earl Granville, 46 of 24 July 1880, F.O., 424/107.

positions for a great number of government officials.⁴ Besides the governors of each of the main administrative levels and their assistants, there were administrative councils and judicial courts at each level and the numerous bureaucratic personnel needed to run any 'modern' administrative system. The most important of the provincial officials were appointed by the Porte rather than the valis, one of the more important methods of restricting the power of the executive officers of the vilayets. Officials appointed in this manner included the defterdar (controller of the revenue) who represented the Ministry of Finance, the Director of Correspondence and keeper of the provincial archives, and a political assistant, usually a Christian, to each of the governors (vali, mutesarrif, and kaimakam) who served as a buffer between the governor and the consuls and local millet representatives.⁵ The mutesarrifs and in some cases even the kaimakams were also appointed by the Porte. These officials were in most cases not residents of the area but were sent from Constantinople or other parts of the Empire. The central government, however, had few men available who were qualified for high administrative positions and could afford to send only a small number to the provinces, especially to provinces as far away as those of eastern Anatolia. Thus,

⁴The nahiyes, or communes, were supposed to be the administrative structure below the kaza, comprising a group of villages headed by a mukhtar, or mayor, but no real attempt had been made by 1880 to establish them in eastern Anatolia.

⁵J.C. McCoan, Our New Protectorate: Turkey in Asia (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879), p. 233.

with the exception of the top positions, most of the administration was manned by people of local origin, many of whom did not share the government's feelings about reform and centralization.⁶ It was in this area of the administration that the terms 'official' and 'notable' become somewhat confusing. In many cases the government officials were in fact notables, or people in the pay of notables. Thus, when we refer to the notables being in opposition to the local government in this study, the reference is to the higher echelons of the local government and to the ideal concept of the attitude and loyalty of the government official.

The laws of the Empire and the entire administrative structure were devised in Constantinople by men who were at

⁶To get a rough idea of the number of officials necessary to man the administrative system set up by the Ottomans, the following list of government officials in the sandjak of Erzincan is provided:

<u>Mutesarrif</u>	Deputy Asst. <u>Defterdar</u>
<u>Idareh Majliss</u> (4 members)	Chief Writer
Chief Writer	2 Asst. Writers
Asst. Writer	Tax-Collector
Court of 1st Instance	Asst. Tax-Collector
A. Civil	6 sub-collectors
President (<u>Kadi</u>)	tithe-collector
2 members	<u>Evkaf Mudir</u> (mortgages)
1 honorary member	<u>Asst Mudir</u>
Chief Writer	<u>Tahrirat Mudir</u>
2 Asst. writers	Chief Writer & 2 Assts.
B. Crimmlinal	<u>Evrak Mudir</u> & Asst.
President	<u>Araze Mudir</u> & Asst. (prop.)
Honorary President	<u>Emlak Mudir</u> (houses)
2 members	6 Writers & Assts.
Procureur-General	Notary & Asst.
Asst. <u>Defterdar</u>	
<u>Idjra Semouri</u> (executioner)	
<u>Mubashir</u> & Asst.	

Everett, Erzeroum, Report on a Journey, 124 of 22 September 1882, F.O., 424/132.

least superficially westernized and who used the West, particularly France, as a model for reform. The application of these laws in the vilayets depended on a very different set of officials, men who in most cases were unfamiliar and unenchanted with the West and with either less vested interest in the success of the reforms or even a vested interest in their failure. The performance of these officials was generally of poor quality by standards set in Constantinople. Those provincial officials who did support the reforms usually despaired of any chance of success after a short stay in eastern Anatolia. None of the officials were regularly paid and their appointments were seldom secure. The fear on the part of the central government that the vilayets as far away as these might entertain ideas of separatism or independence made transfers of officials a frequent occurrence. In addition, corruption was such an ingrained feature of the Ottoman government by the nineteenth century that all provincial officials had to be prepared to expend money to both maintain their position or to advance, forcing them, in many cases, to sacrifice their ideals of good government to the reality of monetary need and survival.⁷

⁷The word 'corruption', like 'decline', 'progress', and many others, is inherently a value judgement and thus requires some explanation. The activity which the word refers to in this study includes payments to government officials for services rendered, use of family and other connections in administrative and legal matters, and other extra-legal or illegal activity. This type of activity was frowned upon not only by the European observers, but also by most of the westernized Ottomans who saw it as a part of the 'traditional' system and a roadblock to reform. While in some cases the corrupt practices led to oppression and misgovernment, in many others it simply made room for local conditions and circumstances in government

For the officials sent from Constantinople, the distance from what was for them 'civilization' and the prevalence of violence and turmoil were important factors in their generally low morale. This led them to spend much of their time in the region amassing enough money to purchase a position in a more desirable part of the Empire. An example of this feeling of isolation was given by the writer Freya Stark while commenting on her journey in Hekkiari in the 1950's. Speaking of the Turkish officials at that time, she says:

"It was no pleasure to any of them to be posted here (Julamerk), to the extreme outpost of their rule. Even with the road made, it takes a man on foot four days to bring letters as far as Bashkala during the six month's winter when riding is often out of the question, and the farther way to Hekkiari is only ventured on according to the weather....The complications of living were caused by the difficulty of carrying on permanent housekeeping in a nomad country -- where the population inhabits its villages in winter only, and spends all the summer months in the high yailas with its flocks... few of the government officials kept their wives there, while the government does its best to send only young bachelors, who are broken in during the first three years or so of their careers."g

With transportation facilities much worse and the physical danger much greater in the 1880's, it is unlikely that many families accompanied the officials to their positions. This personal hardship, the sense of isolation from the mainstream

affairs. The most common example of corruption cited by most westerners was the practice of 'bakshish', the payment of bribes to government officials, the practice of which was virtually universal. When the salaries of these officials, is examined, however, it becomes evident that this practice was essential to their survival. Other forms of corruption yield similar explanations upon investigation.

^gF. Stark, Riding to the Tigris (London: John Murray, 1959), p. 27.

of Ottoman society, the intransigence of the local officials and notables, the difficulties posed by the Kurds, plus the corruption and frequent signs of lack of interest shown by Constantinople, made for a generally low morale and poor quality in Ottoman officials in eastern Anatolia. This factor becomes of crucial importance when large scale reforms are attempted in the 1880's and 90's.

One of the dilemmas of Ottoman policy in the region was demonstrated in the varying amount of power and influence given to the provincial officials, especially the vali. On the one hand, the Ottoman government recognized the need for certain reforms and the need for efficient government in the provinces to implement these reforms. On the other hand, the government was constantly on guard against any threat of rebellion by Kurds or Armenians as well as any indication of an independent attitude on the part of an official. The changes and reforms tended to upset those in powerful positions in the provinces and increase the expectations of those who were dissatisfied, thus increasing the chances for rebellion. The government tried to find a middle road between giving the valis enough power to administer their areas effectively and yet maintain enough control to keep them dependent on support from Constantinople. This tended to keep the valis subservient and tempered the alienation of the notables from the government.⁹ From 1872 on,

⁹The notables, despite their opposition to many of the government's policies, were an important source of support for the Hamidian regime. Being more tradition-oriented than most other groups in Ottoman society, the Sultan could more readily rely on them to support the Caliphate and the idea of the Islamic state. See chapter six for more details on this.

and especially during the Hamidian period, the government moved more and more toward placing restrictions on the valis which in some instances made for greater central control and in others simply gave more influence to the local notables.

A good example of this restriction of the powers of the valis, one the consuls mentioned frequently, was the elimination of their control over and interference with the administration of justice. In a Viziral Circular of 1872, the valis were given power to exercise only a general supervision over the courts, with a view to securing the prompt and certain despatch of business. This was in reaction to complaints made by Europeans and others of civil interference in the affairs of the courts. In 1876, the powers of the valis were further reduced; they were forbidden from interfering in any way with the discussions in the courts or to attempt to influence the decisions of the courts. If complaints were made to them concerning the administration of justice, they could only confer with the kadi and report to the Minister of Justice in Constantinople.¹⁰

These moves were followed by a reforming of the entire judicial system, with the new institutions modelled after the European example. Most of the British consuls roundly condemned these reforms, noting that justice had been made too complicated, officials too numerous, and corruption worse than before. The reforms did not work out as the consuls and other westerners, as

¹⁰Jilson, Sivas, to Goschen, 270 of June 1880, F.O., 424/106.

well as the Ottoman reformers, had expected. Where a competent judicial official was appointed, the administration of justice did generally improve, since he was free from civil interference, but this type of official was rare, most being poorly trained and open to corruption. Under the old system the consuls had usually been able to apply pressure on the vali or other administrative official to stop flagrant abuses of the law and injustices, but now the valis could say that they had no power in such matters.¹¹ Because of reform, the responsibility for maladministration of justice was almost impossible to determine. While at first glance it seems that this reduction of the power of the vali might have worked to his advantage since he no longer had to play a role in this very controversial field, in actual fact it did not. In the provinces the act of governing was a constant struggle between the representatives of the government and the local notables. The restriction of the vali from interfering in the courts meant more influence for the notables, who usually held most of the judicial positions. In many cases the reforms were largely irrelevant since the vali and notables were in close cooperation anyway, but they were highly significant in other instances since they prevented any reform-minded vali from restricting the influence of the notables in the courts.

The vali was further restricted by his complicated relationship to the military forces in the area. The Ottoman military

¹¹Frotter, Constantinople, Memo, 96 of 1 September 1880, F.O., 424/107.

units in eastern Anatolia were assigned to military districts, which usually comprised three or more vilayets. Permission to use regular troops had to be obtained from the commander of the military district, who in turn had to ask for approval from Constantinople. The permission was usually not given. The district commanders were instructed by the Ministry of War not to use regular troops except in case of extreme local emergency, so as to keep them in constant readiness for military use. The commanders of the military districts were usually competitors to the valis for influence both locally and in Constantinople. This was another case of the central government balancing one group or power factor with another so that neither was able to dominate..

Most valis were relatively helpless in their position, relying on the traditional rulers of their areas, the local notables, to actually govern the vilayet. In some cases, usually when he was able to utilize the Ottoman military forces in his area, the vali was able to dominate the vilayet and force the notables to subordinate themselves to him. At best, his job was a delicate balancing act, using manipulation and selective repression to maintain control. For example, the vali of Van in 1884, Hassan Pasha, allowed, in fact demanded, that his officials take bribes. Notables who were known to be corrupt were given posts within the vilayet, in an attempt to thereby control them. "This was only one instance of many cases in which the Vali has given important offices to scoundrels of

the worst description in order that he may be able to accomplish his own ends by holding over them the fear of punishment for their misdeeds."¹² Usually, however, the vali was in a very precarious position in relation to the lower officials and the notables. Since he did not appoint the mutesariffs or higher judicial officials, they had their own connections in Constantinople which could be frequently used against the vali:

"...the difficulty of the position is increased by the recognized system of espionage and intrigue, which makes it possible for a vali to be constantly embarrassed, if not actually intimidated, by his inferior, who may be at any moment in telegraphic communication with persons of influence in Constantinople."¹³

The valis had to maintain their own friends in the capital and see to it that none of the lower provincial officials were ever discontented or ambitious enough to try and unseat him. The notables also had influence in the capital which they could use to cause a vali trouble, in addition to their potent influence over local affairs.

The Ottoman goal in limiting the power of the officials in the provinces was to maintain control over events by making sure that no single group was able to control them. This was their most important concern. The great majority of the officials employed in the Ottoman administration were employed in their local areas. These men included the notables, whose prestige

¹²Eyres, Van, Report on Van, 14 of 4 January 1884, F.O., 424/141.

¹³Acting Vice-consul H. Young, Diarbekir, to Lt. Townley, Embassy secretary, 5 of 16 December 1884, F.O., 424/203.

and economic position entitled them to high positions, and the other 'traditional' officials, such as lesser religious functionaries, and the headmen of villages, who were given an official title and recognition. Even though these men retained much of the power and wealth which had accrued to them under the previous system, there was an undercurrent of resentment among the notables because of the theoretical limitation of their powers and their forced acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the Ottoman government. While in most cases they could not openly rebel against the central authority, the notables were able to be consistently obstructive and asserted their independence whenever possible. By having to rely on these men the Ottoman government severely compromised any chance for substantial and qualitative changes in matters of administration, minority rights, and so forth, but they had little choice.

The problem of the delegation of powers to provincial officials is a prime example of the kind of dualism which many scholars say was the most salient characteristic of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Mahmud II had wanted westernization to help maintain a traditional system, the Young Ottomans were 'liberals' and at the same time pan-Islamists, and Abdulhamid wanted centralization and at the same time the loyalty of those who would suffer most from that centralization.

PART II

The relationship between government, notable, and peasant is revealed most clearly in the financial administration of the region. At a time of financial disaster in Constantinople, a description which is apt for most of the 1880's, it was crucial that the flow of money from the provinces to the center continued uninterrupted. The provincial administrators, while being pressed by the government for taxes, were at the same time being asked to implement complicated reforms and changes which involved increased expenditures within the provinces. The peasants were trying to recover from the economically disastrous years of the previous decade and the immense dislocation caused by the Russo-Turkish War. These conflicting interests in the allocation of the revenue of the provinces were bound to produce conflict in which someone had to lose, and in most cases it was the peasants along with the reforms which came up short. The government received most of what it assessed and the notables continued to take their percentage, but the reform programs and the costs of the administration, such as salaries, suffered throughout the period for lack of funds. To understand the role of the notables in their vilayets, we must examine this financial administration.

The financial administration set up in the provinces by the Ottoman government was an important factor in limiting the power of the valis, while one of its elements, the tax-farming

system, was the chief guarantor of the financial security of the notables. In most cases about one-third of the revenue collected as taxation was destined for use within the vilayet, the remainder being sent to Constantinople.¹⁴ The amount forwarded was not a percentage of the total, but a fixed sum, and if tax collection was low due to crop failure or other reasons, the money was deducted from the vilayet expenses, seldom from the amount sent to the central government. This meant a constant shortage of funds in most vilayets not only for implementing reforms, but for carrying on the normal affairs of the administration.¹⁵

The valis and other provincial administrators were further restricted by the frequent practice by which the government demanded sums of money which were not a part of the regular taxes. At any time a vali could find himself being forced to send a large sum of money to Constantinople, money which the provincial government seldom could spare or had available. This meant the vali had to resort to extortion and other devices to survive in his position. In 1879, the Ottoman Finance Minister demanded that the new vali of Sivas, Abbedin Pasha, raise 10,000 Turkish pounds immediately, and despite his desire to implement many of the new reforms, the vali was forced to rely on the old

¹⁴In 1377 the revenue of the two vilayets of Van and Erzeroum was 50,000,000 piastres. Expenditures within the vilayets were 14,172,000 piastres. Precis of a Paper Presented to the Imperial Commission by the Armenians of Mush, 268 of 1880, F.O., 424/106.

¹⁵A constant complaint throughout the Hamidian period was the chronic inability of the provincial governments to pay their officials.

methods to comply with the order:

"Abbedin Pasha has but recently been appointed Vali, and of course knows that his future career largely depends on his speedy compliance with the order he has received. In the present disorganized state of the finances of the vilayet the Vali can only obtain cash by extorting money from the unfortunate peasantry, who are already impoverished to the last degree, or by borrowing from rich local notables on condition that they be allowed to continue their present system of plunder."¹⁶

It can be readily seen in the above situation that the actions of the government in financial matters were directly related to the position of the notables and the progress of the reforms. To attribute the special monetary levies to a deliberate design on the part of the government to delay and cripple the reforms, as many of the consuls did, would be perhaps going too far, but they were certainly used to discredit and frustrate particular officials whose zeal for reforms was regarded as too great. The primary motivation for the government in regard to taxation and special levies was a simple need for money, but the methods it used to collect this money had complicated and far reaching effects in the provinces, effects which the government must have been aware of.

While the system of tax-farming, or iltizam, was discussed in Chapter One, a more detailed explanation will be necessary to gauge its consequences in an area such as eastern Anatolia. The

¹⁶Wilson, Sivas, to Layard, 98 of 27 October 1879, F.O., 424/91.

amount of taxes due from each vilayet, sandjak, and kaza was determined by the central and provincial government and was seldom altered. In this region the main revenue came from the tax on grain production and since the amount of land under cultivation remained relatively stable, this tax remained at about the same level throughout this period. Instead of direct collection by the government, the taxes of large districts were auctioned off each year, with the urban notables, both Muslim and Armenian, being the primary purchasers.¹⁷ The buyers of tax collecting privileges, either individuals or groups of contractors, then sub-farmed the district to others, who in turn sub-farmed the villages to local notables or village leaders.¹⁸ In some cases this process went through as many as five layers before the actual collector of the tax was reached.¹⁹

Each layer in the process had to make a profit to make the system work and since the government levy was fixed, and the competitive bidding frequently forced the original purchaser to bid more than the actual taxes, the result was inevitably a rise

¹⁷An attempt was made to reform this system by farming out only individual villages, thus giving the villagers a chance to buy the tax-farm. This reform will be discussed later.

¹⁸Besides the farming of the tax on grain, other specialized taxes on salt, fish, liquor, silk, stamps, and tobacco were farmed to syndicates by the Ottoman government. These syndicates employed private police, called keljis, to enforce the collection of these taxes. There were constant attempts by the villagers and others to evade these taxes and their collection was thus not an easy task. Growers of tobacco would secretly hide leaves or send them to neighbors houses which had already been inspected by the collectors to avoid paying the full tax. Other evasions were attempted with the other taxes. Vice-consul D. Cameron, Sivas, to Wilson, 175 of 27 August 1881, F.O., 424/123.

¹⁹McCoan, op.cit., p.136.

in taxes for the peasant. The actual amount demanded by the government was generally quite low, as most observers attest, but the amount paid to the tax-farmer was always considerably higher.

The possessor of a tax-farm for a village was usually a speculator from a nearby town or city who had no personal interest in the village outside the collection of its revenue. He invaded the village each year with his servants, horses, and special police and lived there at free quarters for about four months in the summer and fall while the crops were being harvested. He had virtually complete power over the village, collecting taxes with the full authority of the government behind him. While the legal tax on grain, the tithe, was about twelve per cent of the crop, the tax-farmers frequently collected as much as twenty-five per cent.²⁰ There was little the peasant could do:

"The buyer of the wheat and barley tax pays to the Government a lump sum for the tax on the produce of a certain village or district. He estimates the coming crop at so many bushels, and should he over-estimate it or fall in prices occur, he has recourse to extortion to make up his loss, and in the outlying districts where there are no symbols of official authority, he is supreme, and the poor villager, rather than apply to law for redress, which is a tedious and expensive process, prefers to accede to the demands of the tax-collector."²¹

²⁰Vice-consul Francis Crow, Bitlis, Report, 2 of 4 July 1897, F.O., 424/192.

²¹Vice-consul Tom Nicolson, Angora, to Sir A. Nicholson, 196 of 1 September 1893, F.O., 424/175.

Excessive hardship for the individual villagers was usually avoided since the tax paid was allocated by the village headman or chief. The land was the communal property of the village and each man was assessed by the village according to his ability to pay. Thus the wealthier man paid more than one who was poorer or one with a large family.²²

Despite local efforts, the system of tax collection was termed oppressive by virtually all observers and the peasants they interviewed. The peasants' main complaint was directed at the method of tax collection rather than the amount paid, which even with the tax-farmers' percentage was still within reason. In most cases the tax-farmer used the police to enforce the collection. These police, or zaptiehs, were either ill-paid or not paid at all by the provincial government and therefore relied on illegal exactions from the villagers and payments from notables or officials to support themselves and their families.

The tax-farming system was oppressive and shot through with corruption, but it did manage to ensure the steady flow of revenue from province to capital with a minimum of administrative expense and organization. The Ottoman government was simply incapable of sending a government representative to each district

²²Details such as these may seem at first glance peripheral to a study of this nature, but will become important later in the study. One could easily get the impression from reading contemporary accounts that the eastern Anatolian area during the Hamidian period presented almost insuperable obstacles to the mere survival of the peasant population. The record is one of famine, war, oppression, massacre, and more famine. By going deeper into Ottoman society in our examination of the period, we can see that while conditions were bad, the local population had developed sophisticated methods of dealing with them,

or village to collect the taxes. The villagers constantly tried to avoid paying taxes, using tactics which would have confounded a stranger, but which seldom succeeded with the tax-farmers, who were usually local men and were familiar with the villagers' methods and with their ability to pay. Much potential revenue was lost to the government through the payment received by the tax-farmers at each level, but this was money the government had never expected anyway. For the notables, the system was crucial for their domination of the countryside and their economic position in the community.

The monetary demands placed on the peasant managed to consume most of his income. The most important tax, the tithe, as well as others on tobacco, fruit, and other crops were all collected in kind so the villagers never actually marketed all of their produce. The money they did manage to get from the sale of grain not used for food was used to pay the sheep tax, the tax on property,²³ the military exemption tax if a Christian, and thus little was left at the end of the year. What was left was used to pay back loans which most of the villagers had incurred and to supply the few necessities of life, such as tobacco, which were not available from their land. The villagers' only real complaint was the harassment they were subjected to during the

²³Most of the villagers, both Christian and Muslim, built their own houses. These houses were assessed by a government official usually at rates much higher than the property warranted, and a tax levied. Bribery was common in getting the assessment lowered. Newton to Nicholson, 196 of 1 September 1893, F.O., 424/175.

collection of the various taxes, which included boarding the collector and police and frequent beatings.²⁴ In order to avoid this annual confrontation with the forces of the government, many of the villagers availed themselves willingly of the feudal relations described in the previous chapter, paying a Kurdish aga fifty per cent of their produce in return for freedom from the visits of the tax collectors.

The aspect of the administration most familiar to the villager was the enforcement arm, the zaptiehs and the army. The most important of these for the peasants were the zaptiehs, who served as rural police. These were generally men who had completed their military service and were commanded by military officers. The commander of the zaptiehs in each vilayet was an alai bey, a colonel transferred from the regular army, who was responsible in most instances to the Minister of War, not the vali. The position in the administrative hierarchy of the zaptiehs was very complicated, since the alai bey was subject to orders from Constantinople, from the vali, from the public prosecutor, and from the executive official of the courts. This led to constant disputes between the courts, the valis, and the

²⁴ Consul Shipley notes that the villagers were extremely obstinate about paying taxes and much time and effort was required on the part of the officials to get money from them. He reports that villages forced the officials to resort to beatings, fearing that if the money was given freely, the taxes would rise next year. Vice-consul Mr. H.S. Shipley, Diarbekir, to O'Conor, 77 of 28 August 1906, F.O., 424/210.

central government over the use of the limited number of zaptiehs available in each vilayet.²⁵ The zaptiehs were seldom paid, being almost at the bottom of the administrative hierarchy, and lived by extorting money and provisions from the villages they were supposed to protect from the extortion of the Kurds. The officials knew well the plight of the zaptiehs and their activities in the villages, but could not correct matters without paying adequate and regular salaries. Since the zaptiehs could seemingly survive by taking from the peasants, and the peasants accepted the zaptiehs as one of the 'normal' hardships of life, the government saw no pressing need to deprive itself of money by paying salaries.

Besides the complaints of brutality on the part of the zaptiehs in their tax collection duties, most observers noted that the chief complaint of the villagers against the police and the military was that they were forced to feed and house them. This was particularly a hardship when the troops were on a campaign or moving from one post to another, since they were forced to live off the country. Receipts were usually given to the villagers for their services, but collection was complicated and sometimes impossible.

The enforcement arm of the vilayet administration was far too weak to be effective in implementing reforms or providing

²⁵In the Sivas vilayet in 1881 there were 225 mounted and 156 foot zaptiehs. This averaged out to about six per kaza. Vice-consul W. Richards, Sivas, to Wilson, 130 of 23 May 1881, F.O., 424/122.

security for the countryside. The zaptiehs were notoriously open to bribery and other forms of corruption which did nothing to enhance their prestige or that of the government in general. They were never numerous enough to patrol the villages and keep track of Kurdish activities, and their lack of pay and motivation reinforced their ineffectiveness. The army was powerful enough to defeat any local combination short of a complete unification of the Kurds, an ability frequently demonstrated, but its primary purpose was defense against attack from Persia or Russia, not administration. Whenever possible, it remained aloof from local affairs.

PART III

The power of the notables in the provinces was most evident in their control of the judicial and administrative councils, or majlisses. These councils exercised varying degrees of influence depending on the strength of the vali, the time period, and the attitude of the central government. The Ottomans balanced the independence and authority of the provincial government with the regulatory and supervisory powers given the councils throughout the nineteenth century, in an effort to prevent either from attaining complete control in the provinces. In most cases, the councils were controlled by the same notables who had ruled the area before the Tanzimat and were used by them in their attempt to maintain their dominant position in economic

and political life.²⁶

The majliss system consisted of the following institutions: a hierarchy of new secular courts (nizamiye) for civil and criminal cases at each level of the provincial administration - the courts at the upper level serving as courts of appeal for those in the lower level; commercial courts; a hierarchy of administrative councils at all levels of the provincial administration (idare); a general assembly in the provincial capital; and municipal councils in the cities and towns.²⁷ In addition to these secular courts, there were shari'a courts for cases between Muslims as well as independent religious courts within each millet.

The secular courts at each administrative level were presided over by a kadi or mufti and included six elected officials, three Muslims and three Christians, with a varying number of clerks. They had jurisdiction in all cases except those between Muslims, between members of the same millet and commercial cases.²⁸ Each court managed to have a majority of Muslim members, which frequently made them of little use to Christian litigants.

²⁶It should be noted that the dominant position of the notables in the social life of the region was never in question.

²⁷S. Shamir, "Modernization of Syria....", Polk and Chambers, op.cit., p. 360.

²⁸The election of the members of the court was extremely indirect. For the Court of the First Instance in the kaza (Majliss-i-Davi) the following was the electoral procedure: members were elected every two years - the kadi, the mufti, the kaimakam and the heads of the non-Muslim millets assembled as an electoral committee and selected twelve names from the list of Ottoman subjects residing in the kaza who were thirty one years old and

Besides this, the officers of the secular courts were frequently Muslim religious dignitaries, as the consul in Van reported in 1884:

"The administration of justice is at present chiefly in the hands of the Ulemas, inasmuch as the Procureur-General was formerly a Dervish, the President of the Civil Court of the First Instance is a Mullah, the President of the Criminal Court of the First Instance is also a Mullah recently sent from Constantinople, and in each court there is a mullah as a member."²⁹

This is another example of the difference between the reforms of the nineteenth century as evoked in Constantinople and as practiced in the provinces. The new judicial system, at least the civil section of it, was meant to be relatively independent of the shari'a courts, but many of the men who administered the system were also members of the ulema. Not only were they only used in the lower courts or because no one else was available in the provinces, but as is pointed out in the above quotation, they were even sent from the capital to staff provincial posts. This was another compromise which the reformers of the Tanzimat and later Abdulhamid had to make with the forces of tradition, in this case the ulema.

The consuls and other observers concentrated a great deal

paid 150 piastres in direct taxes. These names were sent to the nahiyes where the various Councils of Elders selected eight names and returned them to the Electoral Committee. The eight names were then forwarded to the mutesarraf of the sandjak and he with the advice of his Administrative Council selected the four members. A similar procedure was followed in the courts of the sandjak and vilayet. Wilson to Goschen, 270 of June 1880, F.O., 424/106.

²⁹Eyres, Report on Van, 14 of 4 January 1884, F.O., 424/141.

of their criticism of Ottoman rule on the judicial system, claiming no Christian could expect to be treated fairly and that corruption was rife. The westerner found it difficult to argue that the system itself was wrong, however, since it was modelled after the French judicial organization. No doubt this could have still left room for criticism by English observers, but they seldom took advantage of this, preferring to blame the Ottoman officials. Since the courts played such an important part throughout this period, it will be useful to give an example of how they actually operated. In the case of a simple robbery, the man who was robbed presented a petition to the Public Prosecutor who forwarded it to the Examiner of the Court. The Examiner questioned the plaintiff and his witnesses in great detail and wrote down their evidence on a deposition, which was signed by the plaintiff. If the plaintiff could afford it he could hire a lawyer to help in preparing the deposition. The Examiner stated on the deposition who he thought should be arrested. It was then sent to the Public Prosecutor, who forwarded it to the Chief of Police with an order to arrest the person named. The deposition of the accused was then collected, sent to the Prosecutor, and a trial ordered. The two depositions were submitted to the Conviction Committee which examined them and drew up a summary of the case, stating an opinion. The report of the Committee was forwarded to the Prosecutor, who, if he approved it, called the trial and

brought the plaintiff and defendant before the court. The court asked questions, consulted, and announced its verdict.³⁰

The most obvious drawbacks to the procedure described above are time, complication, and corruption. With a great many cases to deal with the courts were constantly overworked and a plaintiff would usually be forced to wait for months in the city or town where the court presided until the case came up. Few peasants could afford to leave their villages for such an extended period of time. Besides this, the process was so complicated that few could understand it. Lawyers were expensive, though without one proper handling of the case might be impossible. The worst aspect of the system was the corruption that it engendered. Each of the steps in the progress of a case was ready-made for bribery, pay-offs, and other illegal or corrupt practices. The Examiner and lawyer could easily cooperate, the former rejecting depositions until the lawyer was employed, and the latter splitting the fee with the Examiner.

As mentioned before, the elimination of the vali and other provincial officials from the judicial process was regretted by many western observers. The officials and members of the courts were either notables or in the pay of notables and the new arrangement gave them virtual independence within the courts. The position of the notables and the feelings of the consuls

³⁰Wilson, Sivas, to Goschen, 270 of June 1880, F.O., 424/106.

toward them is expressed in the following quotation from Captain Stewart, consul at Sivas:

"....the only difference between the present system and the one formerly prevailing is, that formerly the people were in the hands of the Pasha, who might be good or bad, according to his character, and now they are under the control of some local magnate, usually a perfectly unscrupulous man. In the one case, there was always a chance of their getting rid of their master by dismissal or removal; in the latter, no matter what outrages, or even crimes he commits, the notable remains their life-long tyrant. So long as he takes the usual means of securing his position, it is perfectly immaterial how detestable his conduct may be."³¹

Consul Stewart was correct in his judgement that there was little legal action that could be taken against an oppressive notable, especially since the central and provincial governments were always reluctant to mix too deeply into local disputes and affairs. If a notable went too far, the government did intervene, but the punishment was usually light and the instances of this intervention rare. What the consul did not point out was that the notable faced other, more local, pressures and demands that the valis were either above or unaffected by. The notable was a notable because of his connection with some group, such as family, tribe, or occupation, or through his traditional role in the community, and thus he had responsibilities to certain people within his community. While this fact made his acts of oppression no less real to some members of the community, to others he was undoubtedly not oppressive. Since virtually every-

³¹ Captain, consul D.H. Stewart, Sivas, to Layard, 208 of 12 May 1880, F.O., 424/106.

one was connected in some way to some notable, acts of oppression and misconduct on the part of the notables tended to even themselves out for most people.

Despite its formal structure and rules, the judicial system in practice retained a great deal of flexibility and was able to adapt itself to local traditions and conditions, a fact noted by only a few of the consuls. Consul Wilson of Sivas, one of the more perceptive, said that the system and laws were "...well suited to the social condition and requirements of the people...They left considerable latitude to the several races and religious communities in the settlement of matters directly effecting themselves."³² Disputes between Christians continued to be settled within the millet courts, while the civil courts in some cases ignored enough of the rules to function capably.³³

It was in the administrative councils that the notables exercised their greatest influence. The administrative council of the vilayet was presided over by the vali and included the chief kadi, the controller of revenue, the director of correspondence, the political assistant, and six other elected

³²Wilson, Sivas, to Goschen, 270 of June 1880, F.O., 424/106.

³³For instance, if a man committed a murder and the order came from Constantinople to execute him, the vali need not do so if the relatives of the murdered man requested leniency. What usually happened was that money passed between the two concerned families. Frequently the murderer, if he was at all wealthy, had to give up all his property and spend 15 years in prison. The sentence was usually not enforced and his friends could get him out with enough payment to prison officials. Burnaby, op.cit., p. 153.

members, three Christians and three Muslims. The councils' functions were "...to deliberate on all that concerns measures relating to the general administration, to the revenue, to foreign affairs, to public works and agriculture, without, however, any right of interference in judicial affairs."³⁴ The council acted as an advisory body to the vali, and since he was usually a stranger to the area he relied on it to a great extent. The notables who were on or controlled the council were thus frequently able to control the vali by governing what kind of information concerning the province he was supplied with."³⁵

The British consuls who had spent considerable time in eastern Anatolia and who had had a chance to observe the Ottoman administration at close quarters were virtually unanimous in their opinion that it was poor personnel, not the

³⁴McCooan, op.cit., p. 237.

³⁵"Nearly all the officials in the Diarbekir Vilayet are local men having local interests. The whole vilayet may be said to be in the hands of certain Diarbekir notables who sit on the Idare Medjliss. Unless the Vali is a man of strong character, he soon becomes completely influenced by these local medjlisses.... The whole system of these medjlisses, excellent in theory, is utterly false in practice. The elections are a mere farce. As the Vali is also Mutesarrif of the Central Sandjak, his whole time is taken up by questions of administrative detail that should never come before him. He rarely or never visits any part of his vilayet, he sees nothing for himself, and generally settles down into that indolent and apathetic life which is so thoroughly in consonance with Turkish habits." General Baker Pasha, employed by Ottoman government, to Layard, 210 of 13 May 1880, F.O., 424/106.

system, that was the cause of misgovernment and inefficiency. The consuls recognized that the local notables were using the courts and other administrative institutions to preserve their political and economic position in the provinces.

Since the law by the 1880's was explicit enough to make many of the notable's activities illegal, their first move was to gain control of the new courts. The attributes of the judicial system described in the previous pages made it fairly open to corruption and facilitated its domination by the notables. A kadi served for two years and usually bought his position from the sheikh ul-Islam in Constantinople. The cost of a position, especially a good one, was high and since the salary was low (1,000 to 3,000 piastres per month) the kadi had to work quickly to regain the money he had spent in acquiring the position. He accomplished this by selling the offices under him and by requiring payment for legal opinion. When his position was purchased by someone else for a higher price he returned to Constantinople and sought another post. The officials under the kadi depended on court costs, paid by the winning side in disputes, for their existence, and frequently made more money than the kadi.³⁶

The other members of the court, those elected by the process described previously, were even more open to corruption and outside influence. In most cases they were local notables who

³⁶McCooan, op.cit., p. 243.

used the position to protect themselves and their friends.

Again, we quote from consul Wilson:

"Though the members of the several courts were nominally elected by the people they were really nominated by the Vali, the Mutesarrif, or Kaimakam, and did not infrequently purchase their seats. The intrigue commenced with the preparation of the lists of selected names, and they generally ended in the election of local Beys or rich Notables as Moslem members, and, as Christian members, of men who had either little independence of character, or who were devoted to the interests of the local Notables. No one was ever proposed for election from the belief that he would make a just and upright judge. The consequence was that honest, capable men held aloof, and that the courts almost invariably degenerated into local 'rings', the members of which sought only to enrich themselves, and advance their own interests and those of their friends. Even the forms of election were rarely carried out....in such an important town as Sivas there have been no elections for seven years."³⁷

An example of the kind of mutual protection and enrichment that control of the courts gave the notables is provided by an incident in Diarbekir in 1878. A customs official apparently stole 20,000 Turkish pounds from the local customs office. Through his connections in the local court, the amount was placed at 2,500 pounds in the records and the man paid a 5,000 pound fine.³⁸ The excess was presumably shared with the court.

The examples of injustice and corrupt practices given in the consular reports are too numerous to be dealt with here, and indeed it would produce a dreary text. Suffice it to say that their record is extensive and relatively well documented,

³⁷Trotter, Diarbekir, to Foreign Secretary Salisbury, 223 of 28 December 1878, F.O., 424/80.

³⁸Wilson, Sivas, to Goschen, 270 of June 1880, F.O., 424/106.

though most of the reports suffer from rather obvious exaggeration. The consuls report that in many vilayets the lower administrative offices were virtually all in the hands of the Kurds, who worked closely with the Turkish officials. The Turks, besides sympathizing with their co-religionists, were tied to the Kurds economically and were under orders from Constantinople to keep on good terms with the tribes.³⁹

Unlike the consuls, we are much more interested in discovering the reasons for the misgovernment than in demonstrating its existence. Two important reasons can be pointed out at this point and more will become evident later in the study. In many cases the action of the Ottoman government encouraged the spread of corrupt practices on the part of officials. The reforms initiated after 1880 produced a dramatic increase in the number of officials required to administer a vilayet. Besides lowering the quality of the officials, this development also increased the vilayet treasuries. Already in budgetary difficulties, in 1880 the Ottoman government was forced to cut all official salaries in half, forcing administrators to seek other sources of income. The salary cut impoverished many of the officials and made them much more susceptible to bribery and other forms of corruption and discouraged others from becoming officials. It also had the effect of making independent wealth a virtual prerequisite for service in the administration. The government preferred to

³⁹Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 45 of 4 January 1881, F.O., 424/122.

choose men from powerful families or wealthy tribes for the important and thus higher salaried positions, since they could more easily deprive them of regular salaries.⁴⁰ The creation of more vilayets, such as Dersim and Bitlis, aided this process by creating even more positions which had to be filled, many of which simply went vacant due to lack of personnel or interest.

Another factor in corruption centered on tax collection. In the Mardin sandjak of Diarbekir over twelve hundred Kurdish agas were accused of various crimes and summoned before the courts. They refused to appear and were convicted in absentia. Nothing was done to carry out the action of the court, however, since "...as the taxes are collected through these chiefs, the Governor thought it advisable to lay the case before the Imperial Government and implore pardon for the culprits."⁴¹ Instances of this type of action are noted frequently in the consular reports. As long as the notables and Kurdish agas were the most important factor in the collection of revenue, there was little the government could do to force them to abandon their disregard for much of Ottoman law. The public flaunting of the law and other regulations by these people both encouraged others to emulate them and demoralized what few officials there were in the region who believed in the reforms.

⁴⁰ Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 209 of 20 April 1880, F.O., 424/106.

⁴¹ Boyadjian, Diarbekir, to Acting consul A.C. Wratislaw, 23 of 24 January 1888, F.O., 424/145.

The domination of the administration was only one of the ways the notables exercised power in the provinces. They were frequently the most powerful factor in local politics, their only competitors being the representatives of the central government and some of the more independent tribes. In most districts and towns there was competition between the vali and his supporters and the local notables, with the tribes in the surrounding area frequently playing a decisive role. The competition was primarily over matters of power and control, but was also complicated by factors of prestige and traditional prerogatives that were being threatened. Such a struggle took place in Diarbekir in the early 1880's when the vali, Abdul Rahman Pasha, tried to purge the administration of its corrupt members. The notables' primary tactic against the vali was to stir up the population by holding meetings, posting inflammatory placards, and so forth. Their most significant tactic, however, was their attempt to stir up the Kurdish tribes in the vicinity of Diarbekir. They were attempting to demonstrate through these tactics that the vali was incapable of maintaining order and thus force the Porte to replace him.⁴² We will be able to study this and other examples of this type of activity later in the study.

Another factor in the notables' favor was their dominant

⁴²Boyadjian, Kharput, to Layard, 119 of 3 July 1878, F.O., 424/73. The fact that the main tactic was disruption of public order indicates the high importance of this commodity in Ottoman eyes. The maintenance of this order was the most important task of the vali.

economic position in the provinces. Besides the connection with tax collection noted above, the notables controlled such crucial sections of the economy as food supplies to the cities and caravan trade. The notables were able to use this power to great political advantage and frequently placed valis in delicate positions. Christian notables as well as Muslims had a great deal of economic power in the cities.

The policy of the Ottoman government toward these notables will be examined in detail in subsequent chapters, but the basis of the policy can be fairly simply stated. The power exercised by the notables was never great enough to severely threaten Ottoman control of the eastern Anatolia area and thus there was no pressing necessity to suppress them. On the contrary, they were used by the government in Constantinople to balance the power given to the provincial governments. The central government was more afraid of Armenian separatism and independence moves on the part of the valis than it was of the essentially local influence of the notables. In order to keep them under a modicum of control the Ottoman policy was to keep them divided as much as possible, but never allow them to engage in open warfare or align themselves with the Kurds. The principal men of most villages, the agas and beys, were usually condemned by default for some offense by the local courts but were allowed to live unmolested as long as they remained in the village. Their influence was thus restricted and at the same

time they were allowed to continue to administer the lowest levels of government on their own, the levels the Ottomans could not hope to deal with. Kurdish feuds were deliberately kept alive by the government to prevent any possibility of tribal unification.

All of these elements of Ottoman policy show a recognition on the part of the government of the strengths and weaknesses of their position in the region and a realization of the importance of the notables to the maintenance of that position.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Aftermath of War.

Having examined the various population groups, classes, and social groups in eastern Anatolia, and having analyzed the governmental structure of the region, it is now time to look more closely at the interaction of these forces and the response of the Ottoman government to the problems created by that interaction. This chapter will focus on conditions in the region during the period immediately following the Russo-Turkish War of 1876-8. Eastern Anatolia had been one of the major theatres of the war, with the Russians eventually occupying Erzeroum in 1878. The most obvious results of this military conflict: famine, refugees, financial chaos, and general disorder, will be dealt with in the first part of the chapter. Then the reaction of the Kurdish tribes, both pastoral and nomadic, to the defeat of the Ottoman army will be examined, an aspect of the war which was especially significant for future developments in Ottoman policy. The chapter will conclude with a section on the arrival of the British military consuls in Anatolia, another result of the war and the diplomatic wranglings that followed it.

PART I

The most highly publicized and probably most important part of the Russo-Turkish War took place in the Balkans. After

several hard-fought battles culminating in the long siege of the Ottoman fortress at Plevna the Russians were eventually able to defeat the Ottomans and move to within sight of Constantinople. In eastern Anatolia the scenario was much the same. The Russians won the initial battles but were soon defeated and driven back. They attacked again in 1878 and the Ottoman armies were defeated, the Russians eventually capturing Erzeroum, deep in Ottoman territory.

The see-saw struggle in eastern Anatolia is important in this study for several reasons, among the most important being the attitude of the local Armenians, the effect of the war on the countryside and the peasant population, and the reaction of the Kurdish tribes. The war took place at a time when Ottoman control in eastern Anatolia, as discussed in the previous chapter, was at best precarious and when the region was in the process of recovering from several years of severe economic hardship. Besides worrying about the success of the Russian invasion, the Ottoman authorities had to be concerned about the loyalty of the various population groups in the region. Russian religious leaders and consuls had been attempting to spread disaffection among the Armenian population for many years, urging them to convert to Orthodoxy and thus come under Russian protection. Even the Kurds were attracted to some degree of Russian intrigue, because of their fellow Kurds in Russia and their antipathy toward the Ottomans. The only groups upon

which the Ottomans could rely were the small Turkish peasant population and the Muslim urban notables, whose lack of sympathy with Ottoman goals and policies has already been discussed. The war was thus a potent reminder to the central government both of its weakness in this part of the Empire and of its need for firmer loyalties among the population, a lesson which was not to be soon forgotten.

If initial impressions are indeed the most lasting ones, then the first years of Abdulhamid's reign are the key to understanding Ottoman policy for the next thirty years. In 1878, it must have appeared that the Empire was in very real danger of either collapsing or giving in to external pressures. The Russians and Austrians had given clear indication that they were in earnest about their interest in the Balkans and the Balkan Christians themselves were emerging as a military threat to the Ottomans, a situation they had not faced since the fifteenth century. This, coupled with British moves on Cyprus and Egypt, European control of the Ottoman economy, and signs of unrest even in the Muslim parts of the Empire, made survival the key issue for Abdulhamid's government. Survival had been the implicit issue ever since Selim III had begun the Ottoman reforms, but it was never as prominent as it was in 1878. When the position of the Empire did become more secure after the initial crisis, the tone of the government had been set. It is only with this primacy of survival constantly in mind that we can understand Hamidian policy.

The years of crop failure and famine which had preceded the Russo-Turkish war were especially hard on the Armenian peasants. The Kurdish nomads and villagers had been forced to rely on the Armenians for sustenance more than usual and since the peasants had less to give, the acts of oppression and brigandage were more frequent. The coming of the Russians, fellow Christians and long thought of by many Armenians to be deliverers, was greeted by them with great joy and expectation. Besides just being happy with the arrival of the Russians, however, the Armenians, especially those in the cities, used the occasion to exact vengeance on their Muslim neighbors for past wrongs. As one author has said:

"With the coming of the Russians....the Armenians had been in the unusual position of having the upper hand as the Russians recognized the members of their race as friends rather than as enemies. Under this protection the Armenians were doubtless guilty of mistreating the Moslems, not was it unnatural that whatever profits were made during the Russian occupation should be gained by the Armenian businessmen."¹

The intrusion of the Russians into the region upset the balance for a brief period between the urban Armenians and the urban Muslims. Many of the Armenians were convinced that either the Russians would remain or the British would occupy most of the area, thus changing the balance for good.² Acting on what proved to be a false assumption, the Armenians revealed many of their

¹Morris Wee, "Great Britain and the Armenian Question 1878-1914", Unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1938, p.56.

²The British occupation of Cyprus in 1878 was seen by many Armenians as a prelude to the occupation of eastern Anatolia. Ibid., p. 57.

true feelings concerning the Ottoman government, and more important for their immediate future, their Muslim neighbors. Once this was done, the relationship between the urban Armenians and Muslims could never be quite the same again. Prior to the war there had been many instances of cooperation between the notables of the two communities, but from 1878 on there was considerably less evidence of this type of cooperation. When the Russians withdrew from most of the region after the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, the Muslims once again were dominant and began settling scores accumulated during the occupation. Rumors of massacres and persecution were rampant throughout the Armenian community, most of which were exaggerated. The panic of the Armenians tended to increase the actual tension and danger because of over-reaction to every incident involving Muslims and Armenians.

In the countryside the Armenian reaction to the Russian occupation was not as pronounced. The peasant Armenian tended to be less informed, less influenced by Russian propaganda and suffered equally with his Turkish and Kurdish neighbors from the ravages of war. The Armenian peasants were not able to benefit to any great extent from the Russian occupation since all armies on the march behaved in much the same way when in the countryside. The difference in the reaction of the two parts of the Armenian community demonstrates the urban-rural split mentioned earlier, a split which became even more

important when the Armenians began to react more strongly against Ottoman and Kurdish acts of oppression.

The effect of the war on the countryside can best be described under three general headings: famine, refugees, and financial chaos. Both the Russian and Ottoman armies, as well as the Cossack and Kurdish irregulars, lived off the land during much of the campaigning, which meant that village life in many parts of eastern Anatolia was completely disrupted. If villages were not in the direct path of the contending armies, they were at the least subjected to increased oppression from the Kurds who reigned supreme as a result of the virtual suspension of Ottoman civil authority resulting from the war. In addition to the losses suffered from the armies and the Kurds, all of the area was forced to contribute men, material, and food supplies to the Ottoman army. All available Ottoman military units and the reserves were moved to the front, leaving a vacuum in many parts of the region which was almost immediately filled by the Kurdish tribes. During the war the Kurdish tribes had been given a semi-military status by the Ottomans which they interpreted to mean freedom to raid and plunder at will.

The devastation and disruption caused by the armies in the countryside was especially hard for the peasant to bear, as is shown in the following statement made by a consul speaking of the area on the caravan road from Erzeroum to Tabriz in Persia:

"In 1877 five times during the short space of seven months did an army traverse these districts, taking from the inhabitants supplies of all kinds without payment, and in many cases without giving receipts. Once in the same year, and again in 1878, whole villages, both Christian and Turkish, were compelled to emigrate on account of the fearful ravages committed by the Kurdish irregular cavalry, and in those flights, which were made in company with the armies, great losses were sustained, To make way for retreating troops the village carts were often pushed off the road and overturned, women and children being trampled and killed, while those who were unable to advance were overtaken by the Kurds and plundered of everything they possessed."³

This quotation should convey some sense of the intense human tragedy which must have been the dominant historical fact for the people of eastern Anatolia. To avoid assuming a too distant and sterile an attitude to all of these developments, we must constantly remind ourselves of the thousands of personal, individual disasters that were taking place during and after the war. While it is true that humans adjust remarkably well to new and sometimes horrible situations, this war with all its hardships, following so close on a period of famine and natural disaster, must have severely demoralized and discouraged not only the officials and notables, but the 'hardy' peasants as well.

The most important consequence of the war for the people of eastern Anatolia was the famine that followed in 1879 and 1880.

³Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 43 of 11 October 1879, F.O., 424/91. It is perhaps significant that as wretched as the Kurds appear to be in these reports, they only plundered the peasants who lagged, they didn't slaughter them like cattle, which one could have expected judging from the language used in the consular reports.

The induction of most of the able bodied men of the region into the army and the calling up of the reserves in 1876 had made it extremely difficult for the villagers to properly plant the crops during these years. The devastation caused by the armies and the Kurds, the government seizure of food for the military, and the extreme weather conditions of 1878 completed the picture and produced famine and misery for most of the peasant population. As in other periods of famine, thousands of peasants were forced to leave their villages and move to the nearest city or town where they could either beg or live off meager government subsidies. By the spring of 1880 there were over four thousand destitute people in the city of Diarbekir, with similar figures for Bitlis, Van, and Erzeroum.⁴ A drought in 1879 had ruined the entire wheat crop in most of the Diarbekir vilayet and supplies had to be sent from Malatia and Kharput, most of which were stolen by Kurds or siphoned off by notables before they arrived. The government supplied some grain each day to the bakeries in the city to feed the population. Bread was given to those with no money and sold at various prices to others, depending on their wealth. Inflation and corruption managed to make even this equitable system inoperable in the long run, though few people were allowed to die of starvation.

The local government had enough grain stored to feed the population in the city and could even send occasional aid to

⁴Trotter, Diarbekir, to Salisbury, 155 of 17 March 1880, F.O., 424/106.

some of the closer villages, but it could not supply seed grain to the peasants to enable them to break the famine cycle. There was probably sufficient grain available in government warehouses but no way to transport it and distribute it to the villages.⁵ As order was slowly restored after 1878 the shortage began to ease since grain and other supplies could be safely shipped from areas such as Sivas, which suffered only slightly from the famine, and Kharput to the harder hit vilayets of Van, Erzeroum, and Diarbekir. With increased order the roads became more secure making transport of goods possible, though still difficult.

The greatest sufferers throughout the period were the villagers. Food was made available to them in the cities but they had to travel to the urban centers in most cases to receive it. With poor roads, few horses, and bad weather most of the villagers were never able to take advantage of the government's generosity. Of the villagers, the hardest hit were the pastoral Kurds who relied on their flocks for subsistence. In a famine situation, the sheep, cattle, and other animals were the first to die because of the food shortage. The flocks of the Kurds were decimated by 1878 and as a result they suffered more from the famine than their Armenian neighbors. Consul Clayton estimated that of the ten thousand persons supposed to have died during the famine, ninety-eight per cent were Kurds. The

⁵Taxes paid in grain were stored in warehouses in the provinces. Due to poor roads and general inefficiency much of this grain remained in the warehouses, generally spoiling.

Armenians, besides having more food supplies set aside and few animals to worry about, received aid from Armenian committees based in Constantinople and Europe and from the consuls, none of which was available to the Kurds.⁶

The urban notables were not adversely affected by the famine since food supplies were always available to them. Many of the notables made considerable fortunes by hoarding what grain there was to sell at the inflated prices. The government made sporadic attempts to stop these practices, but they were largely ineffective.

Another unsettling influence of the war was the large influx of refugees into parts of eastern Anatolia. The operations of the armies created a great number of refugees from among the local population, who were forced to seek refuge in the larger cities until such time as they could return to their villages. By far the greatest number of refugees, however, were Muslims, mainly from areas occupied by Russia after the war. There were approximately 50,000 of these, mainly Circassians, from the Kars vilayet and elsewhere, a third of whom settled in the Erzeroum vilayet and the remainder mainly in Sivas. They were similar to the pastoral Kurds though somewhat more formidable as fighters and thus served to increase the problem of security. No concerted effort was made by the Ottoman government until after 1880 to aid these refugees in settling on the land. They

⁶Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 144 of 30 June 1880, F.O., 424/107.

were assigned to Turkish villages and were forced to live as best they could, relying on the good will of the villagers for food and supplies. As a result of this mistreatment at the hands of the government, many of the Circassians died within a few years while others turned to raiding, primarily against Armenian villagers.

The Russo-Turkish war did nothing to help solve the Ottoman Empire's financial problems but rather, as one would expect, made them much more critical. The new sultan was faced with a monetary crisis which he had to solve before he could begin to seriously consider the myriad other problems which beset the Empire. Despite the famine, lawlessness, refugees, and other problems in eastern Anatolia, Sultan Abdulhamid and the Porte had to press the provinces even harder than before the war for money. The special monetary levies described in the previous chapter were one of the government's main tactics in acquiring the cash to pay for the war and the immediate costs of recovery. In order to meet these levies the provincial officials had to sell much of the grain stored in government warehouses, grain which was reserved for those suffering from the famine.⁷ Besides the financial drain caused by these government levies, there were many provincial government officials taking advantage of the lack of supervision by the central government and extorting money from the villages.

⁷Trotter, Erzeroum, to Layard, 112 of 5 November 1879, F.D., 424/91.

There were many attempts by the government in 1879 to collect back taxes for 1877 and 1878, years when collection in eastern Anatolia had been virtually suspended. The peasants, of course, had no money and no extra grain to pay these taxes, and in fact could hardly pay the current taxes. The villagers and many of the notables who depended on money from the countryside objected to these moves by the government. Many of the villagers had been forced to give supplies to the Ottoman army during the war and felt these contributions should be discounted from the taxes owed. One of the consuls reported that demands for back taxes were especially severe in the Armenian villages and speculated that the government may have been using this as a way of getting back at the Armenians for their questionable conduct during the war.⁸

The financial concern which caused the greatest reaction among the population at large in the years following the war was the devaluation of the currency in 1879. Part of the currency was withdrawn completely while other parts were devalued considerably. The villagers were affected only slightly by these moves since they held very little currency, but the nomads and townsmen suffered large losses.⁹ The devaluation was announced a short period before it was to take place which caused a great deal of dumping of certain currencies on the provincial

⁸Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 133 of 4 November 1879, F.O., 424/91.

⁹Chermside, Kharput, to Layard, 194 of 5 April 1880, F.O., 424/106. Since the nomads were also important in the caravan trade and because they could carry little with them, much of their wealth was in the form of currency rather than real property.

treasuries. The government quickly got rid of it by using it to pay back salaries of government employees. There was a general lack of confidence in the currency throughout this period which, when combined with the turbulent state of affairs generally, made a postwar recovery of business and trade very difficult.

The devaluation led to serious outbreaks of civil disorder in a few of the urban centers, the most significant being in the city of Malatia in Diarbekir vilayet in 1880. In that city about two thousand people marched to the government house to protest the devaluation of a very popular currency, the beshtik. During the day the grain market was plundered, the windows of the mutesarraf's house were smashed, officials were threatened and the leaders of the demonstration made several public threats of more violence if the local officials were not immediately replaced. The most immediate and familiar governmental level was usually blamed for any local problems or unpopular legislation. The demonstration was led by the Muslim notables of the city who probably used the currency issue to excite the population and thereby get rid of a group of officials who may have been seen as a threat by the notables. The vali of Diarbekir bowed to the insurgent's demands and sent a new group of officials to the sandjak, and along with them he sent six troops of cavalry to maintain order.¹⁰ This incident is important because

¹⁰Trotter, Diarbekir, to Salisbury, 177 of 16 April 1880, F.O., 424/106.

it is one of the few instances of a civil protest during this period. Despite all the hardships of famine and so forth, there were no large scale rebellions on the part of the urban or village populations. The events in Malatia show that the ingredients for rebellion were present if the right circumstances brought them together.¹¹ The Ottoman government probably saw the events in Malatia as indicative of at least the possibility of a large scale rebellion. The demonstration could have been easily put down by the six troops of cavalry sent from Diarbekir and the old officials retained, but the government chose to compromise with the notables. Rebellious activity on the part of the Kurds and later the Armenians was expected by the central government and was not a cause for surprise or undue concern in most cases, but the urban notables were the government's main source of strength and any rebellious activity on their part was to be taken very seriously.

Ottoman policy toward disloyal or rebellious activity in the eastern Anatolian area was to vary according to the source and time period. There was no clear cut policy of always asserting the authority of the central government, or of always giving in and waiting for the activity to pass. Each situation was dealt with in its local context and maximum flexibility maintained.

¹¹Trotter, Diarbekir, to Salisbury, 177 of 16 April 1880, F.O., 424/106, and Trotter to Granville, 15 of 1 June 1880, F.O., 424/107.

The reaction of the pastoral and nomadic Kurds to the war and its aftermath had severe consequences for the entire region. At the beginning of the war the Ottoman government decided to utilize the aggressive qualities of the Kurds by attaching them to the Ottoman army as irregulars. They were armed with modern weapons and were given missions similar to those of the Russian Cossacks. Their contribution to the successes and failures of the Ottoman army were practically nil during the war but the impact on the countryside of several thousand well armed, officially sanctioned Kurds was great. They achieved their greatest noteriety for massacring Russian wounded and prisoners on several occasions and for countless Armenian villages which were plundered or destroyed.¹²

The Kurdish activity did not cease with the end of the war. The Ottoman civil and military presence in the region was extremely weak throughout 1879 and most of 1880 and the Kurds took full advantage of the situation. Armenian villages were attacked, in part because of their attitude toward the Russians, and several actual rebellions of Kurdish tribes or groups of tribes were attempted. The situation was especially bad in the more isolated areas as Dersim, parts of Van and Diarbekir, and the Hekkiari region. The general disorder which characterized the period is described well in the following report on Diarbekir by consul Trotter:

¹²No doubt a few of the Kurdish villages of rival tribes were also dealt with by these Kurds.

"In the spring last year several bloody fights, attended with considerable loss of life, occurred between Milli Kurds, Karagotchis, and Arabs on the borders of the desert near Diarbekir, and early in the present year some of the Shamer Arabs were for a time in arms against the government. In many parts of Malatia, the western subdivision of the Diarbekir vilayet, the authority of the government is laughed at; only a few weeks ago at Adiaman some disaffected Kurds in that province attacked a small detachment of soldiers and killed two of them; last May some twenty lives were lost in a fight between two antagonistic Kurdish tribes. At Deyrik, two days to the south of Diarbekir, acts of lawlessness, including murders and robberies, frequently occurred during last spring, and the people were urgently imploring me for help. At Haimi, a large village two days north of Diarbekir, lynch law was executed on a Moslem Notable, and the murdered man's head was publicly dragged round the mosque and afterward carried into Diarbekir, where Izzet Pasha, one of the most incompetent of Valis, is still permitted to misrule the Sultan's subjects."¹³

The increased activity of the Arab tribes to the south of Diarbekir is a good example of the lack of central authority during this period. The Arab tribes moved to the north whenever they were able, which meant whenever there was no force sufficient to stop them. The government generally sided with the Kurdish tribes in the Diarbekir region in their struggles with the Arab tribes to help maintain a balance between the two, but during the postwar period there was no government presence to help the Kurds.

In some parts of the region many of the Kurdish agas and urban notables had been absent from their homes, thus giving such areas as Diarbekir relative peace and tranquility during

¹³Trotter, Memo, Constantinople, 154 of 2 October 1880, F.O., 424/107.

the war years. When these leaders returned to their homes, especially the Kurdish aghas, they more than made up for their absence. As consul Trotter said of the aghas of Diarbekir:

"The Chiefs who were then absent have now returned, convinced of the impotence and weakness of the Turkish Government, and are taking advantage of the same to oppress still more than before their rayahs, both Christian and Mussulman."¹⁴

Before the war these Kurds had always seen the Ottoman forces as powerful and victorious, especially in the direct conflicts between the tribes and the army, but now the weaknesses of the Ottoman army were more apparent and its numbers and morale decimated. In addition, the chaos caused by the defeat in the war made it relatively easy for the Kurds to disregard the recently established Ottoman authority and return to many of their old patterns of activity. Many of the more important Kurdish leaders probably saw the end of the war as a good time to try and end the Ottoman domination of eastern Anatolia and re-establish their own conditional autonomy.

Outbreaks of Kurdish rebellion occurred throughout 1879 and 1880 at different places in the region. In the same month as the evacuation of Erzeroum by the Russians (September 1878), the Dersim Kurds rebelled against the government. After some successes they were blockaded in the mountains by Ottoman troops until winter weather intervened to stop all military operations.

¹⁴Trotter, Diarbekir, to Salisbury, 233 of 28 December 1878, F.O., 424/80:

Most of the rebellion was over by 1879 but as late as 1880 a few Kurds were still holding out.¹⁵ Similar revolts took place in Bitlis and Mush but consisted mainly of Kurds fighting among themselves.

One of the more important Kurdish rebellions took place in the Diarbekir vilayet in 1878. The sons of one of the Kurdish leaders of the earlier wars against the Ottomans siezed several towns on the Tigris below Diarbekir, including the important trading center of Jezireh, and caused general disruption throughout the vilayet. The Kurds occupying Jezireh were defeated after a short struggle by the vali and the local Ottoman troops while another Kurdish contingent at Sert was also quickly defeated.¹⁶ There were approximately 10,000 Kurds involved in these rebellions but they were disorganized, poorly armed, and suffered from internal dissension. The government was eventually forced to use Arab troops from the Baghdad area, which turned out to be more of a hardship for the local villages than the rebellious Kurds had been.

Despite the activities of these Kurdish leaders in rebelling against Ottoman authority, they were pardoned by the Sultan and promised rewards if they would come to Constantinople. The request to come to the capital was not a trap or an attempt to repeat Mahmud's solution to the problem of the Janissaries, but simply an attempt to get these men out of the area for a short

¹⁵Trotter, Constantinople, Memo, 154. of 2 October 1880, F.O., 424/107.

¹⁶Trotter, Diarbekir, to Salisbury, 233 of 28 December 1879, F.O., 424/80.

time to give the government officials time to re-establish stability. While this policy was viewed with extreme disfavor by the vali and the local notables, it indicates the growing conviction on the part of the central government that the Kurds could best be dealt with by appeasement and conciliation rather than suppression. This policy also indicates an awareness on the part of the government of its weakened position in eastern Anatolia along with the early indication of a policy of relying on the Kurdish tribes as a support for Ottoman rule.

The most significant Kurdish activity after the war took place in the Van area and across the Persian frontier. The activity centered around a powerful tribal leader, Sheikh Ubeydullah, who commanded the loyalty of thousands of Kurds in several tribes on both sides of the frontier. He was one of the few Kurdish leaders who had enough prestige and power to unite a large part of the Kurdish tribes in eastern Anatolia, and was therefore a force with which the Ottomans had to deal carefully.¹⁷ He dominated the area to the east of Van and most of Hekkiari, areas where for all practical purposes there was no Ottoman authority. Most of the consuls and evidently many members of the Ottoman government were convinced that the sheikh's aim was to establish an independent Kurdish kingdom on both sides of the border between Van and Hekkiari. He never openly proclaimed such a goal, but is reported to have asked for some

¹⁷Trotter claimed that the Sheikh "...has almost unbounded influence in Turkish Kurdistan from Bayezid down to Suleimaniyeh country, and influence which extends across the Persian frontier." Trotter, Memo, 201 in 1879, F.O., 424/107.

measure of autonomy for that region with himself as governor.

The religious influence of the sheikh was one of the most important factors in his powerful position among the Kurds. The sheikh was a Sunnite of the Shafi'i school as were most of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire and Persia. The persecution of the Kurds in Persia by the dominant Shi'ite government and population was a key factor in his popularity among the Kurdish tribes of that Empire. In addition, he was an important leader of the Nakshebende sufi order, which had many followers among Kurds in both countries.¹⁸

Sheikh Ubeydullah had been a Persian subject before the war and had received an annual subsidy from the Persian government in return for keeping peace on the frontier and administering certain Kurdish areas of Persia. When the war broke out many of his subjects wanted to fight with their co-religionists against the Russians. After being promised a payment by the Ottoman government, the sheikh and several thousand of his followers crossed the frontier and became part of the Kurdish irregular cavalry. After the war he never received the promised money from the Ottoman government and the Persian government stopped payment of the subsidy and let him know that he was no longer welcome in Persia, ostensibly because he had violated Persian neutrality in the war. These developments put the sheikh in a

¹⁸ He was believed to have been linked to Sultan Abdulhamid through this sufi order. Chermiside, Diarbekir, Notes on the Kurdish Movement, 104 of 18 April 1882, F.O., 424/132.

very tenuous position both financially and with his followers and made some kind of action necessary, either against the Ottomans, Persia, or both.

In 1880 Sheikh Ubeydullah and approximately five thousand of his followers crossed the border and invaded Persia. There was speculation by several consuls that he was supported by the Ottoman government in this move, but in retrospect this seems unlikely. The government probably remained aloof from the activities of the sheikh, allowing events on the frontier to take their course. The Persian army defeated the Kurds quite easily and Ubeydullah along with thousands of Kurds from Persia were forced to flee to Ottoman territory.

The sheikh was suspected by many of the consuls to be the moving force behind the many Kurdish rebellions during 1879-80, but he openly disclaimed any responsibility for them. He was probably aware enough of the realities of power in eastern Anatolia to know that he could never defeat the Ottoman forces and that the most he could hope for short of independence was some kind of recognition by one or both governments of his dominant position in certain frontier areas.

The Ottoman government knew it could crush Ubeydullah's forces almost at will, but chose to placate him, as it had done with the rebellious Kurds in Diarbekir. He and his sons were given presents, decorated, and complimented by the Sultan. He was given no official position in eastern Anatolia but rather was left alone for the time being.

Besides attempting to secure the loyalty of the Kurdish tribes by these manuevers, the Ottoman government was by 1880 facing pressure from Europe to give concessions to the Armenians. By maintaining the credibility of the Kurdish threat to order and stability the government could argue that no concessions could be given until order could be guaranteed. It is possible that the Ottoman government deliberately encouraged the Kurds to think of independence and behave belligerently toward any established authority throughout the Hamidian period in order to demonstrate the inadvisability of any reforms which would unduly upset local Muslims. These reasons plus the lack of funds, troops, and the desire to carry out a large scale military campaign against the Kurds in eastern Anatolia, all motivated Ottoman policy.

The Kurds were unable at this time of Ottoman weakness to mount an effective campaign to force them out of the region. They were able to gain certain concessions which slowed down the process of centralization over the next thirty years, but these concessions were not given solely out of fear of the Kurds. The tribal factions, the feuds, the lack of leaders, the absence of any unifying political aspirations, and the relative smallness of the tribes and communities limited the potential of the Kurds to raise a successful rebellion. The Ottomans, having had previous experience with Kurdish uprisings, were aware of all these weaknesses and were sure they could defeat virtually any combination the Kurds could raise short

of complete unification if they wanted to spend the money and effort. The decision to use the Kurds as one of the main pillars of support for the Empire in eastern Anatolia meant the Ottomans could not risk alienating them by completely suppressing tribal autonomy. In addition, the beginnings of the Armenian question in 1879 made the restlessness of the Kurds a useful tool in the government's attempt to stave off European pressure for massive reform in the region.

PART II

Before completing our discussion of the impact of the Russo-Turkish war and its aftermath, some attention must be paid to the reaction of the British to the events of the period. The British did not intervene in the war despite pressure from the Ottomans and the Turkophiles in Britain. By 1877, however, the British government was moving closer to some kind of action to stave off a complete collapse of the Empire and the subsequent Russian domination. The Russian invasion of Anatolia focused British attention on eastern Anatolia and brought into full view the plight of the Armenians within the Ottoman Empire. Fears were expressed that if that region was occupied by the Russians, Syria and Mesopotamia would be next, thus giving them clear access to Egypt and India. The Queen was evidently in favor of war and the Ambassador in Constantinople, Sir Henry Layard, wanted some kind of action to save the Ottomans. Interest was

being renewed in the question of some kind of independence or autonomy for Armenia, and talk of British economic interests, especially in railroad construction, in eastern Anatolia was increasing. When the Russians took Kars in November 1877, excitement in Britain reached even higher levels, as is revealed in the following excerpt from the Daily Telegraph:

"Russia has now virtually conquered Armenia; Persia falls under her domination; the way to the East, West, and South are open; India will thrill with suppressed excitement which no famine subscription will calm; the Czar is on the road to the Dardanelles and the England of Nelson and Pitt sits quietly watching the drama in a state of sentimental indecision."¹⁹

Despite feelings such as these in Britain, the government declined to intervene militarily. The Bulgarian massacres of 1876 and the general disillusionment with Ottoman reform attempts carried the day in the British government. In 1878, Britain was instrumental in revising the Russian imposed Treaty of San Stefano through the calling of the Congress of Berlin. It was at this Congress that Britain assumed partial responsibility for overseeing the reforms in the Asiatic territories of the Ottoman Empire. While many in Britain and elsewhere thought that this meant a kind of protectorate over the region, the actual implementation of the Berlin Treaty provisions by the British consisted only of several British military consuls being sent to the region and pressure being applied to the Sultan and the Porte by the British Ambassador in Constantinople.

¹⁹M. Wee, op.cit., p. 31.

The consuls sent to eastern Anatolia are important for this study because our view of this region during the Hamidian period is to a large degree determined by their perception of events. For this reason it is important that we determine who the consuls were, their duties, their powers, and an initial idea of some of their attitudes towards reform in the Ottoman Empire. It should be stated at this point that for the British government and for the consuls reform was primarily to be directed toward improving the conditions of the Christian population of Anatolia, mainly the Armenians. It was those aspects of the administration and the society which most directly affected the Armenians which most concerned the consuls. Prior to 1878 the word 'reform' had been applicable to the whole range of changes taking place in the Empire, only one of which was concerned with improving the lot of the Christians. After 1878, for Muslims in the Empire and for Europeans, 'reform' came to mean changes primarily for the Christians, a development which was to have a great impact on Muslim opinion in the Empire.

In the spring of 1879 Lt. Colonel Charles Wilson was appointed consul-general for Anatolia and Major Henry Trotter consul-general for Kurdistan.²⁰ Under Major Trotter were two

²⁰Col. Wilson's area of jurisdiction, called Anatolia by the British, was made up of the vilayets in the western part of the Anatolian peninsula, including Sivas. Major Trotter's area included Van, Erzeroum, Diarbekir, Bitlis, Khaeput, and Dersim. Many Armenians objected to the British calling the latter area Kurdistan. Col. Wilson served on the North American Boundary Commission in 1858-9. He was supply officer for the group that cut the boundary from Vancouver to the Rockies. See Sir Charles M. Watson, The Life of Major-General Sir Charles W. Wilson (London: John Murray, 1909), for details on Wilson's life.

vice-consuls, Captain Clayton in Van and Captain Everett in Erzeroum. The initial group sent to the Empire remained at their posts for several years, but by the mid-1880's the consuls began to arrive and depart relatively quickly, with a corresponding general decline in the quality of their perception and reporting.

The duties and powers of the consuls were limited by the British government, which realized that in an inland area such as eastern Anatolia, British armed force could not be practically brought to bear and therefore persuasion and diplomatic pressure were their only real weapons. Lord Salisbury gave the following instructions to Wilson before he left for his post at Sivas:

"Your principal duty, and that of the officers appointed to assist you, will therefore, be to enquire into the condition of the various classes of the population within your Consular district, assisting the Turkish authorities with your advice, and with any information you may be able to collect of a nature to be useful to them, pointing out the means by which economy may be secured and the administration simplified or rendered more efficient, and noting and remonstrating against all cases of oppression or corruption on the part of the executive and judiciary which may come to your knowledge. Where, in your judgement, a case exists for the intervention of the Central Government, you will report the matter to Her Majesty's Government and to the Embassy at Constantinople, in order that proper representations may be sent to the Porte."²¹

As can be easily seen, the consul could exercise very little power in the provinces, being forced to rely on the good will of the Ottoman officials and the influence of the British Ambassadors. The fact that they were all military officers made

²¹Ibid., p. 106.

them suspect in the eyes of both the Ottomans, who were constantly on guard against preparations for a British takeover in eastern Anatolia, and the Russians, Britain's chief rival in the area. In addition, the regular British Foreign Office representatives in the Ottoman Empire never really accepted or got along with these officers, who frequently neglected to follow established bureaucratic procedures in their travels and reporting.²²

The consuls were not restricted to one city or area, but rather had a kind of roving commission, spending time in each part of their assigned vilayets. They were almost always on the move, examining complaints, reporting on topography and economic conditions, and investigating the condition of the Armenian peasantry.²³

The reaction of the provincial officials to the arrival of the consuls was generally unfavorable. A few of the valis and other officials who were genuinely interested in implementing western-type reforms welcomed the consuls as allies and advisors, but most regarded them as unwelcome foreign intrusions. The Muslim population saw them as in the area solely to spy on the government's treatment of the Christian population and were generally convinced that Britain wanted reforms for the Armenians at the expense of the Muslims.²⁴ Many of the consuls

²²W.M. Medlicott, The Congress of Berlin and After (London: Methuen & Co., 1938), p. 306.

²³Rev. H.F. Tozer, Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1881), p. 31.

²⁴Clayton, Van to Trotter, 2 of 10 September 1879, F.O., 424/107.

were unable to establish any kind of relationship with the local officials with whom they had to deal each day, and had to be content with simply reporting to Constantinople.

The Christian population of the region was soon disillusioned with the consuls. Many of the Armenians and Nestorians had thought the consuls were either going to directly administer the vilayets or at the least were going to have extensive powers. The Nestorians believed that because the British were Christians they would be able to act as protectors, not making the distinction between religion and government.²⁵ Despite these initial disappointments the consuls were able to work closely with the leaders of the Christian communities and achieve some influence with them.

The opinions of the consuls as to the types of reforms needed in the Ottoman Empire were varied in their particulars, but in most cases had a common unifying thread. By examining the views of several of these men we will perhaps be better able to understand the complexity of the question of reform, especially when that question was looked at from a nineteenth century European perspective. The very simplicity of their proposed solutions to the problems of the Empire suggests how difficult their task was to be.

The consul in Erzeroum in the early 1880's, Captain Everett, insisted that the consuls needed more power to have any real

²⁵Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 114 of 10 August 1880, F.O., 424/107.

effect in the reforming of the region. He desired a control over the appointment, supervision, and dismissal of provincial officials as a necessary pre-condition for any effective reforms. The most important reforms in his eyes were those affecting the status and welfare of the Christians: "...for so long as the Christians remain oppressed, so long will there be the danger of their revolting and upsetting all reform."²⁶

Though there were exceptions, these two points were the dominant theme of the consuls in Anatolia throughout the Hamidian period.

An extension of Everett's idea was contained in Colonel Wilson's and Captain Clayton's plan for reforms. Wilson proposed that the British should take over complete administration of some central vilayet to provide the Ottomans with a model of reform to work from. In this way the government would presumably see the obvious advantages of the European way and reform would follow naturally.²⁷ Captain Clayton emphasized the necessity

²⁶Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 1 of 7 December 1880, F.O., 424/122.

²⁷Wilson, Sivas, to Layard, 98 of 27 October 1879, F.O., 424/91. In addition to this idea, Wilson proposed an exhaustive list of specific reforms he felt were necessary in the Sivas vilayet:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. reassembly of Ottoman parliament | 14. proper elections |
| 2. enforcement of existing laws. | 15. improved pay to judges |
| 3. purification of electoral system. | 16. civil code in mixed cases |
| 4. breakup of millet system. | 17. Christian evidence in court. |
| 5. reorganization of admin. councils. | 18. court fees abolished. |
| 6. better quality personnel with more power. | 19. travelling court of Assize. |
| 7. decentralization. | 20. prison reform. |
| 8. Christians in civil service. | 21. gendarmarie - Eur. officers. |
| 9. provincial budgets. | 22. land revenue in budget. |
| 10. fixed remittances to Constantinople. | 23. educational reform. |
| 11. improved financial staff. | |
| 12. tax collection reform. | |
| 13. European financial inspectors. | |

Wilson, Sivas, Memo on Reform in Anatolia, 246 of June 1880, F.O., 424/106.

of employing Europeans in key administrative and judicial positions. He called for:

".....a strong executive, kept in the right path by a certain number of European officials, and assisted by the deliberations of a consultative representative council, and local tribunals held in check by European judges of appeal."²⁸

The emphasis for these men was on the inadequacy of the Ottoman administrative personnel and the necessity of European supervision. The administrative and legal system under which Ottoman administrators were operating seldom came under attack, since it was the system that Europeans had encouraged the Empire to adopt in earlier years.

Major Trotter agreed with the need for European supervision but placed more importance on decentralization in the provinces. The consul felt that the governments of the vilayets were too weak to properly govern and that if European supervision were agreed to the governments should then be given the power to initiate their own reforms. Trotter proposed that the vilayets of Van, Bitlis, Kharput, and Erzeroum should be combined and placed under a European Governor-General with extensive powers of internal administration. The terms of officials were to be fixed at five years and more local control over the military available, all of which would serve to weaken the hold of the central government. These ideas ran counter to the whole process

²⁸Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 267 of 25 May 1880, F.O., 424/106.

of centralization in the Ottoman Empire described in Chapter One and were certainly not what Sultan Abdulhamid envisioned for the Empire.

The theme of poor personnel runs through virtually all of the consular reports. Captain Cooper reports from Sivas that "...it is men, not measures, that are required here."²⁹ Most of the consuls agreed that the new laws were ineffective since few people understood them or were capable of administering them. One must suspect that the consuls' perception of the quality of the officials and the complexity of the problems they faced was somewhat shallow and colored by the feelings of racial superiority prevalent at that time in western Europe. This attitude was seldom expressed openly by the consuls but is evident in the following quotation from a well known British traveller in the region:

"All Orientals are children, and the average native of Anatolia and Kurdistan is not only a child, but one of very limited intellectual capacity. His deficiencies in this respect are the results, not so much of a limited education, as of low mental calibre, and many of the traits that are commonly attributed to obstinacy among the upper classes or to apathy and fatalism among the lower, arise in fact from a constitutional inability on the part of both to understand the ideas which are almost self-evident to ourselves."³⁰

This is not an attempt to brand all the consuls as 'bigots' and 'racists', but merely to indicate that since this was a dominant

²⁹Vice consul Captain H. Cooper, Kaisarieh, to Layard, 87 of 26 October 1879, F.O., 424/91.

³⁰Earl Percy, Highlands of Asiatic Turkey (London: Edward Arnold, 1901), p. 8.

attitudinal trend of the period, the consuls were not untouched by it. Many of them expressed great respect for both westernized and traditional Ottomans with whom they dealt, but were nevertheless heavily influenced by the sentiments expressed in the above quotation in their reflections on the region and the Empire as a whole.

Other consuls stressed other aspects of reform. Colonel Norton was convinced that simple law enforcement was all that was needed and that with a little encouragement from the British, the present officials would be more than happy to implement stricter law enforcement.³¹ This represented a view that held the local officials as being respectable but intimidated by the central government, which was corrupt and power hungry. Consul Williams stressed that a thorough financial reform was an essential pre-condition for any thought about reform in general. "The first and most pressing need is for money. This must be found at all costs, and in the near future, or all hope for regeneration of this country is nothing but an idle dream."³² Like the others, Williams felt that the money could only be supplied through European administration of the region's finances.

The consuls were strongly influenced in their diagnoses of the ills of Ottoman society by the British experience in India. The use of European officials to advise the local rulers was a

³¹Col. C. Norton, Pera, to Dufferin, 223 of 20 November 1881, F.O., 424/123.

³²Vice consul Major W. Williams, Van, to Ambassador Currie, 191 of 22 October 1896, F.O., 424/189.

direct result of the Indian experience. Colonel Norton, among others, expresses this influence in a typical manner:

"In British India some of the best governed native States are under a Mussulman ruler, but he rules with an English political resident, armed with great authority, at his elbow. A Turkish governor might be expected to govern wisely and well, if he was watched by an English Commissioner of Reforms, with strong support from the foreign powers, aided by a police under the control of capable European officers."³³

The emphasis placed on the Indian experience by the consuls, especially in the early years of their assignment to Asia Minor, reflected the ambiguity of the British position. The consuls and many others both inside and outside the Empire viewed their presence as a prelude to much greater control. The Berlin Treaty had not spelled out in detail what was to happen in eastern Anatolia, but the Powers had left it up to the British to see to it that reforms to protect the Armenians were carried out.

The plans of the consuls were based on a gradual extension of British power in the region, which was the keystone to the success of all their plans. Within a few years of their arrival it became very clear that the Powers had lost interest in supporting the British in eastern Anatolia, the British government subsequently had no desire to deepen its commitment, and the Ottoman government no desire to encourage such an extension.

³³Norton, Pera, to Dufferin, 223 of 20 November 1881, F.O., 424/123.

CHAPTER FIVE: Hamidian Reform, The First Attempts.

Like the men of the Tanzimat, the Young Ottomans, and the recently arrived British consuls, the new government of Abdulhamid in Constantinople recognized the need for changes in the administration of the Empire. There were differences concerning the type of change, the rate at which it should take place, and other issues, but these differences were the natural result of the changed circumstances in which the Empire found itself in 1880 and the change of leadership in Constantinople. For many Ottomans the war with Russia and the crushing defeat of the Ottoman armies on two fronts, coupled with the lack of support from Britain and France, were indications that many of the reforms of the past had actually accomplished very little for the Empire. The Ottoman army was still being defeated consistently by western armies and the Powers that had promised support if the Empire reformed sat back and did nothing in a genuine hour of need. The accent on a slower rate of change and less reliance on help from Europe and on European approval characterized most of the Hamidian period.¹ In the early 1880's, however, the government of Abdulhamid was especially weak and could not risk rejecting or being too independent of western, especially British, advice. There was fear in the Ottoman government of a more direct British involvement in the internal affairs of the Empire and

¹The attitude of the central government toward change and reform will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

at the same time a need for British support to recover from the disastrous war with Russia. The Sultan had been forced to compromise with the British on the Cyprus issue and the loss of control over such areas as Bosnia, Eastern Roumelia, and later Egypt was to convince him that "...there was certainly nothing fantastic in his fear that Anatolia might slip out of his hands in the same way."² But the need for support was overriding in the early 1880's and the first manifestations of Hamidian reform were essentially a reaction to British pressure and thus not a true gauge of Ottoman policy.

Britain's main area of interest in Asiatic Turkey was eastern Anatolia, where it saw the Ottoman government and the local Muslim population oppressing the Armenian Christians. It pressured the Ottoman government to initiate several types of reforms and endeavored to rally all the European Powers behind their proposals. The Ottomans answered these pressures by despatching several reform commissions to eastern Anatolia and other areas to investigate conditions in the provinces and begin implementing reforms. It is these reform commissions and the results of their efforts which will be the primary concern of this chapter.

PART I

British policy toward the problem of reform in the Ottoman Empire and especially the Anatolian provinces, was complicated

²Medlicott, op.cit., p. 294.

by a change of government in Britain in the summer of 1880. The Conservatives, led by Disraeli as Prime Minister and Salisbury as Foreign Secretary, had engineered the Cyprus Convention of 1878 and the Asiatic Turkey reform clauses of the Treaty of Berlin. They justified their policy of involvement in Ottoman affairs by saying that only by bolstering the Ottoman Empire could Russian expansion to the south be stopped. The 'protectorate' envisioned by many to be the logical result of the policy was the price the government had agreed to pay for the dividends of protecting Suez and India. The Conservatives also believed in the 'civilizing mission' of the British and the moral obligation to protect the Christians of the Empire, especially the Armenians who had no Great Power to look after them. An unsigned article in Blackwood's sums up the argument of the Conservative government:

"Policy and humanity alike point to English influence becoming paramount in Asia Minor. The security of our Indian Empire demands it; the interests of our central Asian trade require it; common humanity and the welfare of the native tribes plead strongly for it....the task of civilizing Asia Minor is vast....but not beyond our strength."³

The British Ambassador to Constantinople, Sir Henry Layard, was a well known Turkophile who saw the renewed British interest in the Ottoman Empire as a chance to cement the friendship between the two Empires and thus give the Ottomans a new lease on life, enabling them to serve Britain as a bulwark against Russian expansionism.

³Blackwood's, CXXIV, 1878, pp. 360-1.

The Ottoman reform commissions had been despatched to eastern Anatolia in late 1879 and once in the provinces it was up to Layard and Salisbury in Constantinople and London to apply constant pressure on the Porte to introduce widespread reforms and not let the commissions prove a failure. In the fall of 1879 Salisbury proposed a specific series of reform measures to the Porte which included the following main points:

- 1) a gendarmarie to be organized by European officers with European inspectors.
- 2) the nomination of European Financial Inspectors for the vilayets.
- 3) the nomination of European Inspectors of the Judicial Tribunals.
- 4) the appointment of the valis for a fixed period of not less than five years. ←
- 5) Baker Pasha (an English officer in the Ottoman army) to be named to a high command in eastern Anatolia.
- 6) Christian governot to be appointed in the vilayet of Erzeroum.
- 7) fuller powers to be given to the valis to govern the vilayets (lesser officials not to be forced on valis, and so on.)⁴

Salisbury saw the maintenance of order as the base upon which all other reforms should be built and for this reason he was most insistent on the establishment of a European managed gendarmarie. Salisbury had little interest in the creation of new laws or institutions in the Ottoman Empire, but rather was convinced that European advisors working with qualified Ottoman officials was the key to the reform and stability of the Empire.

⁴Layard, Memo of Reforms given to Nedim Pasha, Therapia, 75 of 29 October 1879, F.O., 424/91.

As he said in a letter to Layard in 1878:

"In any scheme of reform, I believe your attention will be far more usefully directed to persons than to paper institutions. Good officers, well selected for a length of time, will create suitable traditions of administration which will gradually harden into institutions, and, made this way, reformed institutions will regenerate a people."⁵

Besides the obvious connection between this view and that expressed by many of the consuls in the previous chapter, this quotation from Salisbury demonstrates his emphasis on 'regenerating' the Ottoman Empire to make it a suitable ally, which was the primary purpose of his policy. The gloomy consular reports during 1878 convinced Salisbury that the Empire was on the verge of collapse and that drastic reforms were needed immediately.

The replies of the Porte to the British proposals were at once frustrating and encouraging. The Porte was reluctant to accept European supervision of finances and especially of the judicial system, saying the Muslim population would react strongly against such a move.⁶ While agreeing in principle to most of the reforms, the Grand Vizier, Safvet Pasha, pleaded for time and noted that lack of funds would make the establishment of the gendarmerie and other reforms impossible at that

⁵Quoted in S. Lewis, op.cit., p. 171.

⁶Despite the trend toward secularization of the law throughout the nineteenth century, large sections of the civil code were based on the shari'a and the judicial administrators were still largely kadis, muftis, and other Islamic jurists. To have a European judge presiding over ulema and Islamic law was obviously unacceptable to most Muslims. That Salisbury would seriously demand this reflects his lack of understanding of the Ottoman Empire.

time. He also stressed that it would take time to find the personnel qualified to administer such a program. The Porte seemed to be placing roadblocks in front of each of Salisbury's proposals, delaying a final answer on the proposals until such time as the official Ottoman reform program was ready to be announced.

The Sultan, on the other hand, appeared to be completely in favor of reform and willing to begin implementation as soon as possible. In an interview with Layard in November 1879, he appeared very cooperative, promising Baker Pasha a powerful role in the soon to be established gendarmerie and proposing a Christian vali for Erzeroum who was perfectly acceptable to the British. He noted several pronouncements made by himself demanding that reforms be initiated and insisted that he had instructed the reform commissions to begin substantive work as soon as they arrived in the provinces. He laid much of the blame for the delays on the 'inefficient bureaucrats' at the Porte and according to Layard, Abdulhamid appeared to be a most "...liberal and enlightened" monarch.⁷

The Ottoman government was obviously stalling for time, time to recover from the immediate effects of the war and time to re-establish its control over the provinces. The last thing the government wanted was to alienate the British because it was through projected British loans that Abdulhamid hoped

⁷Layard, Therapia, to Salisbury, 126 of 22 November 1879, F.O., 424/91.

to rebuild the Empire. When it became obvious by mid-1880 that these loans would not be forthcoming, the need to placate the British was no longer as strong and the facade was dropped.

In the summer of 1880 the Liberals under Gladstone replaced the Conservatives as the government in Britain. Gladstone was famous for his denunciations of the Ottomans and their allegedly barbarous treatment of the Christians in the Empire. The Liberal government, with Granville as Foreign Secretary, rejected the idea of dominating Anatolia to protect India and Suez, calling the whole concept absurd. Britain was not seen to have a 'civilizing mission' in Asiatic Turkey and had no duty to reform the area, only the duty to live up to the rather vague clauses of the Treaty of Berlin. As much as he disliked the program he inherited from Disraeli, Gladstone was forced to carry through with the encouragement of reform in Asiatic Turkey, but the sense of urgency and importance were gone. He tried to mobilize all the Powers to apply pressure against the Ottoman government and end the delaying tactics. Despite the series of Joint Notes which Granville persuaded the Powers to sign, Gladstone was unable to arouse any real enthusiasm on the part of France, Germany, or Austria in the affairs of Asiatic Turkey, and the Ottoman government knew it. The reply of the Porte to the notes was totally inadequate given the demands made, but there was nothing the British could do short of actual intervention, something the Liberal government had no intention of doing. The eventual reform program announced by the Sultan bore little

resemblance to that proposed by Salisbury or that pressed for in the joint notes.

PART II

The reform commissions sent to eastern Anatolia performed two functions for the Ottoman government. They were part of an effort to re-establish Ottoman control and to ascertain the true state of affairs in the region, and at the same time were a tactic used to forestall European pressures for reform. It is doubtful if the central government ever intended the commissions to actually initiate any significant reforms. Their initial powers were quite extensive, which was a reflection of the influence wielded by the Powers and the British Ambassador in 1879. They were to set up committees or councils in each vilayet which were in turn to carry out the reforms which were to be promulgated in Constantinople. Most of these reforms were never forthcoming and those that were became impossible to implement because the government almost immediately began to chip away at the powers of the commissions.⁸ One of the first restrictions placed on the commissions was that any reforms or changes that would involve an increased expenditure of money had to be approved by Constantinople. Since this approval was seldom given and since most significant reforms involved some increase in expenditures, the commissions could do very little except

⁸Medlicott, op.cit., p. 324.

listen to the grievances of the people and suggest reforms. As more powers were stripped away, the commissions became more and more concerned with an inspection of the provinces rather than with actively initiating change. The change in the nature of the reform commissions paralleled the growing independence and security of the Ottoman government after 1880.

The first reform commission we will examine is the one which was sent to the Diarbekir and Kharput regions. The commission was led by a young Albanian, Abbedin Pasha, who was assisted by a Roman Catholic official, Manas Effendi. Abbedin Pasha spent most of his time in Diarbekir, which was one of the worst governed vilayets in the Empire. Before examining his reform attempts, it will be useful to give a more detailed account of the state of affairs in the Diarbekir vilayet in 1879.

The vilayet was divided into three sandjaks: Malatia, Mardin, and Diarbekir. The unity of the three administrative divisions was virtually non-existent, Malatia being isolated geographically, and the mutesarraf of Mardin, Said Pasha, being a bitter enemy of the vali, all of which prevented any kind of cooperation. Disputes between these two were so frequent and bitter that they completely overshadowed the welfare of the sandjak or vilayet. Thus, the vali consistently refused to send troops to Mardin to quell outbreaks of violence, hoping that the chaotic situation there would cause Said's downfall.⁹ In

⁹Trotter, Diarbekir, to Granville, 15 of 1 June 1880, F.O., 424/107. Mutesarraf's were of course appointed by the Porte.

Diarbekir itself, the notables of the city held complete sway over the vali through their positions on the councils and in the courts.

While a group of notables in the city of Diarbekir managed to dominate the central government of the vilayet, in the lower administrative divisions, the Kurdish agas were the supreme power. In the Midyad kaza of Mardin there were five kaimakams in a period of two years, each of whom had extorted as much money as possible and cooperated with the Kurdish dominated majliss of the town. Several Kurdish agas managed to completely dominate political life in the kaza. These men possessed considerable power before the war when the Ottoman presence in areas such as this had been more substantial, but by 1879 with virtually no Ottoman force to restrain them, they reigned supreme. The Kurds of the area were divided into two major clans, both of which were at odds with each other. The local kaimakams had to rely on one of these clans for support in collecting taxes, maintaining order, and, of course, enriching themselves.¹⁰ Similar conditions prevailed in the other kazas of the vilayet.

The Diarbekir sandjak was controlled by the notables of the majliss, who were generally more corrupt and self-serving than the Kurdish agas of the outlying districts. Their hoarding of grain and selling it outside the vilayet during the famine produced riots in the city in 1880, but most of their activities

¹⁰Trotter, Diarbekir, to Her Majesty's Plenipotentiary in Constantinople Mr. Malet, 567 of 22 March 1879, F.O., 424/82.

went virtually unnoticed or were simply accepted as the standard operating procedure of all government. Robbery in the city went on unchecked, salaries of lesser officials remained unpaid, nothing was done to protect villages from Kurds or Arabs, and corruption was the generally accepted practice in the courts. It was in this environment that the first reform commission had to operate

Abbedin Pasha was recognized by Major Trotter and other consuls as being an outstanding Ottoman official, just the type of man that the British were hoping to cooperate with in the reforming of Anatolia and regenerating the Empire. This may have been an important factor in the government's decision to put Abbedin Pasha in charge of the commission. As Reverend Barnum, an American missionary of long residence in Anatolia, said of Abbedin Pasha:

"I think that I never saw in any country an example of greater industry and executive ability. He is calm and self-possessed, his decisions are prompt, and are at once put into execution, and he is at work night and day. I doubt whether it is in human nature to sustain such a pressure for any great length of time. He also appears to be thoroughly honest...."¹¹

He had all the qualities the British admired, plus ambition. Major Trotter noted that Abbedin "...was a young and energetic Albanian with his spurs to win."¹² The Pasha was evidently

¹¹Rev. Barnum, Kharput, to Layard, 27 of 26 September 1879, F.O., 424/91.

¹²Trotter, to Granville, 233 of 5 May 1880, F.O., 424/106.

determined to rise in the Ottoman administration and the reform commission was his first real test. He was probably one of the beneficiaries of the western training encouraged during the Tanzimat and was therefore one of the officials thought by many to be the Empire's only hope for internal regeneration.

Abbedin Pasha immediately ran into problems when he reached Diarbekir. The city was controlled by the notables, who through the majliss and their influence with the local population had been able to eliminate a very competent vali, Abdul Rahman Pasha, and completely discredit the local government in the process. The reform commissioners were all strangers to the area and were thus forced to rely on some element of the local population for advice and assistance. It was only natural that this element should be the notables, who made up the membership of the councils and courts and were the people who would have to carry on the reforms once the commission left. Thus in filling new or empty positions in the judicial or administrative structure of the vilayet, Abbedin Pasha was forced to rely on the recommendations of these notables, who were primarily concerned with furthering their own self interests, both as individuals and as a group, and therefore saw to it that more of their own were appointed.¹³

A further problem for Abbedin Pasha was that one of the Sultan's many brothers-in-law, Kiazim Pasha, who was notorious

¹³ Boyadjian, Diarbekir, to Trotter, 1 of 24 August 1879, F.O., 424/91.

for his intrigue, accompanied the reform commission as an unofficial advisor. He was in league with the notables in Diarbekir and helped them in securing the appointment and influence they wanted. There was little Abbedin Pasha could have done to prevent Kiazim Pasha from exercising this influence because of his connections in the capital. The vali of Diarbekir, who protested some of the appointments made on the recommendations of the notables, could do nothing to help Abbedin or counter Kiazim Pasha.¹⁴ As one resident of Diarbekir said in a letter to Major Trotter:

"Abbedin Pasha is a very intelligent, well-educated, and well-intentioned man, but Alas! from the beginning he has been surrounded by some discontented and revolutionary people, whose ruling spirit is the brother-in-law of the ruler of this Empire....If this person is not removed from this place no reform can possibly be introduced into this vilayet. I can assure you that neither the Vali nor any Commission dare say a single word against his will...from the very beginning he and the judge took into their confidence those people who during the Governorship of the late Vali (Abdel Rahman) tried very hard to upset his government not because the Vali was a bad Governor, but because he was too honest for them."¹⁵

The significance of Abbedin Pasha's dependence on these notables becomes clear when we refer back to the instructions given to the reform commissioners. The Ottoman government instructed them to set up reform committees in the vilayets which were to do the actual work involved in the implementing of reforms. In

¹⁴Trotter, Erzeroum, to Salisbury, 101 of 17 July 1879, F.O., 424/86.

¹⁵Extract of a Letter to Trotter, 101 of 30 June 1879, F.O., 424/86.

other words, the role of the reform commission was primarily to select and advise local reform committees, which would logically consist of the local notables. The notables which Abbedin Pasha and the other reform commissioners in other vilayets appointed to these committees were concerned with preventing too much central control of the provinces and in establishing or solidifying their own power in the respective provinces. Their interest in reform was to say the least suspect.

In most cases in eastern Anatolia the factors mentioned above would have stifled any chance for reform. Abbedin Pasha, however, was able to initiate quite a few changes despite the handicaps put in his path. Committees were established to discuss what reforms were necessary and to hear petitions from various interested parties in the vilayet. Kiazim Pasha was eventually recalled after many telegrams from Abbedin Pasha to the Porte, and a few of the more obviously corrupt officials of the vilayet were dismissed from their positions. Abbedin Pasha laid the groundwork for an increased number of Christian members of government, which was part of the reform program announced by the central government.

The most important reforms initiated by Abbedin Pasha in Diarbekir were in the areas of security forces and in the influence of the Kurdish agas. The Pasha saw to it that the zaptiehs were given their arrears in pay as well as uniforms and weapons. He weeded out many of the more inefficient and corrupt

officers among the zaptieh brigade, though most of them were able to regain their positions as soon as the reform commission left the area. In addition to these changes, the military forces stationed in the vilayet were dispersed throughout the countryside in small groups to provide more protection for the villagers.

Abbedin Pasha's greatest accomplishment in the field of security forces was his establishment of an urban police force in Diarbekir and other towns in the vilayet. This force consisted of a select group of men and officers who were to be in charge of security in the urban areas, while the zaptiehs restricted themselves to the villages and countryside. This was Abbedin Pasha's only real move against the urban notables, who were not overly pleased to see another factor enter into the politics of the city, especially since before they had been used to having their own way and controlling the zaptiehs.

The reform which had the greatest impact both locally and throughout the region was Abbedin Pasha's treatment of the Kurdish agas. Since he was a stranger to the area and was forced to rely on the urban notables of Diarbekir for counsel and advice it is understandable that he would feel few restraints against taking decisive action against the Kurds. His western training and probably sophisticated background would have made him less tolerant of the lack of discipline and respect for order among the Kurds and thus more sympathetic to the urban notables. While the Kurdish agas were notables like their

urban Muslim counterparts, the two groups were seldom on good terms. The primary foe of the urban notables was the government, both central and local when they were unable to control it, but their chief rivals for economic power and influence in the countryside were the agas. Abbedin Pasha was probably told, perhaps with justification, that the primary cause of disorder in the vilayet was the presence of the Kurdish agas. Seeing that some kind of decisive action was needed to re-establish order and stability in the area and assert the central government's presence once again, and seeing that there was little he could do in the urban centers in the face of the notables' control of the government, Abbedin Pasha made his most dramatic move against the agas. He invited about a hundred of them to Diarbekir, ostensibly to discuss the problems of the vilayet, and then had them arrested and exiled from the area. The agas were to be sent to Albania, but only got as far as Aleppo.

Most of the consuls agreed that this move against the Kurds was necessary, but they regretted the way in which Abbedin Pasha had carried it out. By denying the agas a fair trial, he made it easier for them to claim unfair treatment and thus eventually gain their release. As soon as they arrived in Aleppo this was in fact what the agas began doing and by 1882 most of them were back in the Diarbekir area.¹⁶ In most other cases the consuls

¹⁶ Boyadjian, Diarbekir, to Trotter, 80 of 16 March 1882, F.O., 424/132, and Boyadjian to Trotter 1 of 24 August 1879, F.O., 424/91.

would probably have cried 'foul' and claimed that Abbedin Pasha deliberately mistreated the agas, knowing that they could then return claiming lack of due process. The consuls were used to such maneuvers on the part of provincial officials and the central government. In this case the consuls did not draw this conclusion but rather attributed the mistakes to the Pasha's zeal and lack of experience, and they were most probably correct in their evaluation.

The exiling of the Kurdish agas was the type of reform which the British applauded but which the Ottoman government definitely was not prepared to accept. Besides disrupting the balance of power in the provinces between the urban and Kurdish notables, this type of reform or change, if carried out widely, could trigger some type of rebellion, which was still one of the government's greatest fears. Soon after the exiling of the agas the government began looking for other assignments for Abbedin Pasha.

Before he was taken off active participation in the reform commission, Abbedin Pasha moved from Diarbekir to the other area his commission was responsible for, the Kharput vilayet. By this time he had received specific orders from Constantinople not to attempt any further large scale action against Kurdish leaders. When he first arrived in the city the notables were rather obviously afraid of him, but as soon as it became evident that he no longer had the power to act independently,

they began to undermine his attempts at reform. He instituted a police force like the one in Diarbekir, but it never had the same success. After working in Kharput for a few months he was ordered to proceed to Sivas to become vali. His assistant, Manas Effendi, tried to carry out the work begun in Kharput but since he was a Christian the notables refused to cooperate and in fact openly worked against him.¹⁷

Before moving on to the second reform commission and the problems it faced in Erzeroum and Van, it will be useful to follow Abbedin Pasha to Sivas where he attempted many of the same reforms he had tried before, and met similar frustrations. The Pasha arrived in Sivas in October 1879, and remained as vali for six months. At the same time he was still the official head of the reform commission for Diarbekir and Kharput, an arrangement the consuls strongly objected to since he could exercise no real influence from Sivas on events in Diarbekir and his representative in the area was virtually without influence or power.¹⁸

Upon his arrival in Sivas Abbedin Pasha immediately began to make changes, having by this time a great deal of experience in provincial problems and administration. In the first five days in Sivas he made several changes in his subordinate officials and within the administrative councils and established a reform commission for the vilayet composed of three Christians

¹⁷ Barnum, Kharput, to Layard, 161 of 6 November 1879, F.O., 424/91.

¹⁸ Trotter, Erzeroum, to Salisbury, 8 of 1 October 1879, F.O., 424/91..

and three Muslims, Colonel Wilson, the consul in Sivas, was overjoyed with the Pasha's activity and with his very presence, saying: "It is very pleasant to me having a man in this wilderness who is devoted to classical literature, and able to talk on matters that interest educated men."¹⁹ Clearly, Abbedin Pasha was not the ordinary Ottoman official.

Like Diarbekir, the vilayet of Sivas was dominated by a group of notables. In the case of Sivas, the notables were led by one of their more powerful members, Mehemet Ali. It was this man and his supporters in Sivas who gave Abbedin Pasha the greatest trouble while he was vali, and of course were still powerful when he left the vilayet. Speaking of Mehemet Ali's domination of local elections, one consul said:

"The evil influence of this man is so great, and he is so much dreaded by the people, that it is almost hopeless to expect any other result. Mehemet Ali has for many years been King of this province, and his word has been law. He has agents scattered throughout the country, in the different local assemblies, who are bound to carry out his official behests. Similar to all his class, he has used his official position as a means of furthering his own ends, and enriching his partisans, totally regardless of the ruin and misery he causes. Many of his agents are thieves and vagabonds, who exert a terrorism over the rest of the population."²⁰

Notables such as Mehemet Ali were extremely formidable opponents for any government official, as the above quotation indicates. In Sivas the government could rely much less on the rivalry between the urban notables and the Kurdish agas, since the

¹⁹Wilson, Sivas, to Layard, 49 of 14 October 1879, F.O., 424/91.

²⁰Consul, Captain D.H. Stewart, Sivas, to Layard, 208 of 12 May 1880, F.O., 424/106.

latter group were much less in evidence than they had been in Diarbekir. The Turkish peasantry of Sivas were more easily dominated by the urban notables since they had no strong tribal organization or leaders beyond the village level. At the same time, it would be easier for a strong and ambitious government in such an environment to gain the allegiance of the peasants than it would have been in Diarbekir or other Kurdish areas. The government, in order to achieve this control, would have had to consistently demonstrate to the peasants its power and superiority before they would begin to defy their local and traditional rulers. There were very few cases of a government being able to do this in any of the vilayets during the Hamidian period, and Abbedin Pasha's short stay in Sivas could do little toward proving to be an exception.

During Abbedin Pasha's stay in Sivas the central government began to take a much more active interest in his activities. He was probably an extremely troublesome figure for the government to deal with since he was obviously after a greater degree of reform than it was prepared to accept. At the same time he was a very efficient official which meant more money for the treasury; a very important consideration throughout Abdulhamid's reign. He could not simply be dismissed or relegated to some unimportant post because he had attracted the attention of the British government which would act as his protector, and his talents were needed by the government. Part of the ambiguous position the government found itself in is shown in the demands

for money made on Abbedin Pasha while he was in Sivas, money outside the regular tax revenues. This was in part taking advantage of his obvious efficiency and ability to raise the money and in part was a move to hamper his reform activities.²¹

In his short stay at Sivas Abbedin Pasha was not able to establish the provincial government as the most powerful element in the vilayet, but he was able to begin quite a few changes. He made great strides in settling many of the Circassian refugees, started new road construction, expanded Muslim education, installed street lamps in the city of Sivas, and started a weekly newspaper.²² He made many suggestions for tax reforms, legal reforms, and so forth, but in March 1880 he was reassigned as vali of Salonica, which must have been in the eyes of any Ottoman official a promotion and was a convenient way to get him away from a particularly sensitive part of the Empire where his reforming zeal would not be a liability to the government.²³

The second reform commission which we must study was assigned to the vilayets of Erzeroum and Van. It was led by Yusuf Pasha and Serkis Effendi, again a Muslim-Christian combination following the spirit of the new reforms in demonstrating the right of the Christian population to participate in the administration of the Empire. As in the treatment of the first commission,

²¹Wilson, Sivas, to Layard, 57 of 7 January 1880, F.O., 424/106.

²²Wilson, Sivas, to Layard, 89 of 7 February 1880, F.O., 424/106. See Chapter Three for more details on this practice.

²³Abbedin Pasha appears in the consular reports again in the late 1880's as a member of the Ministry in Constantinople, and then drops from sight.

it will be useful to examine the environment in which the commission had to operate, in this case concentrating on the vilayet of Van.

While the problems facing the vilayets of eastern Anatolia were basically the same, each particular area experienced these problems to differing degrees. In Van, for instance, the question of Muslim-Armenian relations was of more immediate concern than it had been in Diarbekir because the percentage of Armenians in Van was much greater than in any other vilayet. The post-war famine was as bad in Van as it had been in Diarbekir and indeed showed no signs of letting up until late in 1881.²³ As was shown in the previous chapter, the famine led directly to increased oppression of the villages by the pastoral and nomadic Kurds who were the first to suffer from it. The city of Van in 1880 was overflowing with refugees from the surrounding area, which meant that the most important task of any government, whether local or central, was to feed the population and try to end the famine. Far-reaching reform programs tended to get buried under the sheer weight of immediate problems.

The 'Kurdish problem' was much more important in Van than in the other vilayets. With Sheikh Ubeydullah in the area and an almost complete lack of Ottoman military strength, law and order was hardly a goal to be even seriously considered. The local Armenian notables flooded the consuls with lists of

²³Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 69 of 28 February 1881, F.O., 424/122.

specific acts of oppression by Kurds against Armenian villages.²⁵
Raids by Kurdish tribes were so prevalent that the consul for Van, Captain Clayton, was eventually moved to suggest the use of European troops as the only hope for the restoration of order:

"On the whole, regarding the temper of the Turks, the disposition of the troops and the pecuniary inability of the government to provide and support in a proper manner the force necessary to ensure security in the country, I am forced to the conclusion, that in addition to the necessary reforms in administration, which must, I think, be carried out by European officials, a proportion of European troops is necessary, at all events as a temporary measure."²⁶

As was shown in the previous chapter, the consuls tended to opt for European supervision and control in most matters of reform, but they seldom went to the extent of suggesting actual military involvement. Captain Clayton's request for troops may reflect the degree of disorder in the Van area in 1879-1880, or simply the growing disillusionment of the consuls.

The other main problem the reform commissioners faced in Van, as the others had faced in the other vilayets, was the

²⁵The Armenian Patriarch supplied Clayton with a partial list of crimes from April to July 1880. The following are examples taken from that list:
9 April....Two hours from Van a Nestorian was murdered by Kurds.
5 April....The mill at Akhtaman Monastery was plundered.
7 "A mill in Norderuk was plundered.
8 "mills of monasteries of Surp Nisham and Nareg plundered.
15 "villagers of Karabuli stripped and robbed on way home.
17 "Armenian store in Pertag broken into and all grain stolen.
It is significant that virtually all these incidents, as well as most of those not given, involve Kurds taking food from Armenians. Clayton to Trotter, 131 of 24 August 1880, F.O., 424/107.

²⁶Clayton to Trotter, 245 of 7 May 1880. F.O., 424/106.

misuse of the judicial courts and the administrative councils. Corruption was prevalent in Van as it was elsewhere. Speaking of the members of the criminal court in the sandjak of Baiburt, Consul Everett said:

"Of the two Christians, one takes bribes, and both are illiterate; of the two Turkish, one is a fanatic and ignorant and the other an uneducated nonentity, who sits in the court only to make up the required number,"²⁷

There were over two hundred prisoners awaiting trial at this particular court when Everett visited Baiburt; and this example was not atypical. The quality of justice was extremely poor, with judges representing the interests of certain local notables and bribery the acknowledged practice.

The reform commission assigned to this area spent most of the fall of 1879 in Erzeroum, but accomplished virtually nothing. A council of thirty eight local members was selected to investigate the faults and deficiencies of the government. Of the thirty eight, ten were Christians. The same restrictions placed on the Diarbekir commission were applied to this one and it soon revealed impotency. The Armenians withdrew from participation altogether, not wishing to be associated with an obvious attempt by the government to play at reforms. When the commission left for Van in November 1879, Major Trotter said of its work in Erzeroum:

²⁷Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 29 of 19 December 1879, F.O., 424/106.

"It was with a sign of relief that I saw these Commissioners leave Erzeroum and felt freed from connection with what has turned out to be little better than a delusion and a sham."²⁸

The Commission had not enjoyed the presence of a strong personality such as Abbedin Pasha who, though he accomplished little in the long run, did have some spectacular and temporary successes.

Before the commissioners arrived in Van in December 1879, the vilayet had been under the jurisdiction of the commander of the Fourth Army Corps, Samih Pasha. His main duty since the war had been to prevent a complete Kurdish insurrection by trying to placate as many of the tribes as possible, and especially to keep Ubeydullah from taking any decisive action against the Ottomans. He was receiving virtually no material support from Constantinople and could actually do very little except try to hold the line and keep the Kurds disunited. He told Clayton that he was planning an active campaign against some of the tribes in the spring when he hoped more support from the central government would be forthcoming.

The reform commission did some important work in famine relief in the Van area, but beyond that it was ineffectual. Word of its dismal failure in Erzeroum had already reached Van, so that the Armenians would have absolutely nothing to do with it and the notables knew that they could defy it. The only really

²⁸Trotter, Erzeroum, to Salisbury, 114 of 5 November 1879, F.O., 424/91.

positive act it was able to take was to persuade the government to suspend the collection of back taxes, but even that was only until the matter could be fully investigated.

These were the two reform commissions which the British and many members of the Armenian community in eastern Anatolia had put great hopes in. The Muslims, at least the Muslim notables, had resented and feared the commissions, seeing them as indicative of European interference in the Empire and unsure of the extent of their powers. Once Abbedin Pasha had been rebuked for taking the only really decisive action during the life of the commissions, it became clear to all that they were not a sincere effort at reform.

The revelation that the commissions were merely a gesture disillusioned the British about chances for reform in the Empire, but more importantly, it began the process of alienation within the Armenian community which was to have serious consequences. The Muslim notables, rather than being more ingratiated to the Ottoman government as a result of the failure of the commissions, were encouraged in their belief that the central government was impotent in the region and that they were thus being given a free hand to control all local government.

A third reform commission was sent to the area in 1880 under the leadership of Baker Pasha, the English officer who had been promised a high position in eastern Anatolia. The British and many others in the provinces had great hopes for this commission,

but by the time it had arrived at its first destination, Diarbekir, it had been stripped of any real power. Baker Pasha could only observe and report his findings to the Porte. He came up with the by this time rather standard list of essential reforms, but like the other attempts, he had no real power to do more than suggest.

By late 1880 British interest and faith in Ottoman reform in eastern Anatolia had waned considerably and no outcry was raised in Europe at the dismal findings of the consuls. Their reports had been published in the form of Blue Books, but in 1881 they were withdrawn from public view. The British reform programs were a failure, public interest in Europe was fading, and the government decided to accept its defeat, though the consuls remained in the area and continued their reporting.

PART III

Despite the fact that the British reform proposals were a failure and the Ottoman program largely a sham, there were several reforms which were initiated in eastern Anatolia during the 1879-80 period. These reforms were not necessarily a result of the activity of the reform commissions, but were primarily the result of the general program of reforms announced by the Porte and pushed by the British. These reforms will be considered under the following general headings: the gendarmarie, local government, tax reform, judicial reform, and

government policy toward the Kurds.

One of the first reforms pushed by Lord Salisbury and later by Granville of the Liberal government was for the establishment of a European led and supervised gendarmerie in the provinces. For this purpose a group of British officers was contracted for by the Porte early in 1879 when the Ottoman government was doing everything it could to please the British, but they remained inactive in Constantinople until 1881. By 1880 the Ottoman government had diluted the gendarmerie proposal to a simple reforming of the existing zaptieh organization, with European officers as advisors in some cases. The contracted British officers were finally given assignments in 1881 to the vilayets of Smyrna, Aleppo, Damascus, Trebizond, and Adrianople, but were given virtually no power.²⁹ In the eastern Anatolian vilayets, where a strong zaptieh force was most obviously required, the valis were put in charge of the reorganization and reform of the zaptiehs. Clearly the Ottoman government wanted to discourage the British interest in this potentially volatile region and avoid being pressured into reforming too rapidly.

For the British, two of the most important aspects of the reform of the zaptieh force were an improvement of the quality of the personnel and the addition of Christians to the ranks. It was hoped that in this way the zaptiehs would more fairly

²⁹Goschen, Constantinople, to Granville, 86 of 29 April 1881, F.O., 424/122.

represent the community and would therefore not concentrate their acts of minor oppression strictly on Christian villages. To the reformers' regret, few Christians or qualified Muslims were anxious to join:

"It must be owned that it is not entirely the fault of the government that so few Christians have as yet been enrolled in the gendarmerie in accordance with the stipulation embodied in the scheme of reform lately accepted by the Porte. The Christians themselves have shown no desire to serve, and in many cases have refused to do so. Nor is this very surprising. The Zaptieh has to furnish his own horse, and, unless he gets his salary, the only way of supplying himself with the requisite funds is to squeeze what he can out of the villagers. Christian though he is, he would probably be no more averse to such methods; but they would not be tolerated by his victims, and, if a complaint were made, the Government would have no desire to shield him. He would be placing himself in a hopelessly false position, and rendering himself an object of dislike and suspicion to his superiors, without the compensating advantage of being able to protect his co-religionists."³⁰

Besides the obvious disadvantages of the job, there was evidently strong pressure put on the Armenians by their own community not to join the zaptiehs.³¹ This is perhaps indicative not only of a strong feeling of community among the Armenian population, but also of a growing conviction that little could be accomplished by working within the Ottoman system; that reform was simply not going to take place and by participating the Armenians merely legitimized Ottoman oppression.

The final 'blow' to the Europeans and reform-minded Ottomans for any hope of a more efficient and fair provincial police

³⁰ Lord Warkworth, Notes From A Diary in Asiatic Turkey (London: Edward Arnold, 1898), p. 48.

³¹ Percy, op.cit., p. 67.

was the transfer of control over appointments from the War Office in Constantinople to the majlisses of the vilayets. Only the vilayet commander of the zaptieh brigade was to be appointed in Constantinople. While this followed the decentralization plan put forward by most Europeans, it did not achieve the results they wanted without the strong European influence in the provinces. The local notables would now control all appointments and the brigade commander was faced with subordinates with local ties and interests.³² This was a change, and a change along the lines of European suggestions, but without the full implementation of all the other reforms urged by the Europeans, it achieved the opposite results.

The implementation in 1880 of the provisions of the Vilayet Law of 1867 pertaining to the establishment of kariyes (communes) provides a good example of the attitude of the government toward substantive reforms and the complexity of imposing change from above. The Vilayet Law divided the Empire into vilayets, sandjaks, kazas, nahiyes, and kariyes. The kariye was usually a group of about forty houses, each with an elected Mukhtar (headman), with an assistant, and an elected council of not more than twelve and not less than three members, called the Council of Elders.³³ These provisions of the Law of 1867 had never been acted upon by the Ottoman government and after the war were one of the

³²Norton, Pera, to Dufferin, 223 of 20 November 1881, F.O., 424/123.

³³Wilson, Constantinople, to Goschen, 270 of 30 June 1880, F.O., 424/106.

primary reforms insisted upon by the British government.

The administrative level above the cariye, the nahiye, had also been ignored by the government until 1880. This was to be a collection of cariyes, each with a Mudir (administrator) appointed by the government, a kadi appointed by the kadi of the vilayet, and a Council of Elders appointed by the cariyes.³⁴

The formation of these nahiyes was also begun in 1880 with great expectations by many Europeans that strong local government would be the foundation for more extensive reforms, would cure many of the ills of the present administrative system, and would curb the powers of the local notables and village chiefs.

The valis all set out promptly enough to do their duty and began travelling all over their respective vilayets laying out communal boundaries among the villages. Things did not progress as the consuls had imagined they would, however, and soon complaints began to pour in. In the first place, the municipal-officers, both executive and administrative, who were to be created under the plan were not to be salaried, which cut the number of people in a village who would be able to serve and encouraged corruption and illegal practices.³⁵ More important than this, reports began to come in to the consuls that the nahiyes were not being apportioned between Muslim and Christian fairly. The concept had been that Armenians would be able to rule themselves, and Muslims likewise, on this lowest level of

³⁴Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 156 of 7 September 1880, F.O., 424/107.

³⁵Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 194 of 12 October 1880, F.O., 424/107.

the administrative hierarchy. The communes were laid out on the basis of houses and in some cases outright fraud was being committed by gerrymandering enough so that the communes were virtually all in Muslim hands even though the particular area may have had a significant Christian population. There was also the factor of the difference in population estimates and that Armenian households were quite large compared to Kurdish households. An Armenian house, which was counted as one unit in the commune, could contain as many as forty people, all relatives, while the neighboring Kurdish house would normally have only seven or eight.³⁶ Thus on the basis of houses a Kurdish mudir could be appointed in a commune with a vast majority of Armenians.

The consuls, who by this time had been in eastern Anatolia for over two years, were quick to condemn the creation of the communes as another fraudulent reform; another example of Ottoman duplicity. At the risk of overstating their case, the following quotations from two of the more experienced consuls will be given. First from Captain Clayton in Van:

"The so-called reform of the formation of communes and appointment of Mudirs is a perfect farce. Armenians who have been associated with Turkish employees in the arrangement of the new communes have come to me and said that the most flagrant miscalculations of the relative number of Christians and Moslems had been made; that they had protested but were not listened to, and in some cases refused to sign the Reports of the proceedings. The various local Medjlisses had in several instances been forced by threats to sign. Moreover, the Mudirs chosen are always such as will likely to be tools of the Government."³⁷

³⁶Clayton to Trotter, 194 of 12 October 1880, F.O., 424/107.

³⁷Clayton to Trotter, 220 of 16 November 1880, F.O., 424/107.

And again from Captain Everett in Erzeroum:

"The organization of the nahies is still being proceeded with, and the absurdity of the scheme is becoming each day more evident. The district of the Passin has been divided into seventeen communes. Of the seventeen Mudirs, one only can read or write Turkish; two or three of the Armenian assistants can read or write in their own language; and the remainder are totally illiterate. Great efforts have been made by the Turkish officials to incorporate the Armenian villages among Turkish communes, but, I take it, the game is hardly worth the candle; and the Armenian authorities, having been quick enough to perceive this, have not taken the trouble to contest the matter."³⁸

The growing cynicism of the consuls is revealed in despatches such as these, which in turn produced a disbelief in Ottoman reform in the British government. There was probably a great deal of injustice and corruption done in the formation of the nahiyes, but the consuls showed little appreciation of the problems the officials must have faced in such a difficult task. The Muslim villagers were not about to be ruled by a Christian mudir, despite the more advanced feeling in Constantinople concerning Muslim-Christian equality., and the arrangement of the population was such that there were few villages that were either entirely Muslim or Christian. The village leaders remained the same but simply adopted a new name and the elections were generally meaningless in an area that had little experience with or concern with the electoral process.

In the field of judicial reform no new changes were made in 1880, but rather the reforms of the previous years were

³⁸Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 7 of 16 December 1880, F.O., 424/122.

implemented for the first time in most parts of eastern Anatolia. The civil and judicial branches of government were separated and a host of officials appointed to fill the new positions. These moves had the same effect as the earlier implementation of these reforms had had, and the consuls condemned the Ottoman effort once again. The civil-judicial separation was a good idea in theory, but in practice it meant the local notables could control the courts with virtually no interference from the government. The high number of officials and the low salaries merely increased the chances for corruption so that the whole judicial reform program was in reality counter-productive.

An experiment in tax collection reform was carried out in the Sivas vilayet in 1880. The tax-farming system was abolished and government officials began to collect the tithes. This was a reform which the British had long pressed for and which the Ottoman government was probably quite ready to accept providing it did not involve undue risk of a loss of revenue. The collection in the first year was down a small amount after deducting the expenses of collection, but consul Richards in Sivas called the experiment a success.³⁹ The Ottoman government, however, was reluctant to take a chance on disrupting the revenue apparatus and in the following year re-instituted tax-farming in Sivas. Collection by government seems to involve a

³⁹ Richards to Wilson, 118 of 11 May 1881, F.O., 424/122.

perfectly logical step in the trend toward centralization, and its abandonment reflects either pressure from the notables for their old tax-farming prerogatives or a decision by the government that revenue, guaranteed revenue, was more important than centralization.

The government policy toward the Kurds of eastern Anatolia, while not in the nature of a reform policy, was nevertheless a crucial part of Ottoman policy toward the entire region. We have seen in the previous chapter how the government attempted to placate the Kurds in the years immediately following the war and have discussed the attempts to use the Kurds as a base of support. These policies continued in the 1880's, but they were less conciliatory and reflected the increased degree of government control in the provinces. Dersim was made into a vilayet in 1881 in the hopes that it would give the Kurds in that area a chance to govern themselves and would be a good propaganda weapon for Kurds in other areas. The experiment was apparently a failure since conditions in the province as reported by the consuls and others were chaotic. The Kurds of the Dersim disliked the government set up to rule them as a vilayet as they had disliked the previous arrangement. All the apparatus of government was set up in the area but few officials were available to fill the positions and the army still had to be called in to quell tribal outbreaks.

After containing the Kurds in the Van area during 1879 and

1880, the Ottomans finally managed to restore some degree of order to that area in 1881. Sheikh Ubeydullah was persuaded to travel to Constantinople, where it was the government's intention to keep him in residence. On the way thousands of Kurds greeted him and pledged their allegiance to him and his family. The sheikh escaped from Constantinople in 1882 and returned to the Van area, drawing thousands of Kurds to his side. By this time, however, the Ottoman strength was such that the army was able to surround the sheikh's forces in Hekkiari and force him to surrender. He was exiled to Arabia where he subsequently died.⁴⁰

By 1882 the 'Kurdish problem' in the region was by no means 'solved' but it was at least under some kind of control. Events were now determined to a much greater extent by the Ottoman government and less by the capricious activities of Kurdish tribes or outside forces.

This chapter on efforts at reform during the post-war period would not be complete without a short discussion of the role and opinions of the British consuls. They accompanied the reform commissions throughout their investigations, offered advice, brought information to light, were the chief contact points between the commissioners and the Armenian community, and supplied the British Ambassador with information he used to pressure the Porte. By 1881 most of the consuls had been in eastern Anatolia for at least three years and were relatively

⁴⁰Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 118 of 9 September 1882, F.O., 424/132.

disillusioned with the Ottoman government as well as the notables, both Christian and Muslim, in the provinces. The gloomy and pessimistic reports sent by these consuls were an important factor in the British governments' gradual disengagement from active interest in Ottoman reform.⁴¹

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the consuls had been convinced soon after their arrival in eastern Anatolia that it was due to poor personnel that the reforms were not going well. They were exposed each day to officials who viewed their position as a vehicle for self-aggrandizement and had little faith in the reforms. The British program of reforms hinged on the presence of competent and honest local officials who would, under British supervision, assume increased responsibility in a decentralized Empire, and it was these officials who let them down. The British program was also dependent upon a serious commitment on the part of Britain and other Powers to reform in the region and by 1880 it was obvious that this commitment was not going to materialize,

The rebuke of Abbedin Pasha after his action against the Kurdish agas in Diarbekir and the impotency of the other reform commission revealed in Erzeroum were clear signs to the Ottoman officials in the provinces and the local notables (in most cases

⁴¹The shifting of British attention to Egypt after 1882 was probably the primary reason for this lack of interest, but the disillusionment with Ottoman reform and their sincerity or capability of reforming made the shift much easier. See M.S. Anderson, The Eastern Question (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), chapter 8.

the same men) that the central government had no intention of introducing any basic changes or reforms. Indeed, it should have been obvious to most observers that the kind of changes envisaged by the British were impossible to implement given the conditions in eastern Anatolia. The local administrations were familiar with the problems of government in the area and rather than attempt to implement changes they saw as impossible and in most cases undesirable, they simply continued in their role as mediators between the local power groups and the central government. For the reforms, as envisaged by the British, to be successful, these local officials would have had to assert their authority and become the determining power group in the provinces.

Though the consuls spent many pages in their reports decrying the lack of ability and so on in the local officials, these officials' tasks were by no means easy and their working conditions frequently deplorable. They were being asked to forsake private gain and survive on a sometimes incredibly low salary, to assert the central government's programs in an area far removed from the center of power and where little aid or support was made available, and to overcome their own personal backgrounds and training to fight for reforms they never really understood. These officials should perhaps be given more credit than they have received in the past. As one traveller in the area said of their tasks and abilities:

"Few mistakes are greater or more common than the supposition that even the governing classes of the Empire are insensible to these evils, or obstinately opposed to progress of a rational kind. Prevalent as corruption is among them, the fault attaches to the system far more than to individuals; and honesty requires a sense of public duty, a sacrifice of private interest, which is not demanded among ourselves. The wonder is rather, and it speaks volumes for the national character, that well-intentioned and up-right men should be found at all in positions of trust."⁴²

Officials from vali on down were forced, no matter how high their principles, to violate them time and again to meet the demands of the system in which they operated. The lowly zaptieh had to steal and extort to survive and valis such as Abbedin Pasha had to make deals with corrupt notables to get money demanded of him by Constantinople so that he could retain a position of power.

These first attempts at reform during the Hamidian period are important not so much for the changes which took place, which were rather minimal, but rather for their political implications. The manner in which they were carried out revealed much about the new government in Constantinople, both to the European Powers and to the Ottoman population in the provinces. The officials in the provinces saw that the government had no real plans for decentralization but rather was going to continue the trend centralization of power. The notables were relieved that no concerted effort had been made to usurp their authority and that in many ways they had gained power at the expense of the local governments. The Kurds could sense that the govern-

⁴² Warkworth, op.cit., p. 84.

ment was interested in maintaining and encouraging their loyalty and would give them great latitude in their behavior. At the same time, firm limits had been placed on their freedom of action by the treatment of sheikh Ubeydullah and the eventual military activity in the Dersim, so that the Kurds began to realize that it was to their advantage to cooperate with the representatives of the central government. Finally, the failure of the reform commissions and the ineffectualness of the European presence began the period of intense disillusionment in the Armenian community, about which more will be said later.

CHAPTER SIX: The Central Government and Eastern Anatolia

"From a confederacy of half-independent states, each retaining in the main its own customs, privileges, and institutions, guaranteed by a strength to defend them, and by a rough, but efficacious, popular representation, Turkey has within the last fifty years passed into an absolute, uncontrolled, centralized despotism; under which every former privilege, institution, custom, popular representation -- in a word, every vestige of popular freedom and local autonomy -- has been merged and lost in one blind centralized uniformity."¹

The above judgement was passed on the Ottoman Empire by an English observer in 1874 and reflected the centralizing tendencies of the Tanzimat and the period of Sultan Abdulaziz which the author observed in Anatolia. What we will be concerned with in this chapter is an examination of the centralization process as well as other aspects of Ottoman policy during the Hamidian period, as viewed from the perspective of the central government in Constantinople. Up to this point we have reviewed the process of reform and change in the Ottoman Empire, which in many ways resulted in increased centralization, and have examined in detail a specific portion of the Empire and reform attempts there during the early years of the Hamidian period. The years 1878 to 1882 are not the most reliable to use in a test of Ottoman policy because as has been noted, several strains were operating on the Empire which were soon to recede into the background. In spite of this, the period provides clues and indications from which we may now speculate with some

¹Quarterly Review, op.cit., p. 323.

validity. We shall be examining the character of the Sultan and his government, the bases for Hamidian policy and the various expressions of that policy, such as increased attempts at centralization, the pan-Islamic policy, and the Hamidieh organization in eastern Anatolia.

The Hamidian period has achieved the reputation of being the most centralized era in modern Ottoman history, a period when the Sultan maintained an iron grip on the Asiatic parts of the Empire. In a sense we shall be testing this thesis and the quotation offered above throughout this study in an attempt to ascertain the degree of success or even the desire for centralization within the Hamidian period.

PART I

Although his reign spanned over thirty years, Abdulhamid was in his own eyes an insecure monarch. He had lived through the death of his uncle, Abdulaziz, and the deposition and imprisonment of his half-brother Murad, all of which made the office of Sultan which he had acquired as a result of these actions, appear to be a very tenuous position. He had exiled all of the government officials who had played a role in the events leading up to his accession but he never stopped fearing coup attempts, assassination attempts, or other intrigues against his person or position.

Most of the writings on Abdulhamid's early life are at best speculation, but several themes emerge often enough to have

some claim to reality. His mother died at a relatively early age and he was informally adopted in the harem by the mother of Sultan Abdulaziz. There was evidently much speculation in court circles that Abdulhamid was in fact not the son of the Sultan, but of an Armenian who had somehow penetrated the harem. Though most writers doubt the validity of the story, it created enough suspicions on the part of the Sultan that Abdulhamid had very little contact with his father and spent most of his early life secluded in the harem.² While there he had very little contact with life outside the Palace,, his brother Murad, being the logical heir to the throne, receiving most of the attention and training. While in the harem atmosphere he was apparently introduced to various forms of mysticism by his grandmother. He seems to have been quiet and introspective and was noted to be a great 'observer of people.'

Sultan Abdulaziz had begun the process of increasing the power of the Palace at the expense of the Porte, and Abdulhamid was admirably equipped to carry it through. His feelings of insecurity were translated into a chronic inability to trust others with authority. The Sultan worked up to twelve hours a day on affairs of state, kept extensive files on various aspects of government and administration, and busied himself with details of government normally left to clerks and lesser functionaries. He perfected the use of the telegraph in the

²Wittlin, Alma, Abdul Hamid, The Shadow of God, trs. by M. Denny (London: John Lane, 1940), p. 130. His physical characteristics were remarkably similar to those of an Armenian, which added to the suspicions.

Empire, using it to keep in touch with developments in the provinces through his appointed officials and informers in his personal employ. With this instrument under his firm control he could discover at a moments notice any trouble in the most distant parts of the Empire, and deal with it immediately.

Perhaps the greatest example of his insecurity and thus his desire to control as many aspects of the Empire as possible was his system of spies, which was notorious throughout Europe and feared throughout the Empire. Through his Palace staff, which was quite extensive, he controlled a vast network of spies and informers spread throughout the provinces and Europe. Government officials knew they were being spied upon constantly which besides keeping them perhaps more honest in their dealings with Abdulhamid. also helped spread corruption within the bureaucracy. But as one author has said...."Corruption simply strengthened the ties of understanding, common interest and loyalty which bound the sovereign and his sycophants."³

Affairs of state were directed from Yildiz, the palace built by Abdulhamid, and the Porte descended into the hierarchic background. Ministers were chosen for their loyalty and obedience, not for initiative or honesty. The palace was on a hill and well protected by picked troops from all over the Empire. In a sense it reflected the Sultan's character. He

³Victor Swenson, "Palace, Porte, and Party in the Young Turk Revolution", unpublished paper presented at the 3rd Annual Middle East Studies Association Conference, held in Toronto, November 1969. p. 2.

insisted on "...small rooms where everything could be seen at a glance, less magnificent, but possessed of a quality which he prized above all others - that of safety."⁴ The Sultan left the palace infrequently and only for state functions that could not be avoided, never visiting the provinces of his vast Empire.⁵

The Sultan's most trusted administrators were a different group than had dominated the government in the Tanzimat period. Besides the opportunists, mystics, and so on that surrounded him, he was supported by a rootless and isolated group with no contacts with the traditional Ottoman bureaucrats. While these men were despised by most in Constantinople and the provincial capitals, they were loyal to the Sultan and never pressured him with new or strange ideas for change.⁶ While most pictures presented by European observers and commentators of the government of Abdulhamid are of a closed, censored, unfeeling despotism, one member of the government who later turned against it presents a different and more realistic view inside Yildiz:

"The Sultan's Palace, which was justly considered to be the heart of the evil genius of the Empire, where Abd-ul-Hamid concentrated all his autocratic power, and whence with extraordinary energy, he directed all the administrative wheels of this immense country, had the advantage also of being the rendezvous of all the best minds of the Empire. Many a functionary and official exchanged views on the country's politics with extra-ordinary frankness, giving free vent to criticisms such as one imagines are only to be heard in Liberal countries. Besides those who surrounded the great Master

⁴Wittlin, op.cit., p. 113.

⁵In fact, the Sultan never visited the Asiatic provinces and was in the European ones only after his exile in 1909. He had travelled in Europe with his brother Murad before his accession, but had seen little else of the world or Empire.

⁶P. Sugar, "Economic and Political Modernization in Turkey", Ward and Kustow, Op.cit., p. 159.

with the incense of ridiculous flattery, there were others who did not hesitate to criticize not only the acts of the Ministers, but even of the Monarch himself."⁷

This inside look at life in Yildiz seems to indicate that the dialogue over the future of the Empire was by no means dead with the ascendancy of the Hamidian despotism, only the means of carrying out the proposed solutions to the problems were altered considerably. There were apparently two circles of officials and courtiers at Yildiz and the Porte, one made up of the mystics and so forth referred to above, and the other of former Young Ottomans who had decided to remain in the government despite the failure of the Constitution and work for change. This view is further supported by the various works of that famous visitor to the Ottoman Empire, Arminius Vambery, who recounted at length his conversations with Abdulhamid. He reported that the Sultan was most anxious to be given information which was not necessarily favorable, within certain limits, and that he was always receptive to advice.⁸

Despite his reputation for being a reactionary and his intense personal despotism, Abdulhamid was by no means opposed to the process of change which had begun at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Like his predecessors, he was primarily interested in preserving both the Empire and his position within

⁷Ismail Kemal Bey, Memiors of Ismail Kemal Bey, ed, by Sommerville Story (London, 1920), p. 269.

⁸Arminius Vambery, The Story of My Struggles (London: T. Fisher & Unwin, 1904).

it and he recognized that this goal could only be accomplished by accepting and encouraging certain changes. As Bernard Lewis has said in his by now famous and often quoted paragraph on Abdulhamid in The Emergence of Modern Turkey:

"Abdulhamid was far from being the blind, uncompromising, complete reactionary of the historical legend; on the contrary, he was a willing and active modernizer, the true heir of Sultan Abdulaziz and the statesmen of the Tanzimat, against whose autocratic reformism the Young Ottomans had levelled the first Turkish liberal critique of despotic government. Politics apart, the first decades of Abdulhamid's reign were as active a period of change and reform as any since the beginning of the century, and saw the accomplishment of much that had been only started or sketched under earlier rulers, more famous for their reforming zeal. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was in these early years of the reign of Abdulhamid that the whole movement of the Tanzimat -- of legal, administrative, and educational reform -- reached its fruition and climax. And so, too, did the tendencies, already discernible under the Tanzimat regimes, towards a new, centralized, and unrestrained despotism."⁹

In fact, there was little Abdulhamid could have done had he disagreed with these changes and reforms. The process of reform was not simply a matter of decrees by one man, but involved thousands of people, money, effort, and time, and could not be reversed. He was important not so much in the implementation of reforms, which he probably managed to slow down only a bit, but rather in the complete rejection of the liberal ideals of the Young Ottomans and in the final trans-

⁹Lewis, op.cit., p. 174. A notable exception to the general fulfillment of the Tanzimat was in the area of representative government. See S. Shaw, "Nineteenth Century Ottoman Reformers", in Polk and Chambers, op.cit., p. 35.

ference of political power from the Porte to the Palace.¹⁰ The Young Ottomans had correctly perceived that despotism was the true legacy of the reforms initiated under the Tanzimat, and Abdulhamid fulfilled their prophecy.

The Tanzimat reforms, though western in origin and 'liberal' on the surface, were intended primarily to buttress the Ottoman system and resulted in a more powerful despotism than earlier Ottoman governments were ever able to attain. Many of the reformers of the period, especially those in the lower echelons of the bureaucracy, may indeed have been working for a more egalitarian and representative form of government, but the result of their efforts was more power to the state, represented at various times by either the Palace or the Porte. The Young Ottoman movement was essentially a reaction to this trend toward secularization by some of the reformers. For the bulk of the population and the traditional leaders, the reforms appeared to be a combination of western domination and sacrilege and by 1878 these people were beginning to react not only to the extremism of the the Young Ottomans, but to the reform program as a whole.

The Constitution of 1876 had not been the result of a groundswell of public opinion clamoring for representation, but the aim of a few men in the government and a sop to the western powers. While perhaps not enough in itself to produce a massive

¹⁰It is important to make the distinction between the ideas of the Young Ottomans concerned with representative government, constitutions, and so on, and their program of increased emphasis on Islam, which Abdulhamid managed to capitalize on.

reaction against the trend of government, in alliance with several other factors, it became an important symbol of what some considered the Ottoman malaise. All of the previous efforts at reform and modernization, agricultural, industrial, educational, and military, had taken place with the help of European funds. The bankruptcy of 1875 and the subsequent debt settlement of 1881 seemed a threat to the very sovereignty of the Empire and spread mistrust of the advantages of further attempts at western reform. The defeat by Russia in 1878 and the subsequent loss of Serbia, Rumania, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, the loss of Cyprus, the British occupation of Egypt, the French occupation of Tunis, and the cessation of territory to Greece in 1881 made many Ottomans wonder if the commitment to change was really worth the sacrifice.

Abdulhamid perceived that the reforms of the earlier years had been very beneficial, especially in terms of making the position of sultan a more powerful one, and that the trend of Ottoman history could not be reversed nor even significantly altered. But he also perceived that the reforms, the western-oriented changes, had weakened considerably the unity of the Empire, even the unity of its Muslim population. While one of the aims of the reforms had been to draw more people, specifically the Christians, into the Ottoman system, their effect in this regard had been slight and in fact had weakened the base of the Empire by alienating many of the Muslims. There was a vast gulf of perception and understanding between the westernized

Ottoman reformer in Constantinople and the local notables and tribal leaders in the provinces, a gulf which had to be somehow bridged or eliminated if the Empire was to avoid disintegration. It was impossible to reform the Empire along the lines established by the Tanzimat reformers, lines Abdulhamid accepted as valid or at the least unavoidable, without a strong centralized authority. It was impossible to establish this authority without some cooperation from the provinces. It was to establish this unity of action through a feeling of common effort and goals that Abdulhamid dedicated himself.¹¹

The new Sultan differed radically from the earlier reformers in his formula for unity. While they had been moving toward a secular Ottoman ideal, he recognized the dangers inherent in alienating the Muslim population, which was the prime base of support for the dynasty. It is possible that he may have suspected that the Christian millets would never be loyal to an Ottoman state, whether Muslim or secular, but this may be reading too much into his actions. The Muslim population, as reflected in the attitudes of the notables, was dissatisfied with the character of the government and with the type and pace of change. Perhaps even more important, the Muslim population seemed to be losing all hope of maintaining the Empire and all it represented in the face of western pressure; losing its traditional feelings

¹¹It is my contention that this was Abdulhamid's primary aim in the early part of his reign, in the 1880's and part of the 1890's. One can make a good case for the remainder of the Hamidian period being simply an attempt at political survival, void of high ideals.

of superiority to the non-Muslim which had long sustained the Empire. The following quotation from a western observer in Anatolia reflects this feeling:

"The old Sultan had certainly a difficult problem to face in the earlier years of his reign. In 1880 to 1882 a hopeless despondency about the future of the country reigned everywhere in Turkish society. Prophecies were current that the end of Turkish power was at hand. I quote the saying of a Binbashi or Major, uttered at Angora in 1881, when I was there: 'We have deserved the ruin that is surely before us, and nothing can save us.' Soldiers who had fought against the Russians declared that the misfortunes which the Turks had experienced were a deserved punishment for the treatment of Russian wounded by their own men. Abd-ul-Hamid had to create a feeling of hope among his Moslem subjects. A prophecy began to be current in 1882 that the year 1300, which began on October 31, 1882, was an epoch of Mohammedan history. The prophecies previously current had been about the end of Turkish power."¹²

Much of Abdulhamid's reign was taken up with projects and policies which were aimed at dispelling this feeling of despondency and renewing the Muslim's faith in and loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty and government. As one of the consuls said, "The policy of the present reign has been consistently to develop the Moslem feelings of self-reliance, and to bring home to Moslems the expediency of being a self-supporting community."¹³

While striving for unity on the basis of common religion and militant opposition to western imperialism, the Sultan was at the same time in close connection both politically and economically with the European Powers. In order to increase his

¹²William M. Ramsay, "The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor: Some of Its Causes and Effects", Proceedings of the British Academy, 1915-1916, p. 408.

¹³Chermside, Erzeroum, to Ambassador White, 80 of 29 August 1889, F.O., 424/162.

own power and security and therefore that of the state, he severely undermined several of the traditional groups which had supported the Ottomans in the past, such as the ulema and the army. Any group or institution, no matter how 'traditional' or closely connected to Islam, which he perceived as a possible threat to his position, was dealt with severely.¹⁴ As stated previously, the Hamidian period was in many instances the greatest period of actual reform in the nineteenth century, but this was not the impression given by the government at home or abroad. Instead:

"The people believed it to be their own (regime). It did not appear to be sustained by external support and imported Western Institutions; it appeared to be indigenous, tradition-loving, Islamic, and free from the worries and discomforts of change. Abdulhamid's personal austerity, sobriety, and piety were very appealing to the masses who had had their fill of spendthrift Tanzimat rulers and emulators. The characteristic that most impressed them was the Caliph's appearance as a self-confidant Muslim ruler, independent of all foreign influences and interventions and capable of striking back."¹⁵

The Empire was far from independent, of course, Abdulhamid's reforms costing as much or even more than those of the previous years. But the Sultan's manipulation of the European Powers in international affairs, as exemplified with the courtship of Germany, a thirty year respite from war, and his rigid control over the information available to his subjects preserved the sham until the end.

¹⁴Anderson, op.cit., p. 223. Thus the power of the War Ministry was reduced, rival groups of officers played off against each other, and efforts to raise the quality of religious education suppressed.

¹⁵Berkes, op.cit., p. 255.

The adoption of this Muslim policy by Abdulhamid created some new problems for the government. Since he was bent on personal rule, Abdulhamid had to descend from the normally aloof position of Sultan and become for all practical purposes a politician, an avocation for which he showed considerable skill. Once the sultanate became political it could no longer serve as the rallying point for all the diverse elements of the Empire as it usually had in the past. It now had specific interests and special connections with specific parts and elements within the Empire, to the exclusion of others. Not only were the Christians in the millets denied any meaningful identification with the central government, but many Muslims who disagreed with the policies of the Sultan were now alienated from the dynasty. The Sultan became one force, albeit the most powerful, among many including other members of the Ottoman family, the Khedival family, military officers, prominent notables, and so on. Opposition to the government tended to polarize around these various groups and individuals throughout the Hamidian period.¹⁶ In many ways this stance of the Sultan was like that of Mahmud II in the first part of the century the main difference being that to many in the Empire Mahmud seemed like an outside force, or at the least representative of an outside force, while Abdulhamid was thought of as an Ottoman force.

¹⁶ A. Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of the Notables", in Polk and Chambers, op.cit., p. 59.

The most obvious example of Abdulhamid's policy of emphasizing the importance of unity among the Muslims was the much heralded pan-Islamic policy. He is generally given credit by historians for being responsible for the renewed interest in the Caliphate as a viable political institution, for Islamic propaganda in non-Ottoman territory, and for a renewed emphasis on Islam within the Empire. The rationales for these policies are usually given as the Sultan's attempts to threaten British interests in India, to prevent or stifle nationalist developments among the Muslim population of the Empire, and to strengthen his own position by claiming to be Caliph. The trend toward pan-Islamism, however, pre-dates Abdulhamid by several years, first becoming prominent in 1872. In that year an essay appeared called the "Mahometan Revival", written by an English traveller in the Empire, in which he noted that schools which had been established as non-denominational during the Tanzimat had become in practice Muslim, with European subjects no longer taught or popular. In addition the essay noted that consumption of liquor was noticeably down; religious holidays more popular; the number of Christian government employees down considerably; and mosques, schools, and so on were being built and repaired at a quickened rate, a reversal of a recent trend.¹⁷ This development is supported by Niyazi Berkes in The Development of Turkish Secularism, who states that pan-Islamic activity began in 1872 and that "Hamidian pan-Islamism was the child of this

¹⁷William Palgrave, Essays on Eastern Questions (London: Macmillan And Co., 1872), p. 111.

trend and not the creation of the monarch."¹⁸

The Sultan capitalized on this trend in the Empire and actively encouraged it throughout his reign in both actions and words. The Hejaz railroad was built for several reasons, the most important being to bring parts of the Arab lands under more strict Ottoman control, but the reason offered by the government, and that generally accepted by the populace, was the facilitation of the hajj. Actions by Muslims in Central Asia and elsewhere against European incursions were actively, if only in a verbal sense, supported by the Ottoman government. The strictly censored Ottoman press was extremely effective throughout this period in encouraging pan-Islamic ideas within the Empire. The press was used by Abdulhamid as an instrument of centralization, as is made clear in the following account:

"...perhaps the most interesting and significant characteristic of Turkish papers is the zeal they manifest in printing all items of news affecting Islam, with highly coloured accounts of the strides it is believed to be making under 'the auspices of the Khalif' in countries like Japan, China, the Philippines, India, and various parts of Africa. This side of the Turkish press is undoubtedly the most important and the one which enables it to exercise its greatest influence....the tone and trend of Turkish papers is to intensify the hold of the Sovereign and Khalif on the imagination of the new 'true believers', especially in the lower classes, even in outlying districts of his extensive dominions, thus directly increasing the influence and prestige of the Central Ottoman Government among non-Ottoman tribes and nationalities...."¹⁹

¹⁸Berkes, op.cit., p. 269.

¹⁹Gooch and Harold Temperley, British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, Vol v (London: HMSO, 1938), p. 27. For instance, consul Wilson reports the following from Sivas: "It is hardly possible to exaggerate the evil influence of the

Besides spreading Islamic propaganda, the press was also generally anti-western and reflected the Muslim population's sensitivity to incidents of western imperialism on the fringes of the Empire and throughout Asia.

The Hamidian period witnessed a flowering of religious piety among many of the Muslim population which was more a cause of than a reaction to the government's policies. Besides the ulema there was a new type of religious professional active during this period, both at the court level and among the population. The former were concentrated at Yildiz and were mainly Arab religious men, mystics, astrologers, and so on, who were cultivated and encouraged by Abdulhamid. More important for the Empire were the pious men who crowded into the sufi orders and the refurbished medreses. The orders enjoyed their greatest popularity in modern times during the Hamidian period and the countryside was crowded with wandering mystics. Niyazi Berkes claims that the most conspicuous feature of the period, when compared with the Tanzimat, was "...the presence of outward religiosity."²⁰

The Sultan himself appeared as a pious and devout Muslim, though his private thoughts on the subject are a matter of some

Turkish newspapers. The old 'storyteller' of the bazaars and cafes has given place to the newspaper reader; the arrival of the mail is eagerly watched for, and the reader at the cafe is surrounded by listeners who carry away to their villages such versions of politics as is contained in the articles of 'Vakit', 'Hakikat' and other papers." Wilson to Dufferin, 88 of 25 August 1882, F.O., 424/126.

²⁰Berkes, op.cit., p. 259.

dispute. He led a relatively austere life, surrounded himself with theologians and holy men, founded a college for the training of missionaries, won the Sherif of Mecca to his side and liberally supported all religious institutions.²¹ The image of the Sultan had definitely been altered:

"The image of the Sultan as a benevolent liberal monarch, father of all his peoples alike, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish, and leader of all the forces of westernizing reform - an image which had gradually been formed since the days of Mahmud II - was not destroyed, but it was gradually overshadowed by another; that of the Sultan of Sunni Islam, shadow of God on earth, appealing to all Muslims to rally round the throne in the defence of the umma."²²

PART II

We have already discussed the process of centralization at work in eastern Anatolia up to the Hamidian period and have gained some insight into the Sultan's policy toward the region through the examination of the first attempts at reform. Two points which have emerged from the previous chapters are an attempt to conciliate and gain the support of the Muslim notables and the Kurdish tribes and coupled with this is an attempt to subordinate reform and central control to unity and loyalty. In this section the government's policy toward the Kurds in eastern Anatolia will be examined as an expression of this search for unity within the Empire.

²¹George Antonious, The Arab Awakening (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965, first ed. 1946), p. 71.

²²A. Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 106.

That there was something which could be called the 'Kurdish problem' in eastern Anatolia should by this time be abundantly clear. Left to their own devices the Kurds would have dominated the area in an unduly oppressive manner and incessant tribal warfare would have been widespread to the detriment of both the Christian and Muslim peasantry. The Ottoman government had to somehow restrain the activities of the Kurds while at the same time ensuring their loyalty to the government. Their loyalty could certainly not be assumed even though they were Muslim since most of the tribes had fought with the Russians during the Crimean War and were a questionable quantity during the last war.²³ The Ottoman policy of allowing tribal feuds and small wars but never permitting a single tribe or group to gain complete ascendancy was more than the Russians would have allowed them, and the Kurdish leaders knew it.²⁴ Compared to what the Russian government was doing in Central Asia this was a mild form of centralization indeed. Having won this part of the struggle for the Kurds' allegiance, that is, ending the threat of Russian influence, the Ottoman government then had to move to ensure their actual support.

The Kurds were apparently somewhat ambivalent toward the Ottoman authorities. One of the consuls said of their attitude:

"...the Kurds are not less loyal and trustworthy than other Ottoman subjects, though in rare parts of the mountain fastnesses they inhabit, the influence of the government is scarcely perceptible. As to

²³Wee, op.cit., p. 8.

²⁴Sir Mark Sykes, Dar-ul-Islam (London: Bickers and Sons, 1904), p. 235.

their 'hating their nominal masters', perhaps, under present conditions, indifference, mingled sometimes with a touch of contempt, more accurately represents the state of mind of some Kurds."²⁵

The Kurds must have respected the Ottomans as a military force since virtually all the consuls agreed that the tribes were never a threat or even a match for the regular army. But the Ottomans were reluctant to employ this force in all but the most desperate situations for fear of alienating the Kurds. This reluctance may have been seen as a sign of weakness by many Kurds who were not sophisticated or clever enough to fathom the intricacies of Ottoman domestic policies.

It is important to keep in mind throughout this study that the period of Kurdish dominance, of the rule of the feudal derebeys, was easily within memory. As consul Everett reminded the British Ambassador, "...the good old times of the Kurdish Begs are not only spoken of, but fresh in the memory of every middle-aged man, and though the form of government has disappeared, the habits, customs, and associations remain."²⁶ These memories proved all the more attractive to the Kurds because in the period of disorder following the war with Russia, it was they who actually suffered the most. It was they whom the Ottoman government failed most seriously when it failed to maintain order and the machinery for economic recovery in eastern Anatolia.

²⁵Memo from Davey, Van, 17 of 12 January 1891, F.O., 424/169.

²⁶Everett, Report on Bitlis, Erzeroum, 19 of 30 January 1885, F.O., 424/142.

The first example of Ottoman policy toward the Kurds which we have already seen in action can be called a form of appeasement; rewarding known Kurdish offenders; pardoning exiled Kurdish leaders; and generally turning the other cheek to Kurdish acts of minor lawlessness. This practice was common throughout the Hamidian period and was linked with another practice, that of using the Kurds to balance the power of the urban notables and the provincial governments. If we accept the premise for the moment that the Ottoman goal in eastern Anatolia was not immediate and complete centralization, but rather a desire to simply maintain the status quo, then the logical policy was simply to prevent any one of the indigenous power groups from attaining a dominant position. We shall investigate this policy later in the study in more detail.

Part of the policy of using the Kurds as a base of support in eastern Anatolia involved actually changing many aspects of their lives. The nomadic Kurds were gradually restricted from many parts of their traditional pasture lands and the more excessive violent tendencies among the pastoral Kurds were curbed. Visible evidence of the government's presence in the area and thus the nominal recognition of subservience on the part of the tribes was made whenever possible, usually in the form of a building of at least an official representative of some level of government.²⁷ One of the most dramatic acts of

²⁷One European traveller reports the following incident, saying that Abdulhamid has "...sought at once to civilize them and to render them more efficient from a military point of view. In the wild and seldom visited country between the plain of

attempting to reform the Kurds and bring them under some form of supervision was the formation of the Hamidieh cavalry corps.

In 1891 the central government instructed the valis of the eastern Anatolian provinces to encourage the Kurdish agas in their respective areas to form volunteer units of cavalry for service with the Ottoman army. The purpose of the plan was to both increase the efficiency of the Kurdish tribes in the event of another war with Russia (their performance in the last war had been poor) and to provide at the same time a mechanism for supervision and control.

The Kurds were to be organized into regiments of between eleven hundred and five hundred men, all coming from the same tribe. The leaders of the regiments were to be from the tribes and were given regular commissions.²⁸ Each unit had a regular Ottoman army officer assigned to it as instructor and supervisor. The regiments were to be drilled at least once every three years for three months and potential Kurdish officers were to be sent to Constantinople for training. Barracks were to be built by the government at the center of each tribe's territory, in which the guns and ammunition were to be stored, but in practice these were not built and the equipment was in many cases retained by the tribesmen.

Alashkert and the Lake of Van I was able to gain a practical acquaintance with the methods that are being pursued. In the village of Patnotz, the principal seat of the notorious tribe of Haideranli, a solid stone structure, which has been built by order of the government to serve the several purposes of a mosque, a school, and a residence for the chief, stands out from the usual clutter of mud hovels -- a palace amid the ant hills --..." H.F.S. Lynch, Armenia, Travels and Studies, ii (Beirut: Khayats, 1965, first ed. 1895), p. 422.

²⁸Hampson to White, 19 of 30 January 1891, F.O., 424/169.

After some initial difficulties in recruitment due to mistrust, several thousand Kurds were persuaded to join and a great ceremony was held in Constantinople with representatives from all the participating tribes. Those that participated in the organization were exempted from conscription and from certain taxes, which made the arrangement even more attractive for most Kurds.

In some cases the selection of tribes for the Hamidieh was used to maintain the balance of power in the region, while in others it had the opposite effect. Weaker tribes were usually chosen where possible because the better quality equipment and the training available to them tended to offset the greater size of their traditional rivals.²⁹ This favoring of some tribes over others upset many of the traditional balances in the region, in particular that between the Kurds and the tribal Nestorians:

"Until Abdulhamid's day, the parties (Assyrians and Kurds) were fairly matched on the whole; and generations of cross-raiding had evolved an understanding... Each side used old guns of much the same character; flint locks to wit, with home-made powder and bulletsBut of late years, things have changed for the worse ... and the free distribution of rifles among the Kurds....when the Sultan raised the Hamidie battalionshas done away with the old equality."³⁰

The organization was to have an even greater effect on Kurdish-Armenian relations.

The actual military value of the Hamidieh was never very

²⁹ Anderson, Diarbekir, to O'Conor, 20 of 6 January 1892, F.O., 424/203.

³⁰ Stark, op.cit., p. 64.

high according to the consuls. They were only of use in a local situation and their training was never as extensive as had been planned. As one consul harshly put it: "...as at present organized they are worse than useless. They have a strong inherent dislike of getting hurt, and absolutely no discipline to enable this weakness to be overcome."³¹ Their effect in peacetime was quite the opposite. The Kurds interpreted their new official status as giving them virtual independence from all civil authority. The zaptiehs and other officials were always unsure of the legal status of the Hamidieh and were reluctant to take overt action against them. This attitude on the part of the authorities was encouraged by the government and its representatives in the provinces, who were given instructions to see to it that the Hamidieh troops were treated well.³²

Throughout the Hamidian period the Hamidieh organization, and through it implicitly the Kurds of eastern Anatolia, were given favored treatment by the central government. The Kurds were a potentially dangerous element in the region which needed to be either totally suppressed, an unreasonable policy given the character of the times and the government, or pampered and appeased while kept under loose supervision. While feared by

³¹ Captain G.S. Elliot, Van, to Currie, 13 of 10 January 1898, F.O., 424/195.

³² One consul reported that "The authorities, who have an idea that the Kurds are a bulwark of the Mohammedan power, do practically all they can to foster this state of lawlessness. The zaptiehs are ordered not to fire on Kurds, and are punished and degraded if they do so in self-defense." Elliot, Report, Constantinople, 137 of 23 May 1894, F.O., 424/178.

the government for the disruption they could cause, they were also needed by the government to preserve a balance in the region and in case of a war with Russia, which Abdulhamid was afraid of throughout his reign.³³ The central government's attitude and policy toward the Kurds becomes even more important with the development in the 1890's of a militant Armenian revolutionary movement, the topic of the following chapter.

³³Despite the consuls' condemnation of the military effectiveness of the Hamidieh, the Ottoman government apparently did not share their view. The Hamidieh were regarded in Constantinople, by men who probably never visited eastern Anatolia or saw the actual regiments, as the military equivalent to the Russian Cossacks.

CHAPTER SEVEN: The Development of the Armenian Revolutionary Movement - 1880-1893.

Throughout the earlier chapters we have discussed the conditions of the population of the eastern Anatolia vilayets and have noted that the Christian segment of the population, primarily the Armenians, was both discriminated against and in many instances oppressed. In Chapter One the trend toward secularization and equality within the Empire was discussed and the growing strength and independence of the Armenian millet within the Ottoman system noted. Despite the developments in Constantinople in regard to equality of all subjects, as the subsequent chapters demonstrated, few of these ideas and reforms had penetrated into the eastern Anatolia area in the 1880's.

Chapters Five and Six dealt with matters of crucial importance to the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. The failure of European intervention after 1878 to induce or force the Ottoman government to implement meaningful reforms in the vilayets was extremely disillusioning for many Armenians. The reforms of the Tanzimat period and their accompanying spread of education and general awareness of the world outside the confines of the Empire had affected the Christians as much and perhaps more than the Muslims. From the 1880's on the officials of the Armenian ecclesiastic hierarchy and others prominent in the Armenian community had been urging reforms and demanding more independence for the millet. In eastern Anatolia these demands,

while certainly less vocal than in Constantinople, were being made by urban Armenians who were seeking security and more freedom of action. The European intervention after 1878 and the initial attempts at reform by the new government in Constantinople were seen by many within the Armenian community as the last hope of peaceful reform. When they failed, faith in the Ottoman system disappeared for some and reached a new low for many others. As one Armenian author says:

"The European Powers issued statements, made promises, and urged reforms, but they never took firm action to force the Porte to carry out its obligations under the Treaty of Berlin. Armenian hopes and aspirations were in vain. No recourse remained but to depend on their own resources and resort to revolutionary activity."¹

It is this revolutionary activity and the organizations which supported it with which we shall be concerned in this chapter.

Besides the failure of the reforms, the perception by many Armenians of the Ottoman policies discussed in the previous chapter was an additional powerful spur to revolutionary activity. The turning away from the Tanzimat ideal of equality within the Empire and toward a reaffirmation of the Islamic aspects of the society was an obvious phenomenon in eastern Anatolia and the Armenians reacted accordingly.

¹Louise Malbondian, The Armenian Revolutionary Movement (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963), p. 84. Most Armenian authors assume a kind of unanimity within the Armenian community concerning their plight in the Empire, a unanimity which did not exist.

PART I

The roots of Armenian discontent during the Hamidian period are centered in the conditions in which the people lived and the by now familiar process of rising expectations. Conditions had always been harsh in eastern Anatolia, for both Armenian and Kurd, both peasant and city dweller. The harsh realities of life in such a region had been mitigated to some extent by the feudal type system which had prevailed up to the 1840's, under which local notables and Kurdish agas had been responsible for maintaining order and protecting those peasants of both religions who belonged to them. The centralization process of the nineteenth century weakened this system considerably, enough to destroy its effectiveness as an agent of protection. The central government was unable, however, to substitute another force in the region to fulfill the same role as the feudal notables. The result of this was a general decline in order and thus in security of life and property for the peasant and city dweller. Since the Armenians usually had more property and wealth than most Muslims, they naturally felt the decline in security harder than most. As outlined in previous chapters, the competition between the Kurdish tribes, the urban notables, and the central government for the dominant position in the politics of the region, plus the chaos and poverty caused by the war with Russia made conditions even more harsh for the Armenian population.

What has been said so far applies to all residents of eastern Anatolia. What must now be determined is whether especially hard circumstances prevailed for the Armenians, and if so, what role these circumstances played in the subsequent revolutionary activity.

When the consuls arrived at their posts in eastern Anatolia they were instantly besieged by Armenian representatives from the villages and the cities with lists of grievances and suggested reforms. The consular reports of this period frequently consist simply of a long list of incidents, many times more than fifty in a report, of oppression by Muslims. The lists were usually supplied to the consuls by the officials of the Armenian community. Sentiments which had been long brewing against the Ottomans had only recently come into the open during the Russian occupation and despite the fear of a Muslim reaction, many Armenians were determined to press their case with the British.

Besides providing the consuls with lists of acts of oppression, Armenian officials proposed specific reforms which they felt were necessary for Armenians to accept Ottoman rule. A condensation of some of these reform suggestions may provide insight into the Armenians' perception of their conditions in the early 1880's. The following points are taken from petitions presented to the consuls at Van, Erzeroum, and Mush in 1879 and 1880:

- a. Remove Kurds from area or subject them to rule.
- b. Place strict controls on fanatical Muslim ulema.²
- c. Guarantee property of Christians.
- d. Frequent inspections by consuls and additional consuls.
- e. no collection of back taxes.
- f. Disarming of Kurds and Circassians.
- g. Tribal system ended, with tribesmen dispersed and forced to adopt agriculture.
- h. Payment for supplies given during war.
- i. Equal voice in courts.
- j. No gratuitous work for civil or military officials.
- k. Remove Kurds from all Armenian villages.
- l. Influx of Muslim refugees halted.
- m. Exile of Kurdish agas in region.³

It can be seen from the above that certain Armenians saw themselves suffering from two types of maladies, one immediate and one rather far-reaching. There was the immediate desire to recover from the ravages of war and at the same time a feeling that this was the time to assert themselves and alter the traditional balance of power in the region. To them, the area appeared to be in a state of flux in 1880 with the distinct possibility that when things

²It is interesting to note that in many of the Armenians' suggestions for reforms this matter was usually first and was always mentioned, while in the consul's own reports it was seldom mentioned.

³Clayton, Letter addressed by Armenians of Van, 220 of 14 November 1880, F.O., 424/107. Precis of a Paper Presented to the Imperial Commissioners by the Armenians of Mush, 268 of 1880, F.O., 424/106.

again settled they might very well end up on top or at least in a secure position relative to the Kurds and Muslim notables. In a way it was an all or nothing gamble in the eyes of many Armenians since they had been witnessing a form of 'Muslim revival' since 1872 and had compromised their already delicate relationships with their Muslim neighbors during the Russian occupation.

The Armenians' complaints about their immediate situation, while in most cases valid, were hardly a claim to special treatment since we have already seen in Chapter Four that the Kurdish tribesmen and peasants suffered as much and probably more than their Armenian counterparts. In many parts of the region Armenian villages were severely treated by the Kurds, but usually not on religious or racial grounds but rather because the Armenians had generally survived the war years in much better condition than the Kurds. In the complete absence of any viable governing force the law of supply and demand operated freely, with no bothersome exchange of money to hinder it. Had things remained static after 1879 this situation would have undoubtedly grown much worse, as in fact it did in some isolated areas, and life might have become literally 'intolerable' for the Armenian peasantry, but once government was re-established a reasonable level of order could be maintained.

One of the more consistent complaints of the Armenians during this period was the payment of the military exemption tax. The tax was levied on the entire Christian population of

a town or village, usually five thousand piastres per one hundred and eighty men. In the towns the religious communities arranged the distribution of the tax so that the more wealthy paid the greater share. In the village the system was less equitable since the wealthier villagers administered the tax and evidently avoided paying their share.⁴ The tax in the village was usually about fifty piastres per head and a man with a large family would bear a heavy burden.

The Armenians saw the tax as discriminatory and an undue hardship, but even the British could find objection to this grievance. As one Ambassador said after reading his secretary's report on the subject:

"After reading Mr. Shipley's second despatch, I cannot think that their grievance on this score is a very serious one, as the tax, although higher than it formerly was, only amounts to fifty piastres a year, and, as the Vali pointed out in conversation with Mr. Shipley, this cannot be considered unduly severe when compared with the long duration of the period of military service imposed on Mussulmans."⁵

Along these same lines, some of the consuls reported that the Armenians were frankly taking advantage of the presence of the consuls to exaggerate the horrors of their position. Consul Chermside, who seldom editorialized in his reports, said that in some cases the Armenians were "inclined to grossly exaggerate their special grievances, and to magnify unreasonably or trump

⁴Barnham, Kharput, to Goschen, 182 of 7 October 1880, F.O., 424/107.

⁵O'Connor, Constantinople, to Grey, 51 of 16 April 1907, F.O., 424/212.

up cases of outrage or oppression."⁶

Another theme common to many Armenians even in this early period was that the government, in combination with the Kurds, was setting out on a deliberate policy of extermination. We shall examine this idea in more detail later in the 1890's when it gained more credibility. Consul Clayton noted in 1880 that "There is perhaps, however, sometimes a tendency with the Armenians to impute the positive evil motive of a desire to destroy or drive out the Christians, when there is no real evidence of more than apathy and corruption."⁷ This rather astute statement seems much closer to the truth at this period than most other judgements on Hamidian policy made by contemporaries of the period and is born out by the fact that the government took extensive steps in 1879 to urge the Armenians not to migrate to Russia.⁸ The Armenians were too important for the economy of the region for any government to wish them gone at this point.

From what has been said thus far it seems clear that the beginnings of Armenian nationalist, or separatist, activity in the 1880's did not spring from any sudden drastic change for the worse in conditions in eastern Anatolia.⁹ While life was hard in

⁶Chermside to Goschen, 37 of 6 July 1880, F.O., 424/107.

⁷Clayton to Goschen, 130 of 20 August 1880, F.O., 424/107.

⁸Clayton to Trotter, 9 of 21 November 1879, F.O., 424/106.

⁹Whether the movement begun by some Armenians in the 1880's should be called nationalist is a question this study is not prepared to answer in detail. There had been a 'cultural awakening' within the Armenian community, inspired by French missionaries, Armenians studying in Russia, and contact with western nationalisms by some Armenians, but nationalist sentiment

1879 and 1880, it was hard for anyone who was not wealthy, and the situation was by 1881 and 1882 once again partially stabilized. The roots of Armenian discontent must rather be sought in the context of the entire range of developments in nineteenth century Ottoman history. The war with Russia, the hardships of its aftermath, and the arrival of the British acted as a catalyst for certain forces within the Armenian community in Constantinople and within the provinces which had been developing for many years. The socialist movement in Europe, Italian and German unification, the trend toward secularization and equality in the Ottoman Empire had all worked to create a group within the Armenian community who were determined to press for either independence, autonomy, or at the least meaningful reforms. The disillusionment of 1880 and the character of Hamidian government served to bring matters to a head in the 1880's.

PART II

Evidence of a change within the Armenian community of eastern Anatolia began to accumulate as early as 1879. The most obvious manifestations of discontent were the reports of the

was in evidence in only an elite in the Armenian community. While most Armenians were aware of their separate identity, mainly because of their membership in the millet organization, most of the villagers spoke only Turkish or Kurdish and had only a cursory knowledge of their history. This began to change in the latter half of the nineteenth century as westernized and nationalist Armenians began to spread education among the villagers, but nationalist sentiment remained confined to an elite group throughout the Hamidian period.

British consuls, many of whom were shown to the Ottoman officials in Constantinople and the provinces. These reports were obviously the result of close cooperation between the consuls and local Armenians and were thus a mirror of Armenian feeling. More serious to the Ottomans, however, were the growing indications of Russian-Armenian cooperation in the period immediately following the war.

At first the Russian activity in eastern Anatolia was focused on religion, with Russian-Armenian agents working with local Armenian groups in Van, urging them to petition for admittance to the Greek Orthodox Church, thus coming under Russian protection.¹⁰ Such a petition was circulated in Van in 1879 and it was reported to have gathered over three thousand signatures. By the fall of 1880 this activity had evolved into gun-running with Armenians from Russia slipping across the border and leaving their weapons with local groups in Van and Erzeroum. At the same time, the consuls began to report that Armenian teachers in the region were spreading ideas of "self defence and insurrection" in the schools and communities.¹¹ There were an estimated one hundred Russian Armenians in Van by December 1880 who were promising assistance in any local revolt, not only their own assistance but that of armed, organized Armenian groups just across the border.¹²

¹⁰ Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 13 of 22 November 1879, F.O., 424/106.

¹¹ Everett, Van, to Trotter, 35 of 27 December 1880, F.O., 424/107.

¹² Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 35 of 27 December 1880, F.O., 424/122.

The Ottomans were well informed of all these developments, in fact they were over-informed since the provincial officials tended to grossly exaggerate each instance of Armenian belligerency or sedition, both out of fear and because their suppression of any trouble then assumed great consequence. The bitterness and distrust which the Armenians had engendered in the local Muslims during the war was only exacerbated by these activities. These feelings and attitudes could not help but be carried over to the reform commissions which were operating at this time. The commissions, as we have seen, were geared to the local level, demanding local participation, just at a time when many Muslims in the region were seeing the Armenians as a threat for the first time. Rather than spurring the government and local population on to support meaningful reform in the hope of appeasing Armenian discontent, these developments had the opposite effect. Since it is doubtful, however, that the central government ever had any intention of introducing meaningful reforms in the first place, the Armenians' cooperation with the Russians served only to provide the Ottoman government and local officials with another rationale for inaction.

The Armenian activity of this period was disorganized and virtually leaderless, pre-dating the formation of revolutionary parties or societies by several years. Believing in the reality of future Russian intervention, the Armenian activists of the 1879-83 period were quite possibly serious when they talked of liberation in two years and the lack of necessity for aid from

western Europe.¹³ Their spokesmen were able to convince consul Everett that:

"It may be taken for granted that the Armenians do not intend to remain much longer in their present position. The extreme limit has always been given to me as two years, and is independent of the action of the European Powers. It, in fact, represents the time during which they will continue to bear the oppressions, because they believe it will take them as long to prepare for the effort which shall free them from the Turkish yoke...."¹⁴

While this sentiment may have been simply imparted to the consuls to influence their reports and encourage British intervention, it was more likely the true expression of the naivete of many of the early idealistic and inexperienced Armenian activists.

With the failure of the reform commissions, which was clearly evident by late 1880, and steady propaganda from Russian Armenians, the activity of the various activist groups increased. In December 1880, in the relatively prosperous and peaceful city of Sivas there was an incident which was soon classed a riot by both Ottoman officials and the consuls. For reasons which must remain unknown but which were apparently local, a group of about five hundred Armenians, men and boys, stoned the house of the vali and carried out marches, mass meetings, and other activities throughout the day. The vali, evidently extremely unpopular with both Christians and Muslims, imprisoned thirty

¹³The Russians remained publicly friendly to the idea of Armenian autonomy in the Ottoman Empire until 1883. After this, they began to draw closer to the Ottoman Empire diplomatically and began serious application of 'Russification' in their own Armenian areas. Anderson, op.cit., p. 254.

¹⁴Everett to Trotter, 2 of 25 June 1880, F.O., 424/107.

Armenians and held them without trial.¹⁵ While unimportant in itself, the incident was soon famous throughout the region and in Constantinople and was hailed by Muslims and many Armenians as the beginning of a revolution.

The government reaction to the Sivas incident and others of a smaller but similar nature, many of which were fictional, was typically light, in spite of the fact that tension in the region was very high. Strict orders were sent to the vilayet officials by the Porte. They were to watch the movements of Armenians closely, examine all school books, prohibit the sale of pictures of ancient Armenian kings, prevent all education of a national nature, and disperse all meetings and assemblies.¹⁶ This action of the government reflected the fact that Armenian activity at this point was still relatively spontaneous. There were few organized groups of agitators and revolutionaries at which the government could strike, so it aimed at what it considered to be the root of the problem.

The optimism in the Armenian community in the post-war years had brought many activities and ideas into the open which had undoubtedly been germinating for many years. Meetings were held in cities such as Van on Armenian national anniversaries, and so on, at which inflammatory and frequently seditious speeches were made. Most of this activity was centered in Van,

¹⁵Richards, Sivas, to Goschen, 11 of 27 December 1880, F.O., 424/122.

¹⁶Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 70 of 18 March 1881, F.O., 424/122. These moves indicate more awareness of nationalism on the part of the Ottomans than many would give them.

the area closest to Russian influence and with the heaviest concentration of Armenians. As consul Clayton, never very friendly toward the plight of the Armenians, said:

"They have taken every opportunity of flaunting their nationality in meetings, speeches, and songs, There was no actual disloyalty in most cases in this, but it was unreasonable, when the Government was in great difficulties and therefore suspicious, and in some cases language was certainly used giving some real grounds for distrust."¹⁷

In one instance in Van the vali asked that a meeting be dispersed and the Armenians openly refused unless he issued a direct order, which he subsequently did.¹⁸ The Ottoman authorities seldom liked to use their full authority in this type of situation, preferring to settle matters under more amiable circumstances, but the Armenians were interested in demonstrating the oppressiveness of Ottoman society.

During this early period of Armenian political and cultural activity it was not so much the actions of the Armenians which led to heightened tension, but rather their attitude. In a situation such as that in Sivas, with an unpopular vali, the Armenians were the ones to rise up and stone his house. In Van they demanded the vali follow the letter of the law rather than simply accept his orders with traditional deference. Despite a tradition of tolerance toward 'people of the Book' in Islamic

¹⁷Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 26 of 27 June 1881, F.O., 424/123.

¹⁸Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 121 of 30 August 1881, F.O., 424/123.

society, they were expected to recognize that they were essentially second class citizens. As long as this was clear, relations between members of the two religions were generally good, but if a Christian, or worse still a group of them, began to assert themselves then clearly the time had come for action to redress the balance.

This early Armenian activity was to culminate in Erzeroum in 1882 with the discovery of an organized conspiracy among the Armenians of that city, supported by groups in Russia and Van, to overthrow the local government. Indications that the Armenians were becoming more organized was evident earlier in 1882 with the discovery of an oath taken by several members of the Armenian Gregorian community in Erzeroum:

"I swear in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and on my honour, that I will do all I can for my nation's freedom, and, if necessary, that I will not spare myself. If I fail in my duty to fulfill this promise the highest congregation has the authority to cut my life from this world."¹⁹

The oath was part of an intricate cell-type structure within the city, the extent of which could not be determined.

The fear generated by the discovery of a secret, well-organized plot against the state, plus the real fear in the summer and fall of 1882 that war with Russia was imminent, made the reaction to the disclosure in Erzeroum in the winter even more severe.²⁰ When the plot was uncovered it was thoroughly

¹⁹Everett, Erzeroum, to Dufferin, 36 of 3 January 1882, F.O., 424/132.

²⁰Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 113 of 19 August 1882, F.O., 424/132.

suppressed, many Armenians being killed and others, many not even involved, were sent to prison without trial. The events in Erzeroum had repercussions throughout the region, with Christians being dismissed from councils and other positions without pretext.²¹ Armenian discontent was forced underground for the rest of the 1880's and when it emerged again in the early 1890's it was a mature and changed force.

PART II

Any movement for Armenian autonomy or independence was fated to suffer from many splits and factions within the Armenian community, even more than Ottoman suppression. The most obvious problem they faced was the physical separation of the Armenians within the Empire, the result of which was that in no vilayet and in only a few of the sandjaks were they in the majority. Armenian nationalist writers got around this handicap by in effect refusing to recognize the tribal Kurds as residents, but this argument would hardly have prevented a violent struggle between the two groups if the nationalists' goals had been achieved.

Even more important than the physical separation, were the religious, class, and ideological divisions within the community. The vast majority of the Armenians were Gregorians, especially in the vilayets. There was a small, westernized Protestant group

²¹Everett, Erzeroum, to Trotter, 13 of 19 August 1882, F.O., 424/132.

of Armenians who had little to do with the Armenian revolutionary movement and were heartily disliked by virtually all the other Armenians. The main opponents of the Gregorians were the Catholic Armenians. The latter made up the majority of the wealthy Armenians in Constantinople and the larger cities and held most of the government appointments given to the Armenians by the Ottomans. The Catholics were for reform for Christians of the Empire but were more concerned throughout the Hamidian period to see to it that all power within the Armenian community did not go to the more numerous Gregorians. The Catholics generally prospered under Ottoman rule and were anxious for neither autonomy nor Russian domination.

Before the granting of a constitution to the Armenian millet in 1860, it had been dominated by the clergy, both Gregorian and Catholic, and the wealthy Armenian businessmen and bankers. During the Tanzimat there was considerable agitation within the millet from what can be roughly called 'middle class' Armenians for reform and more specifically for more representation for them within the millet. The constitution of 1860 was a triumph for this lay element in the cities since it effectively dethroned the clergy, giving them only twenty seats out of one hundred and forty in the new Assembly.²²

The constitution and the assembly it established created another serious split in the Armenian community, or rather, it brought another split into the open. Eighty of the members of

²² Sarkis Atamian, The Armenian Community (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), p. 38.

the Assembly were to be elected from Constantinople, while the remainder were to be chosen by the Armenian general assemblies in the vilayets, which were dominated by the urban businessmen, bankers, and so on. Control of the millet had passed from the clergy to the middle class Armenians of the capital and the cities, ^{ei} neither of which had any connections with the vast majority of the Armenians, the peasants.²³ The new leadership saw most of their problems solved by the constitution and were thus not averse to working closely with the Ottoman government in governing the Armenian millet.

Apologists for the revolutionaries and Marxist writers in general who are eager to substantiate theories of class struggle ← point to this split as the primary reason for the failure of most of the activities and programs of the revolutionaries. The peasants, it is assumed, were ready to join the cause, but the Armenian middle and upper classes were satisfied with the status quo and saw revolution or autonomy as a danger to their position. Speaking of the middle class, one writer says:

"It was this minority legitimized by the Constitution and the structure of the Assembly, which provided a powerful opposition to the revolutionary movement and the interests of the interior peasantry in general. While the peasant, which had nothing but misery, could lose little and gain much from a revolution, the bourgeoisie could gain only a little from emancipation (since they already controlled much of Turkey's wealth)

²³"The urban minority, with its different way of life and different economic interests, controlled the fate of the majorityOn every issue the peasantry who were the bulk of the Armenian population were subject to the will of the urban minority." Ibid., p. 46.

and had everything to lose from an insurrection in which their position would become endangered." ²⁴

This argument appears perfectly sound, since the middle class did have a vested interest in the status quo and did work consistently against the revolutionaries, but it is dependent upon another, more unreliable, premise. Whether the peasants wanted a revolution, would have benefited from one, or were even concerned with the possibility of one, is seriously open to question. It has been previously pointed out that the situation of the Armenian peasant in eastern Anatolia, when compared to that of the Kurd, was not particularly unbearable. While undoubtedly suffering considerably from discrimination and sporadic oppression, his life had compensating factors. Besides the question of the impracticability of autonomy, which has been discussed, there is little indication that the Armenian peasantry of the region were even close to achieving a revolutionary consciousness during the Hamidian period. The revolutionary movement was largely made up of educated Armenians from Russia and western Europe, Armenians from cities and towns, and only a few of the peasants. Atamian's statement that conflict in the Armenian community was "...simply a question of class position and class consciousness which produced two diametrically opposed definitions as to what constituted the welfare of the people..." ²⁵ is really concerned with an equation which ignored most of the peasant class. The class conflict was within a single class. *see Van-Khory*

²⁴ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 118.

What sentiment there was among the peasants which the consuls could observe was directed toward annexation by Russia, something the Armenian middle class was generally against. The peasants were concerned primarily with physical security, something the Russians could most probably offer, but the middle class was concerned more with other things. As one consul said of this conflict:

"In Turkey they have intellectual and moral liberty, but are physically oppressed, in Russia they have material prosperity, but are slaves morally and intellectually."²⁶

It should be noted here that in the Ottoman Empire the middle class Armenian businessmen and bankers were seldom oppressed or forced to suffer materially.

Those who were members of one of the revolutionary parties were generally young and had experienced some contact with life outside eastern Anatolia, whether in the west or merely in Constantinople. Since most of them were strongly influenced by European socialism, they put most of their emphasis on arousing the peasant class and on urging the Powers to intervene on behalf of Armenian independence. Since they received little backing from the wealthier Armenians and none from the three religious hierarchies,²⁷ the split between the two groups was both complete and bitter, as is expressed in the following extract from a revolutionary pamphlet:

²⁶Clayton to Trotter, 2 of 13 September 1879, F.O., 424/91.

²⁷Nalbandian, op.cit., p. 183.

"For ten years they ('Our Internal Enemies') are propagandizing us with 'obey the rulers'. Who are they? The revolutionary knows well its mortal enemy. It is our clergy, our aghas, and our piastre-worshipping merchants, our mobs and intelligentsia. In utter degradation, they chew their cud and live in an environment of flattery and servility licking the boots of every insignificant Turkish functionaryFrom this class are born the most dangerous internal enemies, spies, and traitors. They are the silt of the Armenian nation."28

It becomes evident that much of the energies of the Armenian revolutionary movement were not in fact directed against the Ottomans but were engaged in a process of internal 'cleansing' of the community. The infighting and factional attacks which so pre-occupied many Armenians were perhaps one reason the Ottoman government tended to remain oblivious to the movement until it had fully surfaced in the 1890's.

The first organized groups to be formed by the Armenians discontented with Ottoman rule were primarily for purposes of self-defence. The 'Defenders of the Fatherland' were formed in Erzeroum in 1880, but the organization was destroyed when it was discovered by the Ottoman authorities in 1882. Another group, the Armenagans, was formed in Van in 1885, but was hardly a revolutionary organization, being concerned with education and self-defence.

The first important revolutionary organization was the Hunchakian Society, formed in Geneva in 1887. The Hunchaks were influenced by European social democratic revolutionary

²⁸Atamian, op.cit., p. 124.

ideals and early Marxist thought and were dedicated to winning over the Armenian peasants to their cause. The function of the society was to "create political conditions which will give the working class freedom to express its aspirations and demands, and to better the present dire working conditions in order to create class consciousness."²⁹ The Hunchakian Society emphasized the international character of the Armenian 'revolution'; the proposed liberation of Armenia was to be part of the total socialist revolutionary theory aimed against western imperialism and colonialism.

The tactics of the Hunchaks were to create as much disorder in the Armenian areas of the Empire as possible in order to provoke some type of foreign intervention. When this intervention came, and they were sure it eventually would come, the Hunchaks would be ready with a revolutionary vanguard party and a class conscious and revolutionary peasantry.³⁰ Since the national question was of necessity subordinated to the socialist question, the Hunchaks were also determined to draw Kurdish and Turkish 'workers' into their movement, to form an eventual independent federation of nations in the area.

While the Hunchaks did achieve considerable popularity among the peasants, it was more for their practical tactics than political theory. Some of the Hunchakian policies were very attractive to the peasants and more important, they were a

²⁹Atamian, op.cit., p. 95.

³⁰Nalbandian, op.cit., p. 130.

supplier of arms and ammunition to the villagers who wished to resist the Kurds. The emphasis on class had little relevance to a peasantry which was primarily interested in matters of land, water, security, and other local affairs:

"....much of the Marxist class-struggle thesis of the Hunchaks was meaningless to the peasantry. The peasantry, a self-sustaining segment of the population, were hardly a proletariat to be exploited by a superior economic class of its own nationality. Indeed, the absence of industry in Turkey did not provide the conditions for the existence of a proletariat in the Marxist sense of the word. The peasantry was not faced with economic exploitation by the Armenian leadership as much as it was confronted by that leadership's indifference, misdirection, impotence or opposition."³¹

The placing of class interests above national interests and rigid adherence to socialist internationalism and dogma eventually forced a split in the party in 1896. The faction which wished to develop the party's doctrine along more national lines won the struggle and socialism receded into the background.³²

The Hunchaks remained a small revolutionary party which was most successful in organizing individual terrorist actions but seldom involved large numbers of Armenians. The most important of the Armenian revolutionary societies was formed in 1890, and soon achieved relatively widespread popularity within the cities and towns and in some of the village areas. This society,

³¹ Atamian, op.cit., p. 98.

³² Malbandian, op.cit., p. 129.

the Dashnaktzoutyoun, was nominally socialist, but there was sparse evidence of it in their propaganda. The concentration was not even on Armenian independence, but merely on Armenians having the right to rule over themselves.³³ The Dashnaks were interested in achieving as much popularity and support as possible within the entire Armenian community and therefore tried to appear as 'moderate' as possible compared to their chief rivals, the Hunchaks. They asked for Armenian political autonomy within the Empire but relied on terrorism as the means of achieving the necessary concessions from the government. The Dashnaks success in gaining support was probably a key factor in the re-direction of the Hunchakian Society after 1896.

PART IV

By 1891 the Armenian revolutionary groups in eastern Anatolia were beginning to increase their activity, moving from organizing to action. All the consular reports in the spring of 1891 indicated an increase in feelings of uneasiness and tension among the Armenians and the Muslims. Pressure was being stepped up on Armenians who were uncommitted and there were rumors all through the Muslim communities of an army of thirty to forty thousand armed Armenians across the Persian frontier. The word massacre was common in conversations and in the consular reports and there were indications that many Armenian merchants were trying to emigrate from the region.

³³Ibid., p. 172.

Several incidents in the previous few years had aided the increase in tension, by far the most famous being the one involving the Kurdish Aga Mousa Bey. In 1890, Mousa Bey kidnapped an Armenian girl in the Plain of ,ush. The incident was siezed upon by the revolutionaries in that area and others and several demonstrations were held in towns and villages demanding justice. After formal protests in Constantinople, a trial was held in which Mousa Bey was easily acquitted. This rather obvious miscarriage of justice played right into the hands of the revolutionaries, who spread the story throughout the region.³⁴ This incident and others like it were used to great advantage by the revolutionaries who were determined to begin in earnest their struggle against the Ottomans.

It soon became apparent that the primary tactic of the revolutionary groups was not to actually provoke a revolution in eastern Anatolia but instead to create an appearance of revolt and disorder in order to provoke an over-reaction on the part of the Ottoman authorities. If they could succeed in causing a large scale massacre or massive oppression then they were sure the European Powers, with Britain and Russia taking the lead, would intervene and impose a solution on the Ottomans. In 1891 and 1892 there were incidents provoked by both Hunchak and Dashnak groups in Van, Mush, Erzeroum, Kharput, Diarbekit, Arabkir, and Egin areas. The Ottoman reaction was swift in each case and

³⁴Rita Jerrehian, "The Outcome of the Congress of Berlin", Armenian Review, no. 8, October 1955, p. 66.

by 1893 the revolutionaries were forced to move to the Sivas area and provoke incidents among the more prosperous and less numerous Armenians there.

In the town of Yuzgat in the Sivas vilayet the incident followed the by this time well-established pattern. Placards were placed all over the town and surrounding area calling for all the peasants, both Armenian and Muslim, to rise in revolt against their Ottoman oppressors.³⁵ Soon after this several

³⁵The following is one of the placards found in Yuzgat. It is clearly of Hunchakian origin:

"Osmanlis

The Armenian revolutionary movement has been before your eyes for many years. The entire disappearance of law, the fall of justice and right, the bribery of the officials, and the consequent bad results, have thrown the whole Armenian population of Turkey into the arms of revolution. We expected that the injustice, bribery, fall of law, etc., being upon you also, you would either help us or try to find some solution to the problem. But Alas! you have been indifferent, deaf to all this, and you put yourself into deep waters of unbelief, because you do not believe in what we say, but you pay attention to the corrupt and rascally officials. You feel at enmity towards us because you think that the Armenian revolution is aimed against Mohammedanism. You make yourselves the victims of a Government formed of vile officials who kill while they pet you, and you still are faithful to such a Government!

But Oh! Mohammedans! you are suffering the bad results as much or more than we. Yes Mohammedans, the deeds of this corrupt Government are deeds fit for murderers and thieves, but none the less the Government has succeeded in making you oppose the Armenians in order that the two neighbors, Türks and Armenians, both wronged, both robbed, both suffering the evils of bad rule, shall fight against each other, and in order that the officials shall have more opportunities to rob, crush, and wrong both. Both are persecuted, and in this way the officials succeed in attaining their corrupt ends. All of us and each of us has this rotten Government in his presence, a Government that is in the lowest depths of bribery and corruption, and is rushing headlong still deeper and deeper. This takes place before our own eyes. With bribery anything can be done; without it nothing. This is the aim of this nasty yoke. Is there any law, justice or right left in this ruined Government? This is the reason of our movement. We are against the thieving and devouring officials

churches in the town were fire-bombed and small bands of well armed men attacked zaptiehs, police stations, and other symbols of Ottoman authority. The mutesararif reacted strongly and imprisoned about eighty local Armenians, most of whom probably had nothing to do with the incident.³⁶ He was convinced that the activity had the full support of the local Armenians.

In the Yuzgat incident, as in others, the central government seemed well aware of the extent and nature of the revolutionaries' activities and soon ordered the Armenians released. Despite this calm attitude in Constantinople, the local Muslims' attitude was generally one of fear and bitterness. Armed bands of Christians apparently striking at will throughout the countryside were clearly unacceptable. The revolutionaries attempt to implicate some Muslims in their activities, in both the placards and the bombing of a church, further embittered the Muslim population.

not against Mohammedanism.

The examples are before your eyes. How many hundreds of rascals in Constantinople, Van, Erzeroum, Alaskkert, Cesara, Marsovan, Amasia, and other towns have been killed by the Armenian revolutionists? What were these rascals? Armenians! Armenians! and again Armenians! If our aim was against Mohammedans or Mohammedanism, as the Government tries to make you think, why should we kill the Armenians?

Consider the matter, oh Mohammedan people, and come to your senses. Yes, our aim is not, has not been, and never will be, against Mohammedans or Mohammedanism. What religious enmity can exist between us while both have the same God? Yes, and truly, how many times, on the insinuation of the Government, you Mohammedans were expecting that the Armenians would rise up against you in the mosques on the Bairam. Have you ever heard or seen that such a step of brother slaughter has taken place? Dr. Jewett, American missionary, Sivas, 17 of 17 December 1893, F.O., 424/178.

³⁶Graves to Ford, 84 of 21 May 1893, F.O., 424/175.

The central government was fully aware of developments within the Armenian revolutionary movement thanks to the extensive network of spies, including many Armenians. The governments' initial tactics in countering the revolutionaries were aimed at discrediting them within the Armenian community and staving off any European intervention on their behalf, which the government knew was their main objective. Thus, addressing a group of Armenians during the height of the troubles in Sivas the mutesarrif of Amasia made the following speech:

"You are hoping to get help from Europeans, and you kneel down before them. You do not remark that they are playing a joke on your backs. Europeans have been trying for a long time to destroy the Turkish Empire, and they put you forward now to create new troubles. If even their plans would succeed, would you be any better off than now? You pay little tax; you are free from military service; you keep your religion, your language, and your customs. Would the Power coming in our place give you the same liberties?"³⁷

In interviews with European diplomats, Abdulhamid and his government stressed that the Armenians were not being oppressed and that in fact there were only a few revolutionaries causing the trouble, and these were generally Marxists. The sultan pointed out that there were many Armenians in high positions in the government and that newspaper and even some consular reports of the situation in eastern Anatolia were greatly exaggerated.³⁸

Many of the consuls in the region supported the governments' argument by stressing the impracticability of autonomy for

³⁷Dr. Jewett, Sivas, to Acting vice consul Gerald Fitzmaurice, 208 of 23 September 1893, F.O., 424/175.

³⁸Ambassador Ford to Secretary Roseberry, 213 of 13 October 1893, F.O., 424/175.

Armenia, though they disputed the government claims about lack of oppression. Thus, consul Clayton reported:

"...if...an autonomous Armenia were formed, its continued existence would be precarious, What would be done with the large Turkish and Kurdish populations? They must be a very disturbing element; and, moreover, the Armenians themselves, in my opinion, are hardly yet fit for self-government. There is a want of sturdiness in their character, and I have reason to believe that there exists party feuds amongst them which would assuredly come to the front if they found themselves in power, and the result of all these disturbing influences would be certainly chaos, and who would then prevent Russia from stepping in and settling the difficulties by installing her own authority."³⁹

The thought of Russian intervention in and obvious domination of an independent Armenia was enough to discourage any meaningful British support, and the socialist nature of the revolutionaries' ideology simply made this decision even more justifiable in the eyes of the diplomatists.

Despite the lack of evidence of European interest in Armenia, the revolutionaries' activity increased during the early 1890's. In some parts of the region the combination of roving bands of organized Armenians and quasi-independent tribal Kurds and Hamidieh regiments made for near anarchy. By the 1890's the revolutionaries were emerging as a true threat to the internal stability and sovereignty of the Empire. The government could never be sure the Powers would not intervene on their behalf, forcing it to treat the region with special care.

³⁹ Clayton, Van, to Trotter, 73 of 10 October, 1879, F.O., 424/91.

The problem of minorities was a traditional one for the Ottoman government, but in the case of the Armenian revolutionaries it had a new slant. The revolutionaries were socialists and nationalists, two terms the Ottomans had only a cursory understanding of and which were obviously of western origin. The threat was seen as less of internal origin, but rather as a direct challenge from Europe. The government could not continue to ignore this anarchy and constant threat of foreign intervention. The Muslim population, who were supposed to be the new base for the Empire, were beginning to grow restive and were demanding some kind of action, which was exactly what the Armenian revolutionaries were waiting for.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Stability, Tranquility, and Disaster 1884-1894.

The most obvious characteristic of the decade from 1884 to 1894 in eastern Anatolia is the relative lack of activity in the region compared to the previous few years. There were no wars, reform commissions, or serious instances of foreign intervention. The period appears to be one of consolidation and reaction. As has been shown in the previous two chapters, there were several important developments during this decade, most notably the implementation of the government's pan-Islamic or, more properly, 'Muslim' policy and the formation of the Hamidieh regiments, as well as the development of the Armenian revolutionary parties.

The Ottoman government was primarily concerned during this period with consolidating its hold on the vilayets of the Empire. The eastern Anatolian region, being so far from the center not only geographically, but culturally and economically as well, did not lend itself to centralization and therefore required more delicate handling, much like the Arab vilayets. The government relied on its policy of placating and favoring the Muslim element of the population, in this case mainly Kurds, as the key to maintaining loyalty. As a result of this policy the reforms which were only half-heartedly initiated in the first place in 1879-81, were largely ignored and the Kurdish tribes given a special status within the region through the formation of the Hamidieh organization. Ottoman policy was essentially a 'holding

action', as it was in many other parts of the Empire, until such time as a firmer grip was possible.

This superficially quiescent decade was closed by an event which served to re-open the whole question of European intervention, reform, and the possibility of Armenian independence or special status. The 'massacre' of the Armenians in a collection of villages in the Sason district of Bitlis signalled both the full scale emergence of the Armenian revolutionary movement and was the first major test of Ottoman policy toward the region as a whole and more particularly toward the Armenians.

PART I

With the disengagement of Britain from the internal politics of the Ottoman Empire and the growing disinterest of Russia after 1883, the Ottoman government was able to drop the facade of vigorous implementation of the reform programs of 1879 and 1880. Since direct central control in an area such as eastern Anatolia was regarded as at least temporarily impossible, the old method of balancing the various local forces against each other was once again brought into play. The notables in the cities were generally given control of the local governments and the courts, thus ensuring their position within the community and maintaining their economic dominance. At the same time the local governments were kept relatively weak, corruption allowed and in some cases encouraged, and the courts allowed to remain

ineffectual.¹ In this way, the power which the urban notables possessed could not be used to the detriment of the Kurds, who in most cases remained aloof from the local government and outside the jurisdiction of the courts. Between these two groups were the officials appointed by the central government, whose job it was to fill the higher administrative and judicial posts and to oversee the operation of the entire system, and the army, which acted as final arbiter when the system occasionally broke down. Caught in the middle were the Muslim and Armenian peasantry. They were the prize for which the Kurds and notables contested and which, if the system worked, would be denied to both.

The reforms initiated during the Tanzimat and even some of those adopted after the war were by no means abandoned, they were rather de-emphasized. While during the Tanzimat the public

¹An example of the role of the local notables in the cities is the position of the Temir Oglu family in the city of Van. The city was effectively run by about six families or clans, of about fifty persons each. They formed a kind of oligarchy, with the Temir Oglu generally being the most powerful. All the affairs of the city administration which were not filled directly by Constantinople, were controlled by these families. Though their influence was curtailed compared to earlier generations, it was still great. The Temir Oglu, as representatives of the ruling families, were in competition with the Kurdish tribes surrounding the city and with the local vilayet administration. The Kurds in this area were still ruled by descendants of Sheikh Ubeydullah and were thus somewhat unified. The only major uncommitted group in the area was the Armenians, who tended to side with the Temir Oglu. The family fulfilled various roles in the society of Van; at one time mediating between Kurdish tribes and the vali to prevent a rebellion, at another protecting the local government or local Armenians from the Kurds. In this three cornered struggle for power and influence it was relatively easy for the central government to control events. Devey, Van, to Chermiside, 24 of 17 January, 1889, F.O., 424/162, Devey, Van, to Chermiside, 46 of 13 April 1889, F.O., 424/162, and Lynch, ii, op.cit., p. 83.

posture of the government had been that of a vigorous reforming agent, reforming in spite of opposition and obstacles, under Abdulhamid the public posture was that of a unifying agent, at least with regard to the Muslim population of the Empire. Those reforms were pursued which were financially feasible and which would not unduly upset the Muslims, while others were either forgotten or in most cases carried on more discreetly and slowly. Thus in Van in 1887 consul Barnham was able to state unequivocally that "No reform has been introduced to ameliorate in any way the condition of the people."² The 'people' in this case were most probably the Armenian and Muslim peasantry, who were largely untouched by what meager reforms had been introduced into the area. Other reports tell a similar story, with few indications of any effort on the part of the central government or the local authorities to implement the reform programs. One traveller in the Mush area as late as 1894 records that most of the local Kurds were unaware that there was a new civil code in the Empire.³ But, of course, this can hardly be surprising, since it didn't apply to them in practice anyway.

The consuls during this period were not too hard on the Ottomans for this apparent lack of progress. Their sympathy for the Armenians had waned to some degree as a result of the activities of the revolutionaries plus the fact that the Armenian population in general failed to live up to their

²Barnham, Van, to Ambassador White, 11 of 27 January 1887, F.O., 424/144.

³Lynch, op.cit., p. 168.

expectations, proving to be as corrupt, venal, and untrustworthy, to say nothing as 'dirty and unkempt', as their Muslim rulers. After the initial shock in 1879 and 1880 of viewing at first hand the 'barbarity' of civilization in eastern Anatolia and the initial disillusionment with both reform and the Armenians, the consuls seem to have gained a greater appreciation of the complexity of the situation. Speaking of the difficulties faced by the Ottoman officials, consul Everett said:

"...there is sometimes a tendency to overlook it, and because men who find themselves located for a time in a turbulent district are very apt to judge the capacity of the Government by the amount of disorder which is noticeable without reflecting on the causes which produce it."⁴

Everett was one of the more experienced of the consuls in the region by 1885, most of the original group having left after 1882. The consular contingent was reduced considerably after 1882, the Anatolian group being withdrawn completely and those in Kurdistan reduced and rotated quite frequently,

The record of what reforms were introduced during this decade is difficult to follow but one may assume that those reforms which most enhanced the power and prestige of the central government had first priority. The very fact that a reasonable degree of public order was maintained during the decade is indicative of something, though probably of the increased efficiency of the government security forces rather

⁴Everett, Report on Bitli's, 19 of 30 January 1885, F.O., 424/142.

than of a more satisfied populace. The fact that reforms were continuing is demonstrated by a passage in Lynch's book in which he notes that in 1894 a Director of Public Instruction arrived in the city of Van to reorganize the educational structure of the city. He immediately proceeded to set up a secular school system to replace that of mosque education, with the aim of eventually having Christians and Muslims attend the same schools.⁵ If we assume that Van was the most, or at least one of the most, isolated cities in the region and the one least liable to pressure from Constantinople, this was then indeed a remarkable indication of the extent of the power of the central government, and its ability to introduce reforms. In the same book, Lynch records the building of schools in Kurdish villages in the Van area, noting that while this represented visible evidence of the 'Ottoman Yoke' to the tribesmen, it was probably a futile gesture.⁶ The important point, however, is that these moves were not met with open hostility or violent reactions, but were simply accepted as something the government was naturally doing. The gradual nature of these reforms and others like them made them much more palatable to the Muslim population.

The problems that plagued the region in the early 1880's continued to a large degree throughout the decade. The salaries of the government officials were always in arrears, which

⁵Lynch, ii, op.cit., p. 100.

⁶Ibid., p. 20.

continued the trend toward increased corruption and poor quality among officials of the government. The Kurdish tribes engaged in sporadic feuds and brigandage, depending on local conditions and opportunities. There were never enough police to contain the tribes and when harvests were poor, weather extreme, or a local official obnoxious, they would react in their traditional manner. There was a famine in Diarbekir in 1888, but the government seemed helpless to provide any direction toward its alleviation. The dominant theme was *laissez faire* when possible, selected force when necessary.

PART II

The years from 1889 to 1892 were the high point of apparent stability and tranquility in the eastern Anatolian region. The system of balancing off tribal Kurds, urban notables, and local governments against each other was functioning quite satisfactorily as far as the government and most of the consuls were concerned. As early as 1884 consul Everett had been able to report that "...The vilayet of Kharput presents a picture of comparative order and partial prosperity."⁷ By 1889 the consuls were virtually unanimous in their feeling that there was little fear of rebellion nor evidence of undue oppression from either Kurds or Ottomans.

⁷Everett, Remarks on Kurdistan, Erzeroum, 14 of 2 February 1884, F.O., 424/141.

The consuls went to great pains to counter newspaper reports about the treatment of the Armenians, saying they were biased, inaccurate, and in some cases thinly veiled propaganda. Consul Devey in Van was especially sensitive to these newspaper reports which he considered nothing more than attempts by the Armenian revolutionaries to provoke European intervention in the region.⁸ In Diarbekir, vice-consul Boyadjian, an Armenian notable himself, supported this stand:

"I can positively state that, under the strong administration of the late and present valis, the number of such outrages have decidedly decreased. You will gather that in the great majority of the outrages the victims were Moslem Kurds, and the statements of the papers referred to in your letters that they were solely directed against Armenians, and having for their aim extermination, are, as far as it concerns Diarbekir, and Kharput Vilayets, mostly exaggerated."g

Boyadjian goes on in the report to describe an incident in which two Armenian chiefs in a village were feuding and one finally invited a Kurdish tribe to attack the village and kill his opponents. The Kurds proceeded to sack the village, which brought another Kurdish tribe into the action which fought the first tribe for a division of the spoils. The Armenians who had originally perpetrated the attack on the village were arrested and the Kurds went unpunished. The incident has all the makings of a fine 'outrage' for the superficial observer or one unaware of the original invitation, but is actually a prime example of

⁸Devey, Memo, Van, 17 of 12 January 1891, F.O., 424/169.

⁹Boyadjian to Chermiside, 81 of 10 August 1889, F.O., 424/162.

the kind of inter-relationship and balance between Armenians and Kurds discussed in Chapter Two.

Many of the consuls' reports after 1889 seem to indicate that the Ottoman government was in the process of phasing out its system of governing the region through the power of local authorities. A recurring theme throughout the period from 1889 to 1892 is that the local governments were becoming stronger at the expense primarily of the Kurds, but also, no doubt, at the expense of the urban notables. Consul Devey reported from Van that there had been a "...general progress in the various Departments of the Provincial Government, and further, that there has been distinct improvement in public order and justice in the Van and Bitlis Vilayets during the last twelve to eighteen months."¹⁰ He noted that the standard of discipline among the troops and police had increased considerably, justice was being administered with more "order and efficiency", and attempts were being made to make local Kurdish and Armenian chiefs and leaders responsible for the actions of their followers.¹¹ There is no clear cut sign that the central government was in fact beginning the process of centralization in eastern Anatolia after 1889, but there are indications that the various power struggles between the Kurds and notables were

¹⁰Devey to Acting consul Charles S. Hampson, 110 of 2 November 1891, F.O., 424/169.

¹¹This last development is a crucial one for the maintenance of order in an area such as eastern Anatolia. If the Kurdish agas and Armenian village chiefs were made legally responsible for the actions of their people, they could exercise a powerful restraining influence.

being supervised more closely by strengthened local governments. The result of this development seems to have been more stability in the region but the task of imposing a centralized administration on the region was to prove more difficult than merely gradually increasing the power of local government.

Colonel Chermiside supported Devey's reports on the tranquility of the Van area, saying:

"The quiet state of the country, and the relative security of the roads, as compared with any experiences eight or ten years ago, surprised me. Small, unarmed caravans, small groups of wayfarers, or single ones, are to be met with almost throughout the districts visited."¹²

Consul Graves noted the same phenomenon in the Bitlis and Mush areas, pointing it out as a sure indication of increased security and lack of tension.¹³ He also noted the more numerous police and the well disciplined troops which were plentiful in the area. All of this was evidence to all in the area that the central government was asserting itself in the region, and getting results.

Consul Graves echoed another sentiment of most of the consuls when he proclaimed that the Armenian revolutionary movement appeared to be dead, with the exception of a few agitators from across the border in Russia. Arrests for political offenses were almost non-existent, after having been quite

¹²Chermiside to White, Erzeroum, 80 of 29 August 1889, F.O., 424/162.

¹³Graves, Erzeroum, to Ford, 106 of 8 October 1892, F.O., 424/172.

prevalent since 1882. He reported that the Ottoman authorities "...appear disposed to abandon the system of vexatious treatment which has threatened to create feelings of genuine sedition against the Government where there had only existed a platonic sentiment of nationality or mere discontent with local maladministration."¹⁴ This seems to reflect a new feeling of confidence on the part of the central government that it, in combination with the local governments, could now control the provinces with a less heavy hand and with less extra-legal assistance.

The only sour note of the period came from the Bitlis vilayet, one of the more turbulent and one with a high percentage of tribal Kurds, both pastoral and nomadic. Consul Devey reported in 1889 that the condition of the local Armenians was miserable, the local government corrupt, and Muslim 'fanaticism' on the rise. The heavy hand of government was little felt and the Kurds regarded Bitlis as "under exception", that is, that the laws in force elsewhere did not apply there.¹⁵ By far the most widespread sentiment one can glean from the consular reports, however, was one of satisfaction that things were improving, that tranquility and stability were in the offing. As consul Hampson somewhat optimistically put it:

"It is with satisfaction that I am able to report to your excellency that perfect tranquility exists throughout the Erzeroum district; that confidence is very nearly, if not entirely, re-established; and that all

¹⁴Graves, Erzeroum, to Ford, 106 of 8 October 1892, F.O., 424/172.

¹⁵Devey to Chermiside, 46 of 13 April 1889, F.O., 424/162.

danger of disturbances, which in the spring appeared imminent, would seem to have completely passed away. In fact, from what I can learn, the country is in a quieter and more settled condition than it has been at any time since the war."¹⁶

Several interesting developments began in late 1893 and the spring of 1894, which provide important clues to the events in Sason and those events which followed. Armenian revolutionary activity began to increase dramatically and showed signs of obvious planning and coordination (placards would appear in widely divergent areas on the same day, followed immediately by coordinated terrorist activity).¹⁷ Although the Ottoman officials in the provinces were able to keep things under control, evidence began to mount of growing resentment towards Armenians in general, with a resulting increase in tension throughout the region. Things had been quiet for so long that the Armenian disturbances of the status quo were even the more obnoxious to the Muslims. When the times were turbulent, as in the early 1880's, the activity of the Armenian activists had been only one disturbing factor among many, and a minor one at that. Now they were the most prominent disturbing force in a time of relative calm.

At roughly the same time Armenian activity was increasing, the Kurds too began to grow more restive. The creation of the Hamidieh regiments (1891) had given some of the Kurdish tribes

¹⁶Hampson, Erzeroum, to White, 95 of 12 September 1891, F.R., 424/169.

¹⁷See Chapter Seven for more details.

the impression that their traditional disregard for authority was now legally sanctioned and the result was a gradual increase in the level of Kurdish violence after 1891. Once in their uniforms and organized in regiments, the local governments generally left them alone, believing them to have a special relationship with the Sultan. In addition to this increase in Kurdish activity, the increasing stability in the region after 1889 was achieved primarily at the expense of the political power of the Kurdish agas. The erosion of this political influence of the Kurds was so gradual that their discontent with their new position was not directed clearly at any one person or group. Ottoman administration seemed to be improving, the harvest in the fall of 1892 had been good, yet the Armenians and the Kurds were more restive than they had been for many years.

The formation of the Hamidieh regiments and the growing authority of the local governments were the two main causes for the increased Kurdish activity which surfaced in the spring of 1893. Though the Hamidieh had been formed in 1891, it took at least two years for the regiments to be recruited and for the full effect of the institution to be felt in the region. As discussed in Chapter Six, there were several reasons for the formation of these irregular regiments, one of the most important being its use as a mechanism to control more easily the tribes. For this to work, the government would have needed to become much more powerful in the region than it actually was, since in practice once a tribe accepted Hamidieh status it

was removed from the effective jurisdiction of the local governments. The local governments were seemingly unsure how to react to these new, 'official', Kurds and this indecision and lack of a clear government policy further contributed to Kurdish lawlessness.

Most of the increased activity among the Kurds reported by the consuls in 1893 and 1894 was of an inter-tribal nature. The formation of the Hamidieh had inevitably produced jealousies and upset old balances of power, all of which had to be worked out in the traditional manner. Given the nature of the region, however, these tribal conflicts could not be contained, and therefore the peasants, both Muslim and Christian, suffered the most. In addition to these causes, a government attempt to take a census in the Van and Hakkiari areas caused great opposition among the Kurds and tribal Nestorians, which again resulted in increased violence.

The reasons for the rise of Armenian revolutionary activity after 1892 has been alternatively given as the result of a general uprising on the part of the oppressed Armenian peasantry and townsmen or as the result of insidious intriguing on the part of a few outside agitators. Both are true in a limited sense. The outside agitators, as well as quite a few inside agitators, were certainly there in strength by 1892, but they would have remained relatively helpless were it not for widespread passive support and sympathy on the part of the Armenian rural and urban population.

As was mentioned in Chapter One, the process of reform never seemed fast enough for dissatisfied elements in the Ottoman Empire. With each grudging acceptance of a reform or a change by the government and Muslim population, the Christians were seemingly already demanding, and more important, expecting, more. Consul Hampson, in one of his more perceptive comments, noted this 'revolution of rising expectations' in the Armenian community:

"...whatever progress may have been made on the part of the local government, an advance of at least equal dimension has taken place in the ideas of the Christian population. The Armenians have learnt to realize more fully what is their position compared with that of subjects in more civilized countries; discontent has spread with the growth of this knowledge and, as a consequence, the demands and ideas of the Christian subjects of His Imperial Majesty, just and moderate enough in most cases, have outstripped the slow changes toward their accomplishment which can be noticed in the acts of the Government."¹⁸

This process of rising expectations was probably most operative among the urban Armenians, who had greater opportunity for education and a wider perception of their society. The peasant Armenian probably reacted more as a peasant and less as an Armenian, the increased raiding and lawlessness of the Kurds after 1891 and taxes and so forth being the prime reason for his discontent.

By 1894 there had been outbreaks of violence by Armenian

¹⁸Hampson, Erzeroum, to White, 62 of 23 May 1891, F.O., 424/169.

revolutionary groups in most of the vilayets of eastern Anatolia. It was common knowledge that guns were being smuggled into Van from Persia and that most of the Armenian population of that city and others were cooperating with the rebels. The Ottoman reaction to these activities was generally moderate, with prime concern being given to restraining and quieting a nervous and potentially violent Muslim population. When apprehended the rebels were dealt with harshly, as was natural, and in many cases innocent Armenians suffered along with them. There is little evidence, however, of organized attempts by the government to use the local Muslim population against the Armenians. The Kurds were restrained when possible from carrying out reprisals or using Armenian activity as an excuse for raiding Armenian villages. Whenever possible, troops and police were used to combat groups of revolutionaries.¹⁹ But as Lynch recorded in 1894 while in Mush, there was "great tension in the air."²⁰

PART III

Abdulhamid's reputation as the 'red sultan', the 'butcher', and other uncomplimentary synonyms began in earnest in the late summer of 1894 with the Sason incident. This incident began the

¹⁹As late as October 1893 consul Chermiside reported that there were attempts to disarm the Kurds in parts of the region and rumors were circulating that the Hamidiyah regiments were considered a failure and were to be drastically reduced. Chermiside, Memo, 221 of 21 October 1893, F.O., 424/175.

²⁰Lynch, ii, op.cit., p. 172.

series of disturbances, or as most authors say, massacres, in eastern Anatolia which lasted until 1896 and resulted in the death of an indeterminate number of Armenians, though undoubtedly in the thousands. In the contemporary newspaper accounts, in books and articles written by European observers and travellers, and in many recent works, the Sason incident is portrayed as a ruthless and deliberate massacre of thousands of relatively innocent Armenians by Turkish troops and Kurdish tribesmen. It is seen as the beginning of a deliberate policy of extermination on the part of Abdulhamid personally, delayed eventually by European intervention.²¹ The many books written at the time are full of vivid descriptions of mass murders, of women being raped and killed, children flung onto bayonets, and whole villages razed and the inhabitants slaughtered. Romantic accounts are offered of women refusing to renounce Christ for the harem life, refusing conversion to Islam. The most popular estimates of the number killed during the incident range from eight to twenty five thousand, and these are said to be conservative figures.²²

²¹The following are examples of this type of literature: Sir Edwin Pears, Forty Years in Constantinople 1873-1915 (New York, 1916); Rev. Malcom MacColl, The Sultan and the Powers (London, 1896); Johannes Lepsius, Armenia, and Europe: An Indictment (London, 1897); R. Harris, Letters From the Scenes of the Recent Massacres in Armenia (London, 1897); Frederick Greene, Armenian Crisis in Turkey (London, 1895); F.H. Geffcken, "The Turkish Reforms and Armenia", Nineteenth Century, xxxviii, London, 1895; Rev. Edwin Bliss, Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities (London, 1896). Besides these, there are many articles in the journal Armenian Review by Gregory Arabian, G. Chichekian, and Rita Jerrahian which deal extensively with the masaaeres of the 1890's.

²²F.D. Greene, op.cit., p.42.

That there was an incident is in no doubt and that it signalled the beginning of a series of massacres there can also be no doubt. That it was a deliberate government policy, part of a larger plan for a 'final solution' to the whole 'Armenian question' is more in doubt. It is this question, as well as the actual extent of the Sason incident and the others which must be carefully investigated. Why after such a stable period, should such a savage incident occur?

The district of Sason was in the Bitlis vilayet (about twenty five miles west of Bitlis itself), which has already been noted as being one of the worst governed vilayets in the region and the one with perhaps the most oppressed and discontented Armenian population. The kaza of Sason was situated in the wildest and most mountainous part of the vilayet, as well as in the least governable part. As has been mentioned previously, there were many parts of eastern Anatolia in which government rarely made itself felt in any form, in which most of what has been said of reform and government policy did not apply, and Sason was a prime example of one of these areas.

The Armenian population of the Kaza, unlike those in the lowlands, was a "...fierce and warlike race, hardly distinguishable from their Kurd neighbours..."²³ The Armenians were nominally subject to Kurdish aghas, but the feudal authority was loose, the aghas doing little more than levying taxes and requiring occasional help in their struggles with rival tribes.²⁴ Until

²³Currie to Kimberley, Therapia, 260 of 15 October 1894, F.O., 424/178.

²⁴Ibid.,

1893 the Armenians had been left alone by the government of the sandjak and all taxes had been paid directly to the Kurds. After 1893 the government began to pressure the Armenians in the kaza for taxes, a move which was part of the process of extending the control of the local governments.

For several years prior to 1893 the Sason area had been a prime recruiting and organizing territory for Armenian revolutionaries, specifically the Hunchakian party. The revolutionaries had been hoping to recruit both Armenians and Kurds for a planned rebellion, a policy consistent with Hunchakian socialist doctrine. The local outbreak in Sason was then to overflow into the Dersim and Kharput areas (Kharput is one hundred miles west of Sason), both of which were traditionally volatile with large segments of the population disaffected from the government.²⁵ Large amounts of arms and ammunition had been stored in several of the Armenian villages in the Sason district in preparation for these projected activities.

The incident we are concerned with actually took place in the nahiye of Talori, which was situated in a particularly isolated and easily defended part of the Sason kaza. What follows is as accurate as possible a record of the events compiled from the consular reports and contemporary accounts.

In 1893, an Armenian Catholic from Constantinople was arrested by the Ottoman authorities in the Talori area for alleged political agitation. After his capture several hundred

²⁵ Graves, Erzeroum, to Currie, 218 of 1 September 1894, F.O., 424/178.

Kurds, both local and nomadic, massed around the villages. Their reason was partly that the Armenian villages had been implicated in revolutionary activity by the agitator's presence and partly because the local agas were now in competition with the local government for taxes and the villagers had evidently chosen to pay the government. The punishment the Kurds intended for the villages was the traditional one, the raiding and subsequent plundering of animals and supplies. There was some speculation that they may have been encouraged in their actions by the local authorities in an attempt to either finally subdue the villages or provide an excuse through disorder for further government intervention.²⁶

When the Kurds attacked the villages they were repulsed with heavy losses by the well-armed local Armenians, assisted no doubt by a contingent of Hunchaks. The vali of Bitlis then demanded that the chief Armenians of Talori, the people the government held responsible for any activities of the villagers, come to Bitlis to settle the dispute and answer certain charges of complicity with the revolutionaries. The Armenians refused, withdrew to the fortress of their village stronghold and stated they would pay no more taxes until adequate protection against the Kurds was provided by the government. The gauntlet had been thrown. The Armenians were no doubt aware that once they had openly defied the government, fought and beaten a group of Kurds

²⁶Graves, Erzeroum, to Currie, 189 of 27 July 1894, F.O., 424/178.

with weapons they were not supposed to possess, all with obvious cooperation with revolutionaries, they would receive no favors from the Ottomans. From this time on the Hunchaks were clearly in control and were determined to make as much out of the situation as they could. The local Armenians could not reverse what they had done and could only play the drama out under the leadership of the only people qualified to lead them in a military operation. Since there was little hope of a mass uprising, the only other alternative was to force the government into some kind of over-reaction such as a large scale massacre to demonstrate that it was unfit to rule the Armenians.

The vali invested the villages with a battalion of troops in the summer of 1893, but was forced to leave with the coming of winter. In the summer of 1894, the nomadic Kurds from Diarbekir, who had been kept out of the Sason area in previous years because of the disturbances they caused, were once again allowed to enter. These Kurds, in combination with others, attacked Talori again and were again repulsed. The Ottoman kaimakam of the kaza was then sent to the villages to collect back taxes. He and his zaptiehs were beaten by the villagers and driven out.²⁷ This appears to have been an attempt by the vali to force a confrontation with the recalcitrant Armenians.

This and the defeat of the Kurds led the vali to declare the Talori area in open rebellion against the Ottoman government. He telegraphed to Erzincan, the headquarters of the Fourth Army

²⁷Graves, Memo, 36 of December 1894, F.O., 424/181.

Corps, two hundred miles away, and requested troops and notified the Porte of the situation. Seven battalions of regular troops and one Hamidieh regiment were sent in reply to the vali's request. The Hamidieh regiment was kept away from the Talori area throughout the incident, being used to replace regular troops, which reflected the government's desire to avoid encouraging large scale Kurdish-Armenian clashes.²⁸ When the troops arrived the Armenians recognized the hopelessness of their position and surrendered to the Ottoman troops, probably feeling they were safer in their hands than with the local soldiers or Kurds. After the army occupied the villages, the 'massacre' began.

Virtually all accounts of the incident agree that the actions of the troops following their occupation of Talori had to have been approved, and in fact ordered, by Constantinople. While Greene and myriad other accounts say as many as twenty five thousand were killed and consul Hallward, the only European near the area soon after the incident, said three to four thousand, the official investigation in the summer of 1895, which was attended by consular representatives from the Powers, put the figure at nine hundred.²⁹ The consular delegates to the Commission did not deny that an "inhuman slaughter" took place, but also reported that it was vastly exaggerated. The killing was apparently carried out by Turkish troops under direct orders

²⁸ Currie to Kimberley, 231 of 4 October 1894, F.O., 424/178.

²⁹ Shipley, Memo on the Joint Report of the Consular Delegates to the Sssun Commission of July 20 1895, 133 of 12 October 1896, F.O., 424/184.

from their officers, not by Kurds. The troops who were present joined in only upon the insistence of the army officers.³⁰

It is probable that the massacre was ordered by Constantinople, probably by Abdulhamid himself, who must have been following developments in the Bitlis area closely during 1893 and 1894. Mr. Block, the British Embassy secretary, reported that the vali of Bitlis had sent a telegram to the Porte saying thousands of Armenians were assembled in open rebellion. He went on to say that the Sultan, in a moment of panic, ordered the rebellion stamped out and the villages destroyed.³¹ No provincial governor would have dared to order such an event, and no military officer would have attempted it without direct orders. As consul Chermside said:

"It is unlikely that the Turkish troops, who in 1876-77 prevented massacres in Bulgaria, took part in massacres without orders. Turkish commanders are notoriously wanting in initiative and afraid of responsibility. It is improbable that a military commander ordered or instigated a massacre, unless he felt his action was justified by his orders."³²

While it is possible that the Sason incident was the result of a 'panic' in the Palace and a resultant over-reaction, in this writer's view this is an improbable explanation. The formation of the Armenian revolutionary parties, of which the

³⁰Hallward, Van, to Currie, 339 of 6 November 1894, F.O., 424/178. Hallward was at the scene soon after the incident, but was prevented from travelling to Sason because of a cholera quarantine until November 1894. There was in fact cholera in the area, brought by troops from Erzincan.

³¹Block, Report, 536 of 25 December 1894, F.O., 424/178.

³²Chermside to Currie, 412 of 6 December 1894, F.O., 424/178.

government was well informed, and the increasing activity of these groups throughout 1893 made some kind of Ottoman reaction necessary. The tension throughout the region and in Constantinople had been building for two years, making the danger of violent reactions on the part of the Muslims an increasing possibility. Rather than let local populations take matters into their own hands, which would not only have discredited the government in the people's eyes, but could have led to open-ended massacres and more serious revolts against Ottoman authority by both Armenians and Kurds, the government decided to take action itself. Most of the contemporary accounts of Abdulhamid would reinforce the 'panic' explanation, depicting the Sultan as paranoid, afraid, suspicious of everyone. While much of this speculation about his character is undoubtedly true, he also appears to have had a clear understanding of the politics of the Empire and his policies appear to have a firmer foundation than immediate reactions to specific events.

The fact that the government reaction against the Armenians came at Sason in August 1894 was due to the peculiarities of that region and the actions of the local government. The course of events was probably managed from Bitlis until the request for outside troops. Once this request was made, especially due to the urgent manner in which it was made, the government had the perfect chance to provide the Armenian and Muslim population of the region with an example of government firmness. The government realized that the Muslim population was anxious

that something be done to suppress the threat of Armenian rebellion, and acted accordingly. Perhaps the real explanation is that Abdulhamid allowed the suppression of the revolutionaries. Activity such as that of Sason could not be allowed to go unchecked in the Empire and it was hoped that an isolated example of what could happen when dissident elements chose to defy government authority would serve as a lesson to others.

For the moment the discussion of the motivation behind and significance of the new Ottoman policy toward the Armenians shall be suspended. A general discussion of the subject will follow in subsequent chapters. Perhaps it is most fitting to end this section with Abdulhamid's own view of the incident at Sason. To him it was armed rebellion, pure and simple, and his reaction was seen as the same as that of England to similar situations in India and Egypt. As his secretary said of his views:

"His Majesty continues by stating that just as in other countries there are Mihilists, Socialists, and Anarchists, endeavouring to obtain from the Government concessions and privileges which it is impossible to grant them, so it is with the Armenians, who, for their own purposes invent these stories against the Government, and finding that they receive encouragement from British officials, are emboldened to proceed to open acts of rebellion, which the Government is perfectly justified in suppressing by every means in its power."³³

³³Memo Replying to Currie's Memo, 294 of 1895, F.O., 424/178.

CHAPTER NINE: Reaction and Reform, 1895-97.

News of the Sason incident spread quickly throughout eastern Anatolia, creating considerable excitement among both Christians and Muslims. The news was a mixture of rumor and government supplied information released through local newspapers, both of which depicted the incident as an armed rebellion by at least a thousand Armenians. The commander of the troops at Sason was awarded a medal by the Sultan himself and many of the Kurdish leaders involved had been requested to travel to Constantinople where they were also rewarded for their services. The government's attitude toward the Sason incident was interpreted by many Muslims to be indicative of a shift in policy toward a much harder line toward the Armenians and nationalism in general among minority groups.

Before 1894 the government had consistently tried to deal with the revolutionaries with troops and zaptiehs and had taken strict measures to prevent the local population, both in the cities and countryside, from taking independent action. This was part of the attempt on the part of the central government to assert its control over the region, demonstrating that the days of independent action in the provinces were over. After Sason there was not an announced change in this policy but rather less emphasis on keeping the local Muslims under control. One explanation of this change is that the government had simply lost the

ability to control events in the region. The heightened tension caused by the Sason incident and subsequent activity by the Armenian revolutionaries, plus the Muslims' belief that suppression of all Armenian activity was now official government policy may have made it impossible for the central government to control events. The government policy in effect since 1889 of increasing the power of the local government apparatus was by no means an established reality by 1894, nor was their credibility — as the spokesmen for the central government in the region assured. Without vigorous support from Constantinople the centrifugal forces which had traditionally dominated the region could easily reassert their influence. Under 'normal' circumstances the central government could maintain the precarious dominance of the provincial governments, but circumstances in eastern Anatolia after 1894 were far from normal. — *

It is also possible that, far from losing control, the central government deliberately loosened control over the Kurds and urban notables, seeing the danger of the Armenian revolutionaries as acute and not wishing to further implicate the central government in their demise. By giving the impression that the Kurds and urban Muslims were acting independently of governmental apparatus, both central and local, in their actions against Armenians, the government could eventually step in and, after a suitable period, restore order. The revolutionaries could then be portrayed as the guilty party who had so stirred

up by the population that they could no longer be controlled by the government.

PART I

The immediate effect of the Sason incident was to bring about a dramatic increase in the activity of the Kurdish tribes in eastern Anatolia. Believing that the Armenians were preparing for open rebellion and that the government sanctioned any actions to prevent such a rebellion, the Kurdish tribes, in most cases led by Hamidieh officers, began to harass and openly attack Armenian villages in most of the vilayets. This was interpreted by many of the European observers as a deliberate attempt on the part of the government to use the Hamidieh as the instrument for ridding the region of its Armenian population.¹ This view was weakened somewhat by reports from consul Graves in Erzeroum telling of troop movements throughout the winter directed against the Kurds and of other attempts to discourage them from excessive raiding. Much of the booty siezed by Kurds in the Erzeroum area in August and September of 1894 was in the process of being returned to its Armenian owners by the government.² While many speculated about insidious Ottoman motives and policies, there seems to be little evidence to support such speculation, the Ottomans apparently desiring to genuinely ease

¹Hallward, Van, to Graves, 238 of 19 September 1894, F.O., 424/178.

²Graves, Erzeroum, to Currie, 282 of 20 October 1894, F.O., 424/178.

the Armenians' burden.

The government was making attempts to control the Kurds throughout the fall and winter of 1894, but these attempts did little toward lowering the level of tension in the area. Violence of any sort was normally seasonal in eastern Anatolia, the winter weather curtailing activities of Armenians, Kurds, and troops alike. There was a feeling of anxious anticipation throughout the winter; a feeling that if no overt action was taken by the government to deal with the Armenians, there would be trouble on a large scale by the summer.³ All the consuls noted that the dominant split in the cities and countryside was rapidly becoming a Muslim-Christian one. This had been true to some extent since the early 1870's, but there was still considerable empathy and cooperation between Armenian and Kurdish peasants, Armenian and Turkish merchants and artisans, and among the notables in the cities. By 1894 this was rapidly changing as the Armenians came to be seen as a threat and source of trouble. Ottoman officials were becoming more and more reluctant to be seen with consuls or missionaries, since the Muslim population was generally convinced that all Europeans were in league with the revolutionaries and were interested only in overseeing the disintegration of the Empire.⁴

Throughout the spring of 1895, it was becoming more evident

³Hallward to Graves, 225 of 2 February 1895, F.O., 424/181.

⁴Dr. Jewett to Longworth, 72 of 19 March 1895, F.O., 424/181.

that the Muslims were ceasing to make the distinction between revolutionary and Armenian. There was increasing pressure being placed on Armenians to convert to Islam and a rise in the number of kidnappings of Armenian women by Kurdish tribesmen.⁵ The Hamidian governments 'Muslim policy' was having an effect that perhaps was not intended, but the Muslims were reacting to what they saw as a direct threat posed by the Christians in the way they thought the government would have expected them to. When one of the Kurdish sheikhs involved in the Sason incident passed through Diarbekir on his way to Mecca he was treated as a hero by the Muslims of the city. Consul Boyadjian in that city reported that the treatment of Armenians in the bazaars and other public places was becoming more belligerent. He expressed the fear that the local Armenians would do something to set off a general massacre.⁶

The polarization of the Armenian and Muslim communities was actively encouraged by the Armenian revolutionaries. By 1895 the Dashnak party had begun to emerge as the dominant Armenian revolutionary group, which meant more emphasis on Armenian nationalism and less on drawing Kurds into the struggle, which had been the policy of the Hunchak party. Besides a marked increase in arms smuggling in Van and Erzeroum, which resulted in frequent clashes with both Kurds and Ottoman troops, most of the activity of the revolutionaries was directed within their

⁵Hallward, Van, to Graves, 72 of 19 March 1895, F.O., 424/182.

⁶Boyadjian to Currie, 87 of 26 March 1895, F.O., 424/182.

own community. Armenian notables, businessmen, and village leaders were intimidated and frequently assassinated when they refused to support and urge their people to support the revolutionary program. Armed bands of Armenians were known to live in the Armenian quarters of Van, Erzeroum, and other cities. By encouraging polarization, the revolutionaries negated any moderate solution to the problems in eastern Anatolia and encouraged confrontation, both of which were crucial to the success of their program.

The Kurds were more active in the summer of 1895 than they had been for several years. The raiding was almost exclusively against Armenian villages, with inter-tribal feuding becoming less prominent. The Hamidieh Kurds, over which all semblance of control had by this time disappeared, were most prominent in these attacks, believing they had a special 'mission' to carry out the unannounced but assumed policy of the Sultan. While traditional motivations (see Chapter Two) must have been the most important factor in these Kurdish activities, the actions of the Armenians and the ambiguous attitude of the government provided the Kurds with yet another rationale. The Kurdish tribes, even with the formation of the Hamidieh organization, had been losing power and influence in the region relative to the urban notables and local governments. Kurdish leaders, especially those in the Hamidieh who had been led to believe they were to be the Sultan's personal army in the area, responded to his words and actions against the Armenians in the manner they thought was expected

of them. This rationale was, however, probably confined to relatively few Kurds. The Ottomans were occupied throughout 1895 with preserving order in the cities and towns and could not supervise the countryside as they had in the previous few years. This left a vacuum which the Kurds were always prepared to fill. The actions of the revolutionaries and government was important in the long run only for the degree of violence and its direction.

The local governments, controlled in most cases by the urban notables, were able to maintain control in the urban centers throughout the summer despite the indications of trouble in the previous winter. They were still able to prevent any large scale troubles in the countryside, though little was done to regulate the sporadic raiding of the Kurds. When nomadic Kurdish tribes moved into the Sason area in July, consul Hampson was sure there was going to be another massacre, but by August government troops had forced them out and trouble was averted.⁷ Most books on this period of Ottoman history, especially those written by Armenians or their sympathizers, tend to lump the years 1894 to 1897 together and present them as a period of more or less constant massacres by Kurds and Turks against the local Armenians. When the record is examined it shows that there were indeed events which could be called massacres, but they were the result more of local conditions than government policy and in fact were the exception rather than the rule. If we accept the harsh

⁷Hampson, Mush, to Graves, 208 of 24 July 1895, F.O., 424/183.

living conditions for peasants in the region as a reality and the existence of tribesmen-villager rivalry as a contest with advantages to both sides, then the period 1894-7 is not as much an aberration as many would portray it. Indeed, one may marvel that given the conditions discussed in this study (the encouragement of feelings of Muslim superiority, harsh economic conditions, lack of firm government policy or presence, armed bands of revolutionaries throughout the countryside, and so on) there was not more violence than there was.

The summer's activities in eastern Anatolia were interrupted by the renewed interest in Ottoman reform among the European Powers. Britain, France, and Russia had been applying pressure to the government since early spring 1895, after the details of the Sason incident had had their full effect. The amount of literature published in Europe during this period about the fate of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was phenomenal, and it had its effects in a public outcry in Britain and France and in official indignation in Russia.

The Ottoman government resisted attempts by the Powers to force a new reform program on the Empire, maintaining that the Armenian question was strictly an internal matter which had nothing to do with Europe. The government held by its earlier explanation that this was simply a case of rebellion on the part of a few well-organized revolutionaries with no popular support. The events of the summer weakened this argument

considerably since it began to appear that the government could not control the situation in eastern Anatolia and that if something was not done the Armenians would be exterminated.

As in the 1878-81 period, much of the European zeal for reform was a result of exaggeration and overstatement by the consuls, missionaries, and other European observers. While the consuls were generally less biased and sensational than the other observers, a few, most notably Hallward, sent in reports which seem to have had their origin in information supplied exclusively by the Armenians and which, in combination with the news stories, served to imply a darker picture than was deserved. An instance of this type of reporting is the following excerpt from a despatch from consul Hampson while he was in Mush:

"In every village I was surrounded by crowds of men, women, and children; their cry was always the same, 'save us from the brutality of the zaptiehs'. Never has this brutality been carried to such a pitch as now; men are beaten, imprisoned, human excrement rubbed in their faces; women and girls insulted and dishonoured, dragged naked from their beds at night; children are not spared, and these outrages are merely the amusements of the zaptiehs while they are engaged in selling the little remaining property of the villages at a quarter of its value...On every side I heard the same tales; if a consul had not been sent to Moush, not an Armenian would have dared to remain in the plain."⁸

⁸Hampson to Graves, 365 of 25 August 1895, F.O., 424/183. There seems to be little evidence to support the view given of the zaptiehs in Hampson's report. They were usually left unpaid by the government and were forced to extort from the villages and may have committed the occasional injustice, but not as the 'tale' implies. It is significant that the majority of the reports dealing with the vilayets which saw the most trouble in the 1894-7 period came from Hallward and Hampson.

One can only speculate on his sources of information, but both he and consul Hallward seemed to have had the closest contact with the revolutionaries and relied on them for information. In addition, Mush was probably one of the worst areas in eastern Anatolia during this period, the Hunchaks being very much in evidence. Few Ottoman officials would deal with either of the consuls because of what they considered overly biased views.

The books written by travellers in the area during this period and, more importantly, by men who had been in the area in earlier years and wrote in the 1890's from secondary information, were even more spectacular in their denunciation of the Ottomans and their defence of the Armenians. The missionaries in the area, many of whom were the authors of these books, were likewise prone to exaggerated prose. As a consul said of them during a much later period: "...I feel that I am bound to state that I consider that they (the missionaries) are in the habit of using very exaggerated language in those appeals (for funds), and in their letters on the state of the country."⁹ All of these sources of information on the events in eastern Anatolia, plus the newspapers and the efficient Armenian propaganda organization in Europe, were able to mould public and government opinion in Europe and there was little the Ottomans could do to counter them. Abdulhamid's reputation as 'Abdul the Damned' was already established and even the branding of the revolutionaries as 'socialist-anarchist radicals' by the government persuaded only a few outside the Empire.

⁹Tyrell to O'Connor, 45 of 20 April 1905, F.O., 424/208.

Political Party

As late as June 1895 there were two definite factions in the Ottoman government concerning the advisability and desirability of new reforms. One, termed the military party by the British embassy, was firmly opposed to more reforms and advised the Sultan to simply weather the storm of European pressure and protests.¹⁰ Another party urged acceptance of the reform proposals of the Powers, and after a bitter and long struggle eventually won the day. The Sultan, however, gave in to the military party at first, knowing that in the long run he would have to yield to pressure from Britain. By denouncing reforms in the spring and during most of the summer and then accepting them in August, he maintained his credibility with his Muslim subjects and made the reforms even more repugnant than they normally would have been, since it was now evident that they had been literally forced on the government. >

By August the Sultan had agreed to a new series of reforms, but it was still far from that which the Powers had been demanding. The emphasis of the British proposal had been on Armenian participation in the local governments on a much more extensive basis than was even being considered by the Ottoman government. It had asked the Ottoman government to organize the nahiyes in such a way that Christians would choose their own mudirs, there would be local police in each nahiye, Christians would make up one-third of the vilayet administration and would have a veto power

¹⁰Block, Memo, 335 of 5 June 1895, F.O., 424/182.

on the appointment of objectionable valis, and there was to be a permanent Commission of Control to supervise the implementation of the reforms; all were either refused or altered beyond recognition.¹¹ Another main point in the British proposal had been the abolition of tax-farming, with the substitution of direct collection by the government. The delay in deciding this issue had created much confusion in the provinces since the multazims refused to purchase the tithes, fearing they would not be allowed to profit if the government accepted the reforms. The villages, despite encouragement from the government, were also reluctant to buy up their own tithes for fear of the Kurds. The Kurds were evidently afraid to steal from the multazims who were generally powerful men and had the power of the government behind them, but if the villagers bought the tithes, the Kurds would have no fear of siezing^{ei} the grain.¹² By August this confusion had been cleared up by a government decision to continue tax-farming, though with a reformed system. The tithes were now to be offered for sale, village by village, instead of by entire districts, thus supposedly making it easier for villagers to purchase their own tithes.¹³

The actual reform program (which wasn't publicly announced until October 1895) reasserted the principles of the Treaty of Berlin, appointed a new Commission to supervise the reforms and

¹¹Currie to Salisbury, 153 of 3 August 1895, F.O., 424/183.

¹²Graves to Currie, 204 of 1 August 1895, F.O., 424/183.

¹³Chermside, On Sultan's Answer to Reform Proposals, 153 of July 1895, F.O., 424/183.

investigate conditions, and pardoned most of the Armenians held as political prisoners.¹⁴ The reforms were to go into effect in the vilayets of Erzeroum, Van, Bitlis, Kharput, Diarbekir, and Sivas "corresponding with local requirements and the nature of the inhabitants."¹⁵ The head of the new Commission, officially entitled General Inspector, was Shakir Pasha, a former Ambassador to Russia and confidant of the Sultan. Most of the consuls were quite pleased with his appointment, feeling that he had enough power and influence in the government to act relatively independently in eastern Anatolia.

Shakir Pasha arrived in Erzeroum in September 1895 and began his enquiries immediately. He investigated the prisons, audited all the provincial accounts, started a program of road construction, reorganized the local zaptiehs and police, and created a corps of tahsildats (examiners) for tax collection. He then moved to set up a reform commission for the vilayet, like the earlier commissions

¹⁴The specific program accepted by the Ottoman government included the following:

1. judicial inspectors.
2. gendarmes and police from all classes.
3. reform of prison laws.
4. kaimakams to come from Imperial Civil School or have experience.
5. tithes collected by village.
6. appointment of special tax collectors (tahsildars)
7. exemption from forced labor with payment in money or kind.
8. budget of public instruction of each vilayet fixed by Ministry of Education.
9. appointment of moukhtar for each quarter of village.

Currie to Salisbury, 230 of 18 November 1896, F.O., 424/189.
The reform proposals of the Powers were generally drafted by the British, the other Powers recognizing their predominant interest in the area as a result of Congress of Berlin,

¹⁵Viziral Order Addressed to Valis, 197 of 8 October 1895, F.O., 424/184.

in 1880 had done, but ran into unforeseen difficulties. No Armenians would sit on the commission and in fact no Armenians would cooperate in any way with Shakir's attempts at reform.¹⁶ The Armenians of the city were dominated completely by the local Dashnak party, which had decreed that there would be no cooperation with Ottoman reform attempts. The revolutionaries' policy throughout the spring and summer of concentrating on control of the Armenian community had worked; the only Christian on Shakir Pasha's reform commission in Erzeroum was a Greek grocer.¹⁷

PART II

The reform commission remained in Erzeroum throughout the fall of 1895 and most of the winter, more out of necessity than choice. Its real work would not begin until the following spring, but its effect on eastern Anatolia was immediate. The government had been able to maintain order in the cities and prevent any major outbreaks of violence or civil disorder against the Armenians in the countryside during the summer, primarily because the Muslims thought it was going to take the initiative in dealing with the Armenian revolutionaries. The activity of the Kurdish tribes in the summer was not really indicative of the attitude of the Muslim population of eastern Anatolia, as has been pointed

¹⁶ Graves to Currie, 92 of 27 September 1895, F.O., 424/184.

¹⁷ Ibid..

out above. The government crackdown at Sason in the previous year had bought time for the government, but its effect could not last forever, especially since the revolutionaries had no intention of letting up the pressure. On the contrary, after Sason they redoubled their efforts at politicizing the Armenian population and forcing a confrontation with the Ottomans.¹⁸

The European interference beginning in the spring of 1895 had two major effects. The Armenians were all the more encouraged since it appeared to them that actual intervention by the Powers was in the offing, if only a few more bloody confrontations could be forced. The friendly press in Europe plus the many Armenian 'committees' in Britain and France which were pressing for European support of Armenian independence all encouraged the revolutionaries in this conviction. The Sason incident had taught the revolutionaries that if pushed far enough, the Ottoman government would be forced to react, forced by public opinion and its own frustration. At the same time, the revolutionaries were gaining adherents in both city and countryside because of the widespread belief that the Ottomans were pursuing a policy of extermination and because the increased activity of the Kurds, now being directed almost exclusively at Armenians, had made life for the Armenian peasants of many districts almost unbearable.



¹⁸The revolutionaries suspended operations for a period after the announcement of the British reform proposals, but by June 1895 began their activities again. Consul Graves reported that "There is, I regret to say, good reason to believe that there has been a considerable increase of late in the introduction of arms and ammunition into Alashgerd, Passin, and Khinis..." Graves to Currie, 4 of 13 June 1895, F.O., 424/183.

Their increased popularity had further facilitated their suppression through threats and assassinations of virtually all dissident elements within the Armenian community.

The other effect of the European intervention was to create a reaction in the Muslim community. The Ottoman government had so manipulated the European demands for reform that it was clear to most Muslims in eastern Anatolia that the government was being forced to accept a reform program against its will. The reforms were seen as another example of European imperialism, one step on the road to Armenian independence. The government appeared powerless, through no fault of its own, to prevent the implementation of the reforms. Ottoman rhetoric concerning the Armenians for the past decade had stressed that independence would wreck the Empire and that the Armenians were simply tools of European imperialism. Taking these lessons to heart, the Muslims were determined after the summer of 1895 that this independence would never be achieved. Since the reforms were seen simply as one step on the way to independence, they clearly had to be frustrated and the Armenians convinced by force to give up ideas of separation. By September there were reports of secret organizations among Muslims in the cities which were pledged to oppose by force the introduction of any reforms benefiting the Christians. Consul Hampson reported that these groups were made up of the "...worst class of Moslems" and Consul Graves in Erzeroum reported the same, saying they were

led by the "...lower class of officials and religious sheikhs."¹⁹

When the news arrived on October 21 that the Sultan had formally accepted the reform program worked out by the Ottoman and British governments, the first reaction came from a predictable source: the town of Bitlis. The Armenians of the town had been careful not to openly celebrate the event and thus add fuel to the flames, but this did little to dampen the rising tension. On 22 October, Armenian businessmen and artisans began closing their shops, expecting trouble at any moment. A few days later they began to cautiously re-open their shops and appear in public again, their bishop being assured by the local government that there would be no trouble. On Friday, as the Muslims were going to the mosque, the Armenians noticed that most of them were armed and fearing they were preparing for a massacre, the shops were once again closed and the Armenians returned to their quarter of the town. During this process, which started with a few shopkeepers and quickly spread, a few zaptiehs and Muslim shopkeepers tried to calm the Armenians and find out why they were closing. At this point, with confusion complete in the marketplace, a shot was fired. The Muslims in the mosque heard the shot, assumed that it was from an Armenian, and came pouring out of the mosque and began to attack every Armenian in sight. By the end of the day several hundred had been killed and considerable damage to Armenian property caused.²⁰ This incident

¹⁹Graves to Currie, 339 of 3 September 1895, F.O., 424/183.

²⁰Rev. Knapp to Hampson, 731 of 6 November 1895, F.O., 424/184.

is recalled here in detail because it was probably similar to many others which took place elsewhere in the fall of 1895. The Muslims seldom distinguished between revolutionaries and Armenians by this time and the 'massacres' were usually relatively spontaneous. Consul Cumberbatch reported from Erzeroum that "...the state of feeling in Mussulman circles has reached such a pitch that the smallest provocation is only needed to set the fanatical Turkish mob on to the Armenians..."²¹

In Erzeroum an incident at almost the same time as that in Bitlis claimed the lives of about three hundred Armenians and twenty five Muslims. Tension had been building not only because of the reform decree but because of Armenian 'riots' in Constantinople and Trebizond which had been reported in the Turkish papers and which were attributed to the revolutionaries. In addition, the local revolutionaries in Erzeroum had assassinated a highly venerated sheikh and abducted his daughter-in-law, a girl who had previously been kidnapped from an Armenian village.²² The Muslim organization referred to above was preparing for vengeance and the well-organized revolutionaries were prepared to meet them. After a stray shot in the vicinity of the vali's house, a Muslim mob began to rampage through the Armenian bazaar, forcing most of the Armenians to try to leave the city. The vali was able to contain the violence to the bazaar area, thus preventing more killing and looting.²³ It was much more of a confrontation

²¹Cumberbatch to Currie, 460 of 29 October 1895, F.O., 424/184.

²²Cumberbatch, Observations on the Report of the Vali of Erzeroum on Disorders, 314 of March 1896, F.O., 424/186.

²³Cumberbatch to Secretary Herbert, 541 of 4 November 1895, F.O., 424/184.

than the Bitlis incident had been, with Armenians firing on Muslims from rooftops and offering considerable resistance. It was also different from Bitlis in its extent. The local government in Erzeroum was able to control the violence once it had begun. It was significant, however, that even in Erzeroum, the largest, most stable and secure city in the region, the government was unable to prevent the outbreak of violence.

In the Diarbekir vilayet the violence was apparently more widespread, with an outbreak in the city during the first three days in November and attacks on other towns and villages by Kurds throughout the month. Consul Hallward reported at length on affairs in the vilayet, listing over 8,000 dead, 25,000 forced to convert to Islam, and accused the local government of being in collusion with the rioters and the Kurds.²⁴ There was little hint of any impending massacre in the city before it occurred and after orders were received from Constantinople on November 3, the local government was able to halt all activity in the city against the Armenians with little trouble. It was this responsiveness to the directives from the central government by the local authorities that caused suspicion among the consuls. They interpreted this to mean that the disorders were ordered by the central government and at all times controlled by its representatives.

In late November all of the reserves of the Fourth Army Corps (60,000) were called out to deal with the outbreaks, but

²⁴Hallward to Cumberbatch, Diarbekir, 26 of 17 March 1896, F.O., 424/187.

they accomplished very little. Like Diarbekir, the Van vilayet was the scene of virtual anarchy in the countryside, though there were no incidents in the city itself. Since the city of Van was one of the main centers of Armenian revolutionary activity, it is a tribute to the local government and the vali, Nazim Pasha, that both sides were kept in check. In the countryside, however, there was no check on Kurdish raiding. Consul Hallward called the situation "extraordinary" and blamed Shakir Pasha and the reform commission for stirring up the Kurds.²⁵ Consul Cumberbatch in Erzeroum attached a note to this despatch of Hallward's and denied the allegation concerning Shakir Pasha, saying he was doing everything he could to maintain order. He asserted that the Kurds were simply taking advantage of the generally disturbed state of the region to do what they had always done, only to a greater degree. He also recognized that the Kurds probably believed that their actions pleased the Sultan as well, though not because the government had directly told them so.

To complete this picture of turmoil, the Dersim Kurds descended into the Kharput vilayet throughout November. Their activities were mainly confined to looting and burning and although they managed to enter the town of Kharput and cause extensive damage, they were driven out by the local authorities after a day.²⁶ In the Sivas vilayet a few of the smaller towns

²⁵Hallward to Cumberbatch, 792 of 20 November 1895, F.O., 424/184.

²⁶Cumberbatch to Currie, 839 of 5 December 1895, F.O., 424/184.

suffered outbreaks of violence against Armenians, but the city itself was calm. As in other areas, there were local circumstances which dictated the events, in this case the Muslims were reacting to the closure of all Armenian shops in several towns ordered by the local revolutionary group. Since the Armenians represented the most important trading and artisan group in the region, when their shops were closed considerable hardship was felt in the Muslim households.²⁷

The only scene of calm in the entire region was the city of Mush and the area immediately around it. Despite violence in nearby Bitlis, the area remained quiet throughout the fall. The Muslim notables of the city were split over what their reaction to the events of the period should be, the mutesarraf and the mufti counselling calm and the kadi and other religious officials urging the Muslims to follow the example of Bitlis, Diarbekir, and Erzeroum.²⁸ The mutesarraf was very active in his efforts to prevent trouble, sending out constant patrols with the few troops at his disposal to prevent the Kurds in the area from coalescing and making large scale raids. The active policy of the local government in Mush, plus the fact that this was probably the most prosperous district in the region, were enough to prevent violence from breaking out, indicating that perhaps in other areas more forceful action on the part of local government might have at least decreased the level of violence.

²⁷Mr. Herbert, Letter addressed to Herbert, Kerassunde, 621 of 16 November 1895, F.O., 424/184.

²⁸Hampson to Cumberbatch, 77 of 17 December 1895, F.O., 424/186.

By late December, the violent period was over. The reserves were recalled in January, not so much because they were no longer needed but because they were too much of a burden on the areas to which they had been sent. The peasants preferred to take their chances with the Kurds rather than be assured of having to feed and house the soldiers. In other areas, particularly Van, the government began to take a stricter attitude toward the Kurds, summoning several of their more important leaders to Erzeroum to answer charges. By early December Hallward was able to say that "...affairs in this vilayet (Van) have now more or less resumed their ordinary course."²⁹ The kadi in Mush who had been so active in urging violence was recalled in January after many telegrams from the mutesarrif to the Porte. These moves seem to indicate that the government had decided to take a new stance in 1896.

PART III

The events of the fall of 1895 had been a severe test for the Ottoman system of government in eastern Anatolia, but it had survived relatively intact, though its authority was considerably weakened. Of the four pillars of Ottoman strength in the region, two, the army and the provincial government, had remained loyal and had followed the letter of the government's instructions. The other two, the Kurds and the Muslim notables, had demonstrated considerable strength and discontent. The

²⁹Hampson to Cumberbatch, 858 of 4 December 1895, F.O., 424/184,

faith the government had placed in the local administrations had paid off during this turbulent period, since they were able to contain the outbreaks of violence in the urban centers, and the army had been able to prevent any large scale rebellions or massacres in the countryside. On the other hand, the organization which the government thought would serve to control the Kurds, the Hamidieh, had broken down completely. For most of 1895, the Kurds had been free of most controls, the Hamidieh Kurds in fact taking the lead in the disorders.³⁰

The urban notables had demonstrated that they retained their strong hold on the local Muslim population, the government being prevented in most cases from preventing unwanted incidents of violence. This was perhaps the greatest flaw in the Ottoman system and one the government must have seen. The urban notables retained their control over the local population in the cities and in much of the countryside, while at the same time making up most of the administrators in the local governments. The provincial governments were usually presided over by someone from outside the area and many of the top officials were appointed by Constantinople, but the majlisses, courts, and administrative positions were staffed from among the

³⁰ Many Europeans on the scene interpreted this to mean the Kurds were operating under orders from Constantinople, but given the nature of the Hamidieh organization and the virtually non-existent lines of communication between the tribes and the central government, this appears to be extremely doubtful.

notables and their retainers. The Ottoman government could not yet afford the lux^ury of a separate class of administrators in the provinces and was therefore forced to rely heavily on local resources. Thus, while the notables were responsive to the ~~*~~ commands of the central government, aware they could not openly defy it, they also had the power of sabotaging its position through their presence in the administrative structure. The appointment of more powerful valis and other high officials, the strengthening of the army, and the formation of the Hamidieh had all been attempts to weaken this power of the notables or at least control it. The precarious situation of the government in 1895 brought home the fact that the battle for centralized control was far from won.³¹

The implementation of the reform program in 1896 was viewed by the central government with the above situation in mind at all times. While aware that the Powers had to be placated, the government was probably more interested in seeing to it that more power did not pass into the hands of the notables through further alienation of the Muslim population. While the reforms were not "...merely another of the paper promises of improvement which littered Turkish history in the nineteenth century",³² they were also a far cry from what the Powers had originally intended.

³¹ One of the reasons the reform program was not accepted until October was probably that this left the notables little time to organize a reaction, winter weather making virtually all activity impracticable.

³² Anderson, op.cit., p. 255.

The main thrust of the reforms was to be the increased employment of Armenians in the administration, the reform of tax-farming, and the reform of the police structure. The process of implementation began much as the 1880 reforms had begun, with the arrival of a commission and the emphasis on re-establishing order. The government was evidently intent on preventing a recurrence of the violence of the fall and Shakir Pasha was given more extensive powers than those of the earlier reform commissions. While wishing to restore order, the government did not wish to alienate the Muslim population or the notables at the same time. Thus, in January several Kurdish leaders were summoned to Erzeroum, which was enough to make the other Kurdish leaders considerably more cautious, and by May 1896 it was evident that the government was going to release the Kurds in spite of evidence against them compiled by the local prosecutor.³³ The Kurds were still seen as a potential military force against a Russian invasion and as a useful counterpart to the Armenians and thus their credibility had to be maintained.

Despite his considerable powers, Shakir Pasha was hampered in his reform attempts in several ways. The local notables and the Armenians in most cases refused to cooperate with him and the government stifled most of the reforms by simply saying no funds were available. He had orders to implement only those

³³Graves to Currie, 40 of 15 May 1896, F.O., 424/187.

reforms which could fit into present budgets and the cost of the commission, which was considerable, plus Shakir Pasha's salary, was to be paid by the vilayet in which he was resident.³⁴ The administrative structure of the Empire was also used to hamper the reform attempts since the Sultan ordered the Porte to execute the reforms and the Porte then gave instructions to the commission and provincial governments. The provincial officials then had the option of appealing directly to the Sultan through his advisors in the Palace in order to have the Porte's instructions weakened.³⁵ This process was utilized to a great degree and was one of the major causes of corruption and bribery in the Ottoman government, and, of course, of Abdulhamid's power. By March the British Embassy secretary reported that the Sultan considered the Armenian Question dead, the adoption of the reform program and its initial implementation having satisfied the Powers.³⁶

The reform commission did see to it that Christians were appointed to administrative positions in the provinces, though they were virtually all assistants (mouavins) to the Muslim officials. The consuls were unanimous in their judgement that the reform had virtually no effect. Many of the Christians appointed

³⁴This was a severe handicap for the commission since the vilayets which most needed attention were also the poorest (Bitlis and Van especially) and could not afford to have Shakir Pasha remain within their jurisdiction. By March 1897, the commission had to move to Sivas, the only vilayet which could afford it. Graves to Currie, 165 of 24 September 1897, F.O., 424/192.

³⁵Block to Currie, 268 of 3 March 1896, F.O., 424/186.

³⁶Block to Currie, 319 of 13 March 1896, F.O., 424/186.

were of generally poor quality and character, being close friends of Muslim officials, ex-spies, and so on. It was soon discovered that Christians were just as susceptible to bribes and other forms of corruption as were Muslims.³⁷ As long as salaries remained low and in many cases unpaid, officials would be forced to supplement their income, whether Christian or Muslim. Besides this, the Christian mouvains or assistants to Muslim officials had little authority, deferring to their Muslim supervisors in most cases, just as they had traditionally done on the majliss.³⁸ The atmosphere of the region did little to help the new administrators in their task. It was unlikely that a Christian official would attempt to exert much authority over a Muslim given the attitudes of the latter and the activities of the previous year, which it seemed could have recurred at any moment.³⁹

The proposals for the reform of the zaptieh and police forces met with even less success. Rather than increasing the size of the forces, they were decreasing in number due to lack of pay. Villagers were complaining that "...zaptiehs roam about the villages and pilfer corn to supply the needs of their own families."⁴⁰ There was no money to pay for an expanded force and few Armenians would volunteer to help increase the number of Christians in the

³⁷Earl Percy, Highlands of Asiatic Turkey (London: Edward Arnold, 1901), p. 65.

³⁸In many cases the Christian assistants to the higher administrators were brought in from the European provinces, in which case they generally wished to be as subservient as possible in order to get back to their former 'civilized' area. Fontana to Herbert, 80 of 6 July 1896, F.O., 424/188.

³⁹Currie to Salisbury, 300 of 14 April 1897, F.O., 424/91.

⁴⁰Fontana to Currie, 60 of 1 February 1898, F.O., 424/195.

PREVIOUS
TAX FARMING
REFORM

force. They were being pressured by the revolutionaries, were reluctant to be put in the position of policing Muslims, and would have been useless outside the cities anyway.³⁷

The reform of the tax-farming system was also regarded as a failure, though it was not abandoned. The revenue in the vilayets dropped considerably from 1894-6 and part of the drop was because the farming of the tithes in small lots discouraged the large tax-farmers, whose competitive bidding had previously driven up the prices paid to the government.³⁸ The reform excluding Hamidieh officers from purchasing tithes was easily by-passed by the Kurds. They simply purchased the tithes in another Kurd's name, forcing the Armenians to deal with their representatives.³⁹ Though the reforms provided the mechanism for a more equitable distribution of tax collecting privileges, the dominant position of the Kurdish agas and urban notables made any significant changes impossible, in fact the situation was somewhat worse since there was no longer open bidding on a large scale.

By June of 1896 the reforms were well on their way to being implemented in most of the vilayets and they were causing very little reaction among the population. The Armenians saw them as ineffective and were afraid to take full advantage of them for

³⁷Williams, Van, to Currie, 191 of 27 October 1896, F.O., 424/189.

³⁸Graves, Erzeroum, to Currie, 365 of 17 May 1897, F.O., 424/191.

³⁹Crow, Bitlis, to Currie, 200 of 10 October 1897, F.O., 424/192.

fear of another outbreak of violence. The Muslims had gotten over their initial distaste for the whole concept of imposed reforms and realized that they were not really a threat. The appointment of Christian mouavins was greeted by apathy from both groups. Judicial inspectors were operating in most areas and most of the Armenians arrested in 1895 had been freed. In some areas, Armenians who had suffered severe losses were exempted from paying the military exemption tax for two years as a form of compensation.

There were scattered outbreaks of violence in the countryside during the spring and summer of 1896, primarily taking the form of Kurdish reactions to Armenian gun smuggling and other incidents. The greatest problem in the region was not maintaining order, but lowering the level of tension and re-settling the thousands of Armenians who had either fled their villages or who had no food with which to face the winter. In Diarbekir, as in other areas, there were constant rumors ^{of} renewed massacres and open threats by Muslims. These presented almost as much of a problem as the actual disorders.

"It may be thought that these constant panics after all do not do much harm so long as no one is killed, but unfortunately they have had a bad effect throughout the vilayet in maintaining a continuous feeling of insecurity and uncertainty as to what the intentions of the Government really are towards the Christians. There can be no doubt the Kurds and lower class Turks think they may be called on at any time to make another attack on the Christians, and this idea is naturally shared by the

latter, so that a resettlement of the peasants on their lands is practically impossible, and even the resumption of ordinary business is difficult under present circumstances." 40

Taxes were being collected as usual, but few Armenians could afford to pay. 41 Consul Hallward reported that in the vilayet of Diarbekir alone there were approximately 32,000 Christians "...in various degrees of destitution." 42

The Armenian revolutionary groups made their presence felt throughout 1896, though their activities were not as extensive nor as provoking as they had been in the previous years. They continued to bring arms across the Persian frontier, dominated much of the city of Van, and had frequent clashes with both Kurds and Ottoman troops. By far their most spectacular feat of the year, however, took place far from eastern Anatolia. In August, a group of twenty five Armenians ^{seized} the Ottoman Bank building in ^{Istanbul} Constantinople and held it for most of a day, threatening to blow it up if their demands were not met. These demands included the following points:

- 1) appointment of a European High Commissioner for Armenia to be elected by the Powers.
- 2) the appointment of Governors and Mayors by the Commission, to be confirmed by the Sultan.

40 Hallward to Herbert, 52 of 30 June 1896, F.O., 424/188.

41 The revenues suffered little however, since many Muslims who owed back taxes could now pay thanks to booty seized during the previous year from the Armenians. Bulman to Currie, 279 of 15 November 1896, F.O., 424/189.

42 Hallward to Herbert, 218 of 9 June 1896, F.O., 424/187.

- 3) the establishment of a militia and gendarmerie recruited locally to which Armenians would have access and which would be commanded by European officers.
- 4) reforms in the judiciary and the administration of justice.
- 5) freedom of religion, education and press.
- 6) allocation of three-fifths of the Empire's revenues for local requirements.⁴³

They were eventually convinced to leave the building and allowed free passage to a British ship. The incident was followed by a 'reign of terror' in Constantinople against local Armenians and the expulsion of several thousand of them to eastern Anatolia.⁴⁴ The attack on the Bank indicated that the revolutionaries had realized that their confrontation tactics of 1895 had not had the desired effect on the Powers and that a more direct attack was needed. The demands were indicative of the wide gulf that separated the aspirations of the revolutionaries and the concessions the Ottoman government would or could make.

Throughout 1896 the Armenian revolutionaries had been hoping to gain the active support of another dissident, though considerably less numerous and active, group in eastern Anatolia, the

⁴³R. Jerrahian, "Outcome of Congress...", op.cit., p. 69. While many Armenians wished also for Ottoman permission to emigrate from the area, this was not one of the demands of the revolutionaries, and in fact was the opposite of what they wanted. They were trying to establish the credibility of an Armenian majority in eastern Anatolia and thus a rationale for an Armenian state or autonomous region.

⁴⁴These Armenians were probably far from welcome in eastern Anatolia, since the Muslims were constantly afraid that in some vilayets the Armenians might in fact constitute a majority of the population. In addition, the Armenians exiled included many known troublemakers, a type little needed in the region.

'Young Turkey' Party. As early as January 1896, consul Hampson in Mush was reporting on a growing group of Muslims dissatisfied with Abdulhamid's government, though not for the traditional reasons:

"Even in this distant province there is evidently a strong and growing discontent among the educated and intelligent Mussulmans with the Central Government at Constantinople. The feeling that this continued mal-administration is not only impoverishing the country but seriously endangering its very existence, seems to be spreading rapidly. Turks have not hesitated to say to me that if the Sultan continues to be ruined by the unscrupulous and lying clique at Yildiz, Turkey cannot but be ruined; that there will never be any real improvement until there is a Parliament, and even that, if Abdul Hamid persists in refusing to grant this... he must and will share the fate of Abdul Aziz... Many Mussulmans now believe that no real improvement can be hoped for until there are radical changes at Constantinople, and the power of directing the Sultan's views, and of appointing officials is removed from the hands of the Yildiz clique."⁴⁵

In March 1896, Consul Hallward called the 'Young Turkey' party in Diarbekir "...one of the principal elements of disorder,"⁴⁶ in the city. He even implicated the vali and several members of his administration with the group. In Erzeroum the party was well known among the population and was said to have many sympathizers among the civil and military officials of the city.⁴⁷ Many believed that they had cooperated with the Armenians in the seizure of the Ottoman Bank in August. By early 1897, a Young Turk contingent in Van was reported to "...be becoming rather prominent in this town."⁴⁸

⁴⁵Hampson to Cumberbatch, 263 of 28 January 1896, F.O., 424/186.

⁴⁶Hallward to Cumberbatch 26 of 17 March 1896, F.O., 424/187.

⁴⁷Graves to Herbert, 222 of 4 September 1896, F.O., 424/188.

⁴⁸Williams to Currie, 202 of 22 February 1897, F.O., 424/191.

The activity of the Young Turk party in eastern Anatolia was confined primarily to secret meetings and the posting of occasional placards on walls. The focus of their propaganda was against the person of Abdulhamid and his advisors, blaming them for the decline of the Empire.⁴⁹ They advocated either assassinating Abdulhamid or somehow replacing him legally, but left little room for compromise. In 1897, two doctors who had been exiled from Constantinople for their Young Turk activities were arrested again in Erzeroum in 1897 for alleged subversive activities. The arrests aroused a great deal of interest and surprise since it was highly unusual for Muslims to be charged with political crimes.⁵⁰ Despite all of these indications of widespread 'liberal' dissatisfaction with the regime, the Young Turks were hardly public opinion in eastern Anatolia and spoke for only a small segment of Muslim society.

⁴⁹An example of their placards is the following:
"Fellow countrymen, we have often invited you to union and agreement. Thank Heaven, our cry has not been in vain. Now the time has come for the good news. We have all understood that the greatest enemy of the Islamic and Ottoman world is the great assassin Abdul-Hamid and his crew. He wishes to bury us and our country alive in the grave which his bloody hands have dug for us; but let him be assured that he himself will occupy it. For in whatever way possible we will remove their persons from our midst--we will shed blood--we will save our honour and our country.

Brothers, most of the Ulema of our faith and the chiefs of our army belong to our Society; they share our ideas and aspirations. Fear not, be ready when the signal is given. Invite Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and our other fellow countrymen, for they are also children of the country--they live in it, their interests are mutual, and their rights are equal. This is our religion and our law." Currie to Salisbury, 163 of 4 March 1897, F.O., 424/191.

⁵⁰Graves to Currie, 137 of 5 February, F.O., 424/191.

With the gradual return to the semblance of order familiar to eastern Anatolia the reforms, the revolutionaries, and the Young Turks faded from the spotlight. Many Armenian businessmen emigrated from the area when possible, though difficulties were placed in their path by the government.⁵¹ The peasantry was preoccupied with trying to recover from the losses incurred during 1895-6 and the Kurds were gradually being subdued by the forces of government in the region.

PART IV

It can be readily seen from the material presented in this and the previous chapter that it was highly unlikely that the events of 1894 and 1895 were part of a government conspiracy to exterminate the Armenians in eastern Anatolia. This view, however, is not readily accepted, and the dominant interpretation among many contemporary scholars and virtually all of those writing in the nineteenth century is that the massacres were a direct reflection of Ottoman policy aimed at exterminating a troublesome segment of the population. In a recent book on the Armenian revolutionary movement which is both scholarly and in most cases accurate, Louise Nalbandian nevertheless makes the following judgement of Ottoman policy during the 1894-6 period:

"The repressive measures of the government were part of a program that went beyond the stamping out of revolutionaries. It became apparent that the Porte, as part of its plan for Islamic revival, had intentions of

⁵¹ Waugh to Currie, 387 of 18 May 1897, F.O., 424/191.

placing all Armenians--men, women, and children, both guilty and innocent--into a single category marked for extinction. The Porte aimed at the destruction of the whole Christian nation. In pursuit of this cruel policy a series of organized massacres commenced in 1894 and continued through 1895 and 1896. Thousands of unarmed Armenians were the helpless victims of these brutal crimes. The exact number of dead cannot be accurately determined, but numbers vary from conservative figures of about 50,000 to as high as 300,000 persons."⁵²

It was commonly accepted that Kurdish activities against the Armenians were a result of direct orders from Constantinople, as well as the activities in the cities. The Sultan was seen to have "...embarked on a series of planned massacres..."⁵³ to "...rid the country of this hated race which was provoking foreign intervention."⁵⁴ As late as 1907, the British Ambassador in Constantinople was still speaking of "...the long established and rooted policy of the Palace of gradually eliminating by furtive and intangible methods the Armenians in those regions."⁵⁵ By this time the spectre of the massacre had receded from view, but the policy was seen as the same.

Europeans who were friendly to the Ottoman Empire and not particularly sympathetic toward the Armenians usually conceded that the events of 1894-6 were a reflection of Ottoman policy, but they refused to concede extermination as the goal and saw the massacres as unavoidable. Mark Sykes expresses this view in

⁵² Nalbandian, op.cit., p. 102.

⁵³ Jerrehian, op.cit., p. 68.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁵ O'Connor to Grey, 40 of 17 January 1907, F.O., 424/214.

the following passage from Dar ul-Islam:

"How massacres could well have been avoided is hard to imagine. The Armenians insisted on threatening revolution; openly boasting that the Powers would help them; silently intrigued against the Government; silently betrayed one another's intrigues; collected arms and gave offence to Moslems, and yet possessed no more cohesive fighting power or military capacity than rabbits. On the other hand, their enemies, the Turks and Kurds, the bravest and boldest of men, were so ignorant that they believed the Armenians would be assisted by the Christian Powers."⁵⁶

Many of the observers in eastern Anatolia were extremely hard on the Armenian revolutionaries, claiming the guilt for the death of thousands of Armenians rests with them:

"There can be no doubt that the fanatical outbreaks of the last year were largely due to the insensate and criminal actions of a handful of revolutionaries, directed and controlled by some central committee outside the country."⁵⁷

These writers recognized that to the Ottoman government the Armenian revolutionaries appeared to be a very real, and in their eyes, unjustified, threat to their continued rule in a large section of the Empire. The policy of repression, not extermination, was seen as a logical effort to nip this movement in the bud before it gained more popularity or convinced the Powers to intervene.⁵⁸ After the initial massacres in 1894, Arminius Vambery, a close friend of Abdulhamid for several

⁵⁶Mark Sykes, Dar ul-Islam (London: Bickers and Sons, 1904), p. 116.

⁵⁷Williams to Currie, 191 of 20 October 1896, F.O., 424/189.

⁵⁸Warkworth, op.cit., p. 128.

years, recorded the following conversation with the Sultan:

"I have been, so to speak, compelled to take these drastic measures. By taking away Rumania and Greece, Europe has cut off the feet of the Turkish State Body. The loss of Bulgaria, Servia, and Egypt has deprived us of our hands, and now by means of this Armenian agitation they want to get at our most vital parts, tear out our very entrails--this would be the beginning of total annihilation, and this we must fight against with all the strength we possess.⁵⁹

The troubles in eastern Anatolia must, then, be seen in the context and through the eyes of an Ottoman government and population which was extremely sensitive to European interference and threatened loss of territory. The Sason incident, which most probably was the result of direct orders from Constantinople, was part of an Ottoman policy of bringing order to eastern Anatolia. As the Sultan was reported to have said in 1892 of the Armenians: "I will give them a box on the ear which will make them smart and relinquish their revolutionary ambitions."⁶⁰ *

As has been shown in the previous sections, however, the massacres of 1895 were not the result of a government policy, but rather the result of a combination of the dynamics of the region, the Muslim's perception of the government's policy, the actions of the Powers and the revolutionaries. All of these factors combined in 1895 to produce the worst disorders in the region since 1879. A member of Abdulhamid's government who later

⁵⁹ Arminius Vambery, The Story of My Struggles (London: T. Fisher and Unwin, 1904), ii, p. 368.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 368.

became a Young Turk provides a good insight into the events of the fall of 1895 in his book The Diary of A Turk. He portrays the Armenians as having been happy in the Empire until the arrival of the revolutionaries, who are always seen as an outside, European inspired force. All the Muslims, he claimed, were aware that the revolutionaries wanted autonomy and knew what this would do to the Empire. He then spoke of acts of 'outrage' committed by Armenian revolutionaries on Muslim women and children, an obvious attempt to provoke a Muslim 'fanatical' reaction by the Armenians. After much provocation, the population "...took the law into their own hands and put down the Armenian movement in the manner we all know. The Sultan, who was eating his heart out at his inability to punish the revolutionaries, simply connived at the doings of the enraged populace, if he did not actually instigate and encourage them."⁶¹ Public statements by government officials, while probably coming under the category of propaganda in most cases, bear out this interpretation of events. The Armenians were seen as the aggressors and the Powers, represented by the consuls, were seen as being in collusion with them.⁶²

The government's policy in dealing with the threat of the revolutionaries was a success in the sense that after 1897 the power and influence of the revolutionaries with the Armenian

⁶¹Halil Halid, The Diary of A Turk (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1903), p. 130.

⁶²Currie to Kimberley, 206 of 4 September 1894, F.O., 424/178.

community and in Europe declined considerably. The government took advantage of the selection of Sason by the revolutionaries as a point of confrontation and gambled that the Powers would not react too strongly to a crackdown. By 1894 the government had decided to cease distinguishing between Armenians and the revolutionaries, a move that most of the Muslim population of the region had already made. Sason was meant to be an example to Armenians of what they could expect from the government if they continued to support the revolutionaries, and an indication to the Muslims that the government was taking the initiative. The Muslims learned their lessons from Sason, perhaps too well, but few Armenians did. Since the key to the revolutionaries strategy was to provoke the government in order to secure European support, Sason merely spurred them on in their efforts. Perhaps the government had fooled itself by its own propaganda, believing the revolutionaries had virtually no support among the people and therefore that a show of force would bring them into line.

Once the Powers began to react to Sason there was little else the government could do directly to deal with the Armenians. It was at this point, in the fall of 1894 and throughout 1895, that the dynamics of the region and the time took over the direction of events. The Muslim population believed it knew what the Sultan wanted, which was almost the same as their own goals. The Kurds found new justification for traditional activities and thus redoubled their efforts. The urban notables with their supporters in the cities, needed only a small spark

to set them off. The central government could do nothing to prevent these disorders because the desire for vengeance and booty was too widespread. Orders were sent to the local governments to maintain order when possible and once violence broke out, to contain it as quickly as possible. At the same time, no overt action was made at any moment to coerce the various Muslim groups into passivity until after the fall of 1895.

The government certainly did not regret the events in the vilayets, since they served the purpose of frightening most Armenians away from active participation in the revolutionary movement. It probably saw European intervention in the form of a new reform program as inevitable anyway, and in fact was able to use this intervention as an excuse for not taking the lead in dealing with the central problem of the region.

20

CHAPTER TEN: The Army and the Kurds.

The prime consideration of the Ottoman government in its actions in eastern Anatolia was first to establish and then maintain its dominance over the various local powers and groups. Most of the trends and variations in the policy of the central government discussed in the preceding chapters were a result of this fact. The emphasis on the Islamic character of the Empire and hence the favoring of the Muslim elements in the population was a factor, but for the most part was not the determining one. Likewise, there was a definite desire on the part of the government to introduce western-type changes into the Empire, but they were not to be introduced at the cost of weakening the control of the central government. The central government's maneuvers with the Kurdish tribes and local notables, and the sacrifice of the Armenians, were directly related to the government's desire to control the region and its inability to do so by sheer strength alone.

The government's policies toward the Kurds and notables, while important, were not the primary basis of Ottoman control of eastern Anatolia. From the time the region had been first fully subdued by the central government in the 1840's, the Ottoman army, while relatively small, had been able to assert its ability to defeat virtually any combination of local forces. Because of this military superiority there was little

danger during the Hamidian period of the region being lost by internal rebellion. The presence of large Russian armies across the border, Persian claims on parts of the region, and the fear of some form of British protectorate because of the Armenians made it crucial that the Ottomans have more than just the control of the region provided by their military superiority and this led to the policies referred to above. The strength of the army could have prevented many of the disorders endemic to the region throughout the Hamidian period, but at the cost of the affection of large segments of the local population, an affection needed in case of conflict with an outside power. Centralization, the overriding goal of the Hamidian government, thus had to take a back seat to conciliation. With this in mind, we can more easily understand the relation between civil and military forces in the region.

The Ottoman army was the ^{instrument} instrument of government most clearly tied to the central authority in Constantinople, and in particular to the Sultan. The local governments were not elected by the local populations, but of necessity they were staffed primarily by local people. Valis and other high officials were generally assigned to areas far from their homes, but they still had to depend on an army of administrators all with local interests. The army, with more discipline than local governments could hope to muster, and with a structure more amenable to manipulation from Constantinople, operated with fewer local

complications. The generals and higher officers were usually appointed by the Sultan from among his relatives and courtiers in Constantinople while the lower rank officers and most of the troops were stationed in areas far removed from their homes, thus preventing possible conflicts of interest.¹

The primary duty of the army in eastern Anatolia was defense against a Russian attack. In this region this task involved much more than the manning of forts and maintenance of the readiness of the army; just as important was the loyalty of the local population. Because of the character of the Hamidian regime and the activity of the Armenian revolutionaries, the 'population' in Ottoman terms meant the Kurds and Turks. The army could be influential in the maintenance of this loyalty by both its actions and its lack of action at strategic times.

The local governments in the vilayets had no control over the military forces stationed in their areas. The Fourth Army Corps, which had responsibility for all of eastern Anatolia, had its headquarters at Erzincan, a town west of Erzeroum, and all requests by local governments for the use of troops had to go through this headquarters before approval could be given. The commander (mushir) of the Fourth Army Corps (this post was held by a

¹This was possible with the army because there was little need for interaction between the soldiers and the local population. Administrators, on the other hand, required considerable familiarity with the area in which they were expected to work. The central government had made attempts in the past to substitute officials from Constantinople for local ones in matters such as tax collection, and the results had been generally unsatisfactory.

brother-in-law of the Sultan, Zekki Pasha, during most of the Hamidian period) was responsible to the Porte, though in actual fact he was usually in direct communication with the Palace. Since permission to use troops for local purposes was seldom given, this apparent lack of cooperation between the civil and military in the region was criticized constantly by the consuls. The Sultan was anxious to see to it that no local official attained any influence within the army and wanted to keep it a completely separate force in the region. The central government could not keep track of every activity of the various local governments, but it could closely monitor the actions of the army.

The character of Zekki Pasha, the mushir of the Fourth Corps, was a matter of some controversy among the consuls and European travellers who were acquainted with him. Most of the consuls had a very unfavorable image of him, blaming much of the trouble in the area on his attitude of favoritism toward the Kurdish tribes and his refusal to use troops to maintain order. Zekki Pasha was a Circassian, the brother of one of Abdulhamid's favorite wives, and was a young man for his position (b. 1855).² Like the official discussed in an earlier chapter, Abbedin Pasha, Zekki Pasha was a man on the rise in the Ottoman administration. "Before all things the man is ambitious, and he is regarded throughout Turkey as a possible regenerator of the Ottoman Empire."³

¹Clive Bigham, A Rise Through Western Asia (London: MacMillan & Co., 1897), p. 52.

²Ibid., p. 53.

Unlike Abbedin Pasha, he was less interested in reform and more in cooperation with his Sultan and doing his job well. Like Abbedin, his position was of extreme importance to the government and the Sultan was willing to tolerate his popularity and take the risk of him becoming excessively powerful. Zekki Pasha had a difficult role to play, but proved his skill through his longevity at his post.

The mushir, besides being a good politician, was a good officer. While not sharing the qualities of the new group of young officers emerging from the Ottoman military and technical schools, he was nevertheless a 'modern man'. In Erzincan he built a clothing factory, a school for orphans, instituted a bicycle corps in the army, built flour mills, a large infantry barracks, new roads, and planted 80,000 trees to protect the town from disease by eliminating swamps.⁴ He worked his officers and troops extremely hard by Ottoman standards, though it was reported by most sources that he was very popular among the troops. The junior officers, many of whom were by the late 1890's members of the Committee of Union and Progress, tended to resent him both because he was such a firm disciplinarian and because of his close connections with the Palace.

Just as the Kurdish agas, local notables, and vilayet officials were rivals for power in the region and were in more or less constant competition with one another, Zekki Pasha was

⁴Sykes, Report, 79 of 4 September 1906, F.O., 424/210.

in competition with the valis. Several valis attempted at various times to assert more authority than the government intended them to have, and it was Zekki Pasha's function to contest this power for the central government. One of the more popular points of contention between the mushir and the valis was the Hamidieh organization, a favorite of the mushirs and hated by most of the valis. In 1892, Zekki Pasha managed to use his influence to have the vali of Erzeroum dismissed after a disagreement over the role of the Kurds in the area.⁵ In 1897, he managed the same feat with a vali in Van over the same issue.⁶

Zekki Pasha's greatest rivalry was with Rauf Pasha, the vali of Erzeroum. Rauf was a very competent administrator and was popular in the vilayet. He was one of the few valis who managed to collect revenues on time, handle the Armenians with a minimum of trouble, and generally managed to keep things in the Erzeroum area quiet. Rauf was also one of the few valis who was able to defy Zekki Pasha frequently and the result was several attempts by the mushir to have the vali replaced. All these attempts failed, however, Rauf being too valuable an administrator and a useful counter to Zekki's growing influence. Even the mushir, who had the closest connections with the Palace of any official in the region, was evidently not trusted completely and needed to be balanced and kept occupied with

⁵Graves to Ford, 78 of 12 August 1892, F.O., 424/172.

⁶Elliot to Currie, 135 of 1 September, F.O., 424/192.

local rivalries. Not content with this check, Zekki Pasha proceeded to have his friends placed in the lesser positions in the Erzeroum vilayet, hoping to force Rauf Pasha to resign.⁷ Rauf Pasha did offer his resignation in 1900, but it was refused by the Sultan. His successes in the administration of the vilayet had impressed the Ottoman government and had apparently angered the Russian government, which in turn made him even more popular in Constantinople.⁸ Zekki Pasha was able only to undermine Rauf Pasha's attempts at reform in Erzeroum, but unable to unseat him.

The key to Zekki Pasha's role in the region, and therefore the role of the army, can be seen in his relations with the Kurds, and more particularly the Hamidieh Kurds. Much has already been said of the Ottoman policy of using the Kurdish tribes to establish a new Muslim foundation for Ottoman rule in eastern Anatolia, to counter the influence of the local notables, and to suppress the Armenians. This Kurdish policy aroused much opposition in Constantinople, in Europe, and in eastern Anatolia itself. It was Zekki Pasha's task to protect the Kurds and at the same time to try to keep their offences at an acceptable level through pressure and the implied threat of military action.

Zekki Pasha had been one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Hamidieh regiments, wanting them to be a counter

⁷Graves to Currie, 213 of 1 November 1897, F.O., 424/192 and Graves to Currie, 6 of 17 June 1897, F.O., 424/192.

⁸Report on Erzeroum during Quarter ended 31 March 1901, 17 of 31 March 1901, F.O., 424/202.

to the Russian cossacks and for political reasons. He was in charge of the regiments, protected their members from presecution and arranged for their training. The European observers in the region ascribed to Zekki Pasha considerable ulterior motives for his attachment to the Hamidieh, seeing it as an attempt to build up a private power base. As the following account from consul Graves shows, he was given credit for having a large role in the government's policy:

"Zekki Pasha, and a clique of military advisors of the Sultan, chief of whom have been Shakir Pasha and the late Dervish Pasha, have, for purposes of their own, built up a beautiful fiction on the subject of the Kurd tribes, which his Imperial Majesty is, no doubt, glad to believe, and which it will therefore be difficult to destroy. This is to the effect that the Kurds are a gallant and warlike race, personally devoted to the Sultan, though impatient of ordinary civil control; that their misdeeds in the way of rapine are grossly exaggerated by the civil authorities and in foreign Consular reports; and that to allow the said civil authorities to use repressive measures towards them would perhaps result in a civil war of great difficulty and doubtful issue. But if, on the other hand, the control of the Kurds be left to Zekki Pasha, they will not only remain faithful to the throne, but will furnish a splendid contingent of some 30,000 cavalry to serve as the first line of defence of the Empire in Asia and as a counterpoise to the 'rebellious' Armenian population."⁹

This is a tempting explanation of Ottoman policy, but one which becomes more doubtful with closer examination. It is true that the government's knowledge of the state of affairs in eastern Anatolia was heavily dependent on information supplied by the mushir and on his counsel, but it is unlikely that he would have

⁹Graves to Currie, 213 of 1 November 1897, F.O., 424/192.

been able to fool the government on either the likelihood of a rebellion or the military value of the Kurds. There were many instances when valis demanded troops to deal with local Kurdish outbreaks and their requests were seemingly unreasonably refused by Zekki Pasha. The mushir claimed that excessive use of troops against Kurds would only encourage a large scale armed rebellion.¹⁰ There seems to have been little likelihood of this type of rebellion actually occurring, but Kurdish loyalty to the Ottoman government would have been weakened if many of the valis' requests were granted. Zekki was concerned with guaranteeing that several thousand Kurds would supply a loyal and willing fighting force in the event of war, and the valis desire for civil order was sacrificed.¹¹

In line with this policy, Zekki Pasha succeeded in blocking a plan of the reform commissioner Shakir Pasha to move troops into the Dersim area in 1897 to end the Kurds annual forays into the Kharput area. The area was not to be the object of a punitive expedition, but was to have been occupied. This plan was foiled by Zekki Pasha's refusal to cooperate and his arguments with the Palace over the issue.¹² In addition, the Kurdish agas arrested in December 1896 as a result of the disturbances in the fall were quietly released after intervention on their behalf by the

¹⁰Crow to Currie, 143 of 5 September 1897, F.O., 424/192.

¹¹Maunsell to Currie, 236 of 7 December 1897, F.O., 424/192.

¹²Cumberbatch to Currie, 261 of 21 February 1896, F.O., 424/186.

mushir. He was so influential throughout the region that no local judge or administrator could withstand pressure exerted by him or on his behalf.

Efforts by the valis to handle Kurdish violence on their own were also generally frustrated by the mushir. The usual policy was to hold the head of the Hamidieh regiment responsible for any infraction of the law committed by Kurds under his command. This was supposed to make it easier to control the Kurds, but with the system of justice operating in the region it only served to make the situation worse. Since the aga was an officer, he was tried in a military court which was under the direct supervision of Zekki Pasha. The result of the trials of Hamidieh officers in the military court at Erzincan was virtually always acquittal or nominal fines. An attempt by the vali of Van in 1902 to alter this policy and try the individual Kurdish offender in the civil courts was foiled by the influence of the mushir. It was attempted in the Hakkari sandjak of Van, but the mutesarraf, Zia Pasha, was a close friend of Zekki Pasha and refused to follow the orders of the vali in regard to treatment of Kurds.¹³ There was nothing the vali could do short of a showdown with Zekki Pasha, a confrontation he was bound to lose.

Ottoman policy toward the Kurds in eastern Anatolia began to shift gradually in 1899 as fear of a Russian attack lessened

¹³ Satow, Van, to O'Connor, 46 of 28 February 1902, F.O., 424/203.

somewhat, the Armenian revolutionaries became less of an immediate threat, and it became evident to many, including the Sultan, that the Hamidieh Kurds were perhaps causing more trouble than they were worth. A new Grand Vizier, Izzet Pasha, replaced the Arab Abul Huda who had been very pro-Kurdish and who had exercised great influence with the Sultan.¹⁴ Ottoman policy at the center was undergoing a gradual change and it was reflected in Zekki Pasha's attitude in eastern Anatolia. He began to take more serious action against Kurdish outbreaks of violence and in 1900 abandoned his old feud with Rauf Pasha and moved against the Kurds in the Erzeroum vilayet.

Part of the reason for the shift in policy may have been that the Hamidieh organization, when given a virtual free hand as it had since 1892, was in the process of consolidating many of the Kurdish tribes that had been broken up in the 1850's. When the Kurdish derebeys had been deprived of their power the tribes had been relatively leaderless and therefore much easier to handle. The situation was evidently changing by 1900:

"...the Turks have taken great trouble to get rid of the old ruling families in Kurdistan but now the various Hamidieh cavalry leaders, themselves created and given rank by the Sultan, bid fair to occupy the places of the lost 'derebeys', and this, too, with good arms and a certain organization supplied them by the Government."¹⁵

Despite all these developments, new Hamidieh regiments were being

¹⁴Block to O'Connor, 85 of 1 May 1899, F.O., 424/198.

¹⁵Maunsell to de Bunsen, 126 of September 1900, F.O., 424/200.

formed as late as 1901 in the Erzeroum vilayet and elsewhere.¹⁶ The policy of using the Kurds could not be repudiated by the Sultan without repudiating the entire Ottoman policy for the region. By 1907 and 1908 the government was taking even more energetic action against the Kurds, but all within the confines of the policies set out early in the Hamidian period. Attempts were made in 1908 to have Zekki Pasha dismissed, but his cooperation in the new policy of prosecuting Kurdish lawbreakers, his diligent execution of orders from the Palace, and most importantly his close identification with both the Sultan and the policy made his dismissal virtually impossible while Abdulhamid reigned.¹⁷

¹⁶Lamb to O'Connor, 97 of 2 December 1901, F.O., 424/202.

¹⁷O'Connor to Grey, 40 of 17 January 1908, F.O., 424/214.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: The Decline of Ottoman Influence, 1901-08.

By 1901 Abdulhamid could take considerable comfort in the fact that he had been ruling an Empire pronounced dead by many observers at his accession a quarter of a century earlier. Though surrounded by imperialist European Powers, the Empire retained its territorial integrity throughout the Hamidian period, losing only the North African dependencies, which had never been an integral part of the Empire. There seemed to be prospects for only more of the same at the turn of the century. The Sultan's rivals within the government were all under control, closely supervised by his intricate spy system, those totally alienated from the regime were in Europe and not seen as a threat to the government, and dissatisfaction within the army was thought to be confined to a few lower-grade, overly westernized, officers, all of whom were closely watched. When Abdulhamid had become Sultan in 1876, the Empire appeared to be facing the very real possibility of disintegration and his primary goal was therefore survival. All his policies were centered on this goal and in this context they were a success since he and the Empire did indeed survive. The renewed interest by the government in the well-being and satisfaction of the Muslim population of the Empire, reflected in the government's 'Arab policy' and in its policies in eastern Anatolia, coupled with an attempt to control economic and educational modernization were the two pillars of Hamidian

domestic policy. It becomes evident in an examination of the post-1908 period and modern Turkey, that the latter policy, controlled modernization, was doomed to failure, but this thesis is concerned primarily with the fate of the 'Muslim policy', especially as it manifested itself in eastern Anatolia.

The period 1901-08 in eastern Anatolia shows signs of what appears to be a gradual breakdown of the Ottoman system as it was applied in this region. The drive of the central government to impose some form of centralization on the region and to break the power of the Kurds and notables seems to weaken, to lose some of its force. As with any government in power for such an extended period of time, the Hamidian regime appeared to be tired, it seemed to prefer to ride out events rather than control them. The game of balancing power among the various groups in the region was no longer played with the same skill or interest by the element that had either grown bored by winning too often or resigned to the fact that it could never achieve its ultimate goal.¹ This chapter will deal with four examples of this breakdown of the Ottoman system: renewed activity by the Armenian revolutionary groups; the growing independence of a Kurdish coalition in the Diarbekir area; a rebellion in the city of Erzeroum led by local notables; and a similar rebellion in the city of Bitlis. These activities either culminated in the

¹This may appear to be two completely opposite interpretations, but the government was no doubt aware that it did little good to win battles but not the war.

revolution of 1908 or were cut short by it, a question which is larger than the scope of this study.

PART I

To many in eastern Anatolia, the Armenian revolutionary movement had ceased to be a significant threat after 1897. Most of the consuls were sympathetic to the fate of the Armenians in the region and deplored the activities of the Kurds and what they saw as a deliberate Ottoman attempt to suppress and in some cases exterminate a people, but they were not sympathetic to the revolutionaries and their politics of confrontation. As early as October 1896, one consul was able to say that "...for the first time since I have been here I can see a little daylight ahead. The revolutionary movement appears to be scotched. The Turks from highest to lowest, have felt the pinch of poverty, and begin to realize that their welfare is bound up with that of the Armenian population."² The lack of foreign intervention on behalf of the Armenians, even after the massacres, seizure of the Ottoman Bank, and other drastic tactics, had forced the revolutionaries to re-think their position. The reaction of the Ottoman government and, more important, the Muslim population, had been so effective and harsh that most of the Armenian peasants stopped active cooperation with the revolutionary groups which made large scale operation impossible.

²Williams to Currie, 191 of 27 October 1896, F.O., 424/189.

By 1899, the Dashnak organization, by this time completely in charge of the revolutionary movement, was once again becoming active in eastern Anatolia. Its activities were confined primarily to the Mush and Van areas, though for the first time in several years there were bands of armed Armenians reported to be operating near Erzeroum also. The tactics appear to be much the same as those used in 1894-6, with emphasis on recruitment of support within the Armenian community and confrontation with the forces of the government. By 1903 the Mush area, mountainous and with a large percentage of Armenians, was once again in a state of turmoil. Several hundred revolutionaries were again surrounded by Ottoman forces in the Sasun area. The stage seemed to be set for a repeat performance almost a decade after the first Sasun incident. Rumors were spreading throughout the area that the Armenians were going to attempt to capture the city of Mush in which case it seemed impossible to prevent another blood-bath. This time, however, the revolutionaries appeared to have learned from previous experience and did not press for a complete confrontation at Sasun as they had in 1894. After making their presence felt, they simply dispersed and a major incident was averted.

The Sasun incident of 1903 did herald a change however, a change in the degree of cooperation between the Armenians of Sasun and the Kurds. An informal alliance between the two groups had been worked out, with the Kurds supplying the revolutionaries with arms and supplies and refusing to cooperate with the

Ottoman authorities.³ Many of the Kurdish leaders had felt that the general condemnation of the Kurds by Europeans for their supposed role in instigating the massacres of the 1890's was unjustified. They had been manipulated to some extent by the Ottomans during the period and as a result were seen as the main villains, a role they felt they didn't deserve. This, plus the fact that many Kurds admired the daring and bravery of the revolutionaries, made them more reluctant to take action against them.⁴

During most of the 1901-08 period the city of Van and the surrounding area was completely dominated by the Dashnak organization. Kurds sold the Armenians weapons, in many cases guns supplied by the Ottoman government to Hamidieh troops, and avoided any direct clashes with revolutionary groups. The vali of Van, Ali Bey, attempted to crack down on the Dashnaks in 1907, but the result was simply to make them more popular and hence more powerful. Since the revolutionaries lived among the Armenian population in both the city and the villages any attempt by the government to take action against them involved harsh measures against the Armenian population in general. The revolutionaries were so confident of their security that they appeared in the open in Van, carrying guns in public, and fraternizing with officials, but they carefully avoided any direct confrontation

³ Shipley to O'Connor, 112 of 10 November 1903, H.O., 424/205.

⁴ Atamian, op.cit., p. 52.

with local troops. It was reported by consul Dickson in 1907 that they could have easily defeated the local garrison in Van, being able to raise two thousand well armed men in the city and within a few hours an additional three thousand from the villages.⁵ Besides this obvious strength, there was evidently close cooperation in Van between the Dashnaks and the local Young Turk party, with Turkish Muslims on the Dashnak local Committee.⁶

An incident in February 1908, finally touched off the confrontation between the Dashnaks and the local government in Van. An Armenian informer had supplied the vali with the locations of the Dashnaks' arms caches, which troops were at once sent to confiscate. The Armenians fired on the troops and managed to kill several, including the informer. This rebellion lasted for a day and set off a Muslim reaction in the city which resulted in about eighty Armenians being killed. The vali refused to take any action against the Armenians once order had been restored, causing a flurry of telegrams from local Muslims to the Porte and the Palace, demanding the dismissal of the vali. By the summer of 1908 more troops were despatched to Van to root out the Dashnaks, a task they were able to accomplish with little resistance.⁷ Neither the Ottoman government, which had upheld the vali's policy of taking no overt action against

⁵Dickson to O'Connor, 81 of 4 August 1907, F.O., 424/213.

⁶Shipley to Mr. Townly, 15 of 4 January 1905, F.O., 424/208.

⁷Barclay to Grey, 31 of 17 July 1908, F.O., 424/216.

the Dashnaks, nor the Armenians were interested in provoking any confrontations.

The Ottoman government had demonstrated in 1894 and 1895 that it could crush the revolutionaries virtually at will and stave off all their efforts at provoking European intervention at the same time. Once this point was made, and the Armenians ceased to be a major threat to the internal stability of the Empire or region, the government seemingly had little interest in their activities or existence. The Armenian revolutionaries had learned the lessons of the 1890's and were content to build up their organization and popularity, work on alliances with the Kurds and dissatisfied Turks and wait for something to happen of which they could take advantage.

PART II

The notables of the city of Diarbekir were the most troublesome in the entire region throughout the Hamidian period as far as their cooperation with and subservience to the central government was concerned. It was a frontier vilayet in the sense that it bordered on the Syrian desert and thus was constantly the battleground between desert and sown. To preserve order and to maintain strong centralized control would have required the constant presence of a large body of Ottoman troops, something the government was neither prepared nor able to do. Since the

central government had no wish to become embroiled in the politics of the vilayet and the desert to the south, it abdicated most of its responsibility to the notables of the city of Diarbekir. The valis sent to the area were notoriously weak and received virtually no support from Constantinople.

The key to the notables' power was their control of the important trade routes that passed through the area and their control of the agricultural land of the vilayet. In both cases they were in constant conflict with the Arab and Kurdish tribes who tended to disrupt trade and drive the peasants from the land to increase their grazing area. The Ottoman government attempted to maintain a balance between these two groups, preventing the notables from gaining complete power in the vilayet by controlling all the agricultural land and aiding the notables if the Kurds or Arabs became too powerful.

In the period 1901-08 the general decline in the influence of the central government and its decreasing interest in the close supervision of the area was reflected in Diarbekir by the rise of a Kurdish leader, Ibrahim Pasha. From 1905 to 1908 the balance was apparently upset at the expense of the notables and the central government did nothing to right it.

The two greatest powers in the desert area south of Diarbekir had traditionally been the confederations of the Shammar and 'Anazah Arabs. As late as 1878 these great tribal confederations were able to move to the very gates of the city

in the summer, creating havoc for the notables and their peasants. The only thing which prevented further penetration was the incessant feuding of the two groups and the fact that each winter they had to return south in search of grazing land. The smaller Kurdish and Arab tribes, both nomadic and pastoral, bowed to the supremacy of these larger groups and were generally allied to one or the other.

In the early 1880's a Kurdish aga called Ibrahim became the leader of the Milli, a small Kurdish nomadic tribe. He had lived among the Shammar and 'Anazah and had travelled extensively in Egypt and other parts of the Ottoman Empire. He set out to construct a confederation of the small Kurdish, Arab, and Circassian tribes in the area, all under his nominal authority. Although the Milli was a small tribe (no more than thirty tents at this time) it evidently was well respected since it was the remnant of a powerful Milli tribe which had been broken up by the Ottomans in the eighteenth century.⁸ The 'Anazah and Shammar paid little attention to Ibrahim's activities, being embroiled in one of their bitter feuds during this period.

By the 1890's Ibrahim was the leader of a small but relatively powerful group of tribes, though still nothing in comparison the great Arab confederations. This changed radically in the late 1890's when Ibrahim was called to Constantinople and enrolled in the Hamidieh. He was given the rank of Brigadier

⁸Mark Sykes, "The Kurdish Tribes of the Ottoman Empire", Journ. Royal Anthro. Institute, Vol. 38, London, 1908, p.470.

General, supplied with modern arms, and given the authority to supervise the area south of Diarbekir. He founded the city of Veranshehr, which was his headquarters, and his increased prestige as a Hamidieh officer brought more tribes into his confederation. Veranshehr became a great trading center on the route from Mesopotamia to Anatolia and Ibrahim's area of influence began to expand.

The Shammar and 'Anazah were by this time well aware of his activities but made no overt move to oust him. They did continuously raid the caravans going to Veranshehr, however, and by 1904 Ibrahim decided to put a stop to their disruptive activities. He protested to the central government, but it took no action against the Arabs, so Ibrahim attacked on his own. The result was a series of clashes in which neither side emerged as the clear victor but which caused considerable disruption throughout the southern part of the Diarbekir vilayet. These were not armies that were fighting, but loose confederations of tribes, and once they began fighting everything became a legitimate target. The central government finally decided to intervene in the feud, sending a small force to mediate between the two groups. This force was turned back by Ibrahim and its leader, an Ottoman officer, killed. Rather than provoking a greater reaction on the part of the government, this development merely changed its tactics. Ibrahim was evidently worried that he had gone too far, and was rewarded for his services, granted some concessions, and

in return agreed to scale down his feud with the Arabs.⁹

In July 1905, the fighting between Ibrahim and the Shammar Arabs broke out once again. Ibrahim's forces by this time amounted to over 13,000 men and they were causing chaos throughout the vilayet, raiding right up to the gates of Diarbekir. Throughout July and most of August, this situation persisted, with Ibrahim's forces dominating most of the southern part of the vilayet, at the direct expense of the Muslim notables. Orders were eventually sent from Constantinople to Ibrahim to cease his raiding, with which he quickly complied. The feud with the Shammar was probably more of an excuse than a cause of Ibrahim's activities around Diarbekir. The consuls speculated that he was either under orders from Constantinople to weaken the power of the notables in Diarbekir by dominating the countryside, or he was simply demonstrating his capacity for disruption, hoping to convince the central government of his fitness to be the official ruler of the area.¹⁰ In any case, by 1905 the notables of the city were Ibrahim's chief rivals for power and influence, replacing the Arab tribes.

The notables were demanding that Ibrahim be exiled and that Ottoman troops be despatched to fulfill the task. Most of the damage done by Ibrahim's tribesmen in the area around Diarbekir had been done to the property and villages of these notables.

⁹Sykes, Report on Ibrahim, 58 of 1905, F.O., 424/208.

¹⁰Shipley to O'Connor, 80 of 7 August 1905, F.O., 424/208.
and Wilkie to O'Connor, 80 of 25 July 1905, F.O., 424/208.

Their summer houses in the country were burned and since they were responsible for the villages under their protection, these too were dealt with harshly. In addition, the notables were angry because they had lost a lucrative illicit trade with the Shammar Arabs now that Ibrahim dominated the area. Much of the booty siezed by the Arabs had been disposed of by the Diarbekir Arabs at a great profit, but now Ibrahim took all the booty. The final straw for the notables was the favored position of the Christians under Ibrahim. He acted as the protector of Christian villages and favored them over Muslims in most cases, all of which gained him little favor in Diarbekir, though a lot in Mardin and Urfa, towns with heavy Christian populations. It had only been in 1904 that Ibrahim had first moved into the Diarbekir area in strength and the notables were incensed at seeing their traditional influence being threatened by an upstart Kurd who defended Christians. Ibrahim was a direct threat to their power, influence, both local and regional, and their wealth.

The notables attempted to pressure the central government into taking action against Ibrahim by threatening a massacre of Christians in the city and other drastic civil disorders. They forced the vali to send telegrams to the Porte and finally sent their own to the Palace, demanding support against Ibrahim. Word was eventually received from Constantinople ordering Ibrahim to report to Diarbekir. The notables interpreted this as a victory and began to celebrate Ibrahim's defeat. The government had

stalled long enough to send a battalion of troops to the area which served to calm both sides in the dispute. Ibrahim was rewarded again for his services to the Sultan, but told to cease his raiding near Diarbekir and cease harassing the notables. The notables were forgiven for their treatment of the vali and warned not to create any more panics in the city.

There were several reasons the Ottoman government was not altogether displeased by Ibrahim's activity around Diarbekir. His confederation had forced the Arabs to move farther south, thus ending their annual threat to the urban and agricultural areas of the vilayet. By uniting all the tribes in the area, Ibrahim provided a mechanism for maintaining some kind of order and if it was disbanded the result would have been chaotic. The most useful role he fulfilled was as a balance for the notables, who had always been a problem for the government. Besides curtailing their economic influence, he kept them dependent on the central government for support.

In the summer of 1907. the notables of Diarbekir once more demanded that Ibrahim be exiled from the area. He had extended his control to include the city of Mardin and his headquarters at Veranshehr was more prosperous than ever, all at the expense of trade in Diarbekir. He had been able to settle most of the tribal feuds in the area, acting as an arbiter for those involved, and had kept the area south of Diarbekir quiet since the disturbances of 1905. The notables siezed the telegraph

office in November and demanded the dismissal of the vali, who they saw as ineffectual, a reform of the vilayet administration, and the suppression of Ibrahim.

The central government remained calm despite this incident of rebellion, despatching a new vali and an investigating commission. It was reported by the British Ambassador that the Porte seemed little concerned about the situation, believing that the government could at any time by the use of force make themselves masters of the situation.¹² Though this was most probably true in a military sense, it would have meant becoming permanent masters, with all the manpower and expense that would have entailed. Without the notables, Ibrahim would soon become virtually independent, and without him much of the area would relapse into anarchy. The commission sent to Diarbekir reflected this situation when it 'exonerated' Ibrahim and 'pardoned' the notables. This was a severe blow to the latter since they had expected a victory, but it cost them very little. Ibrahim had to consent to the stationing of a few troops at Veranshehr and some of his other towns, but aside from that he was left alone.¹³

In early 1908 the Grand Vizier, Izzet Pasha, asked Ibrahim to proceed to Syria to help protect the Hejaz railway against increasing raids by Arab tribes. He arrived in Damascus in July with several hundred of his men. When the new Young Turk government came into power later in July it decided to end

¹²O'Connor to Grey, 150 of 26 November 1907, F.O., 424/213.

¹³Heard to Barclay, 63 of 8 April 1908, F.O., 424/215.

Ibrahim's quasi-independent status and ordered him to report to Constantinople. Too wise for this familiar Ottoman ploy, Ibrahim and his men set out across the Syrian desert once again to return to Veranshehr and protect his life's work against the new government. Troops were despatched to cut him off but he and a few of his men managed to evade them. Once in Veranshehr he found himself surrounded by Ottoman troops. His confederation began to disintegrate around him and he was eventually killed during a skirmish with the army.¹⁴

PART III

The government had managed to hold its own in the troubles in the Diarbekir area, though the notables had exercised more independent action than it would have permitted in earlier years. A more difficult test of government control of events in the region was to come from the city of Erzeroum in 1906 and 1907 and once again the urban Muslim notables played the central role. With the Armenian revolutionaries relatively inactive and the Hamidieh Kurds no longer guaranteed freedom of action, the notables were emerging as the chief source of power in the region. They had always been the group with which the government had had the most problems controlling since the struggle was more sophisticated than that between government and Kurds or Armenians. The central government had decided several years

¹⁴Lowther to Grey, 9 of 28 September 1908, F.O., 424/217.

earlier to depend on the notables, or local governments, for tax collection and administration of the countryside, a task too complicated and expensive for centralization. Because of this economic and administrative dependence, and because the notables controlled the urban and much of the rural population, the government and its representatives in the vilayets found it necessary to compromise with this group in the allocation of power and responsibility.

The Erzeroum vilayet, like all the others, was in perpetual financial difficulty. The annual income of the vilayet was approximately 200,000 Turkish pounds and under ordinary circumstances expenses averaged about 300,000 TL. In 1905, the military expenses alone were more than the average expenses and the vilayet was unable to correct the deficit without aid from Constantinople or heavy increases in taxation. The central government refused any aid and in fact demanded more money to meet the costs of the war in the Yemen.¹⁵ The vali's position was becoming increasingly tenuous since salaries could not be paid, pensions remained unpaid, and the peasants were faced with large tax increases.

In March 1906, the central government announced that a new poll tax was to be instituted in the vilayet to raise the money needed by the government for the war. The Muslim notables of the city were incensed at the prospect of paying more and having

¹⁵ Shipley to O'Connor, 62 of 8 June 1905, F.O., 424/208.

their peasants pay more, for something which was to be of no benefit to the vilayet. They attempted to persuade the Christians of the city to join them in a mass protest at the residence of the vali, but the Christians persuaded them to petition the vali instead. When this tactic proved unsatisfactory, the notables began sending telegrams to the Porte, demonstrated in front of the vali's residence and had their retainers and supporters tear down the signs announcing the new tax; all this of course after the by now traditional act of siezing the government telegraph office.¹⁶

The next step was the closure of the market place by the Muslim shopkeepers and a shift in focus to a demand for the recall of the vali instead of repeal of the tax. A stream of telegrams was sent off to the Palace. There were no disturbances in the city, the Christians remained calm and largely uninvolved, and the vali made no attempt to assert his authority. Zekki Pasha was ordered to proceed to Erzeroum as a special commissioner but his departure was delayed and the shops remained closed. The consul on the scene noted with some surprise the orderliness of the demonstration and the spirit of cooperation the Muslim notables displayed toward their Christian counterparts.¹⁷ It was also reported that the troops in the city were openly sympathetic to the notables and would probably refuse to take action against them.

¹⁶ Shipley to O'Connor, 20 of 20 March 1906, F.O., 424/210.

¹⁷ Shipley to O'Connor, 22 of 3 April 1906, F.O., 424/210.

Zekki Pasha finally arrived in April with orders to put an end to the demonstration and arrest the leaders. He was to head a commission which was to find the reasons for the discontent. At the same time, the vali was dismissed and another, one more amenable to the notables, appointed. The Sultan telegraphed to the mufti and the ulema of Erzeroum and told them to "...give religious advice to the Mussulman population."¹⁸ The shops were quickly reopened with the arrival of Zekki Pasha and the demonstration apparently ended.

The original protest had been over the poll tax issue and had had wide support among the entire Muslim population. Since this tax was the result of a direct order from Constantinople, the local population could not openly oppose it without engaging in rebellion against the Imperial government, so they had directed their complaints against the vali instead. Though he had nothing to do with the poll tax, he was the natural pawn in the game. The government could dismiss the vali, giving the people an apparent victory, even though nothing would be done about the poll tax. The focusing on the vali also enabled the government to send a commission to investigate rather than an army to crush a rebellion. This was the scenario that had been played out many times before in eastern Anatolia during the Hamidian period and it had always accomplished its task; to smooth injured or wronged local pride and prestige and at the

¹⁸ O'Conor to Grey, 25 of 9 April 1906, F.O., 424/210.

same time maintain the prestige and power of the central government. This time, however, the government needed the money too badly to allow the commission to work out a compromise and the local Muslim population no longer had the degree of respect for the regime that it once had felt. Besides the fact that 'religious advice' was to do little to make the poll tax more palatable in 1906 (though it may in fact have done so in 1896), the mufti was one of the leaders of the anti-government demonstration.

The protest had quickly gone beyond the poll tax issue anyway, to include such things as the chaotic finances of the vilayet, the poor roads, the buildings in disrepair, the high salaries of officials, and so on.¹⁹ By June the government had still made no attempt to collect the poll tax and the notables had by no means abandoned their opposition to it. Consul Shipley reported that:

"...All the information which reaches me goes to show that the Erzeroum Mussulmans, so far from abandoning the position which they have taken up of freely criticizing the shortcomings of the Administration, have only been encouraged by the success which has hitherto attended their protest to question the right of the former to impose special taxation at all, except for purely local needs."²⁰

The consul went on to point out the danger the Ottoman government faced in this situation, saying that this questioning of the rights of the government was:

¹⁹Shipley to O'Connor, 37 of 12 April 1906, F.O., 424/210.

²⁰Shipley to O'Connor, 57 of 15 June 1906, F.O., 424/210.

"...significant of the extent to which the respect for constituted authority--hitherto a leading characteristic of the Turkish population--has been lessened, and although the Government for the moment seems inclined to adopt a temporizing policy, it is impossible that they can acquiesce in a state of things which, if allowed to continue, can only serve to strengthen the existing spirit of opposition. It is, I venture to submit, here that the danger of the situation lies, for it is felt that any attempt by the Government to use coercive measures unless accompanied by the display of an overwhelming force, would, in the present temper of the Mussulmans, be the signal for a dangerous outbreak."²¹

This danger of a wider and more dangerous outbreak was made more serious by the attitude of the military units stationed in Erzeroum. They had become infected by the prevailing sentiments in the city and would probably have refused to obey orders if asked to arrest the notables. They were angry about lack of pay and tended to blame the draining of the vilayet by the central government for most of their financial problems. The officers too were regarded as unreliable, many being known Young Turk sympathizers.²²

The commission headed by Zekki Pasha stayed only a short time in Erzeroum and accomplished very little toward solving any of the problems in the city. Most of their activity was consumed in trying to find a link between the disturbances and the Armenian revolutionaries or consuls. The Muslims denied vehemently any connection and the commission failed to find any proof.²³ It must have been difficult for the Sultan to believe

²¹ Ibid., p. 61.

²² Ibid., p. 62.

²³ Ibid.,

that his Muslim subjects could take such radical action against the very government which had for so long supported them against Christians and Europeans.

After a quiet summer, the government decided to take action against one of the leaders of the Erzeroum notables, the mufti. In October 1906, he was arrested by the vali and along with two other notables was sent to Trebizond to stand trial. When news of the arrests spread in the city, a large crowd of Muslims broke into the vali's house, siezed him, and carried him to the mosque where he was locked up and forced to order the return of the prisoners. In the meantime, the mob broke into the police headquarters and murdered the chief of police because of alleged mistreatment of the mufti during his arrest. Later the police chief's son and a third policeman involved in the arrests were brutally murdered in the streets.²⁴ The Christians remained uninvolved during these events and the army simply observed after telegraphing to Erzincan for orders and receiving no reply. These unprecedented acts revealed clearly that the government had lost the first round in the struggle with the notables and that the Sultan's government was not held in particularly high esteem by large segments of the Muslim population.

But the poll tax was still on the books. On the 15th of March 1907, the vali of Erzeroum summoned fifty of the leading notables to his residence and read them a decree from the Sultan

²⁴Shipley to Barclay, 115 of 27 October 1906, F.O., 824/210

saying the previous decree exiling all those involved in the disorders of the previous March had been rescinded (a decree which had never been carried out) and that those involved in the October disturbances were granted a general amnesty. He further stated that the poll tax was to paid, but the accumulated arrears of the past two years would be remitted. The vali then said a few conciliatory words and suggested the notables send a telegram of thanks to the Sultan.

The vali had been greeted by silence from the fifty notables, and after the population of the city was informed of the terms it too refused to accept them. On the 16th of March a large but orderly group of Muslims told the vali they were too poor to pay the poll tax and asked him to petition the Sultan to abandon the tax. On the 21st of March the vali announced a reduction of the domestic cattle tax, but this had no effect. On the 25th of March the newspapers announced that both the poll tax and the tax on domestic animals had been abolished. As the British Ambassador said, "I need hardly emphasize the importance of this striking defeat of the Government by their Muslim compatriots."²⁵

After this victory, the notables did not abandon their position of strength vis-a-vis the local and central governments. A loose organization of Muslims was formed, known as the 'committee' which demanded a voice in virtually all affairs of local government. After the victory in March, however, the unity of the

²⁵ O'Connor to Grey, 45 of 25 March 1907, F.O., 424/212.

Muslims in the city began to break up. The committee proved to be too disruptive and troublesome for many and by December 1907, the government was able, with the help of troops from outside the city, to arrest between fifty to sixty of the Muslims involved in the disturbances.²⁶

The events in Erzeroum in 1906 and 1907 are not important for any permanent opposition group which grew out of them or for the frustration of a particular government policy, but rather as a symbol of the weakening of the prestige and influence of the central government in eastern Anatolia. When troops were used, the government could always have its way, but it had always been aware of the fact that it would have to be able to rule eastern Anatolia without the constant use of the army, and it was losing this ability during the 1901-08 period. Just as important was the growing unreliability of the army, which was, of course, to be the ultimate cause of the collapse of the Hamidian regime in August 1908. One must also assume that the government was sincere in its policy of relying on the loyalty and affection of the Muslim population of the Empire as the basis for the regime, and to use troops to coerce this segment of the population would have been too obvious a contradiction.

PART IV

The revolt of the notables in Erzeroum did not occur in a vacuum, but was part of a trend in the eastern Anatolian area, a

²⁶Shipley to O'Connor, 172 of 2 December 1907, F.O., 424/213.

trend which included the activities of the Armenian revolutionaries and Ibrahim Pasha. Nor was Erzeroum the only city to experience a revolt against the government. In Bitlis in June 1907, with virtually no warning, the Muslims in the city siezed the telegraph office and began demanding that the vali be dismissed. The markets were closed on the next day and the vali's residence stormed by a mob, several of his attendants being killed and the vali wounded.

The Muslims in Bitlis were not led by the notables as they had been in Diarbekir and Erzeroum, but by the sheikhs, who had always been powerful in the Bitlis area. The revolt had been organized by a Council of Sheikhs who notified the central government after the first riot that it had 15,000 Kurds under arms and would use them if the vali was not recalled.²⁷ The vali was unpopular with the Turks, Kurds, and Armenians which gave the sheikhs a broad base of support. He had artificially increased the price of grain for his own profit, was capitalizing on the Armenian revolutionaries by posing as a great defender of the area and bribing Kurds to uphold the myth, and to cap it off, he had refused to distribute money sent to Bitlis for relief purposes after a disastrous earthquake in 1906.²⁸

²⁷O'Connor to Grey, 17 of 4 July 1907, F.O., 424/213. The Kurds in the area regarded themselves as more religious than the Turks and maintained close ties with the sheikhs. They were not Hamidiyah and had never recognized the authority of the central government. Their potential strength was about 50,000 men, which, while ineffective as an army, could have caused massive disruption. Dickson to O'Connor, 51 of 6 July 1907, FO., 424/213.

²⁸Dickson to O'Connor, 51 of 6 July 1907, F.O., 424/213.

The central government could do little against the threat of the sheikhs and therefore gave in without a struggle. The vali was replaced and the sheikhs told he would be placed on trial in Constantinople. A new vali was named, a commission sent to investigate, and troops called in to see to it that the Kurds were disbanded. The whole affair was over in a week and once again the government had suffered a defeat.

The sense of power which the notables all over the region must have felt after these events was impossible for the Ottomans to contain. In July 1907 the vali of Kharput, who had been trying to fight corruption in the vilayet, came under strong pressure from the notables of that city. He was completely isolated in the area, receiving only verbal support from the central government and none from those around him. Risings against government authority continued in Bitlis during 1907 and 1908. The notables of Bitlis and Erzeroum even began to cooperate in attempts to curb the activities of the Hamidieh Kurds, who were making travel and commerce in the area a virtual impossibility.²⁹

The picture which emerges from eastern Anatolia in the period from 1905 to 1908 is one of virtual collapse of an Ottoman policy begun twenty five years earlier. The Sultan was largely discredited in the eyes of the Muslim population and was unable to use the Islamic appeal to good effect. The local forces in eastern Anatolia had never been defeated by the central government but only managed and distracted through manipulation

²⁹ Heard to O'Connor, 109 of 3 September 1907, F.O., 424/313.

of the Armenian question, the Hamidieh organization, and other policies. The Islamic policy of the Hamidian government had had great appeal in the 1880's and 90's but by the turn of the century this appeal had largely evaporated. The Armenians had ceased to be a very real threat after 1897 and the Hamidieh came to be more a cause of alienation than a device in procuring loyalty; the Kurds finding a new sense of independence in organization and the rest of the population tiring of their disorders.

The failure of the Islamic policy to ensure long lasting support for the Hamidian regime was due to two main causes. The Islamic character of the regime came to be mistrusted by many Muslims after 1900 because of the growing isolation and despotism of Abdulhamid himself. More important than this, however, was the fact that the policy could only have been a temporary trend in Ottoman history. It had achieved its greatest popularity among those Muslims who felt left out of the westernizing process of the Tanzimat, who were unnerved by the pace of change under the previous regimes, or who were opposed to all change in the Empire. The first two of these groups were satisfied with the rest provided by the Hamidian period and after having a chance to compare westernization with Hamidian despotism, the former didn't look quite as bad as it had in 1876. The last group, those opposed to all change, was considerably less important in the Empire by 1900 and thus was not a sufficient base of support for a government.

Once the Islamic policy and other methods of maintaining the government were weakened, little else remained except the exercise of force. In the early 1900's the Ottomans faced revolts in the Balkans, uneasiness and increased Arab raiding in Syria and Mesopotamia, and a potential war with Russia; few troops could be spared to occupy eastern Anatolia. As a result of all these factors, Ottoman policy in the region, as revealed in the incidents discussed in this chapter, was mainly one of 'hanging on', with few initiatives being taken by the central government.

When news of the revolution and re-instatement of the Constitution of 1876 reached the area in August 1908, it was greeted at first with disbelief, then cautious celebration, and finally joint Muslim-Christian expressions of joy. The lone exception to this was in Bitlis, where the sheikhs at first refused to accept the news and the Armenians dared not react in any way.

CONCLUSION

The Middle East and many other parts of the non-western world suffer many common maladies in the middle decades of the twentieth century. One of the most crucial of these is the growing discrepancies between the ideologies and aspirations of government and those of the mass of the population. The process of modernization has increased its pace considerably in the twentieth century and although the extent of many of its accomplishments is debatable, its creation of a new elite in all these areas is not. Since World War I the Middle Eastern countries have been ruled, in most cases, by these elites who have continued and accelerated such aspects of modernization as secularism, nationalism, urbanization, and so on. The flaw in the process, which has not really become clear until very recent years, has been that the process of modernization has not included as participants a large segment of the population. The peasantry, nomads, as well as many in the towns and cities have retained to a large degree traditional values and customs, neither understanding nor accepting the ideologies and aspirations of their leaders, but rather just tolerating them.

In a sense, the process of modernization has gone too far too fast since World War I, just as it had in the Ottoman Empire from 1800 to 1876. The new 'radical' governments in the Middle East, led by men pulled out of the traditional society by an

elite which needed their services to run the modern state, are attempting to redress this imbalance by meeting tradition halfway in many instances.¹ Thus the new governments in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Egypt are really more Islamic in character than the 'liberal' governments of the 1920-1950 period. Their aim is to carry on with the essential elements of modernization while at the same time recognizing the necessity of integrating them with elements of the traditional Islamic culture. The key word for this study is 'necessity'. Their primary motivation is not necessarily a desire on the elite's part to pay more attention to Islam, though this is a factor, but rather a recognition by them that this attention is necessary for their continued rule.

The picture of the Hamidian period in Ottoman history as one of reaction has hopefully been proven false by this study. While there are many facets to the period, one of the most important which has emerged in the preceding pages is the attempt by Abdulhamid to slow down the process of modernization in some areas, hide it behind a facade of Islamic rhetoric in others, and end it completely in still others. Abdulhamid was perceptive enough to realize that the vast majority of Muslims in the

¹For more on this general theme see the following: C.E. Dawn, "Arab Islam in the Modern Age", Middle East Journal, Aut. 1965; Ibrahim Abu Lughod, "Retreat from the Secular Path? Islamic Dilemmas of Arab Politics", Review of Politics, vol. 28, #4, 1966; Abd ar-Rahman al-Bazzaz, "Islam and Arab Nationalism", Die Welt des Islams, iii, 1954; W.C. Smith, Islam in Modern History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Labib, Z. Yamak, The Syrian Social Nationalist Party: An Ideological Analysis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

Empire were uninvolved in the modernization process, had no vested interests in (just the opposite in most cases) and in fact were becoming more and more openly hostile to it. Change imposed from the top such as that which had begun with Selim III was a dangerous exercise, even the more so when the top was as weak as it had been in 1876. The gradual alienation of ruler and government from the Muslim population, the disillusionment with western type reforms after their apparent failure in the war with Russia, and the resurgence of the strength of the traditionalist groups in the Empire in the 1870's all made a change in Ottoman internal policy necessary.

The Ottoman government was thus faced with a situation similar to that faced by Middle Eastern governments in more recent times, and the solutions of both were similar. The policy of relying on the Muslim elements of the population of the Empire as the primary basis for the government was simply the recognition of political realities not only by Abdulhamid, but by most of the bureaucrats in the Porte who had been ardent westernizers in earlier years.

The main significance of the Hamidian period for Ottoman history lies in its political innovations. In economic terms there was little evidence of significant change in eastern Anatolia, though in others areas there was considerably more. Abdulhamid was interested in promoting material advances, but always within the framework of preserving the established order.

Eastern Anatolia was not a lucrative area for foreign investment and besides that, economic change would have upset the local political situation even more than it perpetually was. For these reasons the region is not particularly useful for studying the economic aspects of modernization during the Hamidian period. In political terms, however, it provides a most useful example. The Hamidian government represents the culmination of the centralizing tendencies begun by Selim III but carried out with more skill and caution. The powers of the government were centralized in the hands of the Sultan much more than in previous years, but he exercised this power with more caution than the bureaucrats of the Porte had done. Thus, in eastern Anatolia the central government was obviously eager throughout the Hamidian period to increase its degree of control, but never at the cost of local loyalties or unity in the Empire.

The key to the whole period which comes through most clearly in eastern Anatolia is the desire on the part of the government to preserve the Empire and to try and forge a new ^{INTRO} kind of unity which the westernized reforms had threatened. More and more people began to refer to themselves as Osmanlis during these years, reflecting their adherence to the Ottoman and Islamic ideals stressed by the government. As a contemporary of the period has written, "The claim which Abd-ul-Hamid has to rank as a power in history is that he perceived the want of unity in the Empire, and that he attempted in his own way to remedy this

evil."¹ In eastern Anatolia this attempt to create a new unity manifested itself primarily in the government's acquiescence in the maintenance of the status quo. Changes were encouraged, but only pushed to a point.

Most of the problems with which the Ottomans and British had dealt with in the 1880's in eastern Anatolia were still there in the first decade of the twentieth century. Officials were still unpaid, corruption widespread, Kurds unruly, Armenians unhappy, too much money being drained by the capital, and so on. The notables were almost as powerful as they had been in the 1880's, despite a period of mild repression in the 1890's and the Kurds were in fact more of a threat to the Empire in 1908 than they had been in 1878. The Hamidieh organization had rekindled many of their ideas about independence and autonomy which had been suppressed since the 1850's. The holding action of the Hamidian regime had done just that; it had held the various forces at work in the region in check, but it had not suppressed their development or genuinely persuaded them to abandon local interests in favor of allegiance to a larger whole. In this sense, then, the period gave the Ottoman Empire a breathing spell in which to ready itself for the resurgence of open change under the Young Turks and later the Republic, but it had failed in its real mission, the creation of a viable Islamic Ottomanism.

¹Ramsay, op.cit., p. 411.

GLOSSARY

- Aga A Persian or Turkish military title of medium grade which became generalized as a low-level courtesy title in many parts of the Ottoman Empire. In this study it denotes the leader of a Kurdish tribe or a Kurd of some importance.
- Amir..... An Arabic title originally meaning 'commander', but usually translated as 'prince'. In Arab areas it is also used as a hereditary title by certain families in Syria and Lebanon.
- Ashiret Usually translated as 'tribe'. It applies particularly to the Kurds and Nestorians.
- Ayan..... Originally tax-farmers in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century who replaced the feudal sipahis. Later they became in turn a kind of landed aristocracy in the Empire. Also referred to as 'country notables'.
- Bedouin An Arabic word meaning desert-dweller, but used only for nomads of Arab speech.
- Beshlik An Ottoman five para piece.
- Bey A Turkish title originally meaning a noble or lesser prince, later any person exercising authority.
- Caliph An Arabic word meaning deputy, adopted as title by the successors of Muhammed in the headship of the Muslim community. The word 'caliphate' is used both for the office of the caliph and his government, and for the territory over which he ruled.
- Defterdar An official keeper of records of income and expenditure for a department, province, or state. In the Ottoman Empire the Minister of Finance was known as the Defterdar.
- Derebey Name given to feudal Kurdish leaders in eastern Anatolia before full impact of Ottoman centralization felt in the nineteenth century.
- Dragoman A Europeanized form of Arabic word for interpreter or translator. They were maintained by both the embassies and the Porte.

- Effendi First used by Ottomans to describe men of religious learning, then literate men in general. Came to be used as equivalent to Mr. in many areas.
- Eyalet word for province before reforms in the 1860's.
- Fatwa A ruling on a disputed point of Islamic Law issued by a mufti.
- Ghazi A warrior for the Faith, carrying out Jihad; sometimes applies to organized bands of frontier raiders.
- Hajj The pilgrimage to Mecca, required of every Muslim if possible. Also used as a title by those who have made the pilgrimage.
- Iltizam Term used in Ottoman Empire for state lands, the taxes of which were farmed out to individuals. The holder of an iltizam, called multazim, levied the land tax from the peasants, and paid a fixed fee to the government. The term was also used loosely for any farming of state revenues.
- Janissary The commonest English form of the Turkish Yeni-Cheri, 'new soldiers', the term applied to the Ottoman infantry, first recruited among Christian prisoners, then by a periodic levy of young men among the non-Muslim population of the Empire. This method passed out of use in the seventeenth century when the Janissaries became a closed corps.
- Jihad The holy war for Islam against infidel states- a collective duty imposed on the Muslim community by the Sharia. . Also applied to the struggle against a person's own baser impulses.
- Jizya Commonest term for the 'poll tax' paid by non-Muslims in a Muslim ruled society. Replaced in Ottoman Empire in 1855 by a tax for exemption from military service.
- Kadi Judge in a court administering the holy law. Until the reforms of the nineteenth century he was also the chief local authority on almost all civil, administrative and municipal matters in the area of his jurisdiction.

- Kaza An Ottoman administrative unit, a sub-unit of the sandjak.
- Kizilbash term used to describe religion of Kurds in the Dersim area of eastern Anatolia. A mixture of Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and local customs.
- Khedive Title used by the autonomous Ottoman viceroys of Egypt.
- Madrasa A school for Muslim learning, often, though not necessarily attached to a mosque.
- Majlis An Arabic word meaning a council or assembly. Used for local councils in Ottoman provinces.
- Millet A recognized religious community in the Ottoman Empire. Each millet enjoyed a considerable measure of internal autonomy, under its own head and hierarchy and, in most matters, subject to its own laws and tribunals.
- Mouavin Word used for Christian assistants to Muslim provincial officials instituted after reforms in 1880's.
- Mudir Ottoman official in charge of the nahiye.
- Mufti An expert in the sharia who gives public decisions in cases of law and of conscience. A mufti was appointed to a province, district or city who was in effect the chief authority in the area on all matters of holy law and jurisdiction. He guided the kadis in the area.
- Mukhtar The headman of a village.
- Mullah A man of religious learning.
- Multazim (See iltizam).
- Mushir Commander of an Ottoman army corps.
- Muslim Arabic word meaning 'one who surrenders himself to God', ie., accepts Islam.
- Mutesarrif Ottoman term for governor of a sandjak.

- Nahiye Ottoman administrative unit, a sub-unit of a kaza. Administered by a Mudir.
- Para Ottoman silver coin, which came into circulation in the seventeenth century. By 1834 it was a small copper coin, one-fortieth of a piastre.
- Pasha Turkish title dating from the thirteenth century. Used especially for governors of provinces.
- Piastre Originally a silver coin worth forty paras, but by 1834 it was depreciated greatly, though still the basic Ottoman currency.
- Rayah A term applied to the peasantry, in late Ottoman times especially to the non-Muslim subjects.
- Redif Ottoman military reserves.
- Sandjak Originally a military administrative unit which after the Tanzimat became an administrative unit ruled by a mutesarraf.
- Sayyid Word used for descendants of Muhammed in the line of Husayn.
- Sharif Arabic word meaning noble, used for descendants of Prophet in line of Husaym .
- Sharia The Holy Law of Islam.
- Sheikh An Arabic word meaning 'old man', used in a wide variety of ways in Islamic lands. Usually denotes a religious dignitary, especially a graduate of a theological school. It is also used for heads of religious orders and sometimes of craft guilds.
- Sheikh ul-Islam Title given to the mufti of Constantinople, who was made head of the entire religious hierarchy in the Empire.
- Shi'a Most important sect in Islam, which began as a legitimist group advocating the claims of 'Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammed. Rapidly developed into a religious movement differing on a number of points from orthodox Islam.

- Sipahi An Ottoman feudal cavalryman.
- Sublime Porte The usual English translation of Bab i Ali, 'high gate', a term applied to the Ottoman Grand Vizierate and hence to the Ottoman Government generally.
- Sufi A Muslim mystic, often a member of a mystic order.
- Sultan..... Word denoting the supreme secular power as opposed to the supreme religious power embodied in the Caliph.
- Sunni A Muslim belonging to the dominant majority group in Islam, usually called orthodox.
- Tahsildar An Ottoman revenue official.
- Taifa A clan, referring especially to the Kurds.
- Tanzimat The general term applied to the Ottoman administrative and governmental reforms of the period 1839-80.
- Pariqa A Sufi brotherhood or order, often associated with a craft guild.
- Timar An Ottoman military fief, more particularly one of the third and smallest category.
- Ulema Scholars in religious subjects. Term used loosely to describe the whole Muslim ecclesiastical class.
- Umma The Muslim community.
- Vali Governor of a vilayet.
- Vilayet An Ottoman province, replacing the eyalet in the 1860's.
- Waqf A pious endowment, usually of land, the revenues of which are assigned to a specific purpose. The maker of the endowment could and often did reserve for himself and his heirs the right to use and share in the revenue of the land.

Zaptieh A Turkish policeman.

Ziamet An Ottoman military fief, much larger than a timar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The source most heavily relied upon in this study of the Ottoman Empire was the British Foreign Office Archives, more particularly the despatches from the eastern Anatolian consulates in the F.O. 424 series from 1876 to 1908. To supplement these despatches as many accounts of contemporary observers and travellers were consulted as was possible. Secondary source material was used primarily for the discussion of the pre-Hamidian period and the section on the Armenian revolutionary movement.

Unpublished Documents:

Great Britain, Foreign Office Archives, Public Record Office, London, F.O., Turkey, 424 Series.

Accounts of Contemporary Observers and Travellers:

Ahmad, R., "A Moslem View of Abdul Hamid and the Powers", Nineteenth Century, July 1895.

Arpee, Leon, The Armenian Awakening: A History of the Armenian Church 1820-1860, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1909..

Austin, C.E., Undeveloped Resources of Turkey in Asia, London, 1878.

Barkeley, Henry C., A Ride Through Asia Minor and Armenia, London, John Murray, 1891.

Of little use for this study. The book is full of general information for travellers such as distances, how to camp, characteristics of local population, conversations, scenery, and so on.

✓ Barton, James L., Daybreak in Turkey, Boston, The Pilgrim Press, 1908.

Bigham, Clive, A Ride Through Western Asia, London, MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1897.

Better than the average travel book of the period, though most of it consists of personal reminiscences. Set in 1895.

✓ Bilinski, Rustem Bey de, "The Situation in Turkey", Fortnightly Review, Vol. 78, Feb. 1902. *not to be used*

-----"Abdul Hamid, The Man, His Character and His Entourage", Nash's Pall Mall Magazine, London, May-August 1903.

✓ Bishop, I.L., "The Shadow of the Kurd", Contemporary Review, lix, London, 1891.

Really an excellent article. Narrative of a journey in eastern Anatolia with a great deal of social observations and perceptive comment.

✓ Bliss, Rev. Edwin Munsell, Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities, London, Edgewood Publishing Co., 1896.

Burnaby, Cap. Fred, On Horseback Through Asia Minor, 2 vols., London, Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1878.

One of the better travel accounts. Burnaby is decidedly pro-Turkish, going out of his way to demonstrate the exaggeration of the local Armenians. There are several good portraits of Ottoman officials and many useful comments on economic conditions. A great part of the book is taken up with talk about the Russians, the preparations for war, and so forth.

Burt, Joseph, The People of Ararat, London, Hogarth Press, 1926.

Buxton, Harold and Noel, Travel and Politics in Armenia, London, 1914.

Of little use for extracting social history. The first section is a travelogue, with chapters on Kurds, Armenians, Russian Armenia, and a section on the duties of the Powers. Second part of book is by Aram Raffi and deals with the historical background of the Armenians, their culture and characteristics.

Campbell, George D. (Duke of Argyll), Our Responsibilities for Turkey: Facts and Memories of forty years, London, 1896.

- o Clayton, E., "The Mountains of Kurdistan", The Alpine Journal, Vol. 13, London, 1887.

Virtually all topographical information, but interesting because he was one of the British consuls for the area.

- Contenson, Ludovic De, Les Reformes en Turquie D'Asie, Paris, 1913.

Of little use for Anatolia, concentrating mainly on the Syrian provinces.

- Cuinet, Vital, La Turquie d'Asie, 4 vols., Paris, 1890-5.

Excellent maps and statistical information. Figures for population, trade, school enrollment, agriculture, and so on. Also contains good detail on administrative organization of the provinces, both civil and military.

- o Davey, Richard, The Sultan and His Subjects, 2 vols., London, Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1897.

- o Dicey, Edward, "Nubar Pasha and Our Protectorate", Nineteenth Century, Vol. 4, 1878.

- Dwight, Henry O., Turkish Life in War Time, London, Wm.H. Allen & Co., 1881,.

Mainly concerned with the war as viewed from Constantinople. There is some analysis of the reform attempts, but not very useful.

- o Elliott, Sir Henry, "The Death of Abdul Aziz and of Turkish Reform". Nineteenth Century, Vol. 23, February, 1888.

- Geffecken, F.H., "The Turkish Reforms and Armenia", Nineteenth Century, Vol. 38, London, 1895.

- o Greene, Frederick D., Armenian Crisis in Turkey, London, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1895.

Deals with Armenian massacres of 1895, with several interesting letters from missionaries in the Sason area at the time. Though somewhat 'racist' in character and strongly anti-Turkish, it contains some good information on local conditions, especially on taxation.

Halid, Halil, The Diary of a Turk, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1903,

An attempt by a westernized Turk to explain his country to Europeans. Most interesting sections are on his education in a local madrasah and his decision to become 'western'. Though a Young Turk, he explains and tries to justify the Sultan's Armenian policy.

Harris, R., Letters from the Scenes of the Recent Massacres in Armenia, London, 1897..

No real substantive information. Consists mainly of descriptions of towns and villages after the massacres from American missionaries.

Knight, Edward F., Turkey, The Awakening of Turkey, The Turkish Revolution of 1908, Boston, J.B. Millet Co., 1910.

Lepsius, Johannes, Armenia and Europe: An Indictment, London, 1897.

Consists mainly of a call for action by Europe against the Ottomans, with vivid portrayals of the massacres.

Lynch, H.F.B., Armenia, Travels and Studies, 2 vols., Beirut, Khayats, 1965 (first published London 1898).

MacColl, Malcom, The Sultan and the Powers, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1896.

Strongly Turkophobe, calling for British or European administration of parts of the Empire. The book reviews British policy and has some sections on the Armenian massacres, based on published consular reports.

Maunsell, Cap. F.R., "Kurdistan", The Geographical Journal, Vol. 3, #2, 1894.

McCoan, J.C., Our New Protectorate: Turkey in Asia, 2 vols., London, Chapman & Hall, 1879.

Excellent study of the Ottoman Empire in the 1870's. While it contains most of the criticisms of Ottoman institutions, and so on, that all the other works contain, it is much more sympathetic in its treatment and holds out some hope. Does not attribute backwardness to racial characteristics. Covers education, roads, administration, agriculture, capitulations, ulama, trade, reforms.....

- ° Millingen, Major Frederick, Wild Life Among The Koords, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1870.
- ✓ Molyneux-Seel, Cap. L., "A Journey in Dersim", Geographical Journal, Vol. 44, #1, 1914.
- ° Mordtmann, A.D. (ed. by Franz Babinger), Anatolien: Skizzen und Reisebriefe Aus Kleinasien, 1850-1859, Hannover, Orientbuch-handlung Heinz Lafaire, 1925.
- Norman, C.B., Armenia and the Campaign of 1877, London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1878.
- Extensive details of the campaign in eastern Anatolia by the Times correspondent. While not too friendly to Ottomans, but more objective than most.
- ° Palgrave, William G., Essays on Eastern Questions, London, MacMillan and Co., 1872.
- Very pro-Turkish collection. There is a great deal of material on the 'Islamic revival' in 1870's and several essays on 'Eastern Christians' which are very critical.
- ✓ Pears, Sir Edwin, Forty Years in Constantinople 1873-1915, New York, 1916
- Pears, Edwin, Life of Abdul Hamid, London, Constable and Co., 1917.
- ° Percy, Earl, Highlands of Asiatic Turkey, London, Edward Arnold, 1901.
- ✓ anon., "Provincial Turkey", Quarterly Review, Vol. 137, October 1874.
- Strongly Turkophile. Lays blame for everything wrong with Ottoman society on the centralizing policy of the Government since Mahmud. Romanticizes about eighteenth century.
- ✓ Ramsay, William M., "The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor: Some of Its Causes and Effects", Proceedings of the British Academy, 1915-16.
- ⊗-----Impressions of Turkey During Twelve Years Wanderings, London, 1897.
- Of very little use in this type of study. Attempts to deal with Ottoman government and officials, but provides only personal anecdotes. Interesting section on Abdulhamid and pan-Islamic movement. Takes a middle ground on the Armenian question.

✓ Rolin-Jaequemyns, M.G., Armenia, the Armenians, and the Treaties, London, John Heywood, 1891.

Concentrates on the various treaties relating to Armenia and the lack of change which they brought about. Relies on diplomatic Blue Books for virtually all his information on Armenia after 1878. Good for Armenia prior to 1878, and relation of Treaty of Paris to Armenians.

✓ Salmone, H. Anthony, "Is the Sultan of Turkey the True Khaliph of Islam?", Nineteenth Century, January 1896.

✓ Scudamore, Frank, A Sheaf of Memories, New York, E.P. Dutton and Co., 1920.

Was a Consul in eastern Anatolia in the 1890's.

✓ Story, Sommerville, ed., The Memiors of Ismail Kemal Bey, London, Constable and Company, Ltd., 1920.

Not of much use for study of Ottoman provinces, but provides good information on politics within the Palace during 1890's.

✓ Sykes, Mark, "The Kurdish Tribes of the Ottoman Empire", Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Journal of, Vol. 38, 1908.

-----, Dar ul-Islam, London, Bickers and Sons, 1904.

Strongly pro-Turkish. Consists mainly of a recounting of travels throughout Anatolia, with some political and social comment interspersed. He blames the Armenian revolutionary activity for triggering the massacres and was surprised more were not killed.

✓ Toyntee, A.J., Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, London, 1916.

✓ Tozer, Rev. Henry F., Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1881.

Primarily a travel book. Filled with ancient history, notes on ruins, personal adventures, and so on. Contains extensive descriptions of topography, people, roads, and so forth, with little useful information on local conditions.

✓ Ubicini, M.A., Letters on Turkey, 2 Vols., London, John Murray, 1856.

- o Vambery, Arminius, The Story of My Struggles, 2 vols., London, T. Fisher and Unwin, 1904.

Very useful for information on Abdulhamid, both in terms of his character and policies. Vambery was one of the only Europeans to attain any kind of close relationship to the Sultan.

- o\ -----, "Personal Recollections of Abdul Hamid II", Nineteenth Century, June, July 1909.

- o Van Lennep, Rev. Henry J., Travels in Little Known Parts of Asia Minor, 2 vols., London, John Murray, 1870.

Concerned mainly with archaeology and with the restraints placed upon missionary work by the Armenians.

- Warkworth, Lord, Notes from a Diary in Asiatic Turkey, London, Edward Arnold, 1898.

- Watson, Sir Chaeles M., The Life of Major General Sir Charles William Wilson, London, John Murray, 1909.

Wilson was one of most important of consuls in the 1880's and while this is a good biography, his period in Asia Minor is made up mainly of quotes from his consular reports.

Studies and General Works:

- o Abu-Jaber, Kamal, "The Millet System in 19th Century Ottoman Empire", The Muslim World, vol. 57, #3, July 1967.

- o Abu-Lughod, Ibrahim, "Retreat from the Secular Path? Islamic Dilemmas of Arab Politics", Review of Politics, vol. 28, #4, 1966.

- Allen, W.E.D., and Paul Muratoff, Caucasian Battlefields. A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921, Cambridge, 1953.

- Anderson, M.S., The Eastern Question, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1966.

- Antonious, George, The Arab Awakening, New York, Capricorn Books, 1965, first published 1946.

- Arabian, Gregory, "An Inquiry into the Turkish Massacres of 1894-1897", Armenian Review, 12, October, 1959, 11, April 1959.
- ✓ Atamian, Sarkis, The Armenian Community, The Historical Development of a Social and Ideological Conflict, New York, Philosophical Library, 1955.
- ✓ Bailey, Frank E., British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1942.
- ✓ Barker, J. Ellis, "Germany, Turkey, and the Armenian Massacres", Quarterly Review, CCXXXIII, April, 1920.
- ✓ Bazzaz, Abd ar-Rahman al-, "Islam and Arab Nationalism", Die Welt des Islams, iii, 1954.
- ✓ Birge, John Kingsley, The Sektashi Order of Dervishes, London, Luzac & Co., 1965.
- ✓ Blaisdell, Donald C., European Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire, New York, 1929.
- ✓ Bodman, Herbert L., Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826, Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina Press, 1963.
- ✓ Chichekian, G., "The Armenians since the Treaty of San Stefano: a political-geographic study of population", Armenian Review, 22, #2-82, 1968.
- ✓ Cloud, George H., "The Armenian Question from the Congress of Berlin to the Armenian Massacres 1878-1894", unpublished MA thesis, Stanford University, 1923.
- ✓ Cunningham, Allan, "The Wrong Horse? A Study of Anglo-Turkish Relations Before the First World War", St. Anthony's Papers, #17, 4.
- ✓ Davison, Roderic, Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963.
- ✓ -----"Turkish Attitudes concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the 19th Century", American Historical Review, #4, 1953-4.
- ✓ -----Turkey, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- ✓ Dawn, C.E., "Arab Islam in the Modern Age", Middle East Journal, Autumn, 1965.
- ✓ Etmekjian, James, The French Influence on the Western Armenian Renaissance 1843-1915, New York, 1964.

- ✓ Gibb, H.A.R. and H. Bowen, Islamic Society and the West, Vol. 1, London, Oxford University Press, 1950.
- ✓ Gidney, James B., A Mandate for Armenia, Kent State University Press, Oberlin, Ohio, 1967.
- ✓ Gooch, G.P. and H. Temperley, British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, vol. V, London, HMSO, 1938.
- Great Britain, Mohammedan History, Handbooks prepared under the Direction of the Historical section of the Foreign Office, #57, London, 1920.
- Great Britain, Anatolia, Handbooks prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, #59, London, 1939.
- Great Britain, Armenia and Kurdistan, Handbooks prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, #62, London, 1920.
- ✓ Hamilton, A.M., Road Through Kurdistan, London, Faber and Faber, 1938.
- ✓ Hartunian, Vartan, Neither to Laugh nor to Weep, A Memorial of Genocide, Boston, Beacon Press, 1968.
- Haslip, Joan, The Sultan, The Life of Abdulhamid, London, Cassel, 1958.
- Hourani, Albert, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, London, Oxford University Press, 1962.
- ✓ -----, "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the 18th Century", Studia Islamica, VIII, 1957.
- ✓ Inalcik, Halil, "Land Problems in Turkish History", Muslim World, 1954.
- ✓ Issawi, Charles, The Economic History of the Middle East, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- ✓ Itzkowitz, Norman, "18th Century Ottoman Realities", Studia Islamica, Vol. 16, 1962.
- Jerrehian, Rita, "The Outcome of the Congress of Berlin", Armenian Review, 8, October 1955.
- ----- "Metamorphosis of the Armenian Question", Armenian Review, 9, spring 1956.
- Joseph, John, The Nestorians and Their Muslim Neighbors, Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1961.

- ✓ Kevork, Arslan, Armenia and the Armenians from the Earliest Times until the Great War, trs. Pierrie Crabites, New York, 1955.
- ✓ Kinnane, Derk, The Kurds and Kurdistan, London, Institute on Race Relations, Oxford Univ. Press, 1964.
- ✓ Langer, William, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, New York, 1951.
- ✓ Leach, E.R., "Social and Economic Organization of the Rowanduz Kurds", Monographs on Social Anthropology, #3, London, London School of Economics, 1940.
- ✓ Lee, Dwight E., Great Britain and the Cyprus Convention of 1878, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1934.
- ✓ -----"The Origins of Pan-Islamism", American Historical Review, 47, 1941-2.
- ✓ Lewis, Bernard, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, New York, Oxford University Press, 1961.
- ✓ Lybyer, Albert K., The Government of the Ottoman Empire at the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1913.
- ✓ Ma'oz, Moshe, Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1840-61, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1968.
- ✓ Mardin, Sherif, The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought, Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1962.
- ✓ Matossian, Mary, "Armenian Society: 1850-1914", Armenian Review, 9, Autumn 1956.
- ✓ Medicott, W.N., The Congress of Berlin and After, London, Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1938.
- ✓ Malbandian, Louise, The Armenian Revolutionary Movement, Berkeley, Univ. of Calif. Press, 1963.
- ✓ Nikitine, Basile, Les Kurdes, Etude Sociologique Et Historique, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1956.
- ✓ Philips, C.H., Handbook of Oriental History, London, Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1951.
- ✓ Polk, William, The Opening of South Lebanon, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1963.

- ✓ Polk, William and R. Chambers, The Beginnings of Modernization In the Middle East, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968.
- ✓ Rustow, Dankwart, A World of Nations, Washington D.C., Brookings Institute, 1967.
- ✓ Rustow, D., and R.E. Ward, Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey, Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1964.
- ✓ Ryan, Sir A., The Last of the Dragomans, London, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1951.
- ✓ Safrastian, Arshak, Kurds and Kurdistan, London, Harvill Press, 1948.
- ✓ Sanjian, Avedis, K., The Armenian Communities in Syria Under Ottoman Domination, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1965.
- ✓ Sarkissian, A.O., History of the Armenian Question to 1885, Urbana, Ill., Univ. of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, vol. 22-23, 3 June 1938, #80.
- ✓ Smith, Colin L., The Embassy of Sir William White at Constantinople 1886-1891, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1957.
- ✓ Smith, Wilfrid C., Islam in Modern History, Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1957.
- Stark, Freya, Riding to the Tigris, London, John Murray, 1959.
- Swenson, Victor R., "Palace, Porte, and Party in the Young Turk Revolution", paper presented at the 3rd Annual MESA Conference, Toronto, November 1969.
- ✓ Temperley, H., "British Policy Towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey, 1830-1914", Cambridge Historical Journal, IV, 1932-34.
- ✓ Tyler, Mason W., The European Powers and the Near East 1875-1908, Minneapolis, 1925.
- ✓ Vratzian, Simon, Armenia and the Armenian Question, Boston, 1943.
- ✓ Waugh, Sir Telford, Turkey - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, London, Chapman and Hall's, 1930.
- ✓ Wee, Morris, "Great Britain and the Armenian Question 1878-1914", unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1938.

- Wittlin, Alma, Abdul Hamid, The Shadow of God, trs. from German by Norman Denny, London, John Lane, 1940.
- Yamak, Labib Z., The Syrian Social Nationalist Party, An Ideological Analysis, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1966.
- ✓ Zeine, Zeine N., The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, Beirut, Khayats, 1966.