

In the West the national idea has a long and variable history; in the East it is new, and with all the ardour and the exalted flight of imagination of which an unexhausted people are capable of concentrating on a new ideal, it is seized upon and contended for in the leading circles. It is evident that between these two ideals, the civilising and the national, conflicts and dissensions must arise. Extensive adoption of the western or, at all events, foreign advantages of culture on the one hand, and the maintenance of their own native culture on the other, is the main choice that new Turkey has to make.

Historical development never advances by leaps and bounds, but is the consequence of mutually recognised stages. It is the same in regard to Turkey, but here also, through the prolonged resistance of stubborn elements and the moral pressure exerted from without, the effects of which were felt even in the most remote districts, and, finally, through the appearance of a great leader, the last phase of the development occurred with remarkable rapidity.

During the first half of the 19th century efforts to reform the obsolete political system of Turkey could already be observed. At that time it was the Sultan himself, Mahmut II the "Reformer" (1808 — 1839), who, succeeding Sultan Selim III, was amicably inclined towards reform and who made these attempts. Besides the annihilation of the over-powerful and irregular corps of the Janissaries, the proclamation of reform of the year 1839, known as the *Gülhane Hattı Şerifi* and published after the death of the Sultan, is of historical importance. But unfortunately this attempt at reform remained dormant from its inception. The successors of Mahmut had neither the understanding nor the strength for leadership. At first they had a retarding influence and afterwards were the declared enemies of every kind of development. While the Turkish Empire, which at one time had made Europe tremble, came politically and economically by degrees more dependent upon the Great Powers, these rulers unswervingly upheld the ancient ideas and antiquated institutions and squandered the revenues of the State and allowed its most important means of power to lie idle. A class of educated men who dreamed of restoring the Turkish Empire to its former glory and who were increasingly influenced by liberal Western ideas in the 19th century, became impressed with the new ideas. Under the leadership of Reşit (1802 — 1858) and later of Mitat Paşa (1825 — 1884) they succeeded, after overthrowing the versatile but politically inept Sultan Abdülaziz, in obtaining the grant of a new Constitution to Turkey in 1876. But already in the following year all the hopes attached to this

event were suddenly destroyed. Abdülhamit II, the second successor of Abdülaziz, had overthrown his brother Murat V and under the pressure of the prevailing conditions had granted a new Constitution. Several months later this was again withdrawn. Mitat Paşa was exiled, and for a whole generation the dark cloud of reaction, of which one could scarcely form an idea in the West, lowered upon Turkey. The figure of Abdülhamit and his activity belongs in a measure to our own time, and the secrecy surrounding this undoubtedly important ruler has added to the interest taken in him. In the country his interest was chiefly directed towards the suppression of any modern or independent movement, and every means was welcome for the attainment of this aim. Drastic control of religion, which was connected outwardly with Panislamic endeavours, a system of espionage to an extent never previously experienced — ramifications of which were intended to serve the purpose of spiritual guardianship and supervision hitherto unknown — were among them and, indeed, they fulfilled their purpose for several decades. Banishments and executions — the latter mainly in secret — which the Sultan inflicted upon his adversaries or those whom, in his fanatical and ever-increasing distrust, he considered to be such, were innumerable. But spiritual development could not be arrested, the counter-pressure against that exercised from İstanbul was slowly growing and expanding. In the nineties there arose in Macedonia, especially at Salonika, the "Committee of Union and Progress" in which undoubtedly important moral forces were at work*.

Kemal Paşa, at that time a young officer on the General Staff, also belonged to this movement. The hour of deliverance arrived in 1908. In July open rebellion broke out against Tyranny. The Sultan, notwithstanding his system of spies, was unprepared for this blow and did not immediately grasp the situation. He gave the impression that he surrendered to the inevitable and granted the desired Constitution, and it is significant of the attitude of the Unionists that in the essential points they were satisfied and still allowed the man who was their bitterest enemy to occupy the throne. But scarcely had Abdülhamit imagined that he could throw off the fetters imposed upon him, than he delivered a counter blow (13th April, 1909), repealed the Constitution and proceeded against the followers of the "Committee of Union and Progress." This time, however, the prudent man had

* From the name of the "Committee of Union and Progress", its members and adherents are often referred to in this volume as "Unionists", while they are often described also as the "Young Turks". It must be observed, however, that these two expressions do not mean exactly the same thing, because not all of the "Young Turks" were intimately associated with the "Committee of Union and Progress".