

TURKISH-SYRIAN RELATIONS IN
THE OTTOMAN CONSTITUTIONAL
PERIOD (1908 - 1914)

by

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ABSTRACT.

This study attempts to investigate Turkish-Syrian relations in the period 1908-14, and to trace their role in the origins and development of the Arab nationalist movement. The Revolution of July 1908 put the Ottoman Empire under the rule of the Young Turks. In 1914 the Empire entered the First World War, a step which was to bring about its ultimate defeat and destruction. During this dynamic period Turco-Syrian relations underwent various stages of development, and the effective Arab movement began.

However, signs of such a movement, incoherent and half-conscious, may be seen in the literary and political writings of some Syrians throughout the second half of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century. This is discussed in the introduction which also gives definitions of terms such as "Syria" and "the Syrians". Chapter I analyses the events between July 1908 and the counter-coup of April 1909. From those events stemmed the Syrian opposition to the Young Turk regime. This opposition grew throughout the period under consideration, and several phases in its growth may be discerned. Chapter II deals with the increasing dissatisfaction of the Syrian Arabs with the policies of the Young Turk regime and examines the attempt of the

leading Syrians to enumerate and redress their grievances against that regime in the years 1909-12. Arab societies in Istanbul as well as the Arab parliamentary lobby played a significant, but often overlooked, role in affecting the relations of the Syrian Arabs with the Young Turk governments. The assessment of this role is the subject matter of Chapter III.

Perhaps the most important phase of the Syrian-Turkish controversy was the agitation of the Syrians for the introduction of a decentralised form of government in their vilayets. The origins, nature and development of this agitation are investigated in Chapter IV. The attempt of the Syrians to secure their political rights within the framework of the Ottoman Empire reached their climax with the convening of Paris Congress in June, 1913. This Congress and the events following it are examined in the fifth and last chapter. The study ends with a conclusion in which some general views about the subject are ventured.

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND REFERENCES.

Arabic has been transcribed according to the system adopted in the second edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, with slight variations:

- (i) " j" has been used in place of "dj".
- (ii) " q" " " " " "k".
- (iii) the diagraph "ay" has been used in place of "ai".
- (iv) the diagraphs dh, gh, kh, sh, th, have not been underlined.

Names of Arab authors who have written in languages other than Arabic were spelt as they themselves have spelt them.

Turkish has been transcribed according to the official modern Turkish orthography, except when quoting from foreign sources. Names of all members of non-Turkish ethnic groups (except Arabs) have been rendered according to the same orthography. Modern Turkish place names are used, thus Istanbul and not Constantinople, again except when quoting. Anglicized forms of Turkish titles and of Arabic place names are adopted throughout this study. All dates are standardised using the Gregorian calendar. Finally, for convenience of typing no distinction has been made between the dotted and undotted Turkish "i".

First references to any publication or document in the footnotes have been given in full but subsequent references have been given in a shortened form.

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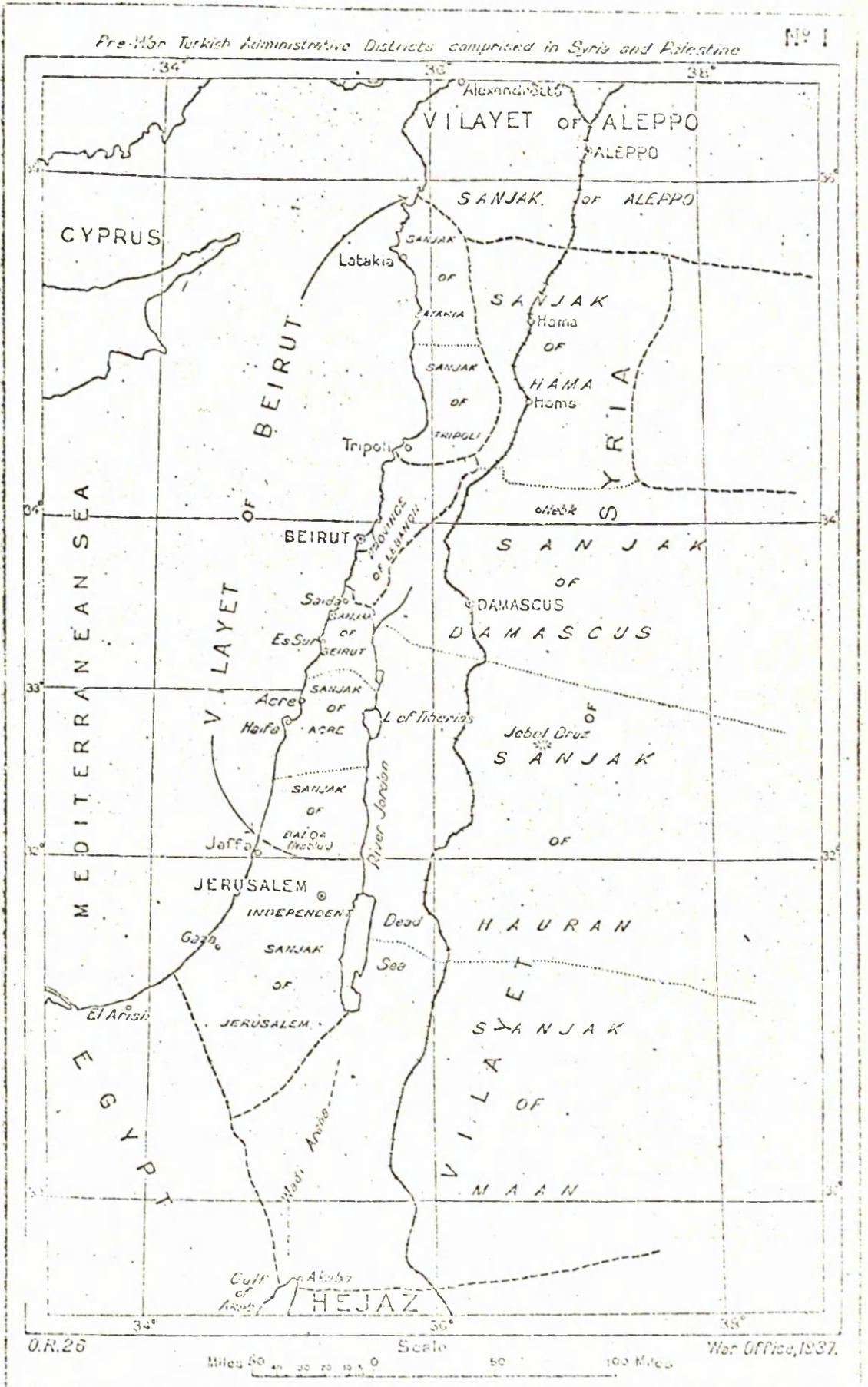
My thanks to Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazā of Damascus, Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb of Cairo and Sāṭī' al-Ḥuṣrī (Beirut), who kindly granted interviews. Professor Albert Hourani made my interview with Ḥuṣrī possible. For that and his valuable suggestions I wish to express my thanks. I am also indebted to the Central Research Fund, University of London, who contributed a grant towards the finances of my travels.

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ABBREVIATIONS.

<u>B. A.</u>	<u>Bazvekâlet Arsivi, Istanbul.</u>
<u>CR</u>	<u>The Contemporary Review.</u>
<u>EI</u> ²	<u>Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd</u> edition.
<u>F.O.</u>	<u>Foreign Office, London.</u>
<u>FR</u>	<u>The Fortnightly Review.</u>
<u>IA.</u>	<u>International Affairs.</u>
<u>MEA.</u>	<u>Middle Eastern Affairs.</u>
<u>MEJ.</u>	<u>Middle East Journal.</u>
<u>MES.</u>	<u>Middle Eastern Studies.</u>
<u>MW.</u>	<u>Muslim World.</u>
<u>NC.</u>	<u>The Nineteenth Century and After.</u>
<u>OM.</u>	<u>Oriente Moderno.</u>
<u>RMM.</u>	<u>Revue du Monde Musulman.</u>



INTRODUCTION

It is important to define the terms "Syria" and "Syrians" as used in the title and text of this study. Confusion has often arisen from the use of both terms and in particular of "Syria" in several different senses. Syria, in its broadest acceptance, is the country that lies between the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and the deserts of Arabia.¹ While it stretches from the Taurus Mountains in the north to the Sinai Peninsula, it has no fixed boundary on the east. Its frontier on that side is the limit of cultivation which fluctuates according to whether the Beduins or the sedentary population is stronger. Generally speaking, however, it is taken to be the Syrian Desert.² This area constitutes a single geographical unit, and is usually referred to as geographical Syria. Its inhabitants form in a sense a single people.³ After the First World War the term Syria came to denote the northern part of this geographical unit. This usage which excludes Palestine is the regular French one for Syria. Under the Ottoman government Syria (Suriya) was the official name of the vilayet of Damascus,

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1. A Handbook of Syria (Including Palestine), prepared by the geographical section of the Naval Intelligence Division, Naval Staff, Admiralty, London (n.d.), p.9- (Henceforth Handbook of Syria).
 2. A.H. Hourani, Syria and Lebanon, a Political Essay, London, 1945, p. 4.
 3. Ibid.

previously known as the Vilayet or Eyalet⁴ of Shām, which lay along the eastern border of the country from the extreme south to as far north as latitude⁵ 35 25'. Nowadays the term Syria denotes the present Republic of Syria, which constitutes a small part of geographical Syria.

The Syrians referred to in this study were the inhabitants of an area, which was more or less the equivalent of that of geographical Syria. This area comprised the vilayets of Aleppo, Damascus (or Syria), Beirut and the mutasarrifliks of Jerusalem and Lebanon. Until the civil war in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860, the vilayet of Damascus included the Lebanon. But after that date and according to its Protocol, Lebanon was detached from the vilayet of Damascus and made into an autonomous mutasarriflik (or sanjak) ruled by a non-Lebanese Catholic Christian, appointed by the Porte and responsible directly to Istanbul. The mutasarrif had to be an Ottoman subject and his appointment had to be approved by the Powers that signed the Protocol of the Lebanon.⁶

4. The term 'Eyalet' has the same meaning as vilayet and is older than it, for it was the term in use after Sultan Selim's conquest of Syria and Egypt. Vilayet is the term used in modern Turkish sources. See Salname (Suriyya) 1305 A.H. / 1887.

5. Handbook of Syria, p. 9.

6. For the full text of the Protocol see, G. Young, Corps de Droit Ottoman, Oxford, 1905, vol.1, pp. 139-154.

In 1887, in view of the growing importance of Jerusalem, the Porte created a new mutasarriflik of Jerusalem which was also made responsible directly to Istanbul.⁷ Previously the area of the mutasarriflik was a part of the vilayet of Damascus. In 1888, because of the increasing commercial and political importance of the town of Beirut, the Porte decided to establish the new vilayet of Beirut.⁸ Each of these vilayets were divided into several mutasarrifliks (or sanjaks or liwas), the mutasarriflik into kazas (Arabic Qadā') and the latter into nahiyes and mazāri'^c. At the head of the vilayet was the vali, the mutasarriflik was governed by a mutasarrif, the kaza by a qaimmaqam and the nahiye and mazāri'^c by a mudir and muhtar⁹ respectively.

Though no accurate official statistics of the population of the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire are available, rough estimates put the figure for that population

7. Z. N. Zeine, The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, Beirut, 1966, p. 29. Muhammad Kurd Ali, Khitat al Sham, Damascus, 1927, vol. 3, p. 236.

8. Z. N. Zeine, The Emergence, p.29.

9. For a detailed account of the administrative divisions of the provinces of Syria in the period under study, see Salname (Suriyya), 1305 A.H. pp. 48-68, also Salname, 1318, pp. 120 ff. Salname, (Lubnan), 1307, pp. 36 ff. Also Salname, (Beirut), 1318, pp. 146 ff. Salname, (Halep - Aleppo), 1326, pp. 227 ff.

at just under three millions.¹⁰ Religiously the population was divided into a multitude of denominations: Muslims who were themselves divided into Sunnīs and a variety of Shī'ī sects; Christians similarly divided among various churches, and a small minority of Jews. Furthermore, the Syrians could be divided between the dwellers in towns and the sedentary section of the population, and the Beduins. However, the Sunni Muslims were the majority among the Syrian population and in a sense they dominated and influenced the political affairs of the country during the period under study. The politically articulate among them had led the pre-World War Arab movement, a movement that was born from and nourished by the controversy between the leaders of the Syrian Arabs and the Young Turks which marked the years 1908 - 14. This is not to say the Christians were not active in that movement. On the contrary, they, together with other religious and social minorities, left their imprint on the Syrian Arab movement of that period, but their activities were those of a minority group. Moreover, the Christian nationalists were more active and

10. The reasons behind the lack of such statistics are probably to be found in the occupation of the local governments with other pressing local and political problems as well as in the difficulty of making the Christians and the Beduins of Syria register themselves for both groups evaded doing so in fear of the military service and the prescription of more taxes. The Muslims had probably also avoided registrations for the same reasons. For an estimate of the population, see al-Ijma' al-Ulyya li Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya, al-Mu'tammar al-'Arabi al-Awwal, Cairo, 1913, pp.86-87, where Shaykh Ahmad Tabbara gives the estimated population of all the Syrian

/Fn. cont....

effective in the embryonic Arab movement of the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century; that is to say in the period preceding the 1908 -14 one.

It is clear, therefore, that any study of a subject such as the Turkish - Syrian relations, whether in the 1908 - 14 period or the one preceding it, would essentially be mainly concerned with the activities and reactions of a minority group of 'enlightened' Syrians to the policies of another elite group of Turks, in this case the Young Turks. While the term "Young Turks" is used throughout this study to mean solely the leaders of the Committee of Union Progress (CUP), often referred to as the Unionists, and the various governments which came under their domination, the term 'enlightened' Syrians is used to mean a variety of groups and personalities. They were a small group of educated Muslims and Christians who had either received their education in the government schools or in foreign and missionary schools in Syria , and who by virtue of their education and general political awareness came to take marked interest in the politics of the Empire and in the destiny of their country - Syria. The Muslims, more than

Fn. 10 cont. from previous p.

vilayets and nutasarrifliks. In p. 84 he gives the area of such provinces. See further, al-Muqattam, no.5880, of 31 July 1908, for a different set of numbers. Compare this with the figures given in C. Ernest Dawn's article, 'The Rise of Arabism in Syria,' in, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 16, 1962, n.8, in p. 149.

the Christians, came from prominent families such as that of the 'Azms and al-Sha m'a of Damascus and in some cases from rich land owners and wealthy notables. They were educated in a more traditional way than their Christian compatriots who received a more sophisticated education that was to leave its impression on their approach and understanding of the Syrian Arab movement.

By profession, both the Muslim and Christian leaders of that movement were predominantly editors and proprietors of newspapers,¹¹ writers and professional men. Unlike the Young Turks, few of them were army officers. Students, who viewed themselves as prospective leaders of the Syrian movement, played an instrumental role in propagating the cause of those nationalists. Two factors, however, made the activities of this elite group of Muslims and Christians of critical importance in the history of Turkish-Syrian relations, and consequently in the history of Arab nationalism. The first and most important factor was the lack of a Syrian public opinion. The great masses of the population were too ignorant to take interest in political

11. Famous among those papers were: al-Ahrām, al-Muqattam, al-Manār, al-Ikdām, (all of Cairo and Alexandria); Lisan al-Hal, al-Mufid, al-Itihād al-'Uthmānī, al-Isāh, (all of Beirut) al-Muqtabas, al-Ḥabas, (of Damascus); Falastīn (Jaffa); al-Karnal, (Haifa); Kalimat al-Haqq, al-Hadāra, Majjallat Lisan al-'Arab, (all of Istanbul). A number of other dailies, periodicals appeared in Aleppo and other Syrian towns.

events in either Syria or Istanbul. Their ignorance and in some cases their indifference to what was going on in Syria and the rest of the Empire meant that the elite was the only group among the population that could claim, with some justification, to speak on its behalf. It further meant that this group was able, through their large number of newspapers, to influence and lead, if not to create, a public opinion favourable to their cause: hence the important role which the journalists played in the formation of a Syrian Arab movement. The second factor which made the activities of those Syrians important in the emergence of Arab nationalism was that all of them were fully aware of being Syrians and of being Arabs. This national consciousness was the result of a general movement for the revival of the national feeling of the Syrian Arabs which swept through Beirut and the Lebanon in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century.

This movement took a cultural aspect before it matured into a political national movement. In both its cultural and political phases the Syrian Christians excelled their Muslim counterparts. Because of their culture and general ideas which they derived from the mission schools, the Christians were probably the first to experience a

national political enlightenment.¹² Indeed it has been claimed that the emergence of the idea "of a Syrian nationality which transcended religious and sectarian identities and could, therefore, include the Arabic-speaking Moslems of Syria along with the Christians, " was entirely the creation of a group of Christian Syrian nationalists, who continued to propagate their cause throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.¹³ The emergence of such a version of nationalism was closely connected with the Arabic cultural revival which was taking place at the time in Beirut. With few exceptions the pioneers of that literary revival were Christians who showed a marked awareness of an 'Arab culture' which they claimed to revive.¹⁴ They were proud of that culture and their writings expressed such pride.

One of the early exponents of this literary revival was Buṭrus al-Bustānī, a Maronite convert to Presbyterianism who lived from 1819 to 1883.¹⁵ His literary and linguistic

12. K. Salibi, The Modern History of Lebanon, London, 1965, pp. 127-148. Z.N. Zeino, The Emergence, pp. 40-52 challenges the view that missionary schools played a very important role in national political enlightenment of the Arab youth in the second half of 19th century.

13. K. Salibi, p. 154.

14. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought In the Liberal Age, 1798-1939, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 277. (Hereafter Arabic Thought.)

15. For more detailed information on al-Bustani, see bibliography cited in S. Lavan, 'Four Christian Arab Nationalists: A Comparative Study,' The Muslim World, No.2, April, 1967, Note 1, p. 114.

works were monumental, and when he died in 1883 he was considered "the most learned, industrious and successful, as well as the most influential man of modern Syria."¹⁶ In his dictionary Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ (Beirut 1870), an outstanding work, al-Bustānī demonstrated how various nationalistic terms were used at his time. His main concern was to attempt and reawaken the Arab mind and heart to a better way of life within the framework of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷ He never advocated the formation of an Arab state. On the contrary he upheld the cause of Ottomanism, and by so doing he indirectly upheld Islam as the official religion of the Ottoman state.¹⁸ He further preached the avoidance of religious fanaticism and the promotion of tolerance. The founding of his school, al-Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya, was a step in this direction. His kind of national consciousness assumed a secular character, and in his periodical al-Jinān he appealed for fraternity between the Muslims and the Christians of Syria. Al-Jinān had it as its motto that "Love of the fatherland (waṭan) is part of the faith". To him the fatherland was Syria.¹⁹

16. K. Salibi, p. 145.

17. S. Lavan, The Muslim World, April, 1967, p. 121.

18. Ibid., p. 117.

19. Ibid., pp. 117 - 120. Also, Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 274.

The coming of the Syrian Christians to national political consciousness was further shown by the formation in 1875 of a secret society by a few young Christians in Beirut.²⁰ This group which may have had connections with Midhat Pasha, the vali of Syria at the time (who was often accused of planning to establish an autonomous regime in Syria on the model of the khedivate of Egypt,²¹ went as far as to hang placards on the walls of Beirut in 1880 - 81 denouncing the evils of the Turkish misgovernment and calling on the people to overthrow it. This society to which Antonius attaches great importance, has been shown to be of little significance.²³ This society aimed at the eviction of the Ottomans from Syria, an aim which its founders realised could not be achieved without the cooperation of the Muslims. The Christian was conscious all the time that he was one of the ra'iyya, as the Christian subjects of the Sultan were then known, and that a Muslim Ottoman government could not be his government.²⁴ Thus the Christian nationalists became keen to develop a Syrian secular nationalism, based

20. Hourani, Arabic Thought, p.274. G. Antonius, The Arab Awakening, The Story of the Arab National Movement, London, 1945, pp.79-87.

21. This accusation was made several times against Midhat and is worthy of further investigation. See for example, Lady Ann Blunt, A Pilgrimage to Nejd, London, 1881, vol.1, p.18.

22. For a detailed account of these placards see, Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, pp.62-66. Antonius, pp. 79-85.

23. See Interview of Faris Nimr, one of the founders of this society, by Zeine in The Emergence, pp. 59-62. See further, S.G. Haim, 'The Arab Awakening: A Source for the Historian?' Die Welt des Islams, r.s., 11, 1953, no.4, pp. 238-250.

24. Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, p.61.

on the Arabic language and cultural tradition in which all Syrians Muslims and non-Muslims, shared. Because of their position as a minority in Syria the Christians had always sought the cooperation of their Muslim compatriots. al-Bustānī tried to achieve such cooperation, so did the secret society of Beirut after him, and Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī attempted to do exactly the same thing in his famous poem in which he called on the Arabs to remember their past greatness and awake.²⁵ The Muslims remained indifferent to such calls.

In such an atmosphere it was not surprising that the Lebanese nationalists adopted a nationalism of their own which was essentially separatist in character. To free themselves from Muslim domination, whether that of the Turks or of their fellow Muslim Syrians, the Lebanese nationalists dreamt of an independent Lebanon with extended frontiers and under the protection of France.²⁶ They believed that the Réglement Organique of Lebanon could be and should be the

25. Poem in Amjad al-Trābulṣī, Muḥadrāt 'an Shi'r al-Hamāsa wal'Urubba fī Bilād al-Shān, Cairo, 1957, pp. 15-16. This book cites similar poems in pp. 14 ff. See also, S.G. Hain, Arab Nationalism, An Anthology, University of California Press, 1962, p.5. Hourani, Arabic Thought, p.277.

26. For a brief account of Lebanese nationalism in this period, see, K. Salibi, Ch. VII, pp. 120 ff. also, pp. 118-119. Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp. 275-276.

stepping stone towards its independence. This Lebanese nationalism lived side by side with the rising Syrian Arab movement and it had in a sense influenced the development of that movement. While the Muslims were cautious not to get involved with the Lebanese separatist tendencies, the Lebanese, or at least some of them, more than once threw in their lot with the Muslim nationalists in the struggle against the Young Turks.

The Arab Muslim nationalists in Syria stood to gain little by opposing their Sultan - Caliph. A strong religious bond bound both the nationalists and the Muslim masses to the Ottoman throne. Indeed it has been asserted with some force that Islam was the whole underlying factor in the question of the Turkish-Arab relations during the period of the Ottoman rule in the Arab lands. Zeine wrote in his Emergence of Arab Nationalism, "If the Turkish rule lasted for four hundred years in Arab lands and if the Arabs acquiesced in that rule most of that time, it is essentially because the Turks were Muslims. The Ottoman Sultans as Ghazis continued the expansion of Islam The Turks carried the banner of Islam to the very gates of Vienna. ... The Arabs as Muslims were proud of Turkish power and prestige. The Ottoman Empire was their Empire as much as it was the Turks'." ²⁷ This view which represented the attitude of some

27. Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, pp. 141-142.

sophisticated leading Muslim Syrians such as Rashīd Riḍā was untypical of other Muslim nationalists who advanced a more secular and racial theory of Arab nationalism such as Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī.

Unlike Rashīd Riḍā, a faithful disciple of Janāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh, who in the interests of Islam defended Arab Islam and by so doing showed a clear partiality to the Arabs,²⁸ al-Kawākibī (1849-1902) declared himself "without ambiguity, as the champion of the Arabs against the Turks."²⁹ al-Kawākibī, a native of Aleppo who left his native town for Cairo because he fell foul of the Turkish authorities in 1898, left us two books which contained his political and religious views. Those were Tabā'i' al-Istibdād wa Maṣāri' al-Isti'bād, which recent research has shown to be largely a borrowing from Alfieri's Della Tirannide,³⁰ and Umm al-Ḥurā, which S.G. Hain asserts

28. For a brief account of Riḍā's views on the subject see, S.G. Hain, Arab Nationalism, pp.20-25. Also, al-Manār, Vol.3, part 8 and 9, of May-June, 1900, pp.169-172 and pp. 290 ff.

29. S.G. Hain, Arab Nationalism, p.27. For further details on his life and activities, see, S.G. Hain, 'Alfieri and al-Kawakibi' in Oriente Moderno, vol.34, no.7, 1954, note 2 in p. 321.

30. S.G. Hain, Oriente Moderno, 34, 1954, pp. 321-334.

"to have been adapted from a book by W.S. Blunt called The Future of Islam, published in 1881".³¹ Briefly al-Kawākibī believed that the regeneration of Islam could only be effected by the Arabs from amongst whom a caliph should be chosen. Such a caliph should reside in Mecca and should act as spiritual head of an Islamic union and should under no circumstances hold temporal power.³² It was this distinction between spiritual and temporal power, a feature completely alien to Muslim notions, which gave al-Kawākibī his uniqueness and made him to be considered "as the first true intellectual precursor of modern secular Pan-Arabism".³³

Nevertheless, it was not al-Kawākibī who demanded an Arab Empire, but a Syrian Christian by the name of Negib Azoury (d. 1916). Azoury was once an Ottoman official in Jerusalem who left his post in 1904 in suspicious circumstances and went to Paris and later to Cairo, where he lived until his death in 1916. He published a book in Paris in 1905, Le Réveil de la Nation Arabe, in which he exposed his political views. He also founded in 1904 the Ligue de la Partie Arabe, which probably had no other members beside himself, and he further published a monthly periodical of which only few numbers appeared entitled, L'Indépendance Arabe.³⁴

31. S.G. Hain, Blunt 'and al-Kawakibi', Oriente Moderno, Vol. 35, 1955, pp. 132-143.

32. S.G. Hain, Arab Nationalism, pp. 26-27. Hourani, Arabic Thought, 272.

33. S.G. Hain, Ibid., p.27.

34. Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp. 277-279. Hain, Ibid., pp. 29-30.

Azoury accepted al-Kawākibī's idea of an Arab spiritual caliphate and enumerated his own theory of an Arab Empire.³⁵ This was the first public demand for the separation of the Arab lands from the Ottoman Empire. It is significant that Azoury recanted his views when he returned to Jerusalem after the 1908 Revolution to seek election for the Ottoman Parliament. He claimed that he advocated such views in order to frighten Sultan Abdülhamid into restoring Midhat's constitution.³⁶ This could well be true of both al-Kawākibī and Azoury, and as such could be counted as one act of the Syrian Arab opposition to the despotism of Abdülhamid.

The struggle during the reign of Abdülhamid (1876-1909) was not so much one of Arabs against Turks as a struggle of both Arab and Turkish Liberals to bring to an end the absolute rule of Abdülhamid. As long as Abdülhamid ruled the differences between the Turkish liberals on one hand and those of the Arabs on the other as well as of the other nationalities were held in check both on account of their common interest in changing the regime and of the difficulty

35. For a short account of Azoury's ideas see, Hourani, Ibid., and Hain, Ibid.

36. al-Muqattān, no. 5942 of 12 Oct. 1908. 'Adil al-Sulh, Suṭūr min al-Risāla, Beirut, 1966, gives details of a secret movement in Damascus aiming at the detachment of Syria from the Empire. The movement was dated 1877, and the author seemed to rely on verbal and hearsay evidence in his book.

of organising and acting freely.³⁷

While the Sultan seemed to have succeeded in winning the sympathies of his Muslim subjects in Syria, both on account of his Pan-Islamic propaganda and his surrounding himself with Syrian Arabs, such as 'Izzat Pasha al-'Ibidī, Abu'l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī and the brothers Salīm and Najīb Maḥama,³⁸ he had no control over Syrian exiles and Snigrés in Cairo and Paris who continued to propagate constitutional ideas openly. Prominent among such Syrians were men like Khalīl Ghānīn, the former deputy of Beirut to the first Ottoman Chamber of Deputies who since his flight to Paris³⁹ had made himself famous as one of the uncompromising Ottoman liberals. Together with Ahmed Rıza he edited the Young Turk Mesveret and persistently worked for the restoration of the 1876 constitution. Equally important was Anīn Arslān, another Syrian exile to Paris, who besides editing an Arabic newspaper entitled Kashf al-Niqāb, collaborated with Ghānīn and a certain Khaṭīb and unknown provider of funds to form the "Turco - Syrian Committee of Reform",

37. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 280.

38. The whole question of Abdülhamid policies towards the Arabs is being now investigated by a research student at St. Antony's college, Oxford. The work is nearing its end now.

39. For the important, though overlooked, role of Syrian Arab deputies in 1878 parliament see, R. Dovereux, The First Ottoman Constitutional Period, Baltimore, 1963, pp. 186 ff., also, pp. 247-250.

40. For Ghānīn's activities, see, Ramsaur, The Young Turks, Beirut, 1965, pp. 22-24, 37, 48, 52, 64, 68. Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp. 264-265.

an organisation which aimed at securing certain reforms for Syria within the framework of the Empire.⁴¹ Salīm the son of Ahmad Fāris al-Shidiyāq, the owner and editor of the famous al-Jawā'ib, was also one of the pioneer Syrians to "fly a libertarian flag from Europe".⁴² Though he was eventually bribed by the Sultan into discontinuing his activities, he remained an important figure in the struggle for the restoration of the Miḥnat's constitution.⁴³

In Cairo, the Lebanese-owned newspapers, al-Huqūq and al-Ahrān, as well as the Islamic periodical of Rashīd Riḍā, al-Manār, attacked the Sultan ceaselessly and agitated for the restoration of the constitution. Moreover, Rashīd Riḍā, Rafīq al-'Izn and Ḥaqqī al-'Izn, all Muslim nationalists who were to play an important role in the Syrian Arab movement after the 1908 revolution, worked together with other Turkish, Armenian and Circassian Liberals for the reactivation of the constitution. They founded the Ottoman Party of the Constitution - Jan'iyat al-Shūra al-'Uthmāniyya. This society, which prior to 1908 refused to amalgamate with the Committee of Union and Progress,

41. Rensaur, pp. 63-64. Also, Şerif Arif Mardin, 'Libertarian Movements in the Ottoman Empire 1878-1895, The Middle East Journal, vol. 16, no.2, spring 1962, p.176.

42. Şerif Arif Mardin, The Middle East Journal, 1962, p. 174. For Fāris al-Shidiyāq, see, EI².

43. Şerif Arif Mardin, Ibid., p. 175.

withered away after July 1908.⁴⁴

In Damascus, which did not experience such a literary and national revival as Beirut had done, a secret society composed of civilians and military officers working for the termination of the Hamidian despotic rule, was reported to be in existence in the early years of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ The society had Turks and Arabs among its members, and secret connections with the Committee of Union and Progress. According to Fāris al-Khūrī, one of its Arab members, they - the Arabs - had a plan of their own to secure for their fellow Arabs their rights but within the framework of the Empire.⁴⁶

This society also had close connections with what was known in the Arabic sources as the 'circle of Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī'. Shaykh Ṭāhir, an Algerian émigré who settled in Damascus, was a man of learning who did much to facilitate private education in Damascus and in making many of the young Damascenes who gathered around him aware of the

44. For details of this society see, H. Rashīd Ridā, preface to 'Uthmān al-'Aẓn, Majma'at athār Rafīq al-'Aẓn, Cairo, 1926, p.v. Also, Hain, Arab Anthology, p.24. Buru, al-'Arab wal Turk, Cairo, 1960, pp. 51-52.

45. Anīr Muṣṭafa al-Shihābī, al-Ḥawāniyya al-'Arabīyya, Cairo, 1961, pp. 51-52, is the only source to mention this society - he gives no date for its formation. His account is of interest for he was a contemporary of the events in the period 1908-14. (Henceforth referred to as al-Shihābī.)

46. al-Shihābī, Ibid.

great literary past of the Arabs.⁴⁷ Nearly all the Muslim Damascene nationalists, who were closely associated with the Syrian Arab movement of 1908-14 were men who frequented the study circle of Shaykh Ṭāhir. Rafīq al-'Aẓn, Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī, Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, Shukrī al-'Isalī, 'Abd al-Ḥanī al-Zahrāwī and others were all at one time regular attendants of the Shaykh Ṭāhir's circle.⁴⁸ Another society which emerged from this circle and which devoted its energies to the study of Arabic language and literature was Jan'iyat al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya - the Arab Renaissance Society.⁴⁹ The society which was founded by Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb and others claimed to have made tangible contributions to the literary and national revival of the Syrian Arabs in the period before 1908.

It was against this background of a gradually emerging Syrian nationalism typified by the efforts of men such as al-Bustānī, Riḍā, al-Kawākibī and Azoury that the

47. The activities of Shaykh Ṭāhir are well described in, Muṣṭafa al-Shihābī, pp. 49-52. See also the unpublished memoirs of Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb entitled, Sīrat Jīl, pp. 7-8; these memoirs are in the possession of their author in Cairo.

48. Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, Sīrat Jīl, pp. 7-8.

49. For a detailed account of this society, which was often neglected by the majority of the Arabic sources, see, Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, (ed.), al-Duktur Ṣalah al-Dīn al-Ḥāsini, 1305-1334, Atharuhu, Ṣafahat min T'arikh al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya fi Awa'il al-ḡarn al-'Ishrin, Cairo, 1959, pp. 3-16. Also, Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, Sīrat Jīl, pp. 9-18. Muṣṭafa al-Shihābī, pp. 52-56.

Syrian Arab opposition to the Young Turks developed in the period 1908 - 14. The establishment of the constitution and the ensuing freedoms of speech and association was the one factor that lay behind the force and the vigour with which the Syrian-Turkish controversy was to be expressed.

CHAPTER I

THE 1908 REVOLUTION AND THE
REACTION OF 1909.

On the 23/24th July 1908, the Ottoman Empire entered upon the most crucial decade in its history; a decade that was to end in the destruction of that Empire. On that date Sultan Abdülhamid unexpectedly capitulated to the demands of the military rebels in Macedonia,¹ and restored the Constitution of 1876 generally known as Midhat's Constitution.² The Imperial decree also called for elections for the Chamber of Deputies (Meclis-i Mebusan) to be commenced.³ A general amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles was

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1. For a brief account of the military revolution and bibliography, see B. Lewis, Emergence of Modern Turkey, London, 1968, pp. 206-209. F.O. 371/544 has numerous reports on the revolution and the first days of the Constitution in the Empire. See also, Sir Edwin Pears, Life of Abdul Hamid, London 1917, pp. 286-291.
 2. Text of Hatt-i Hümayun in Düstür, Tertib sani, Vol.1, Istanbul, 1329 A.H. (1913/14), pp. 11-14, also pp. 1-3. See also, F. Reşit Unat, İkinci Meşrutiyetin İlanı ve Otuzbir Mart Hadisesi, Ankara, 1960, pp. 15-16. Translation enclosed in Barclay to Grey, No. 179, telg., conf., Const. 24 July 1908, F.O. 371/544/25753.
 3. Düstür, Vol. 1, pp. 1-3 and 14-16. İkdam, No. 5087, of 24 July, 1908, reproduces text of İrade. al-Muqattam, No. 5876, of 27. 7. 1908.

granted by the Sultan⁴, and the spy system, which gave the Hamidian regime its notoriety, was abolished.⁵ Thus started the second constitutional regime of the Ottoman Empire, and with it a new chapter in the history of the Turkish - Syrian relations opened. Until July 1908 the interests and the political activities of those Syrian Arabs, who by virtue of their education and background, came to participate in the political affairs of the Empire were channelled in the general struggle of the Ottoman liberals to end the despotism of Abdülhamid.⁶ Those who called for the end of the Turkish rule in Syria and dreamt of an Arab nation and an independent Arab State were mainly Syrian Christians, but such calls and dreams were sporadic, individualistic and utopian ones and failed to appeal to the leading Muslims of Syria. As long as the Muslims remained aloof and uncooperative, any

4. Düstür, Vol. 1, pp.5-6 for text. Ikdam, No. 5088, of 25.7.1908.

5. Düstür, Vol. 1, pp.9-10 for text. Arabic translation in Lisan al-Hal, no.5774. of 28.7.1908. al-Ahram, no.9232, of 30.7.1908. F.O. 371/544/26307 no.199, Barclay to Grey, 29.7.1908.

6. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, p.262-264, for a discussion of the role of the Christian Syrians - Hourani believes that they played a greater part than the Muslims. For Muslim activities, see: Muhammad Rashid Ridā, preface to 'Uthmān al-'Azm, Majmū'at Athār Rafīq al-'Azm, Cairo, 1926, pp.3-5. (Henceforth ref. to as Majmū'at Athār.)

nationalist call in Syria was doomed to failure. The Syrian Christian nationalists must have realised this fact, for they concerned themselves, during the latter part of the ~~twentieth~~^{nineteenth} century, with trying to secure the cooperation of those Muslims.⁷ However, the majority of the Syrian Arabs had little cause to complain about the rule of Abdülhamid, which apart from its repressive measures, had probably benefited Syria on account of the railways which it built there.⁸ Consequently all the tentative attempts at creating a Syrian national Arab movement were isolated, and limited to a small number of Syrian Christian intellectuals, who probably cared more for their co-religionists than for the interests of Syria as a whole. The success of the Young Turk Revolution in July 1908, however, brought drastic changes to these aspects of the Turkish-Syrian relations.

The Muslims became more and more interested in political events and problems generated by the Young Turk Revolution. The revolution which was mainly "the patriotic movement of Muslim Turks, mostly soldiers",⁹ and which

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7. For a brief account see: G. Antonius, pp. 79 ff. For a different view see: Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, pp.58-72. Also, S. Haim's introduction, Arab Nationalism, an Anthology, Los Angeles, 1962, pp.3-6. Also, K. Salibi, 1965, pp. 151 ff.
8. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 262. Handbook of F.O., Syria, pp. 45-6.
9. B. Lewis, Emergence, p.212.

concerned itself with the fundamental issue of saving the Ottoman state was bound to create a feeling of sympathy and enthusiasm among the majority of the Muslims of the empire. In Syria, the press which formed and led rather than reflected the public opinion, was an important factor behind the appearance of a new tendency among the Muslims to take more interest in what was going on in Istanbul. The few Syrian Muslim journalists, writers and professional men, both inside and outside Syria, who, rightly or wrongly, considered themselves as the spokesmen of the whole Syrian Muslim community, were to assume a dominant role in the development of the embryonic Arab movement, a movement that had its origins in the events produced by the Young Turk Revolution.

The Syrian Christians, who, no less than the Muslims were jubilant over the advent of the Young Turk regime, found themselves relegated to the background of the Arab movement which had acquired a strong Muslim colouring and as a result became non-separatist. Apart from the Lebanese Christians, who continued to work for the achievement of an independent Lebanon,¹⁰ the Syrian Christians were content to accept their role as a minority group in the Arab movement. However, the fact that the Young Turk revolution had produced these far reaching repercussions, did not mean it had no immediate political, social and economic effects on Syria.

10. K. Salibi, pp. 151 ff. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp. 286-287.

The proclamation of the constitution came as a surprise to all, including the leaders of the Young Turks who did not expect the sudden acquiescence of Sultan Abdülhamid.¹¹ The attitude of both the local authorities and the inhabitants of Syria reflected this surprise. The local authorities, probably out of lack of confidence in the ultimate success of the Young Turk Revolution and hoping that the old regime might be restored, showed reluctance to declare the news of the establishment of the constitution. The fact that all the officials of the administration in Syria, from the vali downwards, were creatures of the Hamidian regime, and held that regime in considerable awe, may account for this fact. Consequently the constitution was declared in the Syrian vilayets days later, and in some cases weeks later than its promulgation in Istanbul and European Turkey. The mutasarrif of the Sanjak of Jerusalem, for instance, was forced by the growing discontent among the military officers to declare the establishment of the constitution on the 10th of August.¹² The valis of Beirut and Damascus were reminded

11. Alfred de Belinski, "The Turkish Revolution", in the 19th Century and After, LIXIV, 1908, p. 353. Also H. Cahid Yalçın, Talat Paşanın Hatıraları, pp. 10 ff.

12. Consul Blech to Sir G. Lowther, No. 41, Jerusalem, 10 July 1908, F.O. 195/2237.

by Istanbul to announce the grant of the constitution,¹³ and when they finally did so they merely published the telegram of the news in the local press.¹⁴ In other Arab vilayets such as the Yemen and the Hijaz, the valis had practically been forced into declaring the constitution by military officers and civilians who were in sympathy with the triumphant Young Turk Revolution.¹⁵

In all parts of Syria the general public was astonished and incredulous at the news of the proclamation of the constitution.¹⁶ This was particularly true of the big towns. Beirutis were reported to be "whispering the news of the constitution to each other as if they were still fearing the spies"¹⁷ of the Hamidian regime. The Damascenes simply thought the news as a mere 'trick' by the sultan.¹⁸ In Jerusalem, the public was convinced of the reality of the change to constitutional rule only after the detained ex-Patriarch of the Gregorian Armenians, held in

13. al-Ahran, No. 9234, of 1st August, 1908.

14. Ibid. Also, No. 9232, of 30 July, 1908.

15. See Lowther to Grey, No. 517, confidential, Const. 7 Sept., 1908, F.P.371/546, for Hijaz. Muhib al-Din al-Khatib told me in a personal interview of his efforts and other Ottoman liberals in the Yemen in declaring the constitution. This is confirmed in his unpublished memoirs entitled, 'Sirat Jil', p. 24.

16. Annual Report for Turkey 1908, encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.105, conf., Pera, 17 Feb. 1909, F.O.371/768/7053. Also Lisan al-Hal, No.6780, of 4 Aug., 1908. al-Muqattan, No. 5896, of 22 Aug., 1908. al-Ahran, No.9232 of 30 July, 1908.

17. al-Ahran, No. 9234 of 1st Aug., 1908.

18. Lisan, No. 6780 of 4 Aug., 1908.

Jerusalem was given permission to leave.¹⁹ It goes without saying that certain sections of the society, such as the nomads and the peasants living in remote parts of Syria, in most cases, remained unaware of the change.

It was the Syrian émigrés in Egypt, however, who were the first to celebrate the promulgation of the constitution. They sent a telegram of congratulations to the Grand Vezirate and to Prince Sabahuddin who was still in Paris.²⁰ There was some argument as to whether to send another telegram to the Sultan or not.²¹ This attitude is significant because it was contradictory to the grateful attitude to the Sultan prevailing in the rest of the Empire. In their speeches delivered, the leaders of the Syrian community in Egypt expressed their faith in and support for the constitutional regime and for the ideals it stood for.²² In particular they hailed the old ideal of Ottomanism which the Young Turks had now adopted. According to this doctrine, the subjects of the sultan were to be the members of one

19. Consul Bloch to Lowther, No.39, conf., Jerusalem, 6 Aug. 1908, F.O.195/2287. Also, Lowther to Grey, No. 517, conf., Const. 7 Sept. 1908, F.O.371/546.

20. Details in al-Ahrān, Nos. 9231, of 29 July 1908, and 9235 of 3 Aug. 1908. al-Muqattān, Nos. 5876, and 5878, of 27 and 29 July, 1908. al-Manār, Vol. II, part 6, 28 July 1908, pp.465-6.

21. al-Manār, Vol. II, part 6, 28 July 1908, p.465, Riḍā de- scribed the celebrations of Cairo and stated that he suggested sending a message of thanks to the sultan for capitulating to the army and granting the constitution without bloodshed, and that most of the Syrians present agreed with him, but that most of the Turks and the Armenians present disagreed, arguing that the sultan was forced into declaring the constitution. See also, al-Ahrān No.9229, of 27 July 1908.

22. See for example al-Muqattān, No.5878, of 29 July 1908/cont..

Ottoman nation enjoying equality without distinction of creed or race, endowed with the same rights and charged with the same duties. Because of its secular undertones, the Christians found this doctrine appealing. Both al-Ahrān and al-Muqattān, the two leading newspapers which were owned and edited by Lebanese Christians, wrote lengthy editorials in praise of the doctrine.²³

The news of the celebrations of the Syrians in Egypt and of others in Istanbul and elsewhere, played a considerable role in making the Syrians at home realise the depth of the change that had taken place. Consequently the feeling of incredulity gave way to a feeling of delirious joy. All the big towns of Syria celebrated the establishment of the constitution.²⁴ Speeches were delivered everywhere welcoming the new era of "liberty, justice and equality,"²⁵ praising the Turkish army and thanking the sultan for granting

F/note 22 cont...

and al-Ahrān, 9235, of 3 Aug. 1908. al-Manār, Vol.II, part 6, 28 July 1908, pp. 465-468

23. See al-Ahrān, Nos. 9228, and 9229, of 25 and 27 July 1908. al-Muqattān, No. 5875, of 25 July 1908.

24. F.O. 371/546 contains considerable number of despatches describing these celebrations. The same applies to the press. As an example see Lisān al-Hāl, No.5777 of 31 July, 1908, and al-Ahrān, No.9238 of 6 Aug. 1908.

See also, H.H. Jessup, Fifty years in Syria, Vol.II, New York, 1910, 785-787.

25. Anīr Muṣṭafā al-Shihābī, al-Qawniyya al-Arabiyya, Cairo, 1961, p.62. See also as an example, Lisān, No.5778, of 3 Aug. 1908.

the constitution. Much to the annoyance of some Syrian Christians in Egypt, the grant of the constitution was considered by the majority of Muslims and Christians in Syria as a charitable act of the sultan towards his subjects.²⁶ As a result the popularity of the sultan shot up,²⁷ and Rashīd Riḍā, the founder and editor of the Islamic periodical al-Manār, thought it appropriate to warn the Young Turks not to insult the sultan, "the head of the Umma...".²⁸ This is not to say that the Young Turks were showing disrespect or hostility towards the sultan, but to suggest the important place which the sultan held and continued to hold in the Ottoman Empire, a fact which the Young Turks never overlooked. To the Muslim Arabs, and indeed to the Muslims as a whole, both inside and outside the Empire, the sultan represented the head of the last great Islamic empire to uphold the cause of Islam. Sultan Abdülhamid had exploited this feeling and benefited by it. With the advent of the constitutional era, the period in which Islam played a major role in keeping the Muslim Syrians, and for that

26. Lisān Ibid. Also, No. 6780 of 4 Aug. 1908. Nazim Pasha the new vali of Beirut told the Beirutis in a speech that the Sultan granted the constitution as a gift, see Ahrān, No.9268, of 10 Sept. 1908. Also, Devey to Lowther, conf., no.39, Sept. 1908, F.O.195/2277. Cumberbatch to Lowther, conf., no.51, Beirut, 1st Aug.1908, F.O.195/2277. For an article by a Syrian Christian, Dr. Shiblī Shunayyil, see al-Muqqattān, No.5882, of 3.Aug. 1908.

27. Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, p.80.

28. al-Manār, Vol. II, No.6, of 28 July 1908, p.420.

matter the Muslim Arabs, loyal to the Ottoman throne, came to a close.²⁹ This, in my opinion, was not due to any neglect or disregard on the part of the Young Turks of that Islamic bond, which began to weaken through the spread of national ideas among the various ethnic groups throughout the latter part of Abdülhamid's reign. The indifference to Islam and to religion as such, of which the Young Turks were accused, and of which they may have shown manifestations at a later stage, was certainly an important factor in stirring dormant national feelings among the educated leading Syrian Muslims. It is indeed doubtful if such feelings would have remained dormant for much longer. However, the Muslims, no less than the Christians, showed remarkable optimism about the future of the empire, now the age of freedom and brotherhood had come.

The acts of fraternisation that took place between Muslim and non-Muslims in all major towns of Syria following the declaration of the constitution, had sustained hopes in the advent of the Young Turk regime. These events, much talked about in the local press and consular reports,³⁰

29. Anīn Sa'īd, al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubra, Cairo, 1934, vol. I, p.2. (Henceforth referred to as al-Thawra al'Arabiyya.)

30. See for instance, al-Muqqattān, No.5886 of 11 Aug. 1908, p.4, narrating the incident where a priest and a Muslim shaykh shook hands while a Turkish soldier stood behind them with a drawn sword (to signify the revolution) and made them take the oath of fidelity to the constitution and to live as brothers for ever. See also Lowther to Grey, conf., No.488, Const. 24 Aug. 1908. See further, Lisān, Nos. 5778, of 3 Aug. 1908, and 5777, of 31 July 1908.

were seen at the time as proof of the workability of the ideal of Ottomanism. If in a town like Beirut, notorious for religious enmity between its Muslim and non-Muslim population, religious hostility could cease and the principle of equality could be accepted, then the high hopes pinned on a prosperous Ottoman future seemed warranted. But not all Syrian towns had the same degree of readiness nor the willingness of Beirut to abandon the traditional higher status of their Muslim population in favour of the new constitutional precept of equality. And much to the dismay of the Syrian Christian press and indeed to the Christians as a whole in Syria, incidents between the Muslims and the Christians were reported from Homs, Lere, Nāblus and Aleppo in as early as August 1908.³¹ In all these places the Muslims had rejected the principle of equality between themselves and the Christians, and by so doing demonstrated the unworkability of the doctrine of Ottomanism. The biggest incident took place in Homs, where the Muslim youths, on the instigation of some shaykhs, had not only prevented the Christian youths from

F/note 30 cont. . . .

al-Ahrān, No.9238 of 6 Aug. 1908. Cumberbatch to Lowther, conf., No.51, Beirut, 1 Aug. 1908, F.O.195/2277.

31. It is to be noted that incidents of this nature were not reported from Syria as happening against Jews. Attacks on some Jewish settlements occurred, but these were reflective of the state of administrative anarchy which accompanied the early days of the constitution in Syria. For such incidents see al-Muqāṭṭan, No.5973, of 19 Nov. 1908. Also, N. Mandel, "Turks, Arabs and Jewish Immigration into Palestine 1882-1914", in St. Antony's papers, No.17, Middle Eastern Affairs (No.4) edited by L. Hourani, Oxford, 1965, pp.92-93. Note- incidents between Muslims & Jews were reported from Iraq. See Muqāṭṭan, No.5933 of 1/10/1908, also F.O.195/2275.

joining them in celebrating the constitution, but had attacked them wounding eight of them. The shaykhs incited the Muslims to, "kill the infidels".³² Though the Christians were conciliated, al-Muqattam complained that the local authorities of Homs showed some reluctance to punish the instigators.³³ A large part of the Muslim population of Acre was reported to be angered because the eighty year old naqīb al-Ashrāf of that town, who insulted the constitution, was tried by a court whose prosecutor was a Christian. The local authorities were again said to be weak and helpless and were not able to convict the naqīb in whose support about a thousand Muslims gathered and started shouting "long live the nation of Muhammad and the sultan".³⁴ In Aleppo the Christian quarter of 'Ashūr was attacked by a crowd of Muslims causing slight damage to some Christians' property, but the authorities were able to deal with them.³⁵ Even in Beirut itself and only one month after the occurrence of the spectacular scenes of fraternisation between Muslims and Christians, an anti-Christian demonstration by a crowd of 500 Muslims was reported. It took place after a Muslim youth and a Christian woman had quarrelled and abused each other's reli-

32. al-Muqattam, No.5898 of 21 Aug. 1908. Ahrān, No.9249 of 19 Aug. 1908.

33. al-Muqattam, ibid.

34. A.C.Abeera to Tuberbatach, conf. No.61, Haifa, 17 Aug.1908, F.O.371/546.

35. Ferdinand Taoutel, Wathā'iq Tārikhīyya 'an Halap, Vol.4, Beirut, 1964, p.96. (Henceforth referred to as Wathā'iq.)

gion.³⁶ Only the goodwill of the Muslims in Syria could enable their fellow Christians to live in peace with them.³⁷ These incidents were, moreover, indicative of the resentment which the introduction of such alien and rather heretical concepts as that of equality between Muslims and non-Muslims could cause in a place like Syria where traditional concepts and loyalties prevailed. A regime that propagated such concepts was bound to be unpopular among the Muslims of Syria, a fact that the Christian as well the Muslim press played down. It must have been painful and unflattering for the press to admit that Syria was unprepared for constitutional rule.

This unreadiness for constitutional rule, which was to the disadvantage of the Young Turk regime, in Syria, could further be seen in the wrong interpretation given by the peasants, nomads and illiterate townsfolk to the very word constitution and what it stood for. They thought that freedom (Hurriyya) meant the general abolition of taxes, "free licence",³⁸ and in some cases the end of all law and order.

In the village of Beitma, some 20 miles south of Damascus, the peasants thought that the establishment of the

36. Lowther to Grey. conf. No.705, Therapia, 24 Oct. 1908, F.O. 371/560.

37. Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā who toured the vilayets of Beirut and Damascus credited the fraternisation in Beirut to the good will of the Muslims, see al-Manāḥ, Vol.II, part 9, of 25 Oct. 1908, p. 706.

38. Sir E. Pears, Forty years in Constantinople, London, 1916, pp. 248-49, for incidents of this nature in other parts of the empire. (Hereafter, Forty Years .)

constitution meant that they now owned their land, and might withhold the fifth of the produce which they used to pay to the proprietor. A riot developed in the course of which a peasant was killed, and further trouble in that village, and others nearby, was only averted on the arrival of a detachment of 50 soldiers.³⁹ The peasants in Jerusalem rejoiced because they thought liberty implied the general abolition of all taxes.⁴⁰ Those in the north of Palestine became riotous and attacked estates of large landowners as well as some Jewish settlements.⁴¹ The constitution was poorly understood by the Druses of Ḥaurān⁴² and the nomads of Kerak and Salt,⁴³ who refused to register their names for the elections for fear that the lists would be used for calling them up for military service, a duty from which they had been exempt under the Hanidian regime. The Ḥaurān, however, remained a disturbed

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39. Consul Devey to Lowther, conf. No.53, Danascus, 8 Oct. 1908, F.O. L 195/2277. Also Lowther to Grey, No. 705, conf., Therapia, 24. Oct. 1908.
40. Consul Blech to Lowther, No.45, Conf., Jerusalem, 8 Sept. 1908, F.O. 195/2287.
41. N. Mandel, Turks, Arabs, in St. Antony's papers, No.4, 1965, p.93 for further details.
42. al-Muqattan, No.5953 of 24 Oct. 1908- the Druses petitioned the vilayet of Syria to leave them as they were before the constitution.
43. al-Muqattan, No.5924 of 21 Sept. 1908- also for an admittance by the shaykh of the Beni Şakhr Arabs that he did not know what the constitution meant, when asked to take the oath of fidelity to it.

region where the Mujil bedouins, oblivious or unaware of the advent of the constitutional era, continued to raid the Druses,⁴⁴ who in their turn harassed their Muslim and Christian neighbours.⁴⁵

The situation was getting so serious that the Ministry of the Interior found it necessary to instruct the vali of Syria to appoint a commission of three members of the provincial administrative council whose job would be to tour the Ḥaurān region and the eastern frontiers of the vilayet, in order to explain to the Druses, Bedouins and the peasants there the meaning and the advantages of the constitution so as they might keep quiet.⁴⁶ Coupled with these official efforts were the attempts of the local press and public speakers to explain to the townsfolk the essence of change to constitutional rule and the true meaning of "liberty".⁴⁷ But the people were too intoxicated with what they thought was the constitution to take any notice. Even prisoners in Tripoli (Syria) demanded that they should be set free

44. Devey to Lowther, No.44, conf., Damascus, 15 Sept. 1908, F.O. 195/2277.

45. Ibid, No.41, conf., Damascus, 7 Sept. 1908, F.O.195/2277.

46. Devey to Birt, No.45, conf., Damascus, 17 Sept. 1908, F.O. 195/2277.

47. Lisān, No.5778 of 1 Aug. 1908 for an editorial entitled, "What Is liberty?". Also Ahrān, No. 9229 of 27 July 1908-editorial. al-Manār, Vol.II, part 7, 27 July 1908, pp. 545548, for the text of a speech delivered in Beirut about "How to use liberty". See also vol.12, part 2 of 22 Feb. 1909, p.113-117. al-Muqattān, No.5998 of 18 Dec. 1908.

because of the constitution.⁴⁸ They argued that prisoners in Salonica and Istanbul were set free.⁴⁹ In Nāblus prisoners took the matter in their hands and set themselves free.⁵⁰

In the same way the railwaymen in Beirut, Danascus and Aleppo pressed for better pay and working conditions.⁵¹ The employees of the gas company in Beirut, and the porters of the harbour of Beirut went on strike when their demands were not met.⁵² The butchers of Beirut and Danascus agitated for the reduction of the high slaughter-tax.⁵³ These incidents though unprecedented in Syrian history, did not assume disturbing proportions, though the local authorities complained of their recurrence and threatened legal action against any more strikes.⁵⁴ Their importance, however, lies in the fact

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48. al-Muqattan, No.5930 of 28 Sept. 1908. al-Ahrān, 9290 of 6 Oct. 1908.
49. al-Muqattan, No.5936 of 28 Sept. 1908. See Sir E. Pears, Forty Years, p.243.
50. al-Muqattan, No.5933 of 1 Oct. 1908.
51. For fuller details of demands see al-Muqattan, No.5933 of 1st Oct. 1908. F. Taoutal, Wathā'iq, Vol. 4, p.96.
52. al-Muqattan, No.5939, 8 Oct. 1908.
53. Ibid., No.5909, 3 Sept. 1908.
54. For Beirut butchers see al-Ahrān, No. 9267 of 9 Sept. 1908. For those of Danascus see Devey to Lowther, No. 18, conf., Danascus, 3 April 1909, F.O. 371/767. Sir E. Pears, Forty years, p.249, writes of similar strikes in Istanbul. So does Lowther to Grey, No. 105, conf., Pera, 17 Feb. 1909, F.O. 371/768.
55. Lisān, No.5834 of 6 Oct. 1908, p.2. Also al-Muqattan, No.5945 of 15 Oct. 1908.

that they were indicative of the extravagant expectations to which the advent of the constitutional era had given rise, and the non-fulfilment of which caused disillusion among many Syrians. This disillusionment ultimately developed into a crisis of confidence in the Young Turk regime.

The confusion and the dislocation of the local administration as a result of the sudden establishment of the constitution was yet another reason that deprived the new regime of the respect and awe, paid to its predecessor. In an effort to reform the administration a great many officials who were associated with the corruption of the old regime were dismissed in Istanbul and the provinces. In some cases the people decided to take the matter in their own hands and punish members of the old regime.⁵⁶ Syria had its share of both occurrences. High officials, including presidents of the various municipalities, the heads of police and gendarmerie and directors of post offices, were either dismissed or forced to resign. Numerous reports of such incidents appeared in the press and other sources.⁵⁷ Valis were constantly shifted from one place to the other, and

56. See for example Consul Doughty-Wylee to Barclay, Konia, 27 July, 1908, F.O. 195/2280.

57. See Devey to Lovther, No. 51, conf., Damascus, 1 Oct. 1908, F.O. 195/2277. File No. F.O. 371/760 contains a lot of despatches on the subject. Lisān, No. 5780 of 4 Aug. 1908. Ahrān, No. 9247 of 17 Aug. 1908. al-Muqattān, No. 5890 of 12 Aug. 1908, and ff. Nos.

suffice it to say that Beirut had two valis in two weeks.⁵⁸ Its first vali who arrived on 27 July 1908, and who was unceremonially dismissed on 11th August 1908, was put to flight by the hostile and disrespectful attitude of the Beirutis.⁵⁹ Petitions, and in some cases, direct action against muta-sarrifs, qā'innaqāns and other officials in Syria was not an uncommon feature.⁶⁰ These events which added to the prevailing administrative confusion, were mostly caused by lack of proper understanding of the meaning of the constitution, and partly inspired by the example of the local Committees of Union and Progress who by their constant interference in the business of local administration had greatly helped to demoralise and bring down the prestige of that administration, and of the whole constitutional regime.

The central Committee of Union and Progress, whose headquarters were in Salonica, had no branches in Syria in the period preceding the July revolution. Following that revolution, however, committees adopting the politically

58. al-Arhān, No.9256 of 27 Aug. 1908. Also Basvekâlet Arşivi İstanbul, Iradelcr, Dahiliye, Irade No. 154-6/71 of 12 Rajab 1326/11 Aug. 1908, and No. 1718/12 of 2 Sh'abān 1326/1 Sept. 1908.

59. al-Ahrān, No.9250 of 20 Aug. 1908.

60. For instances see al-Ahrān, No.9257 of 28 Aug. 1908, where a petition from Beqa' complaining of its qā'innaqān was addressed to this paper. See further No. 9264 of 5 Sept. 1908 for another complaint. See also al-Muqattān, No.5385 of 6 Aug. 1908. al-Muqattān, No.5933 of 1 Oct. 1908, and al-Ahrān, No.9290 of 6 Oct. 1908 reported the incident where a crowd of 5000 had forced the qā'innaqān of 'Aintāb in the vilayet of Aleppo, to dismiss some members of the administrative council.

convenient name of the CUP and claiming to be branches of the Salonican CUP mushroomed all over Syria. Their appearance was another manifestation of the jubilation felt at the time on the restoration of the constitution. Turkish officers in Syria as well as civilians sympathetic to the cause of the Young Turks who were behind the formation of such committees. They emerged independently of the Central CUP which was able at a later date to reorganise ⁶¹ then and consequently to exercise a more direct control over them. These local CUPs took it upon themselves to safeguard the constitution, ensure

61. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.74, conf., Beirut, 7 Oct. 1908, F.O. 195/2277 - reported that a commission from the Central CUP had visited Syria and had among other things abolished some local CUPs and reorganised others. The Consul did not exceed these remarks. In fact it is not easy to ascertain the organisation of these local branches of the CUP, partly because of the indifference of the local press, and partly because these branches were later re-established on a secret basis; but some information is available. Before it was reorganised the CUP in Beirut was said to consist of over a hundred officers and civilians who elected an executive committee of twelve - six officers and six civilians. After its reorganisation strict secrecy was maintained as to the identity of its very limited members - probably 2-3. This was the same to all the other branches in Syria. The branches could conduct their public business and negotiations with other bodies through an intermediary generally known as rehber, a Turkish word meaning guide. The branches were totally under the control of the Central CUP. For the above information see: Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.2, conf., Beirut, 7 Jan. 1909, F.O. 371/766. See also al-Muqattān, 5034 of 2 Oct. 1908. For remarks about the branch of Latakia see Yūsuf al-Ḥakīm, Suriyya wa'al-'Ahd al-'Uthmānī, Beirut, 1966, p. 160. al-Ḥakīm's account deserves respect because he lived in Latakia during that period and was politically active there as well as elsewhere, he was a member of the local CUP in Latakia.

the application of its precepts,⁶² and to watch over the local administration.⁶³ It was in this last capacity that the local branches of the CUP in Syria caused much resentment against the Young Turk regime both among local official circles and also those sections of the population who were affected by its acts.

In Damascus, for instance, the local CUP went as far as to ask the vali to dismiss a number of officials, among whom were the muftī, accused of being a reactionary, the director of the post office, the chief clerk of the Sha-rī'a court as well as the qā'immaqāms of Zabadānī and Busra Eski - Shām.⁶⁴ The vali gave in and dismissed them.⁶⁵ The same thing happened in Beirut where the authority of the vali was greatly diminished owing to the constant interference of the CUP there in the administrative affairs of the vilayet.⁶⁶ In Jaffa the representative of the CUP attended the meeting of the administrative council in which the dismissal of some officials was decided upon. In this case the Ministry of the Interior found it necessary to instruct the qā'immaqān of Jaffa to retain, at least temporarily, the services of those officials.⁶⁷ Cases of persistent meddling

62. Lisān, No.5810 of 9 Sept. 1908. Y. al-Ḥakīm, Suriyya, p. 160. al-Muqattān, 6000 of 21 Dec. 1908.

63. Ahrān, 9251 of 21 Aug. 1908. al-Muqattān, No.5918 of 14 Sept. 1908.

64. al-Ahrān, No.9251 of 21 Aug. 1908.

65. Ibid.

66. al-Muqattān, 5910 of 2 Sept. 1908. Also No.5885 of 6 Aug. 1908. Lowther to Grey, No.650, conf., Therapia, 9 Oct. 1908, F.O. 371/560 - reported that CUP in Beirut in direct control of police.

67. al-Ahrān, No.9257 of 28 Aug. 1908.

in the administration by the local CUPs were reported from all over Syria.⁶⁸ In some of these cases dismissal of officials was sought not because of their corruption or incompetence, but out of personal motives. In a telegram to the vilayet of Beirut the Minister of the Interior warned against such tendencies.⁶⁹ In other cases some of the local CUPs acted in a manner that was contrary to the wishes of the inhabitants and harmful to the cause of good government. In Latakiya, for instance, the CUP after some discussion and division over the question, made the mutasarrif 'Abd al-Latīf Pasha resign his post despite his integrity and uprightness which commended him to the local inhabitants. The only fault which some members of the CUP found with him was that he was a relative and a friend of Abū'l Hudā, the dismissed Arab adviser and supporter of Sultan Abdülhamid, which made him a danger to the new regime.⁷⁰ In disapproval of the dismissal of the mutasarrif, the judge of the Shari'a court resigned his post and left Latakiya for the capital.⁷¹ On the advice of the local CUP in Jaffa, the Salonican Central CUP,

68. For some examples see al-Ihrān, No.9251 of 21 Aug. 1908. Also al-Muqattan, No.5908 of 2 Sept. 1908, and No.5927 of 24 Sept. 1908.

69. For contents of telegram see al-Ihrān, No.9247 of 17 Aug. 1908. Also Ḥakīn, Surriya, pp.161-62

70. Y. al-Ḥakīn, Surriya, pp. 160-161.

71. Ibid., p.161.

interfering in the administration of that place, dismissed the qā'annāqān there, inspite of his good work and character, and regardless of the appeals of the inhabitants of Jaffa to let him stay in office.⁷² A similar incident in connection with the head of the post office in Beirut, was recorded.⁷³ The administration of the country was suffering to such an extent that on the 20th March 1909, the Grand Vezirate, probably in reply to the complaints of the various valis in Syria and elsewhere, ordered the Ministry of the Interior to instruct all valis not to allow any interference by unauthorised bodies especially the local CUPs.⁷⁴ This telegram was the last effort of the cabinet of Hilmi Pasha, which was facing growing opposition and discontent particularly in Istanbul,⁷⁵ to put an end to the administrative confusion prevailing in the provinces. In Syria, this confusion had so much weakened the authority of government that a state of insecurity was reported to be widespread,⁷⁶ and comparisons

72. al-Muqattal, No.5914 of 9 Sept. 1908.

73. al-ahrān, No.9256 of 27 Aug. 1908.

74. Text of telegram in Takvīm-i Vekayi, No.158, of 21 March 1909. Summary in Lowther to Grey, No.217, conf., Pera, 23 March 1909, F.O.371/761. For a similar but earlier telegram, see Ramsy to Government of India, No.93, Conf., Bagdad, 14 Sept. 1908, F.O.371/560.

75. For the problems of Hilmi's cabinet see Ferozuddin Ahmad, The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-13, an unpublished Ph.D thesis, London, 1966, pp. 72-81 (now in the press at Clarendon).

76. See for example al-ahrān, No.9372 of 15 Jan. 1909. al-Muqattal, Nos 6034 of 3 Feb. 1909 and 6035 of 4 Feb.1909.

were already made in the press between the Young Turk regime and the old regime which were detrimental to the former.⁷⁷

It was not surprising that hostility to the Young Turk regime felt by some of the 'Ulanā' and the majority of land-owning notables which dared not show itself in the early days of the regime began to come into the open now.

It must be emphasised that though the personal behaviour of some members of the CUP had given offence to some Muslims, as for instance, in Damascus, where some of them were said to be not keeping the fast of Raḡāḡān,⁷⁸ the majority of the 'Ulanā' in Syria had as yet no genuine reason to oppose the Young Turk regime. The 'Ulanā', as an important class that had much influence on the Syrian Muslim community, were particularly influential in Damascus, a traditional centre of Islamic learning and culture and not without reason often referred to as al-Shān al-Sharīf. The 'Ulanā' there, though their name and a small group of them was exploited by the notables (a'yān) of Damascus in their opposition of the new regime, had generally supported that regime. Apart from a minor dispute concerning the dress of women - Hijāb -,

77. See al-Muqattān, Nos. 6079 of 27 March 1909, p.4, and 6080 of 29 March, 1909.

78. al-Manār, vol.II, part 12 of 22 Jan. 1909, pp.936-37 where Riḡā narrated how his visitors in Damascus complained that some members of the CUP there did not fast in Raḡāḡān. The same religious laxity was reported from Baghdad see Leut. Col. J. Ramsay to secretary of Government of India, No.942, Conf., Baghdad, 19 Oct. 1908, F.C.195/2275.

which was finally settled, ⁷⁹ no clash was reported between the 'Ulanā' of Damascus and the CUP there. Those 'Ulanā' who joined the cause of the a'yān were driven to by personal and mundane rather than by religious reasons. Such was the case of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Maghribī, a Tunisian connected with Abū'l-Hudā, who led the anti-CUP demonstration of 24 October 1908 in Damascus, generally known as the Damascus Fitna.⁸⁰

The Fitna which started in the Umayyad mosque, following a talk by Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā on some aspects of Islam, began as an argument between Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Maghribī and Rashīd Riḍā. Because his attack on Riḍā caused excitement among the audience, who showed some hostility to Riḍā forcing him to cut short his talk, Shaykh Ṣāliḥ was arrested.⁸¹ No convincing reason was given for his arrest.⁸² The situation was, however, exploited by some a'yān who incited their supporters and a great many ordinary men into believing that the arrest of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ was but one example of the hostility of the Young Turks towards Islam.⁸³ Thousands of armed men

79. Devey to Lowther, No.51, conf., Damascus, 1 Oct. 1908, F.O. 195/2277. Also, al-Muqattān, No.5956, 30 Oct. 1908, reporting that a deputation of the CUP in Damascus visited Hons and advised the 'Ulanā' there not to let the question of Hijāb cause trouble.

80. Details of Fitna in al-Manār, Vol.II, part 12 of 22 Jan. 1909, pp.941-953. al-Muqattān, No.5956 of 30 Oct.1908,p.4.

81. al-Manār, ibid., p.946. al-Muqattān, ibid.

82. All the sources give no reason for the arrest. The only possible reason seems to have been that Riḍā was then a strong supporter of CUP and Asad Bey saw in the attack, quite rightly an attack on CUP.

83. al-Manār, ibid., p.950.

gathered in front of the administrative building and successfully demanded the release of the arrested Shaykh.⁸⁴ They further intimidated the vali Shukrī Pasha, who in view of the weakness over the incident was dismissed later on,⁸⁵ to transfer Is'ad Bey the commander of the Gendarmerie responsible for the arrest of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ. Is'ad, together with Major Salīm al-Jazāirī, the grandson of one of the Algerian exiles who had accompanied 'Abd al-Qādir of Algeria to Damascus, and a certain Dr. Ḥaydar were the leading members of the CUP of Damascus whom the Committee intended to nominate as its candidates for the forthcoming elections.⁸⁶ The notables resented this fact as well as the power and influence which the members of the CUP in Damascus came to enjoy after the granting of the constitution. Such men had no social standing and were therefore not qualified to assume position and influence in a city like Damascus where, prior to the advent of the new era, the notables had a monopoly⁸⁷ of both. They were the power in the Damascene society before the establishment of the constitution and they intended to remain so. Hence their hostility to the new regime and their successful endeavour to oppose and ultimately defeat

84. al-Manār, ibid. al-Muqattān, ibid.

85. Shukri Pasha was replaced by Nazim Pasha the vali of Beirut, who was replaced by Edhem Bey. see: B.İ. İstanbul İradeler, Dahiliye, İrade No.2832/46 - 11 Dec. 1908.

86. al-Muqattān, ibid.

87. al-Manār, ibid., p.948.

the representatives of that regime. With the transfer of As'ad and Salīm Bey, the former to Istanbul and the latter to Adana,⁸⁸ the victory of the notables over the CUP seemed complete. The opponents of the CUP were reported to be in control of Damascus and of the CUP itself whose prestige had by now sunk low. Damascus was branded by the supporters of the Young Turk regime as the seat of reaction in Syria.⁸⁹

The Damascus Fitna was, however, reactionary in as much as it was an anti-CUP movement, for the CUP stood out as the custodians of the constitution, and all opposition to them was considered anti-constitutional and therefore reactionary. Moreover the promoters of the Fitna were men associated with the old regime, who significantly enough used religion as their weapon in the battle against the CUP. Both of these factors strengthened the case against them as being reactionaries. Furthermore the Damascus crisis came at a time when similar incidents were reported from Istanbul in October 1908.⁹⁰ The first was that of Kör Ali

88. al-Ahrān, No.9320 of 12 Nov. 1908.

89. See for instance articles in al-Ahrān, No.9320 of 12 Nov. 1908, and No.9334 of 3 Dec. 1908. al-Muqattan, 5956 of 30 Oct. 1908, and No.5984 of 3 Dec. 1908.

90. For an account of these acts see, F. Ahmad, The CUP in Turkish Politics, 1908-1913, Unpublished Ph.D., London, 1966, pp.52-56.

- blind Ali - who after a religious talk one Ramaḍān night in the Fatih mosque, spoke against the constitution, liberty, equality and the Chamber of Deputies. He then led a demonstration to Tildiz Saray where similar speeches were made. Kör Ali was later arrested and tried.⁹¹ The importance of his movement was that it, like that of Damascus, used religion as its tool. It preceded that of Damascus, for it took place on 7 October, and it had more far-reaching aims. However there is no evidence to indicate any link between either the movement of Kör Ali or that of Nizancı Murad,⁹² both of which were anti-constitutional, and that of Damascus. It is possible that the Damascene notables were encouraged by both these movements. There is no question of any link between the Damascene Fitna and the third incident in Istanbul, which was a mutiny at Taşkışla barracks caused by the transfer of some of the troops to Jeddah.⁹³ The existence of a reactionary party called Hashwar was reported from Baghdad,⁹⁴ but again no connection could be established

91. For details see Yakin Tarihiniz, Vol.I, pp.136-137. Also Lowther to Grey, No.670, conf., Ther., 14 Oct. 1908, F.O. 371/560/36131.

92. For that of Nizancı Murad see F. Ahmad, The CUP, p.53.

93. See Major Surtees to Lowther, No.54 MI, conf., Const., 2 Nov. 1908, F.O. 195/2290. Also, Knight, The Awakening of Turkey, London, 1909, p.264.

94. Lieut. Col. Ramsay to the Govt. of India, Enc. 1 in No. 7, Conf., Baghdad, 19 Oct. 1908, forwarded by Lowther to Grey in Desp. No.796, conf., Const., 23 Nov. 1908, F.O. 371/560/41694.

beyond the fact that all these movements were different manifestations of a growing opposition to the new regime. By October 1908 the exuberance over the new constitution began to wear off and scepticism and antipathy to creep in. By then the external problems of the new regime had begun. On the 5th October 1908, Bulgaria declared its independence. A day after that, Austria - Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. A few days later Crete announced her decision to unite with Greece.⁹⁵ In view of all this it was not surprising that opposition to the new regime began to gather momentum.

A commission sent by the Salonican Central CUP to the Syrian provinces to explain the nature of their movement and to set up organisations in preparation for the parliamentary elections, had reported after touring those provinces, that the population as a whole was indifferent, if not apathetic, to the constitution. The report which was made in October stated that this apathy was particularly true of the landed proprietors of the Aleppo vilayet.⁹⁶ In Palestine, where large landowners were to be found, aversion

95. Files F.O.371/550-556 dealt with the Bulgarian independence and Bosnia - Herzegovina. F.O. 195/2276, Circular to Consul, Crete, dealt with the Cretan problem. See also F.O.371/747 ff.

96. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.74, conf., Beirut, 7 Oct. 1908, F.O. 195/2277. Also, Lowther to Grey, No.705, conf., Therapia, 24 Oct. 1908. F.O.371/560.

to the constitution which in some cases developed into hostility to the new regime, manifested itself on several occasions. Reports of these manifestations were made from Hama, Hama, Haifa and Hebron,⁹⁷ to mention only a few. In Hama an effort was made to organise the opposition to the CUP, and a certain Hajj Hanād Tawfiq founded a society for the purpose which despite its secular name The Patriotic Society - al-Jam'iyya al-Wataniyya - tried to use religious propaganda as its means of fighting the CUP.⁹⁸ Some landowners in the neighbourhood of Hama supported this society.⁹⁹ The landowners in the kaza of Haifa formed a committee of twenty men whose purpose was the protection of their lands from any interference by the authorities in Haifa.¹⁰⁰

Thus the underlying reason behind the hostility of the landowners to the new regime was concern over their personal interests, which were threatened by the new concepts of the new constitution, and by the way the peasants interpreted them. Owing to their misunderstanding of the meaning

97. See for example, al-Muqattat, Nos. 5992 of 11 Dec. 1908 and 5997 of 17 Dec. 1908 (for al-Hajira). 5998 of 18 Dec. 1908, p.2 (Haifa), and 5994 of 14 Dec. 1908 (Hebron). 5973 of 19 Nov. 1908 (Hama). See also Lisan, No.5808 of 7 Sept. 1908. For an excellent description of the difficulties of the CUP in Syria and the activities of notables see al-Muqattat, No.6000 of 21 Dec. 1908, p.1.

98. al-Muqattat, No.5939 of 8 Oct. 1908.

99. Ibid.

100. Report on Beirut and Lebanon, Enc. in Cumberbatch to Lowther, No. 30, conf., Beirut, 12 April 1909, F.O.371/766.

of the constitution, the peasants became more turbulent and more difficult to manage. In some instances they became riotous and attacked the property of their landlords.¹⁰¹ In Beitna, as we have seen, they withheld the dues which they used to pay to the proprietor.¹⁰² In 'Lintāb they asked the qāimmaqān to confiscate the property of their landlords,¹⁰³ while in Hons they presented impossible demands such as returning some of the lands and property long since usurped by the landowners.¹⁰⁴ In addition to this turbulent attitude which the constitution created among the peasants, and which formed a major economic threat to the landowners, there was the danger that the new regime would be less lenient than its predecessor in collecting overdue taxes, assessing new ones and in allowing their many privileges. The power which they held over their docile peasants was already undermined. Thus driven by the desire to preserve their personal interests, and encouraged by the weakness of the local authorities, the landowners opposed the new regime. They showed no respect for the much discussed concepts of justice and liberty, and continued to oppress the peasants living on their land.¹⁰⁵ Their hostility to the constitution

101. As in North Palestine, see above, p. 40.

102. See above, pp. 39-40.

103. al-Muqattan, No. 5933 of 1 Oct. 1908. Also al-Ahrān, No. 9290 of 6 Oct. 1908.

104. al-Muqattan No. 5926 of 23 Sept., 1908.

105. For some incidents see al-Muqattan, 5992 of 11 Dec. 1908. al-Ahrān, 9268 of Sept. 1908. Lisan, No. 5808 of 7 Sept. 1908.

and their disregard for its precepts further lowered the already waning prestige of the Young Turk regime.

Like that of the a'yān of Damascus, the hostile attitude of the landowners to the new era was not motivated by national considerations. In Damascus the reasons were social and political rather than national. All the three members of the CUP there whose rise to power and influence the a'yān resented were Arabs.¹⁰⁶ The objection was to their lack of social standing, which to the a'yān was the only prerequisite for power and influence. There was no evidence that the Damascene notables entertained any grudges against the Young Turk regime as being a Turkish regime which ignored the rights of the Arabs as such, an argument that was to be used by the emerging Arab nationalists in the following years. Both the a'yān and the landowners were concerned with preserving their social and economic privileges. The existence of such hostile attitudes was to provide the nationalists later on with an effective weapon against the different CUP governments. Moreover, it offered the nationalists the chance of establishing a working basis with these a'yān and the landowners, a chance that the nationalists were to make use of to a limited extent. More important still, the new regime was deprived of the support of an

106. As'ad Bey, the Commander of the Gendarmerie was from Tripoli (Syria) Salīm al-Jazā'irī from Algeria, and Dr. Ḥaydar from Damascus.

important class of the population that carried much weight and influence. The Young Turks were young men who lacked the social distinction generally associated with the ruling classes in the Ottoman Empire. This lack of a social standing and their being young and inexperienced was behind much of the opposition which they faced in the different parts of the Empire. They, and their adherents in the Syrian provinces, were to leave a poor impression on the landowners and the a'yān.¹⁰⁷ It must be added however that though the majority of the members of those classes opposed the new regime, some supported it and continued to do so until the outbreak of the First world War. It was the opposition of the first group more than the support of the second which affected the Turkish-Syrian relations during the constitutional period.

A second factor which further affected those relations, and is usually overlooked, was the indifference and scepticism with which the Lebanese greeted the establishment of the constitution. This attitude, together with the ultimate refusal of the Lebanese to elect deputies to the new Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, increased the suspicion that the Lebanese, the majority of whom were Maronites, were separatists at heart and cared more for the Lebanon than for

107. Hostility to the Young Turks based on social reasons had been reported from Iraq as well, see, Ramsay to India Government, Enc.1 in No.1, in India Office to Foreign Office, dated Baghdad, 12 Oct. 1908, F.O.371/561. For Young Turks social shortcomings see Dowther to Grey, No. 151, conf., Pera, 3 March 1909, F.O. 371/761/8914. Also, A. Mandelstam, Le Sort de l'Empire Ottoman, Paris, 1917, p.24.

the integrity of the Empire. The Young Turks became suspicious of the intentions of the Lebanese because of the considerable and emotional concern which they showed over their privileged status, granted to them by the Réglement Organique of 1861, while the Lebanese always suspected the Ottoman state of desiring to abolish those privileges. This mutual suspicion had developed in the years following 1908, and had left its impress on Turkish-Syrian relations. However, it was the anxiety of the Lebanese to preserve their semi-autonomous status that made them adopt a reserved and indifferent attitude towards the new regime.

The British Consul at Beirut wrote that the proclamation of the constitution was received in the Lebanon with gratification, "but with less show of enthusiasm as it is not known to what extent the Mountain will benefit by the change."¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the leading Lebanese were not impressed by the delirious joy expressed over the new constitutional precepts of liberty, equality and justice in other parts of the empire for they regarded such precepts as already granted to the Lebanese by their Statute. al-Urz, a Lebanese newspaper owned by Philip al-Khāzin, a member of the ancient Shaykhly family, put forward such an argument as early as August 1908¹⁰⁹ and other writers often

108. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.51, conf., Beirut, 1 Aug. 1908, F.O. 195/2277.

109. As quoted by al-Ahrām, No.9238 of 6 Aug. 1908.

repeated it.¹¹⁰ But the real issue was not whether Lebanon had enjoyed the blessings of liberty, equality and justice in its Organic Statute or not. It was whether Lebanon would this time elect deputies to the Chamber of Deputies as ordered by the Grand Vezirate,¹¹¹ or would refrain from doing so as she did in 1876.¹¹²

The immediate reaction of the Lebanese was uncertainty as to whether to elect deputies or not, and whether election would affect their statute as a privileged province,¹¹³ for if it did the majority opposed participation in the elections. However three groups emerged. The first group, which styled itself the Liberals, was in favour of the Lebanon taking part in the elections. They argued that the privileged status of the Lebanon did not set it apart from the rest of the Empire, that Lebanon was a mere province of the empire, and as such subject to the general laws of the empire. They saw no contradiction between the right of the Lebanon to elect deputies and its Organic Statute, nor did they see any danger to that Statute in the elections.¹¹⁴

110. Bulus Hus'ad, Lubnān wal Dustūr al-'Uthmānī, Cairo (n.d.), pp.43-6.

111. For order see Lisān al-Hāl, No.6778, 3 Aug. 1908. al-Ahrām, No.9238 of 6 Aug.1908. Also, Düstūr, Vol.1, pp. 1-2.

112. For the Lebanese attitude in 1867, see Lisān, No.5776 of 30 July 1908.

113. For a detailed description of this uncertainty see Lisān, No.6778 of 3 Aug.1908. Also al-Ahrām, No.9245 of 14 Aug. 1908.

114. For the full arguments see articles by Shakīb Arslān in Lisān, No.5791 of 17 Aug. 1908, and No.5803 of 31 Aug. 1908, and also in al-Muqattam, No.5914 of 9 Sept.1908.

This group had so completely overshadowed its opponents in the days immediately following the declaration of the constitution that it looked for a moment as if the Lebanon was going to elect its deputies to the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies. However, the group being a minority one, supported and led by the Druses of the Lebanon/^{it} had no chance of ultimate success. Though its leaders, such as Amīr Shakīb Arslān and his uncle Amīr Muṣṭafā Arslān, were accused by their opponents of being men of the old regime who, in desperation to clear their names and to curry favour with the Young Turks had actively supported the campaign for Lebanese representation,¹¹⁵ it seemed possible that those leaders were motivated by other motives as well. As a minority in the predominantly Christian Lebanon, the Druses had throughout the mutasarrifate period maintained a close cooperation with the mutasarrif and his government.¹¹⁶ In the same spirit, since the mutasarrif Yūsuf Franco Pasha (1907-12) was in favour of Lebanon taking part in the parliamentary elections, the Druse leaders supported the same idea. Moreover they were discontented with the secondary position allotted to them by the Maronite nationalists whose nationalism, with its strongly Christian tones and French sympathies, they strongly suspected,¹¹⁷ and were

115. See for example al-Ahrām, No.9298 of 15 Oct. 1908. The Times of 13 April 1909 echoed these accusations.

116. K. Salibi, p. 118.

117. Ibid., p.p 118-19.

seeking to end the hegemony of the Maronites in Lebanon by bringing the Lebanon into closer contact with the rest of the empire. The Druse leaders having realised that the statute of the Lebanon was in the interest of the Christians decided to associate and cooperated with the Muslim Young Turks. They did this despite the fact that they were extreme shī'is whose beliefs were frowned upon by some of the Sunni Muslims, but such doctrinal differences seemed not to matter in the circumstances. In fact Amīr Shakīb Arslān continued to support the Young Turk regime throughout the period 1908-14. He did so out of religious considerations, and he held on to his views even at a time when men like Rashīd Ridā, who had always supported the continuance of the empire on a purely Islamic basis, had ceased to support the new regime.¹¹⁸ However this zeal for elections was not shared by either the second or the third group of Lebanese, who between them had won the battle, and made the Lebanon refrain from electing deputies.

The second group, composed mainly of the Greek Orthodox, who though they were Christians were in the minority compared to the Maronites, started by maintaining an attitude of apprehensive indifference,¹¹⁹ went a step further

118. For an elaboration of his reasons for supporting the Young Turks and his differences with Ridā and the others see Amīr Shakīb Arslān, al-Sayid Rashīd Ridā aw Akhā' Arb'ain Sana, Damascus, 1937, p.p. 147-155. See also his book, Ilā al-'Arab, Bayān l'il'Umma al-'Arabiyya 'an Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya, Istanbul, (N.D.)

119. al-Ahrām, 9245 of 14 Aug. 1908.

and supported the call for representation on condition that the Statute of the Lebanon should be not only preserved but also thoroughly reformed. Not really anxious fully to support the Druses, who were ready to compromise over the ^{the} privileges of/Lebanon or even to forsake them, the leaders of this second group joined forces with the third and most powerful group, that of the Maronites, whose sole aim was to maintain the status quo in the Lebanon by opposing the movement for representation.¹²⁰ After the leaders of the second group joined them, the Maronites began to advocate a thorough reform of the Lebanese Statute as well as the administration of ^{the} /Lebanon.¹²¹

The basic argument of the Maronites was that Lebanon was much happier with its Réglement Organique which had given it peace and prosperity since its establishment in 1861. Hence the Lebanese had no intention of forsaking their privileges granted by that Statute by taking part in the coming parliamentary elections. This argument which was no more than a mere cover for the reluctance of the leaders of the Maronites, namely the clergy and a'yān, to participate in the political affairs of the Ottoman Empire, was strengthened by the fact that the orders sent by the Grand Vezirate to the mutasarrif of the Lebanon to start elections included

120. Cumberbatch to Louther, No.51, conf., Beirut, 1 Aug. 1908, F.C. 195/2277.

121. Bulas Mus'ad, Lubnān wal Dustūr....., pp. 6-7. Ahrām, No. 9262 of 3 Sept. 1908. al-Muqattam, No.5925 of 22 Sept. 1908.

no assurances that the Statute of Lebanon would not be interfered with.¹²² The Maronite leaders must have realised that the new regime had no power to change or cancel the privileges of the Lebanon without the consent of the six signatory powers. Moreover assurances were given twice that the Statute would be kept intact.¹²³ However the argument was persistently put forward by those leaders, probably in an attempt to play on the fears of the Lebanese masses. This, it seemed they successfully accomplished, for by October 1908 it became apparent to the mutasarrif that public opinion was hardening against participation in the election.

Petitions presented by the Lebanese expressing their desire not to send deputies to the Turkish Chamber of Deputies - in the interest of their privileges - began to pour into the mutasarrifate as well as into the consulates of the signatory powers throughout October 1908.¹²⁴ Until the end of the month the British Consulate alone received 175 petitions with total signature of about 25,000.¹²⁵

122. For telegram ordering elections see Lisān, No.6778 of 3 Aug. 1908. See further al-Muqattam, No.5937 of 6 Oct. 1908.

123. See B. Hus'ad, Lubnān wal Dustūr, p.p.18-19. Also, Lowther to Grey, No.895, conf., Pera, 29 Dec. 1908. F.O. 371/762 - reported that the Minister of the Interior assured him that the Porte had no intention of altering the statute of Lebanon without the consent of the powers concerned.

124. al-Ahrām, No.9286 of 1 Oct. 1908. al-Muqattam, No.5936 of 5 Oct. 1908.

125. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.77, conf., Beirut, 30 Oct. 1908, F.O. 371/561.

The activities of the Union Libanaise society, the organ through which the opponents of the election operated,¹²⁶ seemed to have been justified when the Administrative Council of the Lebanon decreed on the 12th of October 1908 not to send deputies to Istanbul.¹²⁷ This decision by the Council marked the victory of the Maronites over the Druses. Their hegemony over the minorities of the Lebanon seemed unshakable.

As far as the Ottoman government was concerned the matter did not end at this juncture, for on 10 December 1908, the cabinet of Hilmi Pasha, after consultation with the Council of the State, had taken a further decision requiring the Lebanon to elect deputies ^{to} the Chamber of Deputies. The decision which was communicated telegraphically to the mutasarrif stated that since Lebanon was an integral part of the Imperial dominions and had no powers of legislation but was subject to the laws of the empire, it must therefore send deputies to assist in the making of those laws.¹²⁸ This decision had no effect on the situation

126. For this society, see Cumberbatch to Lowther, Op.cit. Also, al-Ahrām, No.9315 of 6 Nov. 1908.

127. Text of decree in Lisān, No.5840 of 13 Oct. 1908. Also al-Ahrām, No.9302 of 20 Oct. 1908. English translation in Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.77, conf., Beirut, 30 Oct. 1908, F.O.371/561.

128. Turkish text in Basvokâlet Arşivi, Meclis-i Vukla Mazbatesi, No.122/123 dated 3 Dec. 1908. Arabic translation in al-Ahrām, No.9253 of 19 Dec. 1908. English translation in Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.90, con., Beirut, 15 Dec. 1908, F.O.371/762 - forwarded to Grey by Lowther in No.895, conf., Pers., 29 Dec. 1908, F.O.371/762.

and the Lebanese Administrative Council stood by its early decree.¹²⁹

The opponents of elections in the Lebanon from this point onwards directed their efforts to reforming and democratising the Statute of the Lebanon. In short they wanted more powers for a democratically elected Administrative Council and less powers for the mutasarraf. Several demonstrations and deputations backed by demands for reform were received by the mutasarraf.¹³⁰ In fact this whole movement came to no important result since it ended in the dismissal of a few officials whose posts were taken over ¹³¹ by their rivals, that is some of the leaders of the movement. Though it was discredited by some office seekers, this movement was important in that it was the first concerted effort by Lebanese leading men to secure some benefits for the Lebanon alone. Its importance lay also in the fact that it was indicative of a distinct Lebanese movement, whose aim was advancement of the Lebanon only with disregard for the interests of the other parts of the Empire. It was this feeling of being more Lebanese than Ottoman that the leaders of the CUP found difficult to tolerate. The entry of the Empire in the First World War offered the Unionists their

129. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.93, Conf., Beirut, 24 Dec. 1908, F.O.371/762.

130. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.2, conf., Beirut, 7 Jan. 1908, F.). 371/766. Repeated in F.O. 195/2311.

131. The Times of 13 April 1909.

best chance to abolish the Reglement Organique, which they took in 1915.

In the rest of Syria, however, parliamentary elections were conducted in accordance with the 1876 electoral ¹³² law, whereby a deputy should be elected by every 50,000 male Ottoman taxpayers between the ages of 25 and 60 years. Except in the case of high army officers and officials of the state who could vote in whatever electoral district they might happen to be during the elections, electors must have lived a year in the district in which they intended to exercise their right of vote. A man would be disqualified from voting if he had been convicted of a crime, if he was an undischarged bankrupt, if his character was notoriously bad or if he did not possess Ottoman nationality. A deputy was to be over 30 years of age, with a knowledge of the Turkish language and should possess all the qualifications of an elector. A deputy would represent, not only his constituency, but all the Ottomans of the empire. He could be nominated either by a petition signed by himself and addressed to the vali, or by another petition signed by not less than 300 persons, or by his party. The election was to be by secret ballot and in two stages,

132. For the Turkish text of the electoral law see Düstür, Vol.1, p.p. 18-39. Also, Hacmuat Şavanini Cedide Osmaniye, Istanbul, 1327, p.p 121-156. For an Arabic translation see Lisan, No.5775 of 29 July 1908. For a summary in English see, E.F. Knight, The Awakening of the Turkish Revolution, London, 1909, p.p.296-298.

primary and secondary. Every 500 primary electors would elect one secondary elector. The secondary electors in their turn would elect the deputies. The electoral law specified heavy punishments for intimidation and corrupt practices.¹³³

The CUP was the only organised party that contested the elections in Syria. The other political party, the Liberal Party - Osmanli Ahrar Firkasi - founded on 14 September 1908,¹³⁴ had little time to establish branches in Syria, and for that matter had little time to organise itself for the elections.¹³⁵ By the time the elections started, the CUP had well organised local branches in Syria that were ready to support and secure the election of its candidates - thanks to the delegates whom it sent there in October and to the prevailing enthusiasm for the cause of the Committee among the majority of the Syrians.¹³⁶ Apart from the

134. See Tunaya, Türkiyede siyasi partiler, 1859-1952, Istanbul, 1952, p.p. 239 ff. (Hereafter Partiler.)

135. Ibid., p.241. See Tunaya, "Elections in Turkish History", in Middle Eastern Affairs, April, 1954, p.117.

136. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.74, conf., Beirut, 7 Oct. 1908, F.O. 195/2277. Also Devey to Lowther, No.1, conf., Damascus, 2 Jan. 1909, forwarded to Grey by Lowther, No.53, F.O.371/767. See also, Yūsuf al-Hakīm, Suriyya, p.160. al-Muqattam, No.5943 of 13 Oct. 1908, and No.6000 of 21 Dec. 1908, p.1.

133. Articles 62-77; Düstür, I, 33-36.

refusal of the Lebanese to participate in the elections and the hostile attitude of the al'yan and landowners in Damascus and parts of Aleppo, the Committee seemed to be confident of the loyalty of the Syrians to its cause. Unlike the Armenians, the Greeks and the Bulgars, the Syrians, who were predominantly Muslims and therefore had a vested interest in the survival of the Empire, did not yet show disturbing signs of a well organised national movement. The CUP were not worried about the loyalties of the Syrians nor about the supremacy of their party there.¹³⁷ Thus when the CUP tried to reach agreements with the Armenians, Greeks and Bulgars on their candidates for election,¹³⁸ it did not attempt to do so with the Syrians, or for that matter with the rest of the Arabs.¹³⁹ This is an indication of the spirit of goodwill which marked the relations of the Syrians and the Turks in

137. The CUP had won, with considerable majorities, all three elections held in Syria in the period 1908-14.

138. For its agreement with the Greeks see Lowther to Grey, No.535, conf., Therapia, 1 Sept. 1908, F.O.371/546/30971. For the Armenian decision to cooperate with the CUP see Fitzmaurice to Lowther, No.54D, conf., 30 Nov. 1908, F.O. 195/2281. For agreements in Macedonia see Lowther to Grey, No.647, conf., Therapia, 9 Oct. 1908, F.O. 371/546/36109.

139. All sources, Arabic as well as Turkish and English or French did not mention any such attempt.

the early days of the constitution, and which not only ensured the peaceful completion of the elections in Syria but secured the election of two Turks by two Syrian constituencies.¹⁴⁰ But the elections were not fought on national or political issues, for such issues hardly existed at the time.

Nor were they fought in the usual democratic way of presenting programmes and counter programmes to the electorate by the various candidates. This is a modern phenomenon which would have appealed to ~~the~~^{the} reasonably educated electorate, but not to the Syrian masses at the time. Their ignorance and lack of proper understanding of the meaning of the constitution prevented them from realising the importance of the elections, and had consequently made the elections colourless.¹⁴¹ The fact that the election was conducted in two stages further lessened the interest of the populace in them. For the candidates as well as for the electors, the approval and the support of the CUP was enough. In fact in Syria as everywhere it was difficult to win a seat without that support. In Nablus, for example, the support of the CUP had won Shaykh Ahmad al-Khanāsh his seat in face of strong opposition from three wealthy and influential candidates, two of whom belonged to the famous

140. They were Fu'ād Khulūsī for Tripoli and 'Alī Jināni for Aleppo.

141. Correspondence d'Orient, 1st Year, No.3 of 1 Nov., 1908, p.88.

'Abd al-Hādī family while the third belonged to the Ṭawqān family.¹⁴² In Homs the CUP had 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī (who in 1916 was to be executed by Genal Pasha on the charge of being an Arab nationalist)¹⁴³ ^{elected} from among three other candidates, all of whom were reported to be men of good standing and repute.¹⁴³ In Latakīya Amīr Muḥammad Arslān owed his seat to the CUP and to the interference of the vali of Beirut, Nazim Pasha.¹⁴⁴ Only in this instance was official interference recorded. In no other instance did the CUP use objectionable means to secure election of its nominees. Only the correspondent of al-Muqattam in Haifa criticised the alleged corrupt means which the CUP used to secure the election of Shaykh As'ad al-Shuqayrī in Acre.¹⁴⁵ Another complaint was made from Damascus. This was the only place in Syria where a deputy who was not a nominee of the CUP was elected despite that party's opposition.¹⁴⁶ He was Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad al-'Aẓm who became a bitter opponent of the CUP in the Chamber of Deputies. The complaint concerned the interference of local authorities in the Damascus

142. al-Muqattam, No. 5939 of 3 Oct. 1908.

143. al-Muqattam, No. 5927 of 24 Sept. 1908. Also, Devoy to Lowther, No. 42, conf., Damascus, 3 Sept. 1908, F.C. 195/2275.

144. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No. 82, conf., Beirut, 12 Nov. 1908, F.C. 195/2277. No other source mentioned this interference.

145. For the detailed account see al-Muqattam, No. 5963 of 6 Nov. 1908.

146. For elections in Damascus see al-Ahrām, No. 9332 of 26 Nov. 1908. al-Muqattam, No. 5978 of 25 Nov. 1908. Also Tawfiq 'Alī Burū, al-'Arab wal Turk fī al-'Ahd al-Dusturī al-'Uthmānī, 1908-14, Cairo, 1960, pp. III-12, and p. 114.

elections, an allegation the Ministry of the Interior hastened to deny.¹⁴⁷ The CUP, however, was not charged at the time of rigging the elections of Syria or of the rest of the Arab provinces.

Despite the lack of election manifestos¹⁴⁸ and the fact that the electors attached more importance to the wealth and fame of the candidates the Syrian elections featured some competition among the contestants. The elections of Haifa, for instance, were marked with controversy and division.¹⁴⁹ Seven candidates contested the two seats of Beirut,¹⁵⁰ while 13 candidates stood for election in the whole vilayet of Beirut.¹⁵¹ Six of those were to represent that vilayet. Except in the case of the Ḥaurān, where no election took place and the deputy was chosen by the Shaykhs of the Druses, no candidate in Syria was elected unanimously.¹⁵² In at least two cases candidates were elected in absentia.¹⁵³

147. Tavin-i Vekayi, No.45 of 12 Nov. 1908.

148. al-Muqattam, No.5922 of 18 Sept. 1908 gives the contents of the only election manifesto in Syria - of a certain Ḥastāki Ḥimṣi seeking election in Aleppo. However he did not win.

149. al-Muqattam, No.5963 of 6 Nov. 1908.

150. See Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.72, conf., Beirut, 16 Oct. 1908, F.O. 195/2277. al-Muqattam, 5967 of 12 Nov. 1908.

151. Lisān, No.5311 of 10 Sept. 1908.

152. Lisān, 5881 of 30 Nov. 1908. Also Devey to Lowther, No. 42, conf., Damascus, 8 Sept. 1908, F.O. 195/2275.

153. They were Rūhī al-Khāldī of Jerusalem and al-'Azm of Damascus.

The Beduins of Kerak were hesitant to elect a deputy and it was not until January 1909 that they elected Tawfiq al-Majālī as their deputy.¹⁵⁴

The Syrians finally elected twenty seven deputies, twenty five of whom were Muslims, one a Druse and one a Christian. The vilayet of Aleppo was represented by ten deputies, Beirut by six, Syria by eight and the Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem by three deputies.¹⁵⁵ Except for one all those deputies were elected as nominees of the CUF whose programme they uncritically adopted.¹⁵⁶ They were from different social and educational backgrounds, and the majority of them had served the state in different capacities. Most of them came from prominent Muslim families, especially those of Damascus and Jerusalem. The landowners dominated the body of the Aleppan deputies. Four of the Syrian deputies were turbanned shaykhs, two from the vilayet of Syria and two from Beirut. On the whole they were either 'Ulamā', landowners or professional men from the towns. The last category included ex-government officials. There was no common tie to bind this heterogeneous group of deputies except

154. Devey to Lowther, No.18, Damascus, 3 April 1909, F.O. 371/767.

155. List of names for Aleppans in Takvim-i Vekayi No.61, of 13 Dec. 1908, and No.59 of 2 Nov. 1908. Names of Beirut deputies in Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.82, Beirut, 12 Nov. 1908, F.O.195/2277. Those of Syria in Devey to Lowther, No.65, Damascus, 24 Nov. 1908, F.O.195/2277. Those of Jerusalem in Blech to Lowther, No.55, Jerusalem, 26 Nov. 1908, F.O. 195/2287.

156. For that programme see Ikdan, No.5197 of 13 Nov. 1908, p.4. E. Knight, Awakening, pp.292-293.

... their loyalty to the CUP. During the period 1908-12 when the parliamentary session ended, they never acted as one body.

The Syrian leaders seemed to be satisfied with the way the elections were conducted and with the number of deputies allotted to Syria. Apart from feeble complaints by the Christians that they were under represented,¹⁵⁷ no other complaint was heard from Syria. When some Christian dignitaries telegraphed their objection to the Ministry of the Interior, namely that in Aleppo no Christian was elected, the Ministry reminded them that the elections were not conducted on the basis of Muslim and Christian, but on the basis that all were Ottomans. The Ministry, however, added that the number of the Christians in Aleppo was one seventh of the population of Aleppo, and would not warrant them to elect a deputy since Aleppo elected six deputies only. Al-Mugattam which reproduced the text of the telegram did not challenge its arguments.¹⁵⁸ Thus in view of the absence of genuine grievances caused by the elections it would be erroneous to claim that the beginning of the Turkish - Arab question dated from these parliamentary elections.¹⁵⁹

157. See for instance al-Mugattam, No.5990 of 9 Dec.,1908.

158. al-Mugattam, No.5991 of 10 Dec.,1908.

159. For this claim, see, G. Antonius, pp.103-4.

There were no national issues involved in the elections, and it was characteristic of the elections that ardent Arab separatists, such as Hajjib Azoury who returned from Paris to stand as a candidate in Jaffa, had renounced his strong nationalist views and adopted more moderate ones.¹⁶⁰ The elections had given Syria some strong future supporters of its cause, which came to be identified as the Arab cause vis-à-vis the Young Turks. From the time parliament was opened on 17 December 1908 until the counter-revolution of April 1909 the Syrian deputies as well as the rest of the Arab deputies adopted an attitude of deep and embarrassed silence over all important issues discussed in the Chamber.¹⁶¹ However they took little or no part in the events which followed the downfall of Kâmil Pasha, and which ultimately precipitated the reaction of 13 April 1909.¹⁶²

On the night of 12/13 April the troops of the first Army Corps mutinied and led by some Mollahs and theological students marched to Ayasofya square, near parliament, demanding the restoration of the shâri'at.¹⁶² The reaction was an anti-Cup movement which had completely routed the

160. For such views see al-Huqattam, No.5943 of 12 Oct.1908.

161. The Activities of the Arab deputies were dealt with in Ch. 3, below.

162. For the fall of Kâmil Pasha and events before the coup see F. Ahmad, The CUP, pp. 70-81. Also B. Lewis, Emergence, pp.214-217. For Bibl. on reaction see, B. Lewis, Ibid., p.216. F.C. 371/770 ff. dealt with reaction in detail.

Coup regime in the capital.¹⁶³ The movement was by no means confined to Istanbul, and simultaneous outbreaks of disorders and even massacres were reported from many parts of the Asiatic provinces of the Empire. Particularly bad among these were the massacre of thousands of Armenians in the vilayet of Adana. These massacres spread to the northern parts of the vilayet of Aleppo where some minorities of Armenians were living among a mixed population of Turks, Kurds and Arabs. Disturbances were reported from Alexandretta region, from Aintab, Antioch, Kessab as well as from Marash where 18 Armenians were massacred.¹⁶⁴ In the town of Aleppo itself, though tension was said to be mounting between the Muslims and the Christians, no disorders occurred owing to the fact that the interests of many Muslim and Christian merchants were so closely knit together that any pillage was bound to affect both.¹⁶⁵ However a reactionary party using religion as its platform existed in Aleppo, and though it was weak and ineffective, some of its leaders were arrested after the crushing of the coup in Istanbul and were sent to Istanbul for trial.¹⁶⁶

163. Lowther to Grey, No.107, conf., teleg. Const., 13 April, 1909, F.O.371/770. Also, F. Pears, Forty years, p.260. al-Manar, vol.13, part 10, 2 Nov. 1910, p.796.

164. Fontana to Lowther, No.12, Aleppo, 27 May 1909, F.O. 195/2306. Also, H.C. Catoni to Fontana, No.14, Alexandretta, 22 May 1909, F.O. 195/2306. Also, Y. al-Hakim, Suriyya, pp. 177-181.

165. Fontana to Lowther, No.13, Aleppo, 27 May, 1909, F.O. 371/773. al-Mugattam, No.6103 of 27 April, 1909.

166. al-Mugattam, 6099 of 22 April. Tabakh, 'Alām al Nubalā'; Vol.7, p.573 and 576.

The events of the vilayets of Adana and Aleppo had greatly alarmed the Christians in the interior of Syria, and a number of their families sought refuge in either Beirut or even in the Lebanon. Some families left Homs, Hama and Tripoli for Beirut, others for the Lebanon.¹⁶⁷ These apprehensions died out with the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid. In the town of Beirut, where a large Christian population resided and where the murder of Amir Muḥammad Arslān - shot by the rebel troops in Istanbul by mistake of his resemblance to the Unionist Hüseyin Cahid - had caused considerable excitement, no incidents of reaction were reported, thanks to the prompt action of the CUP there. Together with the army officers, who were supporters of the new regime, they established quick control over the town, and prevented reaction from setting in.¹⁶⁹ Only in Lere did the reaction party show some activity. Some 200 Muslims shouting slogans against the Committee and cheering Sultan Abdülhamid tried to capture the president of the local CUP,

167. al-Ahrām, 9460 of 1 May 1909.

168. F. Mcullagh, Fall of Abd-ul-Hamid, London 1910, p.113 claimed that al-Bustani assured him that Arslan was killed because he was one of the 20 Young Turk deputies. al-Ahrām, 9453, 23 April 1909.

169. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.32, Beirut, 28 April 1909, F.O. 195/2311.

but the mob dispersed when troops were called in.¹⁷⁰ In Haifa and Sidon there were fears and an undercurrent of unrest lest massacres might break out there. In Nablus, however, the local CUP got the majority of the people behind them that some Muslims volunteered to go to Istanbul and fight in support of the CUP.¹⁷¹ This zeal was unparalleled in other parts of Syria. In the region of Jerusalem the local CUPs were in complete control of the situation, and in places like Jaffa and the town of Jerusalem, the CUP succeeded in inciting the populace to hold demonstrations in support of the constitution and of the deposed cabinet of Hilmi Pasha.¹⁷² Thus the CUPs of Syria, with the exception of Damascus where the reactionary party was in control, rallied the inhabitants to its side on the plea that the counter-revolution in Istanbul was a blow directed not against the CUP, which it was, but a blow to the constitution and an attempt to restore the old regime. Alarmed at this prospect the people, even when they showed some hostility to the CUP earlier on such as in Nablus, supported the CUP. Its alliance with the military authorities was a blessing that saved it.

170. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.32, Beirut, 28 April 1909, F.O. 195/2311.

171. Ibid.

172. al-Muqattan, No.6099 of 22 April 1909.

The reaction of April 1909 had strong repercussions in Damascus which during the days of its Fitna became notoriously known for its marked hostility to the CUP. Moreover, Damascus was the only place in Syria where the authority of the local CUP was practically non-existent. Bitter Arab opponents of the policies of the CUP had always come from Damascus - men such as Shafi'q al-Mū'ayyad, Rushdī al-Shakā' and Shukrī al-'Asalī who dominated Arab opposition to the CUP regime in the Chamber of Deputies. Prominent notable families such as that of Izzat Pasha al-'Ābid, the disgraced second secretary of Sultan Abdūlhamid, and of al-Ba'rī - the close friends of al-'Ābid as well that of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī, the famous Algerian Amīr and many others were declared enemies of the CUP and they made no secret of this fact. Moreover such powerful families carried much weight and influence in the Damascene society. They had a great many followers among the lower classes of Damascus, who out of ignorance and of the propaganda of some 'Ulamā' came to be strong opponents of the Young Turks. It was such notables working with the lower classes who formed a strong Muhammadan society, news of which the vāli Nazim Pasha sent to Istanbul 25 days before the counter revolution took place there.¹⁷³

No massacres of the Christians took place in

173. See Tanin, No.261 of 25 May 1909, and of 19 March, 1909.

Damascus. The reaction there took the form of celebrations and speeches on the arrival of the news of the success of coup in Istanbul. For three days Damascus celebrated that success. Even the municipality was forced into displaying decorations and lights. Some speakers went as far as to incite the mob to demolish the courts of law now the age of the Sharia' had come. Only threats from the commandant of the police averted such action. However, the officials of those courts were for three days apprehensive of going to their offices. Similar suggestions were made with regard to the Medical school of Damascus and the military club, both of which were associated with the cause of the CUP.¹⁷⁴ The reaction in Damascus was wholly organised and led by some Arab notables, and there was no question of their trying to secure or work in collaboration with the troops of the Fifth Army Corps stationed in Damascus, since they had no contact with those troops. Moreover the problem of language ruled out any cooperation, for the troops were predominantly Turkish. The notables used different techniques from those of the leaders of reaction in Istanbul, but their aim was the same, namely to abolish the regime of the CUP.

174. Details of reaction in Damascus in al-Ahrām, 9458 of 29 April 1909. al-Muqattam, 6145 of 15 June 1909. Tanin Nos. 253 of 17 May 1909 and 266 of 30 May 1909.

With the crushing of the Coup in Istanbul, and the deposition of Abdülhamid,¹⁷⁵ an event that was favourably received in all parts of Syria,¹⁷⁶ the Damascene reaction faded out and its leaders were sent to Istanbul to be court-martialled. Moreover with the victory of the CUP over its enemies the Ottoman Empire had entered a new phase in its history.

175. Text of fetva of deposition in Takvim-i Vekayi, No. 194 of 29 April 1909. Düstür, Vol.1, p.166 and p.167.

176 Detailed despatches on this in F.O. 195/2311.
See also al-Muqtabas, No.106 of 28 April 1909.

CHAPTER IIT E YOUNG TURKS AND THE ARABS1909 - 1912

The period 1909-1912 holds an important place in the history of the Turkish-Arab relations. It marked the beginning of the end of four centuries of Ottoman rule in the Arab lands. From 1909 until 1911 the CUP remained in effective control of the Ottoman Empire, and the centralist and repressive policies which its leaders tried to impose on the subject peoples of the Empire, created a considerable amount of dissatisfaction among those peoples and led some of them to seek other alternatives to the Ottoman rule. The Syrian grievances against the Young Turk regime originated from the pursuit of such policies. The agitation of the Syrian leaders to redress these grievances was to develop into a wider agitation for reforms in their provinces, a process which was to culminate in the demand for a decentralised form of government. The frustration of the decentralisers was ultimately to lead to the appearance of a separatist movement among the leaders of the Syrians. The Young Turks have been blamed for the pursuit of such policies, which, coupled with other ones, led directly to the "destruction of the Empire".¹ Hence the importance of the years 1909-1912.

1. B. Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, London, 1968, p.227.

With the crushing of the April counter-revolution,² the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid and the accession of his brother Mehmed Reşad,³ the CUP assumed more direct responsibility in the government of the country. In June 1909 Cavid became Minister of Finance. Cavid was a Dönme (a Judaeo-Islamic sect founded in the seventeenth century)⁴ and one of the members of the CUP. Talât, another ardent member of the CUP was to replace Ferid Pasha as Minister of the Interior,⁵ Ferid being somewhat arbitrarily removed by the CUP in favour of their nominee. The Committee, moreover, introduced in the Chamber of Deputies a scheme for placing their partisans as under-secretaries in the various governmental departments. The measure was, however, rejected.⁶ Until then, and probably because of their being young and inexperienced, the members of the CUP had refrained from assuming direct responsibility in the government of the Empire, and left men of the old regime such as Kânîl Pasha, Hilmi Pasha and Hakki Bey to rule the country. Their clash with Kânîl Pasha, which resulted in his downfall and which

2. F.O.371/771, No.287 Lowther to Grey, Pera, 20th April 1909. Also al-Muqattan, Nos.6102 and 6103 of 26th and 27th April, 1909.

3. Takvir-i Vekayi of 28th April 1909. Also al-Ahrân, No. 9458 of 29th April, 1909.

4. On the origin of the Dönme see: Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition, article on Dönme (and bibliography). See also The Times, No.39583 of 12th May, 1911.

5. F.O. 371/1249/19795, Memorandum respecting the New Regime in Turkey, by Knatchbull Hugessen, F.O. 15th May, 1911 (printed for use of F.O.).

6. Ibid.

generated a sequence of events that contributed in no small measure to the outbreak of the April counter revolution taught them the lesson of not giving his successors a free hand in the administration of the country.

On the pretext of suppressing reaction, and assisted by the declaration of martial law in the capital and its neighbourhood in April 1909,⁷ the CUP was able to purge the city of its political opponents and to secure its ascendancy in the Empire. A further increase in the power of the Committee was derived from the formation in the Chamber of the party of Union and Progress which was the only really organised party at the time.⁸ The Committee of Union and Progress was now firmly in the saddle, and took care not to be unseated again.⁹ Their main concern was to check and to prevent any further territorial disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Because of this they fought the ideas of Prince Sabaheddin who advocated a policy of decentralisation and personal initiative, and desired to get rid of the Macedonian and Armenian questions by some system of autonomy.¹⁰ The annexation by Austria-Hungary of Bosnia

7. Takvin-i Vekayi, No.200 of 5 May, 1909.

8. F.O.371/1249/19765, Memorandum, F.O. 16th May, 1911.

9. B. Lewis, Emergence, pp. 217-218.

10. F.O. 371/1249/19795, Memorandum, 16th May 1911. For a short resume of Sabaheddin's ideas see: Ikdan, No.5142 of 17th Sept. 1908, p.2. Also, Tawfiq Ali Buru, al-Turk wa'l-'Arab fi al-'Ahd al-Dusturi al-'Uthmani, Cairo, 1960, pp.55-57. B. Lewis, Emergence, pp.203-204.

and Herzegovina in October 1908, and the simultaneous secession of Bulgaria had convinced the Young Turks that unless a common bond of unity were adopted the Ottoman Empire would soon come to an end. Thus they advocated their doctrine of "Ottomanism". They proclaimed, "equal rights for all the classes of Ottoman subjects", and announced, "the brotherhood of all nations under the Ottoman flag."¹¹ Though the subject peoples of the Empire, including the Arabs, welcomed the adoption of such a doctrine, it soon became apparent that its application was causing distress among those peoples. The doctrine was "artificial and had no roots in the country. It could appeal to nobody's loyalties, which went as before to the family, clan and the religious community. To establish and run the new order on it, as the Young Turks attempted, was to build on sand".¹² Perhaps it is the spread of nationalism among the subjects of the Empire, and among the Turks themselves, which rendered the ideal of Ottomanism unworkable. The Young Turks were aware of this fact, though they never ceased to advocate their strong belief in the doctrine of Ottomanism, and they invariably accused those who doubted its adequacy of either unpatriotic motives or separatist tendencies.¹³

11. F.O.371/1249/19795, Memorandum, 16th May, 1911.

12. E. Kedourie, England and the Middle East, London, 1956, p.59.

13. See for example Tanin, Nos.762 of 16 Oct., 1910 and 763 of 17 Oct., 1910 and 819 of 12 Dec., 1910 and 872 of 6 April, 1911.

The leaders of the Committee were too conscious of the defects of the doctrine to believe these accusations. In fact the politically conscious among the Syrians as well as among the other nationalities of the Empire had, since the coming of the CUP to power, shown a marked scepticism as to the sincerity of the Unionists in their belief in the doctrine of Ottomanism.¹⁴ It was in this atmosphere of mistrust and resentment that the relations between the Arabs and the Turks developed.

In fact, the whole question of Turkish-Arab relations started as merely a suspicion of the CUP government among a few Arab journalists, notables, professionals and students. Among this heterogeneous group of Arabs, the Syrians naturally loomed large;¹⁵ and they led and dominated the whole of the Arab movement against the nationalist tendencies of the CUP. Each side doubted the intentions of the other and throughout the years 1909-12, they remained thoroughly suspicious of each other. This suspicion was to regenerate what the Arabic press came to call "a misunderstanding between the Arabs and some of the extremists of the CUP".¹⁶ Rafīq al-'Aẓn in a revealing article in al-Ahrān

14. The Arabic press of the time is full of such accusations see for example: al-Muqtabas (daily) No.677/28 of 28 Aug. 1911. al-Muqattan, No.6776 of 12 Jul.,1911, p.4. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 1, pp.57-63.

15. See above (introduction) pp. 11-14. In fact any study of Arab affairs during this period is nothing but a study of Syrian affairs. Zeine in his book Emergence of Arab Nationalism, deals with no more than the affairs of Syrians. See p.IX.

16. al-Ahrān, No.9422 of 15 Mar.,1909.

stated that the main reason behind the suspicion and the misunderstanding between the Arabs and the CUP was the CUP's mistrust of the Arabs and the advocacy of Turkish national ascendancy by some members of the Committee.¹⁷ al-'Azm insisted that the whole question of Arabs and Turks was confined to some of the leaders of both peoples. The masses were not yet contaminated by the virus. He then asked his fellow Arabs not to defend their cause by resorting to the doctrine of 'Arab nationalism', for in the rise of nationalisms lay the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. The Unionists, he concluded, must trust the Arabs and treat them with justice and equality, and both they and the Arabs should guard against the disintegration of the Empire.¹⁸ The reluctance of al-'Azm to admit the existence of a controversy between the CUP and the politically conscious Arabs,¹⁹ is typical of the attitude of the majority of the Christian Syrians and of all Syrian Muslims towards the Ottoman Empire during the period 1909-1911. They entertained no idea of separation from the Empire. Their main emphasis was on reforms which were of a very limited nature, such as the

17. al-Ahrān, No.9422 of 15 March, 1909.

18. Ibid.

19. The politically conscious Arabs were a small group who consisted of a few notables from the families which traditionally supplied the local community with its leadership, a handful of journalists, men of letters, professionals in the big towns and some Arab students in Istanbul and abroad. This group led and directed the Arab Movement before 1914.

construction of roads, the encouragement of the Arabic language, the improvement of agriculture and means of transport and the reforms of certain aspects of taxation.²⁰ There were no demands for any form of administrative decentralisation during this period. In fact when Rashīd Maṭrān and Nakhla Maṭrān, in collaboration with some of their countrymen in Paris, formed the "Comité Syrien"²¹ there, and issued a manifesto in which they asked for administrative autonomy for Syria, both the Muslim and Christian leading Syrians hastened to condemn the Maṭrāns' call as separatist aiming at destruction of the Empire. Both Shukrī Ghānīn, a prominent Lebanese residing in Paris, and Sulaynān al-Bustānī, the Christian deputy of Beirut, attacked and deprecated the call of the Comité Syrien and assured the government of the loyalty of the Syrians to the Ottoman throne.²² Throughout Syria the proposal was received with disapproval, and men who were to lead the decentralisation movement at a later stage, criticised it.²³ The Syrians were not ready yet to

20. al-Ahrān, No.9684 of 22 Jan.,1909. al-Manār, Vol.12, part 2, 22 March,1909.

21. For the formation and activity of this society see: al-Muqāṭṭan, No.6028 of 27 Jan.,1909.

22. See: Correspondence d'Orient, No.8 of 15 Jan. 1909, p.229 ff. Also al-Ahran, No.9385 of 30 Jan.,1909, p.1.

23. For example Rafīq and Haqqī al-Azm criticised it in al-Ahrān, No.9374 of 18 Jan.1909, and No.9377 of 21 Jan., 1909, p.1. For reaction in Syria see: F.O.195/2311, No. 7, Devey to Lowther, Danasc. 21 Jan.,1909. Also Buru, pp.91-94.

respond to any demand for administrative decentralisation. All that they wanted was a fair share in the government of the country and the redress of certain grievances which were the by-product of the CUP centralist policies. The Syrian Arab leaders probably failed to realise the extent of such policies and their implication for their embryonic national movement until 1913. While declaring their loyalty to the doctrine of Ottomanism, the Arab leaders resented the way the Young Turks attempted to apply that doctrine. For example: when the CUP tried to make the Turkish language, which the Ottoman Constitution recognised as the sole official language of the state,²⁴ the medium of instruction in all the government schools, the Arabic press objected vehemently to this deliberate attempt to 'turkify' the Arabs.²⁵ The Arabic press as well as the Arab leaders were intentionally obstructing the efforts of the Young Turks to create an Ottoman nation in which the Arabs and their language would not dominate.

The Arabs in general, and the Syrians in particular, had, long before the advent of the constitutional era, become conscious of their Arab identity that set them apart from the

24. Article 13 of the Constitution, See Kanun-u Esasi in Mecmua Kavanin Cedid-i, Istanbul 1327, p.6. Also F.O. 371/1494/20456, Enc. in No.404, Lowther to Grey, Const. 10 May, 1912 (for a translation of Const.)

25. This is the theme of every article written on the subject, see for instance, al-Hilal, part 3, Dec. 1909, pp.160-164. al-Muqtabas (daily), No.392 of 9 June, 1910, p.2.

rest of the subjects of the Empire. To put a specific date for the beginning of the Arab national movement²⁶ is virtually impossible, for like other national movements its appearance was a gradual process. The Young Turks, on the other hand, were not oblivious to the existence of such national feeling among the Arabs and the other ethnic groups of the Empire. In fact their doctrine of Ottomanism was an attempt to reconcile the aspirations of the various nationalities of the Empire with the general interests of the Empire as a whole. The Young Turks were to fail miserably in this attempt, for they soon realised that the other peoples of the Empire, including the Arabs, were not ready to sacrifice their national interests for that of the Empire. Thus it would be erroneous to suggest that the chauvinistic policies of the Young Turks during the period 1909-11 had caused the appearance of the Arab national movement. That movement had manifested itself on several occasions during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid, who, by showering favours on Arab notables, succeeded in keeping them reconciled to his rule.²⁷ After the

26. For example while G. Antonius in his book The Arab Awakening, London 1945, see manifestations of Arab movement in the Wahabi movement of 1747, and in Muhammad 'Alī's attempt to found a Middle Eastern Empire (See pp.21-34), S.G. Hain in her Arab Nationalism, argues against such an early date for the Arab national movement, though she does not specify a date. She is inclined to consider the movement as a recent growth, see pp.3-15. For a different view of Antonius's interpretation of Arab national awakening, see: Z.N.Zeine, The Emergence, pp.146-151.

27. Through Arabs like 'Izzat Pasha al-'Ibid, Shaykh Abū'l-Hudā and the brothers Najīb and Salīm Maḥmā, Sultan Abdülhamid was able to win the support of an important section of the Syrian population, see Buru, pp.34-36.

Constitution, Turkish nationalism clashed with Arab nationalism, and as a result both the Turks and the Arabs continued to draw apart from each other.

Throughout the year 1909 the CUP continued to consolidate their power which reached its height by the autumn of that year. They were masters of the army, the cabinet, the sultan and the chamber, and had a strong hold on the press.²⁸ Nevertheless, the policies of the CUP during 1909 created considerable dissatisfaction among the various peoples of the Empire. Even before its publication in August 1909 the press law met with opposition from a wide range of Turkish and non-Turkish journalists. A telegram of protest, addressed to Tanin, the semi-official organ of the CUP, and signed by the Muslim and Christian proprietors of twelve newspapers in Beirut, objected to the proposed application of "this law which would kill the Ottoman nation by robbing it of its freedom of expression."²⁹ Compared with the degree of the press censorship which existed under the reign of Abdülhamid, this press law tended to be more liberal. However, it included clauses which might be used to suppress legitimate criticism of the government.³⁰

28. F.O.371/1249/19795, Memorandum, F.O. 16 May 1911.

29. For text of telegram and names see: Tanin, No.300 of 3 July 1909, p.3.

30. For the complete Turkish text of the law see: Düstür, Tertib Sani, Istanbul 1329 A.H., Vol.1, pp.395-403. Also, Mecnu-a Kavanin Cedidi Istanbul 1327 A.H., pp.1-15. See also F.O.371/799, Desp. No.655, Lowther to Grey, Const. 11 Aug.1909 (minute to).

Further discontent was created by the publication of the new Law of Association on 23 August and the Law for the Prevention of Brigandage and Sedition on 27 September 1909. The first of these prohibited the formation of clubs and societies bearing the names of ethnic or national groups³¹. Consequently, the Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian and Arab clubs, which were founded after the establishment of the constitution in both the capital and the provinces, were closed. This measure caused much discontent among the non-Turkish elements of the Empire, and contributed considerably to the increase of the mistrust and suspicion that characterised the relation of the CUP with the subject peoples. The second law provided for the disarming and repression of armed bands in Macedonia.³² Moreover, the martial law which was declared in Istanbul and its neighbourhood after the crushing of the short lived April counter-revolution, was prolonged until March 1911.³³ A law regulating public meetings³⁴ in the capital as well as in the provinces was also passed. The Commission, which was set up after the promulgation of the constitution, to look into the reorganisation of the various

31. See: Düstür, pp.604-608. Also, Mecnu-a, pp. 1-5.
B. Lewis, Emergence, p.217.

32. For the text see: Mecnu-a, Numara 23, pp.3-16. B. Lewis, Emergence, pp.217 ff.

33. F.O. 371/779, No.654, Lowther to Grey, Const. 11 Aug., 1909.

34. For text see Mecnu-a, pp.1-5.

governmental departments, had caused a further complaint among the Arabs; namely, that its decision to pension some 27,000 superfluous officials and officers,³⁵ was biased against Arab officials. The Syrian press claimed that this bias was a calculated move by the CUP against the Arabs, whom they wanted to exclude from the offices of the state on account of the collaboration of certain Arabs, such as 'Izzat al-'Ībid, with the old regime.³⁶ This, and similar arguments, were sometimes carried to undignified proportions.³⁷ Nevertheless, numerous articles continued to appear in the Syrian press in Cairo and Syria complaining bitterly that the Turks had excluded the Arabs from high office, and had made government their monopoly.³⁸

These complaints were more representative of a small class of Syrians whom the Turkish press had described, and not without good reason, as "office seekers".³⁹ They were in no way representative of the demands of the Syrians in general, but were demands more likely to be made by young and educated Syrians who had been suspicious of the intentions

35. F.O. 371/1249/19795, Memorandum, F.O. 16 May, 1911. It seems that this round figure of 27,000 dismissed officials is exaggerated.

36. See for example: al-Īhrān, No.9497 of 11 June, 1909. al-Muqattān, No.6192 of 7 Aug., 1909. al-Hilāl, Dec.1909, p.154.

37. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6134 of 30 Sept., 1909. Arabs claimed that Turks hated them, and often called them 'dirty Arabs' and other names.

38. al-Īhrān, No.9426 of 19 Mar., 1909, and No.9424 of 17 March, 1909.

39. See: Tanin, No.585 of 19 Apr., 1910, p.2.

of the Young Turks towards them and other ambitious Arabs. The Muslim Arabs felt hurt to see such powerful Arabs as 'Izzat al-'Ābid, Abū'l-Hudā al-Şayyādī and others, who held strong positions under Abdülhanid, disgraced and removed from their positions. The dismissal of the brothers Najīb and Salīm Maḥana, the two Christian Lebanese whom Abdülhanid allowed to attain high positions in the Palace, and the subsequent trial and imprisonment of Najīb, had given offence to the Syrian and Arab Christians. The Arabs felt that in denouncing such men the Young Turks "may have denounced Arabs in general, as reactionary tools of Abdul Hamid".⁴⁰ Still more, they felt that the Arabs had lost influence in the Palace, and were not gaining any new positions in other departments of the government. A non-Arab was appointed Minister of Awqāf, a ministry that consisted mainly of Arab pious foundations, they complained.⁴¹ In fact the complaints of the Arabs were of such a minor nature that the Young Turks ignored them; a fact which the Arabs interpreted

40. S.G. Hain, Arab Nationalism, p.31.

41. Majmū'at Athār Rafīq al-'Azn, collected by Uthmān al-'Azn, Cairo, 1926, pp.133-134. Also, Thawrat al-'Arab, (Anonymous), Cairo, 1916, pp.53. The author of this book has been established to be As'ad Dāghir, who was the correspondent of al-Muqattam in Istanbul during most of the years 1908-1914, see Buru, pp.8-9. It is of significance that Thawrat al-'Arab and Majmū'at athār, almost copy each other in most of their facts and interpretations of these facts. It is possible that they either used the press of the time particularly al-Muqattam, as their common source, or al-Majū'nat used Thawrat as its source. It should be noted that Thawrat al-'Arab copies, sometimes word by word, the reports of al-Muqattam at the time, a fact which supports the finding that its author is 'As'ad Dāghir.

as a further sign of the regime's mistrust of the Arabs.

The Arabs, more than the Turks, had always emphasised the fact that the Young Turks suspected that the Arab leaders wanted and worked for the revival of an Arab caliphate. Rafīq al-'Aẓn, who had joined the CUP after the July revolution, was convinced of this.⁴² In his unfinished essay on Ottoman Unity and Turkish Fanaticism⁴³ he is at pains to explain the appearance of this "rumour of the Arab caliphate", and the role it played in the enstrangement between the Arabs and the CUP.⁴⁴ Like other Arab writers he attempted to soothe the fears of the Young Turks by reminding them that it was a Young Turk, Murād al-Dāghistānī, who escaped to Egypt in 1894, and together with other Young Turks, created the plot of the Arab caliphate in order to intimidate the sultan into restoring the constitution.⁴⁵ One finds this explanation absurd and unconvincing.

42. Majmū'at athār, p.122. Also, Hain Arab Nationalism, p.31.

43. This essay is included in Majmū'at athār, pp.118-145. The collector added that Rafīq did not finish the essay because no good would come out of it, for relations between the Arabs and the Turks had reached the breaking point. This fact indicates that Rafīq might have written his essay sometime just before 1914.

44. See Majmū'at athār, p.122. For a discussion of the alleged connection between the Khedive and the plot of Arab caliphate, see S. Hain, Arab Nationalism, pp.27-29.

45. Majmū'at athār, p.122. Hain Arab, p.29. See also, al-Ihran, No.9495 of 11 June 1909, editorial. Also, Thawrat al-'Arab, p.48.

al-'Ailan newspaper, the organ of the Nationalist party in Egypt, had played an important role in the revival of the rumour of Arab caliphate, and had often accused certain Syrians of conspiring to restore the caliphate to the Arabs. For examples of this see: al-Manār,

It could be argued that by reviving and debating this question of an Arab caliphate, the Arab leaders were trying to alarm the Young Turks into taking their complaints and demands more seriously. It was as if the Arabs wanted to remind the Young Turks that they could still cause some anxiety and division in the Empire over this question. The Unionists must have realised the emptiness of the threat and therefore never paid it much attention. Every now and then, the CUP press would pick on the question of the Arab caliphate either in an attempt to meet some accusations from some anti-CUP Syrian newspapers, or in an effort to divert attention from burning questions in Istanbul, such as the heated debates which took place in the Chamber of Deputies between the Unionists and their opponents.

Perhaps the most manifest indication of the growing Syrian national movement was the attempt of the Syrian Arabs to defend and preserve their language against what they considered to be a calculated move by the CUP to impose their Turkish nationality on the Arabs by the gradual repression of Arabic. This question of language became the first and one of the most irritating and persistent of all Arab grievances against the Young Turks. Moreover, it showed the artificiality and the impossibility of trying to apply the doctrine of 'Ottomanism'. It then dawned upon the Young

F/n. 45 cont..

Vol.14, part 1 of 30 Jan.1911, pp.36-40. al-Hilāl of Dec.1909, p.156. al-Muqattān, Nos.6620 and 6621 of 18 and 20 Jan.1911, replies to the accusations of al-'Alam.

Turks that any attempt to apply that doctrine could not but be resented and resisted. Confronted with this opposition from the Arabs, the Young Turks realised that to achieve their ideal of 'unity and progress' they had to rely on the Turks alone. The various subject nationalities in European Turkey had long demonstrated their strong dislike of Turkish rule, and the Young Turks had no illusions about their separatist tendencies. Now the Arabs showed a strong hostility towards the application of the doctrine of Ottomanism, the Young Turks became more and more convinced of the necessity of resorting to more forceful policies towards the subject peoples of the Empire. Hence the adoption of their 'turkification' policies.

In their attempt to achieve their dream of creating one unified Ottoman nation, the Young Turks decided to give to all Ottoman subjects a uniform educational system. By making the study of the Turkish language compulsory in all schools run by the government, and insisting that it should remain the medium of instruction in these schools, and that all official correspondence, including the proceedings of judicial courts should be conducted in Turkish⁴⁶, they wished to make their heterogeneous subjects ^{into} "a nation which would

46. Political programme of CUP in *Ikdam*, No.5197 of 13 Nov., 1908. *Tunaya, Partiler*, pp.209-212. *The Times*, No. 38761 of 25 Sept.,1908.

be one in language."⁴⁷ In trying to do this, it should be emphasised, that the Young Turks were within their constitutional rights,⁴⁸ and were only attempting to carry the constitutional rights,⁴⁸ and were only attempting to carry the doctrine of Ottomanism to its logical conclusion. The Arabs had indeed repeatedly declared their loyalty to that doctrine, but were not prepared to go beyond paying such lip service. However, these measures of the Young Turks caused a particularly strong reaction among the Arabs.

The Arabs have always shown an emotional attachment to their language. Throughout their history, the Arabs had held the Arabic language in almost religious respect. It formed, and still forms, the most important factor in the ideology of Arab nationalism. It was natural, therefore, for the politically conscious Syrians to make the Arabic language the focal point of their opposition to the Young Turks' regime.

Fully aware of their numerical superiority within the Empire, and of the cultural significance of their language, the leading Syrians saw in the attempt of the Young Turks to disseminate their language a deliberate attempt to "Turkify the Arabs."⁴⁹ The Muslim and the Christian papers

47. Sir Edwin Pears, Forty years in Constantinople, p.271. Zeine, The Emergence, p.98.

48. Article 18 of Constitution makes Turkish official language of the state. See above p. 89 , note 24.

49. al-Manār, Vol.12, part 7 of 16 Aug.,1909, pp.509-510. Also, Dr. A. Shahbandar, al-Thawra al-Wataniyyah, Damascus 1933, pp.2-3. Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, pp. 98-100.

in both Cairo and Syria were unanimous in opposing this policy of the Young Turks, which they alleged, aimed at the systematic repression of the Arabic language. Lisān al-Hāl, a pro-CUP Christian paper, summarised the objections of other Syrian papers when it stated, "many Arabs have no objections to making the Turkish language the official language of the Empire, nor do they object to making it an obligatory subject in all/^{the}government's schools. But they disagree with the government over its decision to make Turkish the medium of instruction, because such a decision is a blow to the Arabic language, and will make it soon die out".⁵⁰ Lisān al-Hāl then went on to criticise the use of Turkish in the law courts of the Arab vilayets. The ignorance of the great majority of the Arabs of the Turkish language, and the conduct of legal cases through the medium of a translator would result in gross injustice. The paper finally concluded with a friendly advice to the government to respect the languages of its various subjects, and allow each race ('Unṣūr) to be educated in its own language. By this means the government would "eradicate fanaticism, win over the support of its subjects", and achieve better understanding and lasting unity among the peoples of the Empire.⁵¹ Being a supporter of the CUP, Lisān al-Hāl, perhaps, was understating the resentment which the Muslim journalists felt over this problem of language.

50. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6195 of 10 Dec., 1909.

51. Ibid.

While Lisān al-Ḥāl, al-Ahrān and al-Hilāl, all of which were edited by Lebanese Christians, took a relatively mild attitude in opposing the language policies of the Young Turks, papers and periodicals owned by Muslim Syrians took a very strong view. Rashīd Riḍā, for instance, argued in a revealing article in al-Manār that had it not been for the nationalist reasons which would prevent the Turks from accepting the sensible proposal of making Arabic the official language of the Ottoman Empire, such a proposal would have been the ideal solution for the Empire's ethnic problems. Riḍā saw in the attempt of some of the Young Turks to make their language the medium of instruction in the schools as well as the official language in all departments of the government an apparent attempt to turkify the Arabs by eradicating their language, and in so doing striking a deliberate blow at Islam.⁵² Though other papers, including al-Ahrān, which was owned and edited by Syrian Christians, kept reminding the Young Turks that Arabic was the language, and still is, the language of Islam and of its prophet Muḥammad,⁵³ none of them went as far as al-Manār when it suggested that any attack on Arabic would be also considered

52. al-Manār, Vol. 12, part 7 of 16 Aug., 1909, pp. 504-505, the article is entitled, "The Ottoman Nationalities and the Turkish and Arabic languages". See: pp. 501-512.

53. al-Ahrān, No. 9572 of 9 Sept. 1909. See also No. 9759 of 22 Apr., 1910.

an attack on Islam.⁵⁴ But Shaykh Riḍā was always reminding his readers of the religious laxity of the leaders of the CUP.

Riḍā put forward the view of many leading Syrian Muslims when he not only equated the Turkish and Arabic languages in importance, but placed Arabic a step higher "because it is the language of the biggest element in the Empire [the Arabs], and of the religion of all Muslims within and without the Empire who are bound to the Caliphate with the strongest of ties".⁵⁵ This was, perhaps, the first attempt to stress the usefulness of the Arabic language in any pan-Islamic propaganda that the CUP government might adopt. Riḍā was a faithful disciple of Muhammad 'Abduh who was himself a disciple of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, the alleged founder of the Pan-Islamic movement.⁵⁶ No wonder then if Riḍā thought it proper to remind the Young Turks of their duty towards other Muslims outside the Empire.

Riḍā stated that some Arabs motivated by religious reasons and some by nationalistic reasons believed that the Ottoman government "should make the Arabic language the medium of instruction in all its schools, and after its spread,

54. al-Manār, Vol. 12, part 7 of 16 Aug., 1909, p.504

55. Ibid.

56. The literature on al-Afghānī is voluminous, for two recent and upto date works see: E. Kedourie, Afghānī and 'Abduh, London, 1964; N.R. Keddie, An Islamic Response to Imperialism, Berkeley, 1968.

the official language of the state, because it is the language of the bigger element in the Empire....."⁵⁷ Some impartial observers, he said, were of the opinion that in order to solve the controversy about language in the Empire without affecting the national interests of either the Arabs or the Turks, it would be necessary to reorganise the Empire on the Austro-Hungarian model.⁵⁸ Arabic and Turkish would then be of equal standing. This suggestion is the more important because in 1913 the secret military Arab society al-'Ahd was to make it the cardinal point in its programme.⁵⁹

Another solution which the majority of the leading Syrian Arabs found acceptable but the Young Turks rejected, was that Arabic should be the medium of instruction in the Arab vilayets, and Turkish in the rest of the Empire. Primary and intermediate education for the Arabs and the Turks should be in Arabic and Turkish respectively. Both languages should be made obligatory subjects in the secondary and higher schools. The business of ~~government~~ should be in Arabic in the Arab provinces, and a translation bureau should be set up in order to translate from and to Arabic

57. al-Manār, Vol.12, part 7 of 16 Aug., 1909, p.504.

58. Ibid., p.506.

59. On al-'Ahd society and other Arab societies see Chapter III, pp. 163-195.

all official correspondence.⁶⁰ This regional solution which adopted some of the administrative practices that were in use before the time of Sultan Abdülhamid, and which would have meant a greater measure of decentralisation in the administration of the Arab vilayets, was totally unacceptable to the Young Turks. The application of such a solution would have been the negation of the Young Turks' centralist policies. Naturally all those Arab notables and dignitaries who had vested interests in the return of old administrative practices supported this suggestion.

A compromise proposed by 'Ubaidallāh, an ardent Young Turk, and later the editor of the Arabic newspaper, Jarīdat al-'Arab in Istanbul, was equally unacceptable to the Young Turks. He suggested that the government should make Turkish the medium of instruction for the Turks, and at the same time establish academic institutions in the capitals of the Arab vilayets with the function of studying and reviving the Arabic heritage.⁶¹ The Arabs were ready to accept this compromise as a basis for a solution. One cannot see how such a defective proposal could have served as a basis for any solution at all.

The conflict was, however, more than a language

60. al-Manār, Vol.12, part 7 of 16 Aug.,1909, pp.506-507.

61. Ibid., p.507. The suggestion of 'Ubaidallāh was originally published in the Turkish paper Tasvir-i Evkar, and translated by M.ī. al-Khatib in al-Muḡattam No.6163 of 6 July,1909, p.2.

problem. It was the clash of two nationalities, one Arab and the other Turkish. The latter tried and failed to dominate and absorb the former. The Unionists though aware of the existence of some sort of national feeling among the Arabs, made the fatal mistake of underestimating the extent and depth of that feeling.

Hüseyin Cahid's (Yalçın) defence of the Young Turks' language policy, which he published in Tanin, argued that by making Turkish the official language in the law courts, the government was only trying to apply the principles of the Constitution, which specified that Turkish was the official language of the state and that all the subject peoples of the Empire were equal before the law. Thus the Young Turks were not ready to grant the Arabs certain privileges over the rest of the subjects of the Empire. This would nullify the principle of equality and would create a dangerous precedent whereby the rest of the subject peoples of the Empire might demand the same treatment as the Arabs. That would mean the death of the doctrine of Ottomanism.⁶² Cahid's arguments seemed logical and convincing, but they did not convince the Arabs who were becoming too aware of their national identity. al-Haqīqa, a Beirut bi-weekly, declared in an editorial that to repress the language of a

62. Tanin, No.428 of 11 Nov.,1909.

nation is equivalent to killing that nation, for no nation can live without its language.⁶³ Rafīq al-'Iẓn warned that by "neglecting the Arabic language in its schools and by replacing it ^{with} / Turkish, despite their knowledge that the Arabs had now no bond except that of language, the government touched them in their tenderest part and awoke their national sentiment from a deep slumber".⁶⁴ al-Ahrān cautioned the government "not to give offence to the national feelings".⁶⁵ al-Manār saw the necessity of reviving the Arabic language for "languages are among the most important factors which constitute nations".⁶⁶

Coupled with this language grievance there were sporadic complaints that the majority of the Turkish officials whom the government used to send to the Arab vilayets were unable to speak the language of the country.⁶⁷ Though this complaint did not assume large proportions at this stage, yet it was to be the characteristic feature of the programme of the decentralisation movement during 1912-13.⁶⁸

63. al-Haqīqa, No. 233 of 11 Apr., 1910, editorial entitled, "The Arabic language and the Government".

64. Hajūnat Athār, p. 134.

65. al-Ahrān, No. 9572 of 9 Sept., 1909, editorial, "The Arabic language in the Ottoman Kingdom".

66. al-Manār, Vol. 12, part 2 of 23 Mar., 1909, pp. 111-112.

67. al-Muqtabas (daily), Nos. 656 and 695 of 20 Apr. and 4 June, 1911, respectively. The Times, No. 3941 of 24 Mar., 1911. Also, F.O. 195/2342, des. No. 18, Young to Lowther, Damascus, 10 June, 1910. Also, Hajūnāt Athār, pp. 142-3.

68. See below Chapter IV, pp. 264, and pp. 278-279.

To ask for officials who knew Arabic was ~~the~~ the equivalent of asking for Arab officials, for the Arabs knew that very few Turks were acquainted with the Arabic language. This was another attempt by the Arabs to oppose the centralist policies of the Young Turks, and to initiate a return to decentralised administrative measures that characterised the days before Sultan Abdülhanid came to power.

Meantime, a general feeling of disappointment in the constitutional regime was becoming apparent among the public of Syria. Though commissions were formed in Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo and other Syrian towns to consider important questions of reform, such as the construction of roads, collection of taxes, instruction and public security, their decisions were hampered by lack of funds to execute them.⁶⁹ In the words of the British consul at Beirut, "the reforms so loudly preached at noisy public meetings, parliamentary speeches and press articles and in official circles have not come up to expectation".⁷⁰ In Aleppo, for instance, there was little improvement in the various departments of government while bribery and corruption were "as bad or worse than during the reign of Abdul Hamid".⁷¹ The fact that the Syrians as well as the other subjects of the Empire expected too much from the Young Turks' regime was no fault of the Young Turks. The subject of the Ottoman Empire,

69. F.O.371/1002, No.49, Devey to Lowther, Damascus, 11 Oct., 1910.

70. F.O.371/1006, No.31, Cumberbatch to Lowther, Beirut, 16 Oct., 1910.

71. F.O.371/1002, No.49, Devey to Lowther, Damascus, 11 Oct., 1910.

and particularly the Arabs, had always relied heavily on the Ottoman government for effecting changes and reforms. In fact most, if not all, major reforms/^{were} initiated by men at the top who were either statesmen or closely associated with the business of administration. However, when the Young Turk government, harassed by its financial and political problems, was unable to fulfil the extravagant expectations of its subjects, it was held to blame by them.

The principle of equality promised by the Constitution meant the extension of military service to the non-Muslims of the Empire. It was hoped that this measure would help in creating imperial unity. Since 1855 the non-Muslim subjects of the Sultan were nominally liable to conscription in the Turkish army, but they always paid the military exemption tax (bedel) which the government was more than willing to accept. In fact until the publication of the temporary law for the conscription of Non-Muslims⁷² on 8 August 1909, military service was confined to Muslims.

Though the Christian press of Syria had welcomed the law, there was a general desire among the Christians of Syria not to enlist.⁷³ In fact, the application of the new law caused an exodus of young Christians to America.

72. For the text of the law see: Kavanin-i Cedide, pp.1-2. For an Arabic translation of the Firman see: al-Mugattam, No.6274 of 15 Nov., 1909.

73. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6153 of 22 Oct., 1909. F.O.371/781, No. 73, Colonel Surtees to Lowther, Const. 20 June, 1909 discusses attitude of Christians.

About 5,000 to 8,000 Christians or about one sixth of the Christian population of the town of Aleppo, were reported to have emigrated in the summer of 1909. They were averse to military service and dreaded being in the badly paid and poverty stricken Turkish regiments.⁷⁴ In Homs the Christian youths were said to be fleeing the country to avoid military service.⁷⁵ They discovered that it was cheaper⁷⁶ to emigrate to America than pay the military exemption tax. In Jerusalem the same lack of enthusiasm to enlist prevailed among both Jews and Christians. The British consul reported that a total of 250 non-Muslims had left the district of Jerusalem for Europe and America.⁷⁷ The Roman Catholics seemed especially averse to military service, and in Jaffa went so far as to petition the Consuls to intervene on their behalf and secure their exemption.⁷⁸ In contrast to this, the Armenian Patriarch realising that his flock had nothing to lose by enlisting, urged them to do so.⁷⁹ The Greek and the Latin Patriarchs petitioned the authorities to exempt

74. F.O.571/781, No.28, consul Fontana to Lowther, Aleppo, 25 Oct. 1909.

75. al-Muqattam, No.6231 of 23 Sept. 1909.

76. Ibid.

77. F.O.1935/2321, No.76, Consul Blech to Lowther, Jerus., 17 Sept. 1909, he further gives the nos. enlisted from each community, e.g. 600 Jews, 121 Latin, Armenians 29 and 80 protestants.

78. Ibid. Also, F.O.195/2321, No.78, same to same, Jerus., 20 Sept. 1909.

79. Ibid.

the district of Jerusalem on ground of its sanctity.⁸⁰ Lebanon was exempted from the military service because of its privileged status. The Lebanese living outside Lebanon attempted to benefit by this exemption but their efforts were not wholly successful.⁸¹

Tanin regretted the aversion of the Syrian Christians to military service, and assured them that their fears of being subjected to hardships were unfounded.⁸² Though some Syrian Christian and Muslim papers made a serious effort to encourage their fellow Syrians to enlist,⁸³ the antipathy of the Syrian Christians continued. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the Young Turks really minded this unwillingness of the Syrian Christians to join the army. Nevertheless, it made them suspect the loyalty of those Christians to the new regime, and they made no secret of these suspicions. Tanin, for which the Syrians had no warm feelings, had time and again hinted the doubts of the CUP on the patriotism of the Syrians.⁸⁴ The Syrian press, both Christian and Muslim, was not slow to retaliate.

80. F.O.195/2321, No.76, Blech to Lowther, Jerus., 17 Sept., 1909.

81. For a detailed account see F.O.371/1006, No.18, Cumberbatch to Lowther, Beirut, 25 Mar., 1910. Also, al-Haqīqa, No.222 of 28 Feb.1910.

82. As quoted by Lisān al-Hāl, No.6153 of 22 Oct., 1910.

83. Lisān, Ibid. See also al-Muqattān, No.6264 of 3 Nov., 1909. Also al-Ahrān, No.9632 of 19 Nov., 1909.

84. Tanin, Nos.576 and 585 of 10 and 19 Apr., 1910, respectively, also, Tanin Nos.754 of 8 Oct.1910 and following Nos. for a series of articles on Syria by one of Tanin's reporters. These articles gave great offence to leading Syrians and were another reason adding to the worsening relations of the Young Turks and the Syrians.

For instance, the emigration of many Syrians to America and other parts of the world, which continued before and after the Young Turks' regime, and which had done the economy of Syria a great deal of harm, was always after 1909 blamed by the Syrian press on the policies of the Young Turks. This is unjustifiable as the emigration was caused by many factors some of which can only be ascribed to the Syrians themselves.

The government, perhaps, preferred that the Christians pay the military exemption tax than perform the service. "The Turks", wrote the British Military Attaché in Istanbul, "were not anxious to see any military power in the hands of the Christian races of the Empire".⁸⁵ It would have been more accurate to say that the Christian peoples of the Empire were not anxious to share any power, military or non-military, with the Turks. Their hearts were set on establishing their own autonomous states. The Unionists, sure of the existence of such hopes among the Christian peoples of the Balkans, suspected that the Syrian and Lebanese Christians entertained similar separatist ambitions. Several factors contributed to their suspicion. The Lebanese showed more concern about their privileged status than about their being Ottoman subjects when they refused to elect deputies to the Ottoman Chamber. The Maronites had always looked to France for help and protection. Not only did the

85. F.O.371/781 - No.73, Colonel Surtees to Lowther, Const., 20 June, 1909.

privileges of Lebanon exempt it from military service, but the Lebanese domiciled outside the Mountain were agitating to acquire the same right. The Christian Syrians were fleeing the country to avoid military service. Moreover, the Maṭrān brothers, who belonged to a famous Greek Orthodox family in Ba'albek, had initiated the first Syrian call for the autonomy of Syria.⁸⁶ The press of the Syrian Christian émigrés in North and South America was outspoken in its criticism of the Young Turk regime, and its criticism might have ^{had} separatist undertones.⁸⁷ It was this kind of suspicion on the part of the Young Turks which, among other factors, contributed to the deterioration of their relations with those Christians, and ultimately led to the growth of their estrangement from the Arabs.

The Young Turks were faced with immense difficulties in trying to solve the internal administrative problems which the Hamidian regime bequeathed to them. In Syria as well as in Albania Sultan Abdülhamid ruled by the favours and exemptions which he gave to the local tribal chiefs and notables. Through them he controlled his subjects there.

By attempting to put an end to such practices, and to impose

86. See above p. 88 for the 'Comité Syrien' and the Maṭrān's call.

87. The role played by the Syrian émigrés in the Arab movement and their relations with the Ottoman government form a separate and an interesting subject which is virtually untouched.

a more direct system of administration, the Young Turks did not add to their waning popularity in either Syria and Albania. During the year 1910 the Turkish government had to tackle disturbances in Albania,⁸⁸ Macedonia and in Syria. The centralising and unifying policies of the Young Turks were the main reasons behind the disturbances in Albania and Macedonia,⁸⁹ and in dealing with these disturbances they were following preconceived policies.

The same could not be said of their measures which resulted in the suppression of the revolt of the Druzes of Ḥaurān and of the disturbances of the Beduins at Kerak. Both these incidents occurred in the latter half of 1910. The Druzes had always been a thorn in the flesh of the Turkish authorities, and the Young Turks were too busy handling other more urgent and important matters to plan a permanent solution to the problem they constituted.

The Druzes' attack on their neighbours, the villagers of Buṣrā Eskī Shān, the resulting state of insecurity in the area and their subsequent clash with the authorities, generally known as "the revolt of the Druzes"⁹⁰ was in no way

88. For the revolt in Albania see: F.O.371/1245/6167, Desp. No.103, Lowther to Grey, Const., 14 Feb., 1911, being the Annual Report for the year 1910, pp.27-29. For conditions in Macedonia and European Turkey in general see the same pp.29-32 and following files.

89. Ibid., for a brief enumeration of those policies of the Young Turks. See also series F.O.371/1002 ff. for detailed information.

90. This Druze revolt is well documented in the contemporary sources. The press reported on it daily. While some papers call it a revolt, others called it Fitna, see for example, al-Ihrān, No.s 9850 & 9853, 8 and 11 Aug. 1910. al-Muqattān, No.6502 of 15 Aug., 1910 and following numbers.

a calculated move against the Turkish local authorities,⁹¹ nor was it a manifestation of the emerging Syrian national feeling. Equally, the revolt was not an anti-constitutional movement engineered by some reactionary elements in Syria as claimed by some Arabic newspapers.⁹² Certainly it was not a national uprising. The revolt was a much simpler affair.

In the days of Abdülhamid, Ḥaurān had been left to itself; the powerful Druze chiefs paid taxes only when it suited them, and both Druze and Muslims evaded military service. The annual movement of the Beduins from the Syrian desert to the Hauran region, their raids on the Druzes as well as on other settled elements, and the unrelenting feuds between the Druzes and their Muslim and Christian neighbours, produced a state of persistent insecurity in the region. Unlike the Beduins, who raided and departed, the Druzes, settled, and better organised and somewhat more united, gained ground at the expense of the sedentary Muslims and Christians alike. They recovered rapidly from a harsh campaign conducted against them in 1895-96, and started once more consolidating their power. Sultan Abdülhamid regarded them as a possible danger to the Ḥijāz railway. It was only

91. al-Muqtabas, No.667 of 11 Sept.,1911 for an article by al-'Isali in this sense.

92. al-Ḥurān, 9852 of 10 Aug.,1910 & 9853 of 11 Aug.,1910. Also No.9938 of 21 Nov. 1910 stated that Danascene reactionaries were behind the revolt. Official investigations, however, proved this to be groundless.

93. The Times of Fri.,23 Sept.,1910, p.3.

the growth of disorder in the European provinces and the revolt in the Yemen which prevented the Sultan from settling the Druze question. To use the words of The Times, "the object of the Hamidian policy seems to have been the establishment of a sort of equilibrium between Druse and Beduins, maintained by government interference on behalf of the side which had been most recently worsted. But when, after some years, the Druses began to gain the upper hand, the government, with Macedonia and the Yemen on its back, was not in a position to redress the balance."⁹⁴ As late as 1906 the Druzes raided as far as the outskirts of Damascus without the government being able to punish them. They resumed their feuds with their neighbours and continued to harass the villages in the region of Ḥaurān.

In fact it was one of these feuds between the Atrash family, the ruling family of the Druses, and that of the powerful Muslim Miqdād of Buṣrā Eski Shān, which caused the clash between the Druses and the Turkish authorities.⁹⁵ A murder of a Druze stirred the old feud between the two families, whereby the Druses attacked and pillaged

94. The Times, No.39385, Fri., 23 Sept.,1910, p.3.

95. al-Ihrān, No.9850 of 8 Aug.,1910. The Times, Ibid. See also: al-Muqattān, No.6515 of 30 Aug.,1910. Also, Buru, p.210.

two villages belonging to the Miqdād family causing considerable loss of life and property.⁹⁶ The central government, anxious to restore its prestige which had sunk low in Syria, decided to send an expedition against the defiant Druzes to punish them and bring security to the region of Ḥaurān. Moreover, the leader of the expedition, General Sanī Pasha al-Fārūqī, an Iraqi by origin and the son-in-law of the Minister of War, Mahmūd Shevket Pasha, was ordered to disarm the Druzes, enlist them, make them pay the arrears of the government's taxes and finally to introduce basic and necessary reforms in the region.⁹⁷ It could be argued that the government hoped that the expedition would overawe the rest of the Syrians, whose press had lately shown disturbing signs of strong anti-Turkish feeling. Nevertheless, all the Syrian newspapers in Egypt and Syria unanimously approved of the expedition and its objectives.⁹⁸ Criticism in some of these papers was not made at the time of the expedition but at a much later date, when relations between the Arabs and the Turks were strained and at breaking point.

96. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6397 of 6 Aug.1910. The Times, No.39385, of Fri., 25 Sept.1910, p.3. Also, al-Muqattan, No.6502 of 15 Aug.1910.

97. Lisān al-Hāl, Ibid. The Times, Ibid. Lisān, No.6399 of 9 Aug.1910. al-Muqattan, No.6498 of 10 Aug.1910, p.4. Also, al-Ahram, 9852 of 10 Aug. 1910. Thawrat al-'Arab, p.54, for a slightly different version.

98. See for example: al-Muqtabas, No.521 of 10 Nov.1910. al-Ahram, No.9853 of 11 Aug.1910. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6397, of 6 August, 1910.

The expedition, well armed and equipped, made its way in the Druze area,⁹⁹ and after some light fighting was able to establish its control over Jebel Druze.¹⁰⁰ There were hardly any complaints of the way general Sāmī Pasha conducted the campaign. On the contrary there was much praise of ^{his} "tact and kindness".¹⁰¹ On 8th November, 1910, the British Consul at Damascus reported that the revolt had ended, that the Druzes were handing ⁱⁿ their arms, and that some 250 Druzes were recruited and sent to Damascus.¹⁰²

Having met such success in the Ḥaurān, the government decided to extend conscription to the Beduins living east of the river Jordan. To accomplish that, it was necessary to take a census of the Beduins and to disarm them. It was decided to start with the Majālī Arabs who lived in the kaza of Kerak; but the Beduins unaccustomed to military service, fearing the financial consequences of the census, and indignant at the prospect of being disarmed, attacked the station at Qatrānā on the Ḥijāz railway, killing the station master with two others, looting and

99. al-Ahrām, No.9907 of 15 Oct.,1910, and No.9899 of 6 Oct. 1910. Also No.9900 of 7 Oct. 1910 and following five numbers. See also al-Muqattān, 6494 of 5 Aug.,1910 and following numbers.

100. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6444 of 30 Sept.,1910. al-Muqtabas, No.521 of 10 Nov.1910. Also, F.O.195/2342, No.165, tel. Devey to Lowther, Dan., 29 Oct. 1910.

101. F.O.195/2342, same desp. Also, No.52, Damascus, 8 Nov., 1910.

102. Ibid. desp. No.52

burning a train and cutting the line and the telegraphic wires for several miles. In Kerak itself the administrative building was attacked and burnt, while the mutaşarrif and the garrison of Kerak were besieged in the fortress.¹⁰³ The first reports coming from Kerak gave very exaggerated accounts of the disturbances, but were soon corrected.¹⁰⁴ The small contingent, which Sāmī Pasha sent against the Beduins, speedily relieved the fortress and restored law and order in the area.¹⁰⁵

Thus the Kerak disturbances, like the Druze uprising, were in no way a national movement against the tyranny of the Young Turks. Though provoked by the attempt of the Young Turks to impose a more direct system of administration on the Druzes and the Beduins, the disturbances never assumed an anti-Turkish aspect as suggested by the British A. Consul at Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ The Druzes and Beduins opposed the attempt to infringe on their old privileges. Both incidents were indicative of the tremendous difficulties

103. For more details of Kerak disturbances see: al-Muqtabas, Nos. 547 of 11 Dec., 1910; 548 of 12 Dec., 1910 and following Nos. till No. 552 of 22 Dec., 1910. Nos. 557 of 26 Dec. until No. 561 of 31 Dec., 1910 contain very useful articles about Kerak, population, economy etc. See also, Lisān al-Hāl, No. 6507 of 13 Dec., 1910. al-Muqattān, No. 6612 of 2 Dec., 1910.

104. See for example, F.O. 195/2343, No. 59, Devey to Lowther, Danascus, 13 Dec., 1910. al-Muqattān, No. 6608 of 21 Dec., and No. 6609 of 22 Dec., 1910.

105. Lisān al-Hāl, No. 6512 of 19 Dec., 1910. F.O. 195/2343, No. 66, Devey to Lowther, Danascus, 20 Dec., 1910.

106. F.O. 195/2334, No. 69, A. Consul Norgan to Lowther, Jerusal., 16 Dec., 1910.

confronting the Young Turk regime in Syria as well as in the rest of the Empire. To try and make out of either the Druzes or the Beduins true Ottoman citizens was to attempt the impossible. Thus once more we see the inapplicability of the doctrine of Ottomanism. The loyalties of the Druzes and Beduins went to the family, to the clan ~~tribe~~ and tribe than to a unified Ottoman nation. Even Islam, a strong bond that bound the Muslim Arabs to the seat of the Caliphate, could not have rallied the Druzes nor the Beduins to the Ottoman state. Islam had always sat lightly on the Beduins, and the Druzes were hardly to be expected to rally to a Sunnī caliph. Thus the Young Turks' attempt at a more centralised system of administration had alienated the Druzes and Beduins, and deprived their regime of their services. If the report of a certain Forder, an American missionary who lived among the Beduins of Kerak for many years, were to be believed, the Beduins had already started looking for an alternative to the Turkish rule; for he told the British acting consul at Jerusalem that the Beduin Shaykhs asked him to convey their desire for English protection. This desire was expressed as early as December 1910.¹⁰⁷ It could be suggested that the Beduins of Kerak wanted no more than a regime, like that of the British in Egypt, which would relieve them of the threat of conscription. Whatever the degree of dissatisfaction among the Beduin Shaykhs,

107. F.O. 195/2343, No.69, L. Consul Morgan to Lowther, Jerus., 16 Dec., 1910.

the press of Syria was unanimous in approving the measures taken by the government.

Nevertheless, as early as 1913 when Turkish-Arab relations were nearing a breaking point, the government's actions in the Hauran and Kerak began to appear in the anti-CUP papers as a deliberate attempt by the Young Turks to turkify the Arabs.¹⁰⁸ Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā argued that by disarming the Albanians, and the Arabs the government would be in a much stronger position to impose its plan of "Turkification" over those races who would be unable to resist them.¹⁰⁹ Riḍā, probably, was expressing a point of view which in 1913 became prevalent among his fellow Syrians in Egypt, but which was far too daring and unsupported a notion to broadcast in 1910. However, one would not expect strong support for the Druzes and Beduins among the sedentary and highly sophisticated educated classes of the Syrians.

Though the Syrians were fully aware of the consequences for their country of the increasing Jewish immigration into Palestine they found very little to complain about in the policies of the Young Turk government in that matter. The Arabic press of the time sustained a lengthy and interesting dialogue about the Zionist movement in which

108. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 1 of 8 Jan.,1913, pp.57-60.

109. Ibid., p.57.

the Arabs, no less than the Turks, showed a considerable knowledge of that movement and its aspirations. Surprisingly enough, there was little or no discussion of the alleged connection between the Young Turk movement and that of the Zionists.¹¹⁰ Apart from sporadic and isolated utterances by al-Manār in Cairo and Nahdat al-Arab in Paris, there was no criticism of the Young Turks' policies towards the Zionists' plans to colonise Palestine.¹¹¹ The truth of the matter was that there was nothing to criticise; for the Young Turks, while favouring Jewish immigration into the Empire as a whole, stood by the restrictions which Sultan Abdülhamid had put in the way of Jewish immigrants into Palestine.¹¹² The Young Turks, though not sure of the ultimate motives of the Zionists, suspected some separatist undertones in the Zionist movement which put them on their guard. The Syrians kept reminding the government of the dangers of the increasing

110. On these allegations and more see: Ransaur, The Young Turks, pp.88 ff. The Times is convinced of their reality and argues so in many articles, see Nos.39559, 14 Apr. 1911; 39634, 11 Jul.1911 and ff. The British embassy in Istanbul supports the views of The Times on the subject, though independently; for an example see F.O. 371/1245/6167, No.103, Annual Report, Lowther to Grey, Const., 14 Feb.1911. B. Lewis in Emergence, pp.211-212, n.4, showed these allegations to be groundless.

111. See, St. Antony's papers, Middle Eastern Affairs, No.4, edited by L. Hourani, Oxford 1965, pp.94-96, for an article by N. Mandel, entitled, Turks, Arabs and Jewish Immigration into Palestine, which is itself part of an unpublished thesis on the subject.

112. See same article pp.79-89 for a summary of these restrictions. Also, B.A. (Istanbul) Meclis-i vukla Mazbatasi, No.145 of 24 Oct.1910 deals with the subject. However, Mandel's unpublished thesis, Turks Arabs and Jewish Immigration into Palestine, 1882-1914, deals with the whole question of Arab reactions to CUP policies towards immigration extensively. See pp.190 ff. and Ch.6.

number of Jewish immigrants arriving in Palestine, and showed a marked willingness to work hand in hand with the government in combating "the Zionist menace".¹¹³ Not even at the time when the Turks and the Arabs were about to go their separate ways did the Syrian press condemn the policies of the Young Turks with regard to Jewish immigration into Palestine.

The Young Turk movement was concerned first and foremost with the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Empire. Essentially it was a conservative movement in that it tried to achieve what the preceding reformist movements had attempted. Because of this conservative nature, the Young Turks never attempted, or even contemplated to effect social change in the Ottoman Empire. They were unlucky in that they assumed power at a time when the political problems of the Empire overshadowed other social and to some extent economic problems. Thus their efforts were directed to finding solutions for these pressing political problems, and they were busy tackling them when the First World War broke out; a war that they entered with the hope of solving the problems of their dying Empire, but which unfortunately ended in the destruction of that Empire. Hence the Young Turks era saw little or no legislation with regard to social affairs, and limited legislation as far as land tenure, industry and commerce were concerned. Consequently,

113. See for example, al-Muqtabas (daily) Nos. 319 of 16 Mar., 1910 and 329 of 28 Mar., 1910.

the social patterns were in 1914 more or less what they had been under the latter half of the reign of Abdülhamid.

Syria was no exception to this indifference of the Young Turks to social and economic problems. Only in Aleppo did its vali Hüseyin Kâzin, who took his post in November 1910, attempt to break the power of the local Muslim landowners and notables.¹¹⁴ Though the attempt failed and ended in the recall of the vali,¹¹⁵ one feels that such an attempt was not made as a part of a comprehensive plan for social change by the regime. It was, probably undertaken because the Muslim landowners and notables of Aleppo had remained, since the establishment of the constitution, avowed enemies of the new order, and their influence and power, which the constitutional regime tried to curtail, proved to be a stumbling block in the way of the local government. This attempt by the Vali alienated them more from the constitutional regime for which they had very little respect. Heedless of the new order of things in the Empire, they continued to consolidate their power at the expense of the local government and of the lower classes of the population of Aleppo. Moreover, their increasing power had dwarfed and lessened the importance of the new regime in the eyes of the rest of the population

114. F.O. 195/2337, No.27, Fontana to Lowther, Aleppo, 15 Nov., 1910, stated that the Vali championed the cause of the poor who were oppressed by the rich, and that he did not exceed publishing articles in the press attacking the rich landowners who succeeded in having him removed. See also, 195/2336, No.2, same to same, Aleppo, 20 Mar., 1911.

115. Ibid.

and overshadowed attempts by the local authorities at reforming local government. Such attempts passed unnoticed; a fact that did not help to enhance the declining popularity of the Young Turks in Syria.

Opposition to the CUP government continued throughout 1911 and the first half of 1912.¹¹⁶ Though the majority of the Arab deputies in Istanbul and the Syrian press in Egypt and Syria continued to criticise the policies of the Young Turks towards the Arabs, the tone of that criticism remained moderate and non-separatist.¹¹⁷ The Arabs must have realised that it was not in their political interests, and indeed in their interests as such, to separate from the Empire. They were always at pains to prove to the Turks their loyalty to the Ottoman state. In June 1911, Dr. 'Izzat al-Jundī, a Syrian Arab nationalist who figured prominently in the politics of the time, wrote in reply to an allegation made by the Rumeli, the official organ of the Central CUP in Salonica, that the opponents of the CUP wanted the disintegration of the Empire, that, "Our complaints are from a minority group in government that has no interest except furthering their personal ambitions. The misunderstanding which exists now

116. F.O.371/1491/4966, No.100, Lowther to Grey, Const. 31 Jan.,1911 and ff.

117. See for example, al-Muqattam, No.6759 of 22 June,1911. al-Ahram, 9975 of 6 Jan.1911. al-Manar, 1910-11 is full of such articles.

is between the Arabs and such a group. The Arabs and the Turks love each other. All that we want is equality and justice, and that our demands should be investigated justly. We know the benefits of unity, and we, therefore, do not desire to separate. You [Turks] should realise that if you want to separate from the Arabs, the Arabs will not allow you to do so, and they will grasp you with iron hands while saying to you that you cannot separate from the Arabs as long as they live. I declare, on behalf of the civilised and non-civilised classes, the previous fact. This is not for our love to you, but for the love which we entertain for ourselves and in order to secure our interests (manāf'inā), because our political life is dependent on our support of the centre of this beloved sultanate. This is the view of all Arabs, civilians, military and the inhabitants of the desert".¹¹⁸ The Arabs, having realised their numerical superiority in the Empire, pressed the Young Turks to apply the principle of equality which the constitution had granted. This would have given the Arabs preponderance in the administration of the Empire, a fact that the Young Turks were not ready to grant. The constitution, for which the Young Turks had long struggled, was to cause

118. al-Muqattan, No.6763 of 27 June, 1911.

ultimately much discontent among the peoples of the Empire and the final dissolution of the bond of loyalty that had for long kept the Ottoman peoples together.

In face of the refusal of the Young Turks to listen or even to take the complaints of the Arabs seriously, the Arabs began to formulate more advanced and drastic demands. In the early days of January, the first articles, elaborating demands for administrative decentralisation, appeared in al-Muqattan.¹¹⁹ Significantly enough they were written by two prominent Syrians.

119. al-Muqattan, Nos. 6919 and 6920 of 2 and 3 Jan. 1912, by Haqqi al-'Azm and Wali al-Din Yakan.

CHAPTER IIITHE ARAB COMMUNITY IN ISTANBUL1908 - 1914.(a) The Arab Deputies:

Istanbul, being the political centre of a vast Empire comprising various ethnic groups, had always had its communities of Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Arabs and others who flocked to it seeking lucrative posts, education and above all opportunities in its trade and commerce. The Arab community of Istanbul consisted, before 1908, of students, officials and ex-officials, cadets and officers as well as merchants and Arab residents.¹ After the assembling of parliament in December 1908 the Arab deputies formed an important part of that community,² which played a significant role in the shaping and development of the Turkish-Arab relations in the period of 1908-14. This role, however, was either overlooked or underestimated

1. In a letter to his friend Rashīd Riḍā, 'Abd al-Ḥanīd al-Zahrāwī, deputy for Ḥama, and later a member of the Ottoman Senate, described vividly the Arab community in Istanbul. See, al-Manār, Vol. 19, part 3 of 29 Aug. 1916, pp.178-79.

2. The exact number of that community is not known. It could be between 2000-3000. See, al-Muqāṭṭar, No. 5914 of 9 Sept. 1908.

by most of the sources that dealt with the question of the Arabs and the Turks in this period.³ Istanbul was the centre in which the whole question of the dialogue between the Young Turks and the leaders of the Arabs originated and developed after 1908,⁴ hence the importance of the political activities of the Arab community in that city. Within that community, the Arab deputies emerged as the most important group in that some of them were to play a critical role in shaping and leading the embryonic Arab movement during the first six years of the constitutional era.

While the students, officials, ex-officials and officers participated in the Arab movement by the formation of secret and open political societies, the Arab deputies, some of whose names appeared in the lists of such societies, could express their political views and criticism of the government's policies in parliament. Every deputy was free to speak his mind, and parliament was not affected by martial law, which was declared after the April counter-revolution in Istanbul and its neighbourhood, and which continued to affect the anti-government press and

3. Neither Zeine, The Emergence, nor Antonius, Anīn Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya and al-'Azamī dealt in a satisfactory way with this role. This is to give only a few examples.

4. Lisān al-Hāī, No.6918 of 23 April 1912, reported Sharīf J'affar Pasha as saying after a tour of Syria to find out the complaints of the Syrians, that nobody in Syria talked about the alleged Arab question as they talked about it in Istanbul.

critics until July 1912, when the cabinet of Ghazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha cancelled it.⁵

Though some of the non-Arab deputies made use of the newly acquired freedom of speech and either criticised or approved the actions of government, the Arab deputies, the great majority of whom were elected with the approval and support of the CUP⁶, remained silent during most of the first session of parliament. Beside the loyalty of that majority to the CUP, which was the only organised force in the Empire after the declaration of the Constitution, the Arab deputies lacked proper knowledge of parliamentary procedure and were therefore unable to make their voices heard from the start. Until the end of parliamentary sessions in January 1912, when parliament was dissolved over the continual refusal of the Chamber of Deputies to accept the government's amendment of article 35 of the Constitution,⁷ about 30 of the 59 Arab deputies remained

5. Tanin, 23 July 1912. Ikitihan, No.152 of 27 July 1912.

6. With the exception of Shafiq al-Mu'ayyad and Rushdi al-Shana', deputies of Damascus, and Talib al-Naqib and al-Zuhayr (Basra) and Yusuf Shutwan (Beghazi) all the Arab deputies were elected under the auspices of the CUP. See, a Buru, pp. 113-116. Also, above pp. 69-73.

7. Article 35 which was already amended in 1909, stated that in case of disagreement between the Chamber and the cabinet, the latter had to resign or submit to the Chamber. If the cabinet resigned, and the new Ministry adopted its predecessor's posture which the Chamber still rejected, then the Sultan could, with the consent of the Senate, dissolve the Chamber. The government's amendment, however, aimed at restoring to the Sultan the power enjoyed by him under the Constitution of 1876 of dissolving the Chamber without consulting the Senate. See, B.A. (Istanbul), Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi

Other reasons given for the silence of the Arab deputies were that they lacked proper knowledge of the Turkish language,⁸ that there were no good orators among them and, finally, that some of the CUP deputies tended to shout down all speakers who did not agree with them, thereby intimidating and silencing the Arab deputies even when questions directly concerning them were being discussed.⁹ Shukrī Ghānin, the brother of the Beirut deputy in the 1876 parliament, the famous Khalīl Ghānin, complained in a letter from Paris, in which he enumerated the demands of the Arabs, and which caused considerable resentment in CUP quarters,¹⁰ that the Arabs did not elect suitable deputies.¹¹

The reason for their silence may, however, be sought in the fact that the 23 July 1908 Revolution was so sudden that it threw the whole Empire into confusion and

F/n. 7 cont. from previous page.

(henceforth Zabit Ceridesi) pp.649 ff. Sitting of the Chamber No.31 of 24 Dec. 1911. Also, al-Ahran, Nos.10293-10300 of 16-24 Jan. 1912.

8. al-Muqattan, No.6015 of 12 Jan. 1909.
9. al-Muqattan, No.6070 of 17 March 1909. Lisān, No.5996 of 12 March 1909.
10. Tanin, Nos. 574 and 576 of 8 and 9 April 1910, respectively.
11. Lisān, No.6311 of 28 April 1910.

took everybody by surprise, including the Young Turks. Thus the Arab candidates for election to the Chamber had no time to formulate a programme of action to follow if elected. They, together with other Ottoman deputies, were unanimously agreed on the condemnation of absolute rule, their determination that there would be no return to such rule and in their optimistic hopes for a bright future for the Ottoman Empire.¹² Beyond such hopes, they were agreed on nothing.

In fact the Arab deputies did not form socially, culturally and politically, a single and homogeneous group. They were not even all Arab; for amongst their numbers there were 15 Turks elected to represent constituencies in the Arab provinces.¹³ The Constitution, however, declared that a deputy elected to the Chamber should represent the whole Ottoman people, not the inhabitants of his constituency alone.¹⁴ Apart from this, the differences in background, education and social standing made of the Arab deputies several small groups, which had nothing in common except the name of Arab, which covered Yenedi,

12. al-Muqattat, No.6070 of 17 March 1909.

13. Buru, pp.108-109.

14. See article 71 of the Constitution: Turkish text in, Mecmua, "Kanun-u esasi", p.18. English translation in Lowther to Grey, No.404, conf., Constant., 10 May 1912, forwarding a complete translation of the Ottoman Constitution, F.O.371/1494/20456, p.6.

Syrian, Ḥijāzī and Iraqi deputies. Even within such territorial divisions, social and cultural differences divided one group of deputies from the other. Not all the deputies of the vilayet of Aleppo, for example, shared the same political views, nor did they come from the same social class. A deputy from Damascus might have more in common with a Ḥijāzī or Yemeni deputy than with his own fellow Syrian deputies. This is why it could be argued that to speak of an Arab question during this period would be to speak of a phenomenon which had not yet emerged. Nevertheless, despite this lack of unity which made the Arab deputies ineffective during the first session, and to some extent during the rest of the sessions of parliament, some of those deputies managed to narrow the gaps separating them, and to create an Arab lobby in the Chamber which played a critically important role in power-politics during the period 1909-12.

The leading men behind the creation of such a lobby were some of the Syrian deputies, who were opponents of the CUP even before their election, such as Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad al-'Aẓm and Rusḥdī al-Shana' of Damascus, or supporters of the CUP who became disillusioned with it, such as 'Abd al-Ḥanīd al-Zahrāwī^w, the deputy of Ḥana. Not only that, but when the dissident Arab deputies engineered the formation of the Liberal Moderate Party (al-Hizb al-Hurr

al-Mu'tadil), the same category of the Syrian deputies was the driving force behind this act. Their members were active in opposing the CUP both inside and outside the Chamber, hence the dominant role which the Syrian deputies played in the embryonic Arab movement.

When the first session began on 17 December 1908 the majority of the Arab deputies were content to remain adherents of the CUP. Until then, the Committee was the only organised force in the Chamber, and there were no signs yet of any rival parties.¹⁵ The CUP which had declared the Constitution was very popular, and people were seeking its favour and support rather than thinking of opposing it. However, this happy situation for the CUP was not to continue for long. By the end of January 1909 Ismail Kemal Bey, a prominent Albanian deputy (for Berat), and until the declaration of the Constitution a veteran Young Turk, succeeded in forming the Liberal Party (Ahrar Firkasi), the first opposition party in the Chamber.¹⁶ The majority of its members were naturally, Albanians, but we were told that some Arab deputies sympathised with

15. al-Muqattat, No.6041 of 11 Feb.1909. Ikdam, No.5232 of 18 Dec. 1908.

16. Ibid. Also, Tunaya, Partiler, pp.236 ff. for its programme. The official date of its formation was given as 11 Sept. 1908, but it started to be effective inside the Chamber from Jan.1909, the date of its real life.

it, and that four or five of them joined its ranks.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the Arab deputies did not try to form a party of their own, or even a parliamentary bloc until November 1909. Encouraged by the activity of the Liberal Party, and aroused by the criticism in the Arabic press of their prolonged silence, some forty Arab deputies met and discussed a plan to follow in the Chamber. They elected a committee of eleven to formulate such a plan.¹⁸ This, however, was not an attempt to form an Arab party, for that committee of eleven included some of the ardent Arab supporters of the CUP, such as Sulaymān al-Bustānī, deputy for Beirut, who never wavered in his loyalty to the CUP.¹⁹ In fact the correspondent of al-Muqtabas in Istanbul wrote to his paper that Arab deputies had agreed to serve one end, namely the Ottoman bond, and that they had decided to enter the ranks of the CUP party. This, the correspondent added, they did with the advice and guidance of Sulaymān al-Bustānī.²⁰

While the correspondent did not mention a number, one source at least stated that forty Arab deputies entered the CUP party at this particular time.²¹ This could have

17. al-Muqattan, No.6041 of 11 Feb.1909. No names were given.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., for the names of the committee of eleven.

20. al-Muqtabas (daily), No.16, 2 Jan.1909.

21. Buru, pp.116-117.

meant that the leaders of the CUP made a serious effort formally to enlist some of the Arab deputies, for until then all who professed liberal ideas and showed sympathy with the aims of the Young Turks were considered as members of their party. Membership was still a loose term which lacked definition. To have been discredited or exiled by the old regime was enough to make one enter the ranks of the liberals who fought for the restoration of the Constitution. Association with the old regime was the stigma of shame and unworthiness.

In fact when the election of four Arab deputies was challenged in the Chamber, one of the charges brought against them was their association with the Hamidian regime. It was only after some discussion, in which the rest of the Arab deputies showed their lack of unity and organisation, that three of the four Arab deputies were accepted by the Chamber.²² The candidature of the fourth, Yūsuf Shutwān, deputy for Benghāzī, was rejected on the grounds that he was one of the spies of Abdülhamid, that he was of bad character and finally that he had used his influence to secure election.²³ It is of interest to note that Shutwān was elected by his constituency in absentia.²⁴ However, he

22. Lisān, Nos. 5917 and 5930 of 14 & 19 Jan. 1909 respectively. Also, al-Muqattan, No. 6015 of 12 Jan. 1909.

23. For details, see minutes of the 3rd Sitting of the Chamber on 22 Dec. 1908, in Takvin-i Vekayi, Nos. 74 and 75 of 24 & 25 Dec. 1908, respectively. Also, al-Muqattan, No. 6008 of 31 Dec. 1908.

24. Ikdan No. 5228 of 14 Dec. 1908.

was only accepted when re-elected. Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad, the deputy for Danascus who won his seat without the support of the CUP, and one of the chief founders of the Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood,²⁵ which the Unionists viewed with great suspicion, was the first of the three Arab deputies to be accepted. The discussion of his/^{case} was brief, and it is remarkable that none of the Arab deputies came to his defence.²⁶ Instead it was Riza Tovik (Edrine) who defended al-Mū'ayyad and refuted the charges brought against him.²⁷ The election of Ṭālib al-Naqīb, the leading notable of Baṣra who became its deputy, and that of his colleague, Aḥmad Pasha al-Zuhayr, was also accepted without much trouble.²⁸

It seems possible that the CUP decided to use its majority in the Chamber to obtain acceptance of the elections of all three Arab deputies, on the understanding that Arab deputies would formally enter the ranks of its parliamentary party. This would explain the entry of the forty Arab deputies in the CUP party.²⁹ It is also feasible that the Young Turks, already sensing opposition from some of the non-Turkish deputies, such as the Albanian veteran Ismail Kemal

25. For this society, see, below, pp. 167-175.

26. Sitting, No.6, 28 Dec. 1908, in Takvin-i Vekayi, No.79 of 29 Dec. 1908, pp.9 ff. for details of that discussion. al-Muqattam, No.6015 of 12 Jan. 1909.

27. Ikdan, No.5243 of 29 Dec. 1908 for a resume of Riza's speech and commentary.

28. For more details, see Sitting No.24 of 8 Feb. 1909, in Takvin, No.121 of 16 Feb. 1909, pp.6 ff.

29. See above, pp. 133-134.

Bey, wanted to strengthen their already big majority by winning over the wavering Arab deputies. The Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood was certainly doing its best to make itself the focal point around which the Arab deputies might gather.³⁰ It caused uneasiness in CUP quarters by the grand reception which it organized for the Arab deputies on their arrival. The Turkish Press sensed nationalist undertones in the anthem and slogans read at those receptions.³¹ This seems to have worried the CUP, which in an effort to secure the support and goodwill of the Arab deputies, decided to accept the election of the three deputies. Moreover, 'Arif al-Mārdīnī, one of the founders of the Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood and an outspoken critic of the CUP, was appointed vali of Basra in February 1909.³² While 'Arif showed recognition of the favour which the Committee had done him by remaining faithful to them to the end, and by combating on their behalf the reformers in the vilayet of Syria in 1913, the three Arab deputies, to whose elections the Committee objected, remained throughout the parliamentary session which ended in January 1912, bitter opponents of the Committee. Both Ṭālib al-Naqīb and Iḥnād Pasha al-Zuhayr played a leading role in opposing the government's scheme

30. al-Muqattan, No.6041 of 11 Feb. 1909.

31. Ikdan, Nos.5216 and 5218 of 2 & 4 Dec. 1908 respectively. Also, al-Muqattan, No.5997 of 17 Dec. 1908.

32. al-Muqattan, No.6064 of 10 March 1909.

to fuse the Ottoman Navigation Company, the Hamidieh, with the British Lynch Company. The affair which came to be known as the Lynch Affair was probably one of the reasons behind the sudden resignation of the cabinet of Hüseyin Hilni Pasha in December 1909. Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad, the third aggrieved Arab deputy, remained to the end, sometimes the sole Arab deputy to do so, behind all opposition to most of the Unionists' schemes and policies.³³ His opposition to the Committee was almost a personal vendetta, which ended in 1916 when he was hanged by Cemal Pasha for alleged acts of treason.

Apart from condemning the manifesto issued by the 'Comité Syrien'³⁴ founded by Rashīd Maṭrān in Paris, the Arab deputies remained dormant within the Chamber for the first four months of its life. The manifesto, which called for autonomy for Syria, caused a stir in Istanbul and Syria. Telegrams were sent from Damascus, Beirut and Paris to the Chamber dissociating the Syrians from the machinations of the Maṭrāns and emphasising the loyalty of

33. See for instance, Zabit Ceridesi, Sitting, No.14 of 13 Nov. 1909, in Takvin, No.409 of 24 Dec. 1909, pp. 2-7. Also, Meeting No.57 of 13 Feb. 1910, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.1614 ff.

34. This society is of no importance, for - apart from this manifesto - it was completely inactive. For its formation, see, al-Muqattan No.6028 of 27 Jan. 1909. Al-Muqattan, also condemned it. For a copy of the Manifesto, see, F.O.371/561/45494 (no covering despatch). Also, The Times, No.38852 of 9 Jan. 1909, and No.38928 of 8 April, 1909.

the Arabs to the Ottoman throne.³⁵ Rūḥī al-Khālīdī, the deputy for Jerusalem, agreed with the contents of those telegrams and asked that they should be published in the press.³⁶ 'Alī al-Ḥanīd al-Zahrāwī deplored this "madness of Rashīd Maṭrān" and requested that Maṭrān should be tried by the government.³⁷ Rushdī al-Shama' (Damascus) complained that the Turkish press confused Maṭrān's society and called it an Arab society which it was not.³⁸ Mīr Muḥammad Arslān (Latakīya) reminded the Chamber that this act of Rashīd Maṭrān should not be held against his family who were loyal Ottoman citizens.³⁹ Having assured the government of their loyalty to the new regime,⁴⁰ the Syrian deputies, together with the rest of the Arab deputies, were content to remain silent over nearly all the major issues discussed in the Chamber until well after the crushing of the counter-revolution of April 1909.

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35. For the text of such telegrams, see Takvin, No.97 of 20 Jan. 1909. Damascus telegram was signed by 218 persons, many of whom were Christians. See also No.95 of 18 Jan. 1909.
36. See Sitting No.13 of 14 Jan. 1909 in Takvin, No. 94 17 Jan. 1909, pp.5 ff., and No.96 of 19 Jan. 1909.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Sitting of 18 Jan. 1909 in Tanin No.168 of 19 Jan. 1909.
40. Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın, "Osmanlı Meclisinde - Arap Mebuslar". Yakın Tarihniz, Vol.I, pp.265-266 accused the Arab deputies of denouncing the manifesto of Maṭrān "only outwardly".

For instance, in both the clash between Kânîl Pasha and the CUP which brought about his downfall,⁴¹ and the sequence of events leading to the coup d'état of 13-14 April 1909, the Arab deputies showed negligible interest. On 13 February 1909 the Chamber assembled to question Kânîl Pasha on some ministerial changes which he had made without consulting his colleagues.⁴² He was summoned, but he refused to come, and tried to have the interpellation postponed. But the Chamber was in no mood to wait, and without hearing Kânîl's explanation, the deputies passed a vote of no confidence in his cabinet by 198 to 8 votes.⁴³ Kânîl's fall was wholly engineered by the CUP, for only a month before his cabinet had received a large vote of confidence by the Chamber.⁴⁴

The great majority of the Arab deputies went along with the CUP, either by voting against Kânîl or by abstaining. Out of the eight deputies who voted for Kânîl, three were Arabs⁴⁵ who, though CUP supporters, went against the wish

41. For the downfall and its results, see F. Ahmad, The CUP in Turkish Politics, pp. 70 - 81.

42. Lowther to Grey, No.93, Conf., Pera, 11 Feb. 1909, F.O.371/760/6295. Also, McCullagh, pp. 33 ff.

43. Sitting No.21 in Takvin of 18 and 19 Feb. 1909. Also, Lowther to Grey, No. 102, conf., Pera, 15 Feb. 1909, F.O.371/760/7050. al-Muqattan, No.6050 of 22 Feb.1909,p.1.

44. Sitting No.12, part 2 of 13 Jan. 1909 in Takvin of 16 Jan. 1909. Also, Tanin and Ikdan of 14 Jan. 1909.

45. They were al-Zahrâwi (Hama), Rif'at (Aleppo), and Sayyid Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥman (Ḥudayda). See, Ikdan No.5288 of 14 Feb. 1909.

of their party. It has, however, been suggested that the Arab deputies agreed to vote against Kânil if the Committee agreed to dismiss the Şeyh-ül-Islâm Cenalüddin Efendi.⁴⁶ There is no evidence to support this suggestion. Apart from the fact that Cenalüddin's memoirs made no mention of this condition,⁴⁷ the Arab deputies had no complaint whatsoever against the Şeyh-ül-Islâm. The truth of the matter was that the Arab deputies like many of the other members of the CUP party, had no definite plan for voting in this, and other crises. Deputies had hitherto voted as their private convictions dictated, and it was not until the second parliamentary session of April 1912 that CUP deputies were made to toe the party line in all matters of importance.

Arab deputies were almost silent as to the demands and needs of *Their* constituencies, and their activities in the Chamber between December 1908 and April 1909, were individual efforts which lacked coordination.⁴⁸ They did not reflect the demands of the Arab provinces as revealed by Arab journalists in the press. For instance, the deputy

46. Türkgeldi, Görüp İstittiklerin, Ankara, 1951, pp.20-21, as quoted by F. Ahmad, The CUP In Turkish Politics, p.72, n.136.

47. See Cenalüddin Efendi, Hatirat-i-Siyasiye, Istanbul, 1335/1917.

48. See for instance Sittings Nos. 12 and 13 of 13 Jan. 1909 in Takvin, No.93 of 16 Jan. 1909; and Sitting No. 36 of 6 March 1909 in Takvin, No.140 of 9 March, 1909.

of Kumus introduced a report to the Chamber in its sitting of 1 March 1909 requesting that until the Turkish language became more general, officials sent to vilayets such as Hijāz, Yemen and Tripoli should be chosen from those who knew the local languages. The Arab deputies (except for al-Bustānī, who suggested that the report should be transferred to the appropriate commission for further study), remained completely silent over this important issue.⁴⁹ Moreover, they did not raise a finger when the proposal for a firmer Press Law was discussed in the Chamber.⁵⁰ The proposal caused considerable opposition in both the Turkish and Syrian press.⁵¹ Embarrassed by this silence, a group of Syrian deputies attempted to organise some sort of joint Arab action in the Chamber. They thought of forming an Arab opposition party.

In February 1909, opposition to the CUP began to manifest itself among non-Turkish deputies. It was then that some Arab deputies over 60 according to Tanin⁵²,

49. See Sitting No.36 of 6 March 1909 in Takvin, No.140 of 9 March, 1909.

50. See details in Sitting No.47 of 29 March, 1909 in Takvin No.165 of 30 March, 1909.

51. See Ikdan No.5282 of 8 Feb. 1909. Tanin No.300 of 3 July 1909. Lisan No.5951 of 21 Feb. 1909. al-Ahram No.9441 of 7 April 1909.

52. Tanin No.191 of 11 Feb. 1909.

held several meetings under the chairmanship of Nāfi' Pasha al-Jābirī, deputy for Aleppo, to consider their tactics in the Chamber and to form a moderate party which would be open to all Ottoman deputies.⁵³ The purpose of this party would be to strengthen the bonds of Ottoman unity by preserving the right of equality which the Constitution granted to all the peoples of the Empire. However, while applying this principle of equality the numerical proportion of each ethnic group ('unsur') would have to be taken into consideration. Only through such a scheme, could true Ottoman unity be achieved. Nāfi' Pasha and his friends claimed that their proposed party would attempt to accomplish this precise aim.⁵⁴

This attempt to create an Arab parliamentary party was bitterly criticised by Hüseyin Cahid in an editorial in Tanin.⁵⁵ Despite its professed Ottoman aims, Cahid saw in the party an attempt to break the unity of the Empire instead of strengthening it. He accused the Arab deputies concerned of wanting to form a purely "Arab party" which would cater for Arab interests only (nanāfi' 'arabiyya). He then denounced the party as a 'national (milli) party which

53. İkdam No. 5287 of 13 Feb. 1909, p.3, Nāfi' explaining the aims of the party to Dr. Rıza Nur (Sinope), and denying any nationalist aims of the proposed party.

54. Tanin No. 191 of 11 Feb. 1909.

55. Ibid. Editorial entitled "Arab Firkasi".

constituted a clear invitation to other ethnic groups in the Empire to follow its example.⁵⁶

In its next issue Tanin reported that deputies from the Yemen and African Tripoli had denied any knowledge of such/^aparty, and had gone further to deprecate all attempts to break up Ottoman unity. 'In an attempt to exploit regional and political divisions among the Arab deputies, Tanin called upon the deputies of Baghdad to make their stand clear from the recent Arab machinations.⁵⁷

Tanin knew that the CUP could count on very devoted supporters among Baghdadi deputies such as Ismail Hakki Babanzade. Petty divisions among the Arab deputies, and their lack of leadership, were real difficulties to be overcome before an Arab opposition party could be formed. Nāfi' Pasha and his colleagues had to wait until November 1909 when their efforts materialised in the formation of the Liberal Moderate Party.

The April counter-revolution was a blessing in disguise for the CUP, for it left/^{them}the unchallenged masters of the Empire. They were in complete control of parliament. The Liberal Party (Ahrar), the only opposition party, was dissolved. Its members were disgraced on the grounds of their alleged part in the counter-revolution, and their

56. Tanin No.191 of 11 Feb. 1909. For further criticisms see, H. Cahid Yalçin "Osmali Meclisinde - Arap Mebuslar" Yakin Tarihimiz, Vol. I, pp.265-266.

57. Tanin No.192 of 12 Feb. 1909.

leader, Isnail Konal, was in flight. The Press Law was passed by the Chamber almost without opposition. The Arab deputies, who showed some irritating signs of wanting to form their own party, together with other dissident deputies, were stunned by the success of the Unionists, and were content to toe the line, at least for the time being. With such a colourless Chamber, there was a pressing need for an opposition party.⁵⁸

When the deputies returned from their parliamentary recess in November 1909, al-Muqattan's correspondent in Istanbul wrote to his paper that there were signs that this session was going to be one in which parties would be formed.⁵⁹ Isnail Konal, who returned to the capital, was busy trying to form another party from the remnants of his Liberal Party, and from the dissatisfied non-Turkish deputies, whose numbers began to increase. Meanwhile some 32 deputies, the majority of whom were Arabs, held a meeting in the Pera Palace Hotel where they agreed on the necessity of forming a political party. This party, they decided, to call the Liberal Moderate Party (al-Hizb al-Hurr al-Mu'tadil)⁶⁰. Its purpose would be to strengthen

58. Buru, p.255. Ikdan Nos.5438 and 5451 of 9 & 22 Nov., respectively.

59. al-Muqattan, No.6274 of 15 Nov. 1909.

60. Buru, pp.260-261. al-Muqattan, No.6280 of 22 Nov. 1909. Ikdan No.5463 of 4 Dec. 1909.

the bonds of unity among the various ethnic groups of the Empire without encroaching on the rights or the identity of any one group. Furthermore, this party would oppose the government in a moderate and constitutional way, and would work to promote true equality among the peoples of the Empire. Though the party would be opposed to dividing the Empire on any federal basis, it would advocate the principle of more participation in the local administration of the vilayets by the general councils.⁶¹

This party, however, was not wholly an Arab party; it had some Armenian, Greek, Albanian and Turkish deputies among its members. Some Arab deputies still adhered to the ranks of the CUP party, and some of them tried to discourage their fellow Arabs from joining the newly formed party.⁶² They had little success. Rushdī al-Shama' (Damascus) made an attempt to give the party a distinctly Arab character by including in its programme several points relating directly to Arab needs; the most outstanding of these being the elaboration of schemes for settling the nomadic Arabs. The attempt was, however, given up for the sake of creating a more heterogeneous party which

61. For fuller details of programme see, Tunaya, Partiler, pp.282-285. Buru, p.263, Lisān No.6193 of 7 Dec.1909. al-Muqattan, Nos.6280 & 6295 of 22 Nov. & 9 Dec. 1909.

62. al-Muqattan No.6281 of 30 Nov. 1909.

would cater for the needs of all its different members.⁶³

Thus, after November 1909 the Arab deputies were divided between the CUP Party and the Liberal Moderate Party. It is significant that only one of them joined the third party in the Chamber, formed on 21 February 1910, under the name of The People's Party (Ahali Firkasi)⁶⁴. Its programme, criticised by Cahid in Tanin as more suitable for European countries than for the Ottoman Empire,⁶⁵ did not appeal to the Arab deputies. However, the People's Party professed itself to be a democratic socialist organisation interested mainly in the betterment of the conditions of the peasants and workers. It also advocated a greater measure of administrative decentralisation, which non-Turkish groups found interesting.⁶⁶ The Arab deputies were already too far committed to other parties to give such a programme a serious thought. But it must be added that both this party and the Liberal Moderate Party continued to act cooperatively inside the Chamber until their merger in the Liberal Entente in November 1911.

63. Buru, pp.261-262.

64. The list of founders included the name of Furhad Bey (Tripoli, North Africa). See, Ikdan No.5543 of 22 Feb. 1910 for the list and a discussion of its programme. Ikdan said its members were 30, all of whom dissidents from the CUP Party.

65. Tanin No.455 of 8 Dec. 1909.

66. Buru, 264 is the only source to mention administrative decentralisation. For programme see Lisān No.6203 of 20 Dec. 1909, al-Ahrān No.9653 of 14 Dec. 1909. Also, Ikdan, Ibid.

The importance of the Arab lobby could be seen in two major issues which were discussed in December, 1909 and May, 1911. The first, over which the Arab deputies showed considerable solidarity, was the debate on the 'Lynch affair' which occupied the whole of the sittings on the 12 and 13 December 1909. The Lynch Company was an English concern which, in accordance with several firmans granted to it, was navigating the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.⁶⁷ The Haniedieh, the Ottoman Navigation Company, was also navigating the same rivers. In an attempt to end competition between the two companies, and the ensuing legal and political problems, the cabinet of Hilni Pasha granted the Lynch Company a concession which enabled it to merge the Haniedieh with itself. Though the newly amalgamated Company was to retain the name Lynch, its shares were divided between the Ottoman government and the owners of the original Lynch Company. Moreover, the Company was given a monopoly of the navigation of the Tigris and Euphrates.⁶⁸ The cabinet, however, signed and granted the concession without consulting the Chamber of Deputies about it; a right which the Chamber claimed to be its constitutional privilege.

67. For a brief history of the Lynch see, Buru, pp.176-179.

68. Buru, pp.179-180. al-Muqattan, No.6311 of 30 Dec.1909, for more details of the terms of concession.

Moreover, some Arab and other deputies felt that the terms of the concession were not fair, since the Hamiedieh had 12 vessels compared with the three of Lynch Company. The cabinet was further embarrassed by the press publicity given to the issue. The CUP press accused the Germans of obstructing the government's scheme.⁶⁹ Other papers opposed it on the grounds that it gave Britain extra privileges in the area of Iraq and the Persian Gulf, an area in which British penetration was being viewed with much concern by the Iraqi deputies.⁷⁰

On 12 December 1909 the issue was raised in the Chamber when four Iraqi deputies interpellated the government as to why it granted such a concession without seeking permission from the Chamber. The Grand Vezir, Hilmi Pasha, gave a lengthy explanation, which was often interrupted by his opponents, Arabs and others, trying to shout him down. Hilmi was followed by Shawkat Pasha (Baghdad) who refuted his arguments and emphasised the fact that the government ought to have consulted the Chamber. Halil Bey (Menteshe) the leader of the CUP Party, tried to soothe the rising tempers of the opposition members, but with little success. Both Cavid, the Minister of Finance, and

69. See Jeune Turc, 12 Dec. 1909, enc. in Marling to Grey, No.967 very confid., Const., 14 Dec. 1909, F.O.371/781/4606. Tanin, No.464 of 17 Dec. 1909.

70. Buru, p.180. al-Ahrām, 9654 of 15 Dec. 1909.

Talât, the Minister of the Interior, attempted to move a motion for forcing a vote on the issue, but with no success. The sitting ended with the Chamber reaching no decision on the issue, and the President postponed discussion for the next meeting.⁷¹

In the second sitting the main Arab speaker was Khidir Luṭfî (Zor) who, presumably speaking on behalf of the rest of the Arab deputies, assured the deputies that "we Arabs [Arab deputies] have no bad intentions towards the government, and that our aim is the preservation of the safety of the fatherland (watan). We denounce, however, all attempts to endanger that safety by granting such economic concession to foreign Companies".⁷² But the whole issue was by now assuming a different character, for speakers who followed Luṭfî were discussing the wider constitutional implications of the question, namely whether the executive power had the right of granting any concession at all without the authorisation of the legislature. Zohrab (Istanbul) discussed the issue at length and reminded the Chamber that the question was developing into a ministerial crisis of the first magnitude.⁷³ The vote was then taken as to whether or not the Chamber was

71. Sitting 13 of 12 Dec. 1909 in Takvim, No.408 of 23 Dec. 1909. Also reported in, al-Ahram No.9659 of 20 Dec. 1909. al-Muqattam No.6311 of 30 Dec. 1909. Buru, pp. 180-183.

72. Sitting 14 of 13 Dec. 1909, in Takvim, No.409 of 24 Dec. 1909, p.3.

73. Ibid., pp.3-5.

satisfied with the Grand Vezir's explanation. Eight deputies, among whom was Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad (Damascus), found the explanation insufficient and rejected it. 168 deputies including 15 Arab deputies, accepted it; 66 deputies abstained. The rest of the Arab deputies - 43 in number - were among the abstainers.⁷⁴

Hilmi Pasha, probably indignant at the opposition to his scheme in the Chamber, resigned office on 28 December 1909, two weeks after receiving an overwhelming vote of confidence.⁷⁵ His successor, Hakki Bey, reversed the decision concerning the Lynch concession, and went even further in refusing to grant other concessions earmarked for British firms in Iraq.⁷⁶ This was a victory for the Arab lobby in parliament, and it demonstrated, to both the Unionists and the Arabs themselves, the lobby's importance. It is significant that the solidarity of the Arab deputies over the Lynch affair, and their subsequent effectiveness, was never to be repeated again; not even on more pressing Arab problems such as the question of the Yemen.⁷⁷

74. Sitting 14 of 13 Dec. 1909 in Takvim, No.409 of 24 Dec. 1909, p. 7, for list of names.

75. al-Muqattam, No.6311 of 30 Dec. 1909 suggested that Hilmi resigned because of the criticism of the Chamber. See also, No.6314 of 4 Jan.1910. F. Ahmad, "Great Britain's relations with the Young Turks, 1908 - 14," Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.2, July 1968, No.4, p.317.

76. Ibid. Also Grey to Lowther, teleg. No.37, Confid., F.O. 17 Feb.1910, F.O.371/1004/5693.

77. During the whole parliamentary session no serious attempt was made by the Arab deputies to discuss the problem of the Yemen in the Chamber. Only once did al-Zahrāwī/cont..

However, all through the year 1910 opposition to the CUP regime was gathering momentum, and with the opening of the new session in November 1910, there was already talk of amalgamating all opposition parties and groups inside the Chamber into one strong party, that would stand up to the CUP more effectively, and perhaps succeed in ousting it from power.⁷⁸ The attacks of the Opposition on the government became more frequent and more violent in tone.⁷⁹ The Arab deputies who distinguished themselves in the ranks of the opposition during this session were mainly Syrians. Among them, Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad was by far the most outspoken critic of the government. On one such occasion al-Mū'ayyad's severe criticism of the budget provoked Hüsseyin Cahid to accuse him of being one of Abdülhamid's spies.⁸⁰ The accusation caused bitter arguments in the Chamber during which the question of whether

F/n. 77 cont. from previous page.

make such an attempt but his effort was frustrated by the CUP members. See, Sitting 39 of 12 Feb., 1910, in Zabit Ceridesi, pp.290-297.

78. al-Muqattan, No.6593 of 30 Nov., 1910.

79. See for example, Zabit Ceridesi, 3rd Year, Sittings 3-42, pp.30-1158. Also, al-Muqattan, Nos.6602, 6603, 6604 of 14, 15, 16 Dec., 1910, and No.6607 of 20 Dec., 1910.

80. Details in Sitting No.85 of 9 May, 1910, Zabit Ceridesi, pp. 15-18. See also, al-Ahran, No.9778 of 16 May, 1910. Buru, pp.270-275.

or not the government should publish the reports of the spies (Jurnal) was debated at length.⁸¹ On another occasion al-Mū'ayyad attacked the CUP regime for restricting the freedom of the press and free speech, and described the Committee as a 'criminal organisation'.⁸² But in spite of such criticisms of the government's policies and continual harassing, the opposition was not able to effect a change of government. Nonetheless the lines dividing the opposition members from those of the government were beginning to be sharply drawn. Voting over all important issues began to follow clear and defined patterns. The names of some 30 Arab deputies were always among the opponents of government policies.⁸³ Most of those members were Syrians.

Attacks on CUP ministers continued throughout 1911, and they were particularly strong and bitter during the early months of that year. During February and March 1911 the Committee was occupied by internal strife between its radical and conservative wings. Many of the CUP deputies had felt that the government had fallen into the hands of "a clique from Salonica", which was represented in the

81. Sittings Nos.85, 86 of 9, 10 May, 1910, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.1538-1545.

82. Sitting No.11 of 5 Dec. 1910, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.249-255, for the full text of al-Mū'ayyad's speech.

83. See for instance, Sitting No.29 of 24 Jan. 1910, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.75-76.

cabinet by Talât, Cavid, Ismail Hakki Babanzade and Halaciyan.⁸⁴ This extremist group was accused by its CUP opponents of being under the domination of Zionists who, through the Free masonic lodges, came to control the CUP.⁸⁵ Sir Gerald Lowther, the British Ambassador in Istanbul, was convinced that Zionism played no small part in the dissensions which divided the CUP in February 1911.⁸⁶ Coupled with this crisis in the CUP there was general concern, among Turkish and Arab deputies at the rising tide of Zionism in the Ottoman Empire. The persistent propaganda in favour of Zionist projects in Palestine had awakened the Turks to the danger of an "undesirable aliens" problem on a large and embarrassing scale.⁸⁷ The Arab leaders were well aware of this danger, and the Syrian press was conducting a continuous battle against Zionist plans in Palestine.⁸⁸ It was against this background that the Zionist problem was discussed in the Chamber.

84. Lowther to Grey, No.800, Conf., Const. 2 Nov. 1910, F.O.371/1010/20761.

85. Same to same, No.360, Conf., Const., 24 May 1910, F.O.371/1244/20368.

86. Same to same, No.121, Conf., Const., 22 Feb. 1910, F.O.371/1244/7151.

87. Ibid.

88. Prominent among such papers were: Falastin, al-Karmal, al-Muqtabas, al-Mufid, al-Ahrām, al-Ikdam, All edited by Syrians.

In March 1911, Cavid Bey, the Minister of Finance, was severely criticised by Ismail Hakki Bey, the deputy for Gümülcüne, and the leader of the Ahali party, who had once been an ardent supporter of the CUP. Cavid's budget was harshly attacked and he was virtually accused of being in league with the international Zionist movement. His loans were received from Jewish banking houses in Paris against which the Zionists were supposedly accorded facilities in Palestine. Ismail Hakki then tried to show that the aim of the Zionists was to establish a state in the Holy Land. After brief observations by Karasu (Salonica) and Nissim Mazliah (Izmir), both of whom were Jews, the Grand Vezir replied to the accusation of Hakki. He tried to minimise the significance of the Zionist movement and ridiculed it as the fancy of some Jewish idealists. Nevertheless, he assured Hakki that the government was standing firm in preventing immigration.⁸⁹

This campaign, apart from stirring up a series of anti-Zionist articles in both the Turkish and Arabic press, precipitated the resignation of Cavid and two of his colleagues.⁹⁰ It seems possible that the whole campaign

89. For the full debate see Sitting No.49 of 1 Mar. 1911, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.1363-1392. Also, al-Muqtabas (daily) Nos.629, 630 of 20, 21 Mar. 1911. al-Muqattam, No.6675 of 12 Mar. 1911. Lowther to Grey No.146, conf., Const., 7 Mar. 1911, F.O.371/1245/9105.

90. The Annual Report for 1911, enc. in Lowther to Grey, No.100, conf., Const., 31 Jan. 1912, F.O.371/1491/4966.

was the work of some Syrian deputies who had been disturbed about the activities of the Zionists in Palestine, and whose ranks had been strengthened by the election of Shūkrī al-'Asalī as deputy of Damascus, on the death of Muḥammad al-'Ajalānī.⁹¹ Al-'Asalī was a pronounced anti-Zionist, and he had conducted a campaign in the Syrian press against the plans of the Zionists in Palestine, even when he was qā'immaqām of Nazareth, a spot desired by the Jewish colonists.⁹² In fact it had been suggested that the dragging of the Zionist issue before the Chamber was done "on prompting from Shukrī Bey al-'Asalī".⁹³ If such prompting was done by al-'Asalī, it must have been in an unofficial capacity, for he took his seat in the Chamber on 4 March 1911, three days after the debate.⁹⁴

Al-'Asalī, however, had plans of his own. On 29 March 1911 he delivered a previously prepared speech in which he complained that the Arabs in the Empire did not have their share of the posts of the various governmental departments. He told the Chamber that after studying the official salname he found the names of only four junior Arab officials in all the departments of the State.

91. al-Muqtabas (daily) Nos.584, 586 of 26, 29 Jan. 1911.

92. al-Muqtabas (daily) No.542 of 5 Dec.1910. Also N. Mandel, "Turks, Arabs" St. Antony's Papers, MEA, 4 pp.95-97.

93. Ibid., p.97.

94. See Sitting No.51 of 4 Mar. 1911, Zabit Ceridesi, p. 1433.

Al-'Asalī claimed that in the Ministry of Finance alone there were 111 Turks, 13 Jews, 10 Armenians, 4 Greeks but not a single Arab. Though the Arabs had many qualified men among them there were no Arab valis and Ministers. When someone interrupted al-'Asalī by saying that he would be made a Minister, al-'Asalī retorted "I would never become a Minister because I am an Arab". When he was reminded that Mahmud Shevket Pasha was an Arab, al-'Asalī replied that Shevket was only one person, while the Arabs were 15 millions. However, both Wahbi (Konia) and Sayid Bey (Izmir) replied to al-'Asalī asking him not to raise such explosive national problems.⁹⁵

Though al-'Asalī's speech was the first attempt to discuss Arab grievances in the Chamber, no Arab deputy, except Riḍā al-Şulḥ (Beirut), was ready to support him. It was neither an organised effort nor typical of the wishes of the majority of the Arab deputies. As such it was bound to fail. It, however, caused a sharp reaction in the Turkish press.⁹⁶

It was on the Zionist question that the Arab deputies, or rather the Syrian deputies, were to show a measure of solidarity. The attack of Ismail Hakki on Cavid

95. For debate see Sitting No.68 of 29 Mar. 1911, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.1940-1943. Also, al-Muḩtabas (daily), No.644 of 6 Apr. 1911. al-Muḩattam, No.6697 of 7 Apr. 1911.

96. al-Muḩattam, No.6698 of 8 Apr. 1911 gave a summary of articles in the Turkish press replying to al-'Asalī. Tanzimat, No.7 of 4 May, 1911.

and his raising of the Zionist question was only the herald, for in May 1911, and during the Budget debate, the Syrian deputies raised the Zionist issue a second time. Shukrī al-'Asalī and Rūḥī al-Khālīdī (Jerusalem) were the main speakers on the subject. Al-'Asalī distributed to the deputies stamps, on which the picture of Herzl and other Zionist leaders were printed, and which he claimed the Jews in Palestine were using; he also stated that they had their own separate courts, clubs and flags. Al-'Asalī was implying that the Zionists wanted to establish an independent Jewish State in Palestine. He also claimed that they were buying large tracts of land in the vicinity of the Ḥajjāz railway. Al-'Asalī was followed by Rūḥī al-Khālīdī, who gave a long historical review of the origins of the Zionist movement. He supported his facts by quotations from the Old Testament, and read part of speeches of leading Zionists to prove that their aim was to establish a Jewish State in the Holy Land. He suggested that Jewish immigrants should become Ottoman citizens and that they should settle in other parts of the Empire. At this point Riza Pasha (Konia) interjected "let them settle in Konia". Mazliah, the Jewish deputy of Izmir, and Vartkas, a Greek deputy, replied to the speech of Rūḥī. Vartkas saw a similarity between this anti-Jewish movement and that against the Armenians under the Hamidian regime.

Khalil Bey, Minister of Interior assured the Arab deputies that the Ottoman Jews did not agree with the aims of the Zionists and that the government would guard against the concentration of Jews in one place. The Arab deputies found this reply satisfactory.⁹⁷

This was the last concerted effort of the Arab lobby in the Chamber until the end of the parliamentary session in January 1912. Its result was to heighten the Arab opposition to the CUP. It also showed that the Syrian deputies dominated the lobby, and that the Arab deputies had not yet found a common cause. Their grievances were regional rather than general Arab demands.

The general election of April 1912 was so well prepared that out of 275 members, only six opposition members were elected.⁹⁸ During the 47 meetings held by the Chamber, from 18 April to 6 August 1912, there was no sign of an Arab lobby or of any other opposition to the policies of the CUP government. With almost unanimous vote, the government carried out its amendments of the various Constitutional articles which the previous Chamber

97. Sitting No.99 of 16 May 1911, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.2974-3001. Also, Lisan, 6549 of 31 May 1911. al-Muqtabas (daily) No.691 of 31 May 1911.

98. Report On The Proceedings in The Ottoman Chamber, April-July 1912, in Marling to Grey, No.608, conf., Const., 17 July 1912, F.O.371/1497/30869. See also, Tunaya, "Elections in Turkish History", Middle Eastern Affairs, V, No.4, April 1954, p.118.

had refused to accept. For instance, the amendments of article 35, an issue which caused the dissolution of the previous Chamber, was passed by the majority of 212 votes to 15.⁹⁹ The deputies then moved on to discuss and pass the budget. In these discussions, which in the last session were the occasion for the opposition to attack the government, not a single criticism was raised against the policies of the cabinet.¹⁰⁰ Like the majority of the 101 members the 65 Arab deputies remained loyal CUP supporters. After the downfall of the CUP from power, and the subsequent dissolution of the Chamber¹⁰² in August 1912, the Empire was without a parliament until May 1914. The Balkan wars of 1912-13 had prevented the holding of any elections until that date.

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99. Sitting No.19 of 24 June 1912, Zabit Ceridesi, pp. 337-346 for debate and list of names.
100. See Sittings Nos. 24-37 of 1Jul-23 Jul. 1912, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.42-738.
101. In the first Chamber the Arab deputies were 59 in number divided as follows: 26 Syrians, 14 Iraqis, 11 Yemenis, 4 Hijazis and 4 for Tripoli (North Africa). The Syrians were divided thus: 6 for the vilayet of Beirut, 8 vilayet of Damascus, 8 Aleppo vilayet, 3 mutassariflik of Jerusalem and 1 for mutasarriplik of Zor. The 65 Arab deputies of the 1912 Chamber were divided as follows: 31 Syrians, 18 Iraqis, the rest Yemenis, Hijazis and from North Africa. The Syrians were: 8 for Beirut, 9 Damascus, 10 Aleppo, 3 Jerusalem and 1 Zor.
102. See Sitting No.40 of 25 July 1912, Zabit Ceridesi, pp.768-771; and No.47 of 5 Aug. 1912, Zebit Ceridesi, pp.913 ff.

The elections of April 1914 had once more produced a colourless Chamber, which, until its adjournment in August 1914, on the occasion of the outbreak of World War I, busied itself with passing the Budget. There were 81 Arab deputies in this Chamber¹⁰³ including men who had previously been active in opposing the Young Turk regime, such as the leading Syrian decentraliser Salīm 'Alī Salām (Beirut), Fāris al-Khūrī (Damascus), Ṭālib al-Naqīb, Sulaymān Fayḍī (both Basra) Jamīl al-Zahāwī and Shawkat Pasha of Baghdad.

It was three of these men who finally brought to the notice of the Chamber three of the long felt Arab grievances, namely, the non-use of Arabic in the law courts, lack of government schools, their low standard of education and use of Turkish as the medium of instruction, and finally the insufficiency of chances given to Arab students for study abroad. The first of these grievances was raised by Sulaymān Fayḍī during the debate of the Budget of the Ministry of Justice.

He started by asking the deputies not to misunderstand or misinterpret what he was going to say. He then complained in rather mild language that officials in

103. The number of the Arab deputies rose probably because of a rise in the population. These 81 deputies were however, divided as follows: 36 Syrians, 29 Iraqis, 12 Yemenis and 4 Hijāzīs. There were no deputies from African Tripoli which had been occupied by the Italians in 1912. The Syrian deputies were divided as follows: 9 Beirut, 11 Damascus, 12 Aleppo, 3 Jerusalem and 1 Zor.

the local administration especially those in the law courts were ignorant of Arabic. He pointed out the injustices which usually resulted from conducting legal matters through the translators. To stop such injustices, officials should learn Arabic, the language of Islam and the Prophet. Fayḍī asserted that both the Ministers of War and Interior were learning Arabic. He further complained that the government decree of September 1913 authorising the use of Arabic in law courts¹⁰⁴ was never carried out in Iraq. He concluded by reminding the Chamber that, by putting forward these complaints, he was not suggesting that all officials should be Arabs, for "we are all Ottomans desiring the progress of this State whose interests we will guard with our lives and property."¹⁰⁵

Fāris al-Khūrī agreed with Fayḍī and said that Syria suffered from the same ailment. He enumerated some examples and asked the government to put an end to this situation.¹⁰⁶

Two debates after this one, Salām spoke, not about the demands of the Syrian decentralisers of whom he

104. This decree, supported by an Imperial Irade was issued after the CUP and the Syrian reformers came to terms after the Paris Congress. It was a concession to Arab demands. See below, Ch. V, p. 334-36.

105. Sitting No.30 of 11 July 1914, Zabit Ceridesi, p.595. For the whole debate see pp.591-599.

106. Ibid. pp.598-599.

was until recently the spokesman, but about the insufficiency and low standard of education in Syria. He compared the government schools with those of the foreigners, much to the disadvantage of the former. Salām urged the government to take more interest in the schools of Syria. He went on to complain that the Arab students were poorly represented in the missions of students sent abroad for study, and requested that choice should be based on examination. The Minister of Instruction replied to the speech of Salām. Sa'ad Allah al-Manla (Tripoli, Syria), and al-Zahāwī (Baghdad) asked the Minister some minor clarifications to which he replied. The Minister said that he was aware of the problems and defects which the speakers pointed out, but the budget of his Ministry was limited.¹⁰⁷

In a different sitting Fayḍī spoke again, this time complaining about the inadequate number of the government schools in the vilayet of Baṣra.¹⁰⁸ Al-Zahāwī, who followed him, urged (among some interruptions) that the instruction in secondary schools in Baghdad be in Arabic. However, al-Zahāwī was not allowed to finish his address, for the president accepted a motion for closure, despite protests from the speaker.¹⁰⁹

107. Sitting No.33 of 14 July 1914, Zabit Ceridesi, pp. 698-702 for the full text of Salām's speech; pp. 702-709 for the discussion.

108. Sitting No.34 of 15 July 1914, Zabit Ceridesi, pp. 723-725 for the speech of Fayḍī.

109. Ibid., pp.725-728 for al-Zahāwī's speech and discussion.

Thus there is reason to believe that had the life of this Chamber been long an Arab lobby might have appeared in it. But as things stand it would be erroneous to speak of an Arab lobby in this Chamber or in the one that preceded it. In the 1912 Chamber all Arab deputies were elected because they were supporters of the CUP. In the 1914 one, except for a handful, they were members of the CUP parliamentary party.

(b) Arab Societies:

While the Arab deputies, who opposed the Young Turk regime, were active through their lobby in the Chamber of Deputies and through their contribution to the formation of parliamentary opposition groups and parties, Arab students in the higher educational institutions of Istanbul, Arab cadets and officers, as well as some deputies and members of the Arab community there, concentrated their political efforts in the formation of Arab societies, both secret and open. By so doing they contributed to the Arab movement, which was in the making, but had not yet taken a definite shape. More important still, they voiced, in the various programmes of those societies, the hopes and aspirations of that movement which the Young Turks failed to recognise. By so doing they alienated the leaders of the movement, a factor which

together with the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War and its subsequent defeat, had ultimately led to the termination of Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces.

The Young Turks were suspicious of the Arab machinations throughout the period 1908-14, and when they discovered the existence of some of the Arab secret societies in the latter half of 1914, their suspicions became a certainty that the Arabs were working to secede from the Empire.¹ In fact the programmes of the open and secret Arab societies, founded in Istanbul between 1908-14, did not express a desire to separate from the Empire, but rather an intention to secure certain political rights and reforms for the Arab provinces whose inhabitants were

1. See, Dördüncü Ordu-u Hümayun; Âliye Divan-i Harb-i Örfisinde Tetkik Olunan Meslese-i Siyasiye hakkında İzahat, Istanbul, 1334/1916, pp.5-30, and pp.117-127, where this book (henceforth referred to as Izahat) ascribed revolutionary and separatist aims to all the Arab societies; an accusation that was put forward as the justification of the execution of many Arab nationalists in 1916 by Cemal Pasha's military tribunals. Because of these executions, Cemal Pasha, who was the Commander of the Fourth Army in Syria, was styled by the Arabs as al-Safāh, the shedder of blood. Izahat, which was published simultaneously in Turkish, Arabic and French, was intended to be the official explanation of those executions, and must therefore be treated with great care and reservation. The Arabic copy was written in poor and broken language, and slight differences exist between the facts and narrative of the three copies. For the full title of the Arabic and French copies, see Bibliography.

quite willing to remain a part of the composite Ottoman state. The programmes of open societies, such as al-Muntadā al-Adabī (the Literary Club) founded in 1909 by Arab students for cultural and educational purposes, bore a striking similarity to those of the secret societies, and in fact one often wonders why the Arabs of Istanbul resorted to the means of forming secret societies at all.² The aims which those societies tried to pursue were legal enough to be incorporated in the programme of any non-secret Arab society. Arabic sources, which often exaggerated the importance and role of those secret societies, did not attribute any separatist aims to them,³ and there is no reason to presume that they were trying to cover up such sinister items in the programmes of these societies.

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2. Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazā, implied in his, Hawl al-ḥaraka al-'arabiyya al-ḥadītha, Sidon, 1951, vol.1, p.26, that secret societies had different aims from open ones and that they constituted a new phase in the Arab movement, but he did not substantiate his allegation. (This book is henceforth referred to in this study as Darawaza.)
3. See for example, Darwaza, 1, pp.26-33. Also, al-Shihābī, pp.68-80. Aḥmad 'Izzat al-'Azamī, al-Qadiyya al-'arabiyya, asbābuḥa, muqadinātha, taṭawurha wa nataijuḥa, Baghdad 1932 (henceforth referred to as al-'Azamī), vol.3, pp.30-34, and vol.4, pp.53-54. Also S'aid, al-Thawra al-arabiyya, 1, pp. 10 ff. Majid Khaduri erroneously stated that Arab sources regarded al-'Ahd society as most effective in spreading Arab separatist ideas among the Arab officers in the same way as al-Fatāt society had done among civilians, see his article, "Azīz 'Alī al-Misrī and The Arab Nationalist Movement", in St. Antony's Papers, MEA No.4, Oxford University Press, 1965, p.143.

Other writers who ascribed to them separatist aspirations seem to have been misled by the fact of their being secret societies, and were probably under the influence of what Cemal Pasha said about them in his Izahat.⁴ It was only on the eve of the revolt of the Sharīf of Mecca in June 1916 that some writers ascribed separatist aspirations to al-Fatāt society,⁵ which had been formed in 1911 by Syrian students in Paris but was to transfer its headquarters to Damascus on the outbreak of the First World War.⁶

The formation and the activities of the Arab societies constituted an important chapter in the history of the Arab movement during the period 1908-14. Though none of them was specifically formed to propagate Arab national ideas,⁷ yet all of them came to concern themselves with the Arabs alone and with their welfare. They were a reaction to the Unionists' failure to recognise the Arab demands and

4. Izahat, p.7 ff. French copy, La Vérité, pp.7 ff.

5. The full title of al-Fatāt is Fatāt al-Unma al-'Arabiyya, though it is often referred to as Fatat al-'Arab. This secret society however, was to play a more important role in the Arab movement at the time of Faīṣal's government in Syria and the French mandatory rule there. It was rather insignificant during the period under study. Moreover, it was formed by Syrian students in Paris and as such does not concern us directly here. Details of it in Darwaza, 1, pp.27-32.

6. See, Darwaza, 1, p.31.

7. Antonius, p.108 as well as other Arabic sources, for instance, Darwaza, 1, 26, attribute the propagation of national ideas to such societies.

to their suspected intentions of "turkifying" the Arabs. Even Jam'iyat al-Ikhā' al-'Arabī al-'Uthmānī (The Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood Society), founded on 2 September 1908 by some prominent Arabs of Istanbul to help the CUP promote the cause of Ottomanism and protect the newly granted constitution, showed an irritating awareness of an Arab nation (al-Umma al-'Arabiyya) whose conditions it promised to better.⁸ This is significant, for the society was formed at the time of the "Turco-Arab honeymoon" which marked the early days following the declaration of the constitution.⁹ In fact its name and objectives were considered as signs of that honeymoon, and its founders never tired of emphasising its Ottoman aspect. Nevertheless, the society was more Arab than Ottoman; it was founded by Arabs and attracted only Arabs to its ranks. According to Amīn Sa'īd, who was the only Arab writer to quote verbatim the first article of the programme of this society in his al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā, written as late as 1934, and therefore relying heavily on newspapers and other earlier sources for its information, al-Ikhā' declared itself as "consisting of all the Ottoman Arabs in

8. Amīn Sa'īd, al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya, 1, p.8. Hassan Saab, The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire, Amsterdam, 1958, p.226.

9. Antonius, p.102, H. Saab, p.226.

Istanbul regardless of their various affiliations and sects, and that every Arab (and the Arab is every individual who was born/or took an Arab home) is eligible for membership provided that he is^{of}/good and upright character...."¹⁰ The article then proceeded to define the means by which the conditions of the Arabs should be improved. These ranged from education and the construction of roads and factories and the sedentrization of nomads to the preservation of the "rights of the sons of the Arabs from all injustices and encroachments",¹¹ and in case of their being aggrieved by government officials to help them seek justice from higher authorities.

By so doing, al-Ikhā' hoped to assist the CUP in guarding the principles of the Constitution, and in uniting all Ottoman nationalities in loyalty to the Sultan.¹² Despite the fact that al-Ikhā' professed itself to be a vehicle for the promotion of Ottomanism, it was obvious to the Arab community in Istanbul and to the leaders of the Syrian enigrès in Egypt as well as to the Young Turks, that its real aim was to cater for Arab welfare vis-a-vis what its founders considered as signs of an anti-Arab attitude shown by the new regime towards Arab

10. Amin Sa'īd, al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya, 1, p.7.

11. Ibid. Also, Hassan Saab, p.226.

12. Ibid.

officials who served Abdülhamid, such as 'Izzat al-Ābid and Abū'l-Hudā. Those Arab officials were employed by the Sultan as part of his plan to win the loyalties of his Arab subjects.¹³

With the Young Turks Revolution these officials, like the rest of Abdülhamid's close advisers and counsellors, were removed from office. Not only that, but some of these Arab counsellors were subjected to a bitter attack in the Turkish press. The pride of some Arab students in Istanbul, and probably of other Arab officials, was hurt when they witnessed the general onslaught in the Turkish press on their 'Izzat al-Ābid, Abū'l-Huda, Najīb and Salīm Malḥama.¹⁴ They probably, felt that in denouncing these Arabs, while saying nothing about their

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13. The Hamidian Arab policy played an important role in determining the nature and scope of the Turkish-Arab relations. This subject is now being investigated by a research student, St. Antony's, Oxford; see Introduction, p. 22.
14. For an example of such attacks, see, Ikdam, No.5097 of 13 Aug. 1908. Ahmad Qadrī, Mudhakkaratī 'an al-thawra al-'Arabiyya al-kubrā, Damascus, 1956, (henceforth Ahmad Qadrī), p.7, narrated an incident of such attacks (of a Turkish officer, Sabri Bey, who while addressing a Turkish crowd on the merits of the Constitution, made several and specific attacks on 'Izzat al-Ābid and other Arab dignitaries). Qadrī said that he confronted this speaker and refuted his arguments, and he further stated that this incident was the main reason behind his, (together with others), forming the society al-Fatāt only four days after the declaration of the Constitution. Amīn Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'arabiyya, Vol.1, p.8, stated that the unjustified attacks on 'Izzat and other Arab officials were a reason for the Arab students in Istanbul flocking to al-Ikhā'.

Turkish equivalents, the new regime was conducting a deliberate policy of discrediting and denouncing the Arabs in general. In this, they believed, the Young Turks were motivated by nationalistic considerations.¹⁵

It is not surprising thus that the founders of al-Ikhā', who were mostly men associated with the former regime,¹⁶ were prompted by fear of what the new regime held for them and for their fellow Arabs into forming their society. This suspicion of the Unionists' intentions towards the Arabs was then the driving force behind the formation of al-Ikhā' as well as the majority of the Arab societies.

The suspicion was mutual, for the Young Turks viewed the appearance of al-Ikhā' with great mistrust and saw it as a tool of reaction with a secret programme aiming at the separation of the Arabs from the Empire.¹⁷

15. Ahmad Qadrī, pp.6-7.

16. The idea of the society was conceived by Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad al-'Aẓm, a man related by marriage to a previous Grand Vezir, Cevad Pasha, and a former high official in the Caisse de la Dette. Nadrā Maṭrān, a close associate of Shafīq, and Shākir al-Ḥusaynī, a former head accountant of the Ministry of Instruction, were among the founders of the society. The list of the founders is predominantly Syrian and shows clearly the association of such men with the Hamidian regime. See, for this and the complete list of names, al-'Azamī, vol.II, pp. 99-100. See also, al-Muqattam No.5914 of 9 Sept. 1908. Ahmad Qadrī, pp.7-8. Amin Sa'id, al-thawra al-'arabiyya, vol. I, p.7. See also, Arab Bulletin, No.90, 1918, copy in F.O.882/27.

17. Izahat, pp.9-10. Also the French copy, La Vérité, pp. 11-13. See further, Tanin, No.254 of 18 May 1909, p. 3, col.4, and No.256 of 20 May, 1909, p.3.

The Young Turks were not alone in their suspicions of the real nature and aims of this society. Prominent Syrians such as Rafīq al-'Aẓm, Rashīd Riḍā and the editors of al-Muqattam expressed their displeasure at its formation and believed that there was no need for such a society. They were further sceptical as to its name, which they considered as nationalist, a matter not only contrary to the spirit of brotherhood that marked the early days of the Constitution but which was the negation of the concept of Ottomanism.¹⁸ Al-'Adl, an Arabic newspaper published in Istanbul voiced the rumour that the society was established with the object of serving the personal interests of some of its founders.¹⁹ Al-Ikhā''s reception of the Arab deputies aroused criticism in the press, which detected national undertones in the speeches delivered and the slogans shouted during that reception.²⁰ Amīn Sa'īd described the reception as "the first Arab demonstration that Istanbul saw".²¹ It was this nationalist aspect of

18. See, Majnū'at athār, p.130. Al-Manār, Vol.II, part 12 of 22 Jan. 1909, pp.936 ff. al-Muqattam, No.6127 of 25 May, 1908, p.5.

19. Al-'Adl, No.1 of 5 Nov. 1909, p.1, col.3.

20. See above, p. 136.

21. Amīn Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'arabiyya, vol.I, p.8.

al-Ikhā' which the Unionists found intolerable.

Moreover, its founders were not content to confine their activities to Istanbul, but proceeded to open branches in some Syrian towns.²² Al-Muqattān reported the formation of a branch in Aleppo which found such a welcome that some 900 members, including Muslim and Christian notables, joined it.²³ This is significant because al-Ikhā' was the only Arab society which had, to an extent, attracted some Christians to its ranks. Nadra Maṭrān, a member of a famous Greek Orthodox family in Ba'albek, was among the Syrians who launched the idea of forming al-Ikhā'.²⁴ All the other secret or open Arab societies were exclusively Muslim organisations, initiated and dominated by Syrian Muslims, the only exception being al-'Ahd society, which though Muslim dominated was founded by a non-Syrian officer, the Egyptian 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, and had further some Iraqi officers among its active members. However, the majority of the Arab community in Istanbul were Muslims. Nevertheless, the Islamic bond which was considered by some writers as the main factor in the relations of the Arabs with the Turks, did not prevent constant friction and occasional clashes between that communi-

22. Antonius, p.103, stated that branches were founded throughout the Arab ~~world~~ provinces. There is no evidence to support this claim.

23. al-Muqattān, No.6046 of 17 Feb. 1909.

24. Al-'Azanī, Vol.II, p.98.

ty and the Young Turks.

Opposition to the nominees of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Parliamentary elections of Damascus, a city that remained throughout the period 1908-14 an abode for the opponents of the constitutional regime, centred around the club of al-Ikhā' there.²⁵ Shafīq al-Mū'ayyad, the chief architect of al-Ikhā' was elected a deputy for Damascus despite opposition of the CUP.²⁶ It was not surprising, then, that the CUP tried to annul the election of al-Mū'ayyad and Yūsuf Shutwān (deputy for Bēghāzī), both of whom were among the founders of al-Ikhā'. The charges brought against them were their bad characters and use of illegal means in the elections, as well as their association with the old regime. Al-Mū'ayyad's candidature was, however, accepted but that of Shutwān rejected.²⁷ Al-Mū'ayyad remained to the end a bitter opponent of the CUP while Shutwān collaborated with the Unionists towards the end of 1912.

It seems reasonable to argue that the CUP was disturbed by the futile attempt of al-Ikhā' to create around itself an Arab parliamentary party,²⁸ and tried to

25. Buru, pp.111-112.

26. Ibid. See further, al-Ahrām No.9332 of 26 Nov. 1908. al-Muqattam No.5978 of 25 Nov. 1908, for more details of Damascus elections.

27. See above, p.134-36(Chapter III).

28. al-Muqattam, No.6041 of 3 Feb. 1909, gave details of this attempt.

buy off some of its outspoken founders. The candidature of al-Mū'ayyad was accepted, and 'Ārif al-Mārdīnī, a vehement critic of the Unionists and one of the founders of al-Ikhā', was appointed vali of Baṣra.²⁹ Nevertheless, the CUP continued to watch the activities of al-Ikhā' uneasily and took the opportunity of the April counter-revolution to close the society and similar societies which were formed by other nationalities after the declaration of the Constitution.³⁰

Al-Ikhā' al-'Arabī al-'Uthmānī, which was the first open society to be formed and dominated by Syrian Arabs in Istanbul, included men of different and, sometimes, conflicting aims. While some of its members were sincere in serving the cause of Ottomanism, the motives of others were dubious.³¹ It was this lack of unanimity of purpose among its members which caused the failure of al-Ikhā' to achieve its aims, in particular the desire to better the conditions of the Arabs.³² The establishment

29. al-Muqāṭṭan No.6064 of 10 Mar. 1909, discussed this issue and suggested some reasons as to why al-Mārdīnī was appointed vali of Baṣra.

30. Shihābī, p.69. al-'Azamī, Vol.II, p.103. Antonius, p. 105. Tanin, Nos.254 of 18 May 1909 and No.256 of 20 May 1909, accused al-Ikhā' of connections with reactionary elements working for the overthrow of the Constitution. Izahat, pp.11-12, repeated the accusations. al-Ikhā' denied the allegations in Tanin No.256 of 20 May 1909. Tanin No.167 of 18 Jan. 1909 implied such connections. Also, A.Qadrī, p.10.

31. al-'Adl, No.1 of 5 Nov. 1908. al-'Azamī, Vol.II, p.102.

32. al-'Azamī, Ibid. Shihābī, pp.68-69.

of this society and its activities in Istanbul and Damascus had certainly contributed to the suspicion with which the Young Turks viewed the deeds and intentions of the Arab leaders in the capital as well as in other towns of the Arab provinces. This suspicion was the underlying feature of the Turkish-Arab relations which, with the exception of a brief interlude following the declaration of the Constitution, continued to deteriorate throughout the period 1908-14.

The closure of al-Ikhā' which no doubt added to³⁵ the enstrangement between the Arabs and their government, created a political vacuum among the Arab community in Istanbul. Al-Muntadā al-Adabī, (The Literary Club) was founded by Arab students, allegedly for educational and cultural purposes, to fill that vacuum. Most sources agree that its foundation took place in the autumn of 1909, and that among the Arab youths who were behind its appearance the efforts of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khalīl, a law student from al-Shayāḥ village [near Beirut], loomed very large.³⁴ The Club was probably founded with some encoura-

33. Majmū'at athār, pp.129-130, considered the closure as one of the first acts of the Unionists against the Arabs. S.G. Haim, Arab Nationalism, pp.31-32.

34. Al-'Azamī, Vol.III, pp.7-9. Shihābī, pp.70-71. Amīn Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'arabiyya, Vol.I, pp.8-9. Izahat, pp.10-12. Buru, p.310, put its foundation as late as February 1910. He gave no justification for such a date. Ahmad Qadri, pp.10-11. Darwazā, vol.1, pp. 23-24. Muḥammad Jamīl Beyhūn, Qawāfil al-'Uruba wa nawākibuhā khilāl al-'usur, Beirut, 1950 (hereafter Qawāfil), Vol. II, p.21.

gement from Arab deputies such as 'Abd al-Ḥanīd al-Zahrāwī, and some of the former members of al-Ikhā'.³⁵ Al-Khalīl, who was hanged in 1915 by Cenal Pasha on the charge of treasonable nationalist activities, was, with the exception of a brief interval, the president of the Club from the end of 1909 till its closure in 1915.³⁶

Like al-Ikhā', al-Muntadā was an open society established by Arabs for the welfare of the Arabs, but unlike al-Ikhā' it enjoyed the confidence and the support of the government, and as a result was to play a more concrete role in the development of Turkish-Arab relations. It consequently played a tangible part in the emergence of the Arab national movement in the period 1908-14. Ahmad 'Izzat al-'Azamī, who was closely associated with the

35. Izahat, pp.10-14. Al-'Azamī, Vol. III, pp.9-10, where he mentioned the fact that Shukrī al-Ḥusaynī, one of the founders of al-Ikhā' gave al-Khalīl and his friends 60 Turkish Liras and the furniture of al-Ikhā'. See also, pp.7-8. The same story is repeated by Amin Sa'id, al-thawra al-'arabiyya, Vol.I, pp.8-9. Also, Muhammad Ḥarb Farazat, al-hayyat al-hizibiyya fī Suriyya (1908-1955), Danascus, 1955, p.31. Antonius, p.108.

36. al-'Azami, vol.III, p.13. In pp.10-11, al-'Azamī gives details of controversy over the issue of electing a first president of the Club. The candidature of al-Khalīl was challenged by three young veterans, namely Dr. Ahmad Qadrī, Dr. 'Izzat al-Jundī (both of whom were to gain fame in the Arab movement at a later stage) and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī. Al-Zahrāwī mediated, and the difference was solved by electing a Muṣṭafā 'Ādil, who was an independent of both groups.

formation of al-Muntadā,³⁷ and was later to edit its periodical,³⁸ tells us that the programme of the Club was drafted by al-Khalīl, and after its language was corrected by Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā,³⁹ was shown to Khalīl Ḥamāda, the Minister for Awqāf, who not only approved of it but chose the name al-Muntadā al-Adabī for it.⁴⁰ Ḥamāda, himself a Syrian domiciled in Egypt, promised to give al-Muntadā the sum of 500 Turkish Liras from the Awqāf budget provided that it would become "an educational club" in which lectures would be delivered to Arab students, and a library built up, also some of its rooms would be used as an accommodation
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for poor students. Thus al-Muntadā was officially to be

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37. Ahmad Qadrī, p.11, mentioned the name of al-'Azamī among the founders of al-Muntadā. He is the only source to do so. According to al-'Azamī himself in Vol.III, p.9, the founders were three Muslim Syrian youths, namely, al-Khalīl, Yūsuf Sulaynān Ḡaydar (Ba'albek) Sayf al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (Damascus) and Ahmad Janīl al-Ḥusaynī (Jerusalem.) Izahat, p.11, gave the same list except for al-Ḥusaynī. Both Anīn Sa'id, al-thawra al-'arabiyya, Vol.I, p.8, and Antonius, p.108, n.2, gave a longer list of founders. They added the names of Rafiq Rizq Sallum (Christian from Homs) and Salih Ḥaydar (Ba'albek).
38. Its periodical was named after it "al-Muntadā al-Adabī", and was originally the periodical of a secret society known as al-'Alan al-Akhdar (see below p.195), and its name then was Lisan al-'Arab. For further details, see al-'Azamī, Vol.III, p.38.
39. Rashīd Riḍā was the editor of al-Manār of Cairo, but at the time was in Istanbul trying to improve the worsening relations between the Arabs and the Turks, and to secure the government's help for an Islamic missionary school which he was endeavouring to establish in Cairo. For Riḍā's account of that journey to Istanbul, see, al-Manār, Vol.13, part 2 of 11 Mar. 1910, pp.145-150, and part 3 of Apr.1910, pp.219-225.
40. Al-'Azamī, Vol.III, pp.7-9.
41. Ibid., pp.8-9.

a club and a meeting place for Arab students in Istanbul, and it was to concern itself wholly with cultural and literary affairs. Under such a non-political programme, which the CUP tolerated,⁴² al-Muntadā operated, and because of it, it managed to be the longest surviving Arab society.

In actual fact, al-Muntadā exerted a good deal of political influence, and Cemal Pasha in his Izahat claimed that before it was a week old "political issues and secret instigations" appeared as an item of the activities of the Club.⁴³ Cemal Pasha went as far as to assert that 'Abd al-Ghanī al-'Araysī, the editor of the renowned anti-CUP Beiruti newspaper al-Mufīd, and one of the many Syrian nationalists who were tried by the military tribunal in 'Aley (Lebanon), testified before that tribunal that the real aim of al-Muntadā was to disseminate Arab national ideas among the Arab students and ultimately to promote the secession of Arab lands from the Empire.⁴⁴ Rafīq Rizq Sallūm and Sayf al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, two founders of al-Muntadā tried and subsequently executed by the 'Aley tribunal,⁴⁵ confessed to similar nationalistic charges against al-Muntadā, and to a secret programme of

42. Antonius, p.108.

43. Izahat, p.11.

44. Ibid., p.13.

45. Ibid. pp.118-119, for the charges against these men and their sentences.

that Club. Only founders and top members were allowed to be acquainted with this programme, which, according to Izahat, amounted to treasonable acts against the State.⁴⁶ Izahat claimed, rather unjustifiably, that the Club became a mere branch of the Administrative Decentralisation Party of Cairo, membership of which was the sole reason why the military tribunal of Cemal Pasha sent many Syrian nationalists to the gallows.⁴⁷

If Izahat is too biased to believe, nationalist aims were attributed to al-Muntadā by al-'Azamī and Muṣṭafā al-Shihābī. Both men lived through that period and took part in the political activities of Arab students in Istanbul.⁴⁸ Al-'Azamī stated that al-Muntadā was the only Arab society responsible for spreading national ideas among the Arab youths inside and outside Istanbul.⁴⁹ According to al-Shihābī al-Muntadā was conceived by "Arab nationalist youths" (Shubbān al-'Arab al-Qawmiyūn) as an attempt to save and preserve the rights of the Arabs which were threatened by the policies of the Unionists.⁵⁰ No sooner had this Club been formed than it

46. Izahat, pp.12-14 for these confessions, and for the details of the alleged secret programme of the Club.

47. For this claim, see, Ibid., pp.14-16. See also, pp. 117-127 for the list of those condemned and their alleged crimes.

48. Al-'Azamī, Vol.III, pp.3-7. Al-Shihābī, p.67, and pp.70-72.

49. Al-'Azamī, Ibid.

50. Al-Shihābī, p.67.

became "an abode of Arab nationalism - or Arabism - (al-'Uruba)" in the capital.⁵¹ The cultural and literary programme of the Club was a cover for national aims which remained its genuine, but latent, purpose. Another Arab writer, As'ad Dāghir, an active participant in the events of that period in Istanbul, wrote that with the change of the CUP's attitude towards the Arabs al-Muntadā became a political centre (Markaz Siyasī).⁵² All three Arab writers, writing at a much later date than the formation of al-Muntadā, probably read far too much into the intentions and the activities of the Club, and thus ascribed aims and purposes which would have fitted a more recent stage in the history of the Arab movement, and which al-Muntadā neither had the facilities nor the opportunity to serve.

The real importance of al-Muntadā does not lie entirely in its political and allegedly nationalist activities, but in the fact that it provided a meeting place "in which Arabs from all parts of the Empire felt at home and talked freely in an atmosphere in which minds relaxed and the traffic of ideas could move".⁵³ Arab students, who after the proclamation of the Constitution came to Istanbul in great numbers to finish their studies, were

51. For an elaboration of this point, see, al-Shihābī, pp. 70-71.

52. As'ad Dāghir, Mudhakkarātī'alā hānish al-qadiyya al-'Arabiyya, Cairo, (n.d.), p.35.

53. Antonius, p.109. See also, al-Shihabi, p.71.

able to meet and know each other. Al-Mutadā's cultural and social activities,⁵⁴ such as public lectures, celebration of the birthday of the Prophet and the performance of Arabic historical plays, which were usually attended by the majority of the Arab community in Istanbul,⁵⁵ gave those students a further chance of meeting Arab deputies and politicians. Such contacts broadened their minds as to the issues which were at stake between the Arab leaders and the Unionists, and incited them to take more interest in those political matters. Like most other students, Arab students seem to have concentrated more attention on politics than they ought to have done, and some sober-minded Arabs complained of the students of al-Muntadā who neglected their studies and started meddling with political questions which were beyond their abilities to grasp.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the Arab students acted on certain occasions as a very effective pressure group, which influenced the decision of the government, and made the Arab community in Istanbul realise its own power and influence.

54. For a summary of such activities, see al-'Azanī, Vol. III, pp.13-30. Darwaza, Vol.I, p.24. Al-Shihābī, p. 71, and Buru, pp.311-317. For one example of its cultural activities, see, al-Muqtabas (daily) No.99/1399, of 28 Jan. 1914.

55. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6623 of 1 May, 1911, and al-Muqtabas, Ibid.

56. See articles in, al-Ahrām No.9769 of 5 May, 1910, and No.9770 of 6 May 1910. It is of interest that these criticisms of al-Muntadā were answered by no lesser man than Rashīd Rīdā in al-Manār, Vol. 13, part 6 of 7 July, 1910, pp.469-470.

For instance, when the Turkish newspaper Ikdan published in March 1910 an article on the Yemen which gave great offence to the Arabs,⁵⁷ students led the protest of the Arab community in Istanbul, and committed acts of violence against the newspaper and its editor.⁵⁸ In fact the protest of the Arabs was so strong that the government was forced to close Ikdan and send its editor for trial.⁵⁹

Moreover, the president of al-Muntadā, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khalīl, attempted a far reaching cultural project when he put forward in June 1911 his scheme encouraging enterprising individuals among the Arabs to found private schools throughout the Arab provinces which would instruct the pupils in the Arabic language.⁶⁰ He tried to solicit support for his scheme among the Arab deputies, whom he in-

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57. The article of Ikdan was reproduced in a number of Arabic papers which did so in the process of replying to its allegations - see for example, Lisān al-Hāl, No.6277, of 18 March, 1910; al-Ahrām, No. 9730 of 17 March, 1910. Buru, pp.157-161 deals with this incident in some detail. The allegation which gave offence to the Arabs in Istanbul and elsewhere was that the Yemenis were ready to sell anything for money including the honour of their women.
58. Lisān al-Hāl, No.6274 of 15 Mar. 1910. It also reported protests of some notables in Damascus and Beirut against Ikdan's article. See further, Buru, pp.157-159. Al-Shihabi, p.65.
59. al-Manār, Vol.13, part 3, 7 Jul.1910,p.220. Buru,p.157.
60. For the ten points of al-Khalīl's schene, see, al-'Azami, Vol.III, pp.20-22. Also, al-Ahrām, No.10134 of 13 Jul.1911. Al-Manār, Vol.14, Part 8, 24 Aug.1911, pp. 635-637. Buru, pp.316-317.

vited to a meeting to discuss the issue.⁶¹ In the speech of welcome to the deputies, al-Khalīl showed a marked awareness of ~~awareness of~~ an Arab nation that was held back by its lack of education, and which needed national schools for its advancement and unity.⁶² Both the government's schools and the foreign schools were not sufficient for the needs of the Arab nation (Umma), and only through a national scheme of education, and a standardised curriculum in all the primary schools would that nation restore its glorious past.⁶³

Though the Arab deputies welcomed the scheme heartily, and promised to support it they did not supplement it. The Syrian colony in Egypt, whom al-Khalīl visited in the summer of 1911 to enlist their support for his scheme were more responsive, and they formed a committee to help him.⁶⁴ However nothing more was heard of this committee, and like the whole scheme it came to naught.

The scheme was probably devised by al-Khalīl, in concert with some opponents of the CUP government among the Arab deputies and the Arab community in Istanbul, as an

61. al-'Azanī, Vol.III, pp.14-15, for details of that meeting.

62. See the whole text of al-Khalīl's speech in, al-'Azanī, III, pp.16-20.

63. Ibid., p.19.

64. Ibid., p.28. al-Manār, Vol.14, part 8 of 24 Aug. 1911, pp.635-637, for that visit, and the names of the committee.

answer to the continuous neglect of Arabic by the government in its schools. This issue had been during the period 1908-14, one of the major grievances of the Arabs against the Young Turks regime.⁶⁵ The scheme, aiming at the creation of one Arab nation, which, according to al-Khalīl, had already possessed a unity of language, history, land and interests,⁶⁶ could have been the real answer to the educational grievances of the Arabs. The unionists raised no objection to the scheme, probably realising that it was a mere talk which the Arabs lacked the will and the resources to implement. However this important project of al-Khalīl failed to materialise; had it succeeded it would have been one of the lasting results of the efforts of al-Muntadā.

Al-Khalīl, around whom the activities of al-Muntadā revolved after 1910, and some of his friends,⁶⁷ were naturally in touch with the Arab opponents of the CUP in Istanbul and with the decentralisers of both Cairo and Beirut.⁶⁸ It was these contacts which probably

65. See above, C.II, p. 98-105.

66. Speech of al-Khalīl, al-'Azamī, Vol.III, p.17.

67. Those friends were: Rafīq Rizq Sallūm (a Christian from Homs) Sayf al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (Muslim from Damascus) and Dr. 'Izzat al-Jundī (Muslim from Homs). All three were co-founders of al-Muntadā. The first two were executed in 1915 by Cenāl Pasha while the third was deported to Anatolia but was killed by his guards when he attempted to escape. See Izahat, pp.118-119. Buru, p.315.

68. Al-Shihābī, p.71.

made Cemal Pasha accuse al-Muntadā of being a mere branch of the Decentralisation Party.⁶⁹ In view of such contacts and due to the deliberate policy of the CUP government in 1913, which aimed at winning over the Arab youths of Istanbul, al-Khalīl came to play an exceedingly conspicuous role in the agreement and events which followed the Arab Congress of Paris.⁷⁰ Al-Khalīl, who was often referred to in both the Turkish and Arabic press at the time as "the representative of Arab Youth " in Istanbul (Mu'tamad al-Shabība al-'Arabiyya)⁷¹ assumed the role of a recognised intermediary in the negotiations for the settlement of differences between the Arab decentralisers and the CUP. In fact the agreement arrived at between the government and the Syrian decentralisers was no more than an agreement between al-Khalīl, in his new capacity and the leaders of the CUP.⁷² Again in the celebrations and feasts held to commemorate the new Turkish-Arab rapprochement al-Khalīl stood prominent. He became virtually the spokesman of the decentralisers.

69. Izabat, pp.14, 15.

70. Chapter V. below deals with this Congress and its results.

71. Al-'Azamī, Vol.III, p.28 claims that al-Muntadā established a secret society under the name of al-Shabība al-'Arabiyya whose aim was the independence of Arab lands. This is wrong since the name was publicly used by the papers at the time: see for example, Fatā al-'Arab, No.50/1484 of 12 Feb. 1914.

72. al-Manār, Vol. 16, part 8 of 2 Aug. 1913, pp.636 ff.

The speeches of Talât Bey, Cemal Bey, Midhat Şukru and other leaders of the CUP echoed far and wide throughout the Syrian provinces,⁷³ and it looked as though all was now well between the Arabs and the Unionists. The latter, who had always suspected the Arab decentralisers of Syria and Iraq of being in collaboration with the foreigners, seemed now anxious to establish a working bond with the young Arabs.⁷⁴ Those young Arabs of Istanbul could be more easily influenced and won over by the government than the "old" Arab reformers. It was almost like a deliberate attempt to drive a wedge between the old Arab reformers and the young ones. The Unionists had succeeded in this and in subsequently paralysing the cause of Arab reform, for soon al-Khalīl and his young friends in Istanbul were disowned by certain sections of the reform movement, and to al-Khalīl's great disappointment, he was solely blamed for the mishaps which befell that movement.⁷⁵

From now and until its closure in 1915, al-Munta-dā, like the rest of Arab societies, lost its vigour and

73. al-Ahrām No.10781 of 16 Aug. 1913. Al-Islāh, No.91/1486 of 25 Aug. 1913. Thawrat al-'Arab, pp.82-90. Al-'Azamī, III, p.30.

74. Thawrat al-'Arab, p.102.

75. See, Fatā al-'Arab Nos.36/1470 and 39/1473 of 26, 29 Ja. 1914, respectively. al-Islah, No.94/1489 of 28 Aug. 1913. al-Muqattam Nos.7433, 7436 of 8 & 11 Sept. 1913, respectively. al-Ahrām No.10831 of 5 Oct. 1913. Thawrat al-'Arab, p.82.

ceased to play an effective role in the political life of the capital. al-Muntadā never "established branches in various towns in Syria and Iraq" as alleged.⁷⁶ It remained to the end of its days a society operating from Istanbul and dominated by Syrian students, who were helped and guided by some Syrian opponents of the CUP in the capital. al-Muntadā was of special importance for the future Arab movement which was to receive leadership and guidance from many of its active members.

According to Mustafā al-Shihābī the activities of the Arab youth did not stop at the formation of al-Muntadā, but extended to the founding of Arab secret societies. He claimed that as a result of contacts between such youths and certain Arab officers three secret societies were founded, namely al-Qaḥṭāniyya, al-Fatāt and al-'Ahd.⁷⁷ al-Shihābī was the only source to state that al-Fatāt was formed in Istanbul by Arab youths and officers.⁷⁸

All other sources agree that this society was formed in Paris by Syrian students who were studying there; that its activities were confined to Beirut and Damascus, and were to reach their peak during Amir Fayṣal's administration

76. Antonius, p.109.

77. al-Shihābī, p.68.

78. Aḥmad Qadrī, pp.6-7, gave a different version of the founding of al-Fatāt. See above, n. 14 p.

in Syria. The other two secret societies were founded in Istanbul . and had branches in Syria and Iraq. Though some civilians were mentioned among the members, the military element dominated in both societies. Their importance has been far exaggerated by the sources, and in fact their activities and impact would not warrant the amount of discussion and publicity given to them.⁷⁹

Different accounts were given of the programmes of al-Qahtāniyya and al-'Ahd. Antonius and Saab ascribed federal ideas to both societies. They believed that those societies worked for the attainment of a broad federal scheme based on the example of the Austro-Hungarian Ausgleich in which all the political rights of all the ethnic groups would be recognised.⁸⁰ This is yet another attempt to secure for the Arabs their rights within the Ottoman Empire. Other sources, while silent on the existence of federal ideas in the programme of al-

79. Most of the Arabic sources dealt with them in a rather inflated way. See for example, Darwaza, I, pp.27-33. Al-'Azami, III, pp.30-35, and IV, pp. 53 ff. Other writers who followed those sources did the same. To mention only one writer who wrote in English: Hassan Saab, The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire, dealt extensively with both al-Qahtāniyya and al-'Ahd, and read far too much in their programmes and activities. See, pp.234-270. to him both societies had federal ideas, thus the title of his book.

80. Antonius, p.110, 119. Saab, pp.234 ff.

Qahtāniyya, mentioned such ideas in the programme of al-'Ahd.⁸¹ Al-Shihābī ascribed federal ideas to neither.⁸² 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, the founder of al-'Ahd and alleged co-founder of al-Qahtāniyya,⁸³ denied on one occasion that his society worked for a federal scheme.⁸⁴

This confusion in accounts stems probably from the fact that it is difficult to know precisely the programmes of secret societies, their membership and genuine achievements. What the Arabs failed to achieve in their open societies and through their dialogue with the Young Turks was usually claimed as achievements, or at least as part of the programmes of secret societies.

However, al-Qahtāniyya was the first Arab secret society to be founded in Istanbul towards the end of 1909.

81. For example, al-'Azamī, III, pp.30-34 dealt with al-Qahtāniyya, and mentioned no federal ideas in its programme, while in Vol.IV, pp.53-54 stated that al-'Ahd desired to establish a dual monarchy of the Ottoman Empire on the model of Austria-Hungary. The same story in Anīn Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, I, p.10, and pp.46-47. Ahmad Qadri, p.14, Darwaza, I, p.32, and Farazat, p.41 attributed federal ideas to al-'Ahd.

82. Al-Shihabi, p.69 for al-Qahtāniyya, and pp.78-79, for al-'Ahd.

83. Saab, 234. Antonius, p.110, 119. Also, Farazat, p.40.

84. Buru, pp.557-560, narrates an interview which he (in the presence of Hassan Saab) had with 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī in Cairo. 'Azīz had denied that al-'Ahd had any federal ideas in its programme which aimed only at securing a decentralist system of government. 'Azīz suggested that the programme might have been corrupted after he left Istanbul early in 1914.

There is some difference as to who founded it. Some writers believed that Khalīl Ḥanāda, the Minister of Awqāf in the cabinet of Kānil Pasha was its founder.⁸⁵ Others give the credit to al-Zahrāwī, the deputy for Ḥama, while a third group stated that Ḥanāda together with al-Zaharāwī, 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī and Salīm al-Jazā'irī founded this society.⁸⁶ The truth is that the society was formed by a group of civilians and officers, conspicuous among whom was Salīm al-Jazā'irī, an officer and the grandson of one of the Algerian exiles who had accompanied Anīr 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī to Danascus.⁸⁷ The society aimed at the betterment of the conditions of the Arabs, an aim which al-Ikhā' 'Arabī al-'Uthnānī had attempted to attain before. Al-Qaḥṭāniyya also aimed at a national awakening of the Arabs by reviving their glorious past, promoting their cultural, social and economic standards and by making them aware of their usurped rights so that they might be urged to demand them.⁸⁸ This is a significant reflection on the

85. For example, al-'Azanī, III, p.31. Amīn Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, Vol.I, p.10.

86. Ibid. Izahat, p.16. Farazāt, p.40. Also, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-'Ummarī al-Mūṣilī, Tarikh Muqadarāt al-'Irāq al-Siyāsiyya, Baghdad, 1925, (Henceforth al-Ummarī), Vol.I, p.168.

87. Salīm al-Jazā'irī was the nephew of Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī referred to in the introduction above, pp. 24-25. For Salīm's role in the formation of al-Qaḥṭāniyya, see, al-'Azanī, III, pp.31-33. Amīn Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, I, p.10. Buru, 320. Al-Shihābī, p.69.

88. Al-Shihābī, p.69. Also, Majid Khadduri, "'Azīz 'Alī Miṣrī and the Arab Nationalist Movement" in St. Antony's Papers, No.17, MEA, No.4, ed. by A. Hourani, Oxford University Press, 1965, p.142.

apathy and indifference of Arab public opinion to the heated arguments which were going on between their leaders (almost self-appointed) and the leaders of the Young Turks.

Al-Qaḥṭāniyya had a password and a signal for identification⁸⁹ but as its programme was essentially that of recognised Arab societies, it became inactive within a year, and most of its members joined other societies, such as al-Fatāt and al-'Ahd. Antonius, however, said that the society had "died of wilful neglect" because its founders discovered a traitor amongst them.⁹⁰ He is the only writer to mention this fact.

Al-Qaḥṭāniyya was the first attempt of Arab officers in the Turkish army to enter the realm of politics. Envious of the achievements of their Turkish counterparts, who declared the Constitution and continued to play a leading role in the political life of the Empire, the Arab officers were, probably, trying to follow suit and play the same role but with regard to their own people, the Arabs. This tendency of the military element to try and assert themselves in the field of politics, which has become a bedevilling feature in the modern history of the

89. For details of such sign, see, al-'Azamī, III, p.34. Antonius, p.111. Izahat, p.17, IN pp. 16-18, Izahat, accused al-Qaḥṭāniyya of separatist aims.

90. Antonius, p.111.

Middle East, was more noticeable in the formation and activity of al-'Ahd society.

Al-'Ahd (the Covenant) was founded by 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, an Arab officer in the Turkish army whose contribution to the Arab nationalist movement is often over-rated,⁹¹ in October 1913. 'Azīz intended the society to be confined to the circle of army officers, but the list of its membership included the names of some civilians.⁹² They were, however, in the minority, and the soldiers dominated the ranks of al-'Ahd. Iraqis, being the most numerous in the Turkish army, were heavily represented in its membership.⁹³ The reason given for its formation was that there was a general feeling, particularly among the Arab officers, that the government's bad intentions towards the Arabs had increased, and that it had resolved on

91. For an assessment of 'Azīz's role in the Arab nationalist movement in pre and post War I period, see Majid Khadduri, "'Azīz 'Alī ..." in, St. Antony's Papers, No.17, pp.140-163.

92. Antonius, p.119, said only two civilians were admitted, and gave the name of Anīr 'Ādil Arslān as one of the two. Taḥsīn al-'Askarī, Mudhakkarātī 'an al-thawra al-'Arabīyya al-kubra wal thawra al-'Iraqīyya, Baghdad, 1936, vol.1, p.8, gave the names of five civilians among the members of al-'Ahd, all of whom were students. He also gave the names of some 19 cadets as members, the majority of whom were Iraqis. Prominent among its military members were, Salīm al-Jazā'irī, Nurī al-Sa'id (a former Prime Minister of Iraq), Yāssīn al-Hashīmī (Baghdad), Mawlūd Mukhlīṣ (Baghdad), Amīn luṭfī al-Ḥāfiz (Damascus) and many others. For a fuller list see, Darwaza, I, p.33, al-Azami, IV, p. 55.

93. Antonius, p.119.

stern measures as a solution for the Arab problem.⁹⁴ Moreover, the leaders of the Arabs in Istanbul and elsewhere had realised that the government had no intention of carrying out the items of the agreement reached in Paris with the Arab reformers.⁹⁵ In this atmosphere of deteriorating Turkish-Arab relations, al-'Ahd was founded to support the Arab agitation for a decentralised system of administration for the Empire.⁹⁶ There is nothing revolutionary in its programme, and considering its purposes al-'Ahd could have been more effective as an open society.⁹⁷ Even if we accept the allegation that one of its aims was to transform the Empire into a dual monarchy on the model of the Austro-Hungarian Ausgleich that would not make^{it} a revolutionary society. This suggestion for a dual monarchy was not a new one, nor was it revolutionary, for it had been proposed as a remedy for the problems of the Empire as early as 1908 by the Turkish ex-Chargé d' Affaires in Washington.⁹⁸ In fact it is hard to find

94. For those measures, see, Amin Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, I, pp.47-48. Al-Azani, IV, pp.56-57. Thawrat al-'Arab, pp.78-79.

95. Al-Azani, IV, pp.55-58.

96. For the views of 'Aziz, see, Buru, 557-560. See also, al-Shihābī, pp.78-79.

97. Its secretary, Taha al-Hashimi, suggested to Aziz to make public its aims, since its purpose was to end the differences between Turks and Arabs. See, Majid Khaduri, St. Antony's Papers, 17, note 23, p.149.

98. See, Alfred De Billinski, "The Turkish Revolution", The Nineteenth Century And After, No.CCCLXXIX, Sept. 1908, pp.364 ff.

a reason as why al-Qaḥṭāniyya and al-ʾAhd assumed a secret character at all. However, with the arrest of 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī in February 1914 - an incident that had caused considerable commotion among the Arab community of Istanbul - and his subsequent release and departure to Egypt in April 1914,⁹⁹ al-ʾAhd became dormant. Nevertheless, 'Azīz, together with some of its officer members were to join the Revolt of Sharīf Ḥusayn of Mecca in 1916, and to play an important part in it.¹⁰⁰

Two other secret societies, which had nothing much to their credit, were mentioned by al-'Azani, namely The Black Hand (Jan'iyat al-Yad al-Sawdā'), and The Green *Flag* (Jan'iyat al-'Allan al-Akhḍar). No date was given for the formation of the first of these societies, but its founder was said to be Dā'ūd al-Dubūnī, an Iraqi medical student. Its aim was a terrorist one, to assassinate Arabs who opposed the Arab movement. Its members, mainly military cadets, were divided among themselves, and as result the society dissolved before it was a year old, having achieved nothing.¹⁰¹

99. See Below, pp. 339.

100. Al-'Azani, IV, pp. 65-66. Tahsin al-Askari, pp. 184 ff. Majid Khadduri, St. Antony's Papers, pp. 151-155.

101. Al-'Azani, III, p. 39.

Dā'ūd al-Dubūnī, for whom the formation of secret societies held a special fascination, also founded the society of the Green Flag in September 1912. According to al-'Azami,¹⁰² its name was a reference to the green Nejdite flag. It had civilians, mainly medical doctors and students, and junior army officers among its members. Its aim was to strengthen national bonds between Arab students in Istanbul and to urge them to work for the welfare of their Arab nation (Umma)¹⁰³ Its most significant work was the publication of a political - literary periodical called Lisān al-'Arab¹⁰⁴ (the language or tongue of the Arabs), edited by al-'Azami. However, this periodical, was soon made the organ of al-Muntadā al-Adabī, and was called after it.¹⁰⁵ Like the rest of the secret Arab societies, al-'Alam al-Ahḍar had modest achievements and limited its activities to Istanbul alone. None of these societies had separatist aims.

102. Ibid., p.36. The green flags and banners were always the symbol of rebellion in the history of Islam.

103. Ibid., Also, Amīn Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, 1 p.10.

104. al-'Azami, Ibid., pp.37-38; Amīn Sa'īd, Ibid.

105. Ibid., for more details.

CHAPTER IV

THE SYRIAN DECENTRALISATION

MOVEMENT.

The Syrian decentralisation movement, with its two main centres in Cairo and Beirut, was the culmination of Arab agitation for the assertion of their rights within the Ottoman Empire. The movement, which made its first appearance in the early days of 1912 in the form of newspaper articles and booklets written by Syrians and arguing in favour of administrative decentralisation as a system of government for the Arab provinces,¹ was to develop into the first organised and open Syrian political party seeking to oppose, largely through constitutional means, the

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1. Important among those articles and booklets were two articles published by Ḥaqqī al-'Azm, who was to become the secretary of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo later on, and by Walī al-Dīn Yakan, a prominent Arab writer and journalist, in al-Muqattam, No.6919 of 2 Jan., 1912, p.4, and No.6920 of 3 Jan. 1912, p.4, respectively. Both articles dealt with Administrative Decentralisation for Arab lands. Ḥaqqī follows up his arguments in his booklet: Ḥaqqā'iq 'an al-Intikhabāt al-Niyā-biyya fī al-'Iraq wa-Suriyya wa-Falastin, Cairo, 1912. In the second half of 1912 and towards the end of that year there were almost incessant articles in the press on the subject of Administrative Decentralisation, see for example: al-Muqattam, No.7104 of 8 Aug. 1912, and No.7217 of 21 Dec. 1912, p.4; Also, Lisān al-Ḥāl, Nos. 7122-7126 of 20-26 Dec., 1912; al-Ahram Nos. 10470 of 8 Aug. 1912 for a declaration by an unknown organisation calling itself Fityān Qaḥṭān. The declaration enumerated demands for the Arab nation all of which fall within the range of administrative decentralisation. This organisation is probably fictitious. Also No.10582 of 21 Dec. 1912 for agitation of Arab students in Istanbul for the introduction of administrative decentralisation in Arab provinces.

centralising and anti-Arab policies of the Young Turks. Apart from the sympathetic response to the movement in Baṣra and Baghdad, a response that was mainly due to the instigation and encouragement of the powerful Sayyid Ṭālib al-Naqīb of Baṣra, who was known for his opposition to the CUP and support of the Syrian decentralisers, the movement remained exclusively Syrian. Moreover, it came to be regarded as a manifestation and proof of the rising tide of nationalism among the Syrian elite. For the first time in the history of Syria, Muslim and Christian nationalists worked together for what their press termed the common aim, namely the granting of administrative decentralisation to their provinces. Subsequent events and facts showed that this common aim was not as common as the press inferred, for divergences and differences did occur. However, this willingness of the Muslims and the Christians to work together made their agitation for the introduction of a measure of administrative decentralisation in the system of the government of the Ottoman Empire, of critical importance in the history of the Turkish - Syrian relations during this period. The suspicion with which the Young Turks viewed the movement, and its subsequent failure, widened the ever growing gap between the Syrians and their Ottoman government. When the Turks resorted to repressive measures to strangle the Syrian movement, the Syrians were driven to disappointment and despair and as

a result some of them began to look for other alternatives to the rule of the Turks.

Origins of the Syrian Decentralisation Movement:

This movement, however, had no claim to originality. It was no more than an echo, though with some variations, of ideas which had been in the air since the Congress of 4 February 1902, convened by the Ottoman Liberals in Paris in order to establish a common line of action.² The Congress, however, split, partly on personality conflicts but mainly on the issue of the necessity of securing the assistance of the European powers and the participation of the Turkish army in the contemplated internal revolution. Prince Sabaheddin, the president of the Congress, headed the "interventionists" while Ahmed Riza and his faction remained opposed to this policy.³ This difference between the Prince and Ahmed Riza began "to crystallize from now onwards as one between Turkish nationalism and Ottoman liberalism".⁴ The former stood

2. On the Congress, see E. Ramsaur, The Young Turks - Prelude to The Revolution of 1908, Beirut, 1965, pp.66 ff.; B. Lewis, Emergence, pp.202-205; Tunaya, Partiler, pp. 106 ff.

3. Kemal H. Karpat, Turkey's Politics - The Transition to a Multi-Party System, Princeton, 1959, p.14. Also, Tunaya, ibid., p.106; B. Lewis, Ibid., p.203.

4. B. Lewis, ibid. See also, Ramsaur, pp.81, ff.

for the principle of Ottomanism to be implemented through a centralised form of government in which the Turks were to have the dominant role. Ahmed Riza was the outspoken representative of this school of thought, and he was challenged by Prince Sabaheddin, "who envisaged a total transformation of the Ottoman Empire by decentralizing the administration and promoting individual initiative, and by inducing the intelligentsia to engage in productive occupations rather than seek government jobs".⁵ Thus the Prince emerged as the main advocate of the concept of administrative decentralisation as a remedy for the problems of a multi-racial empire such as that of the Ottomans, and from then and until the entry of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War in October 1914, the name of Sabaheddin was associated with all political parties and groups calling for decentralisation in the Empire. Naturally the ideas of the Prince became popular with the non-Turkish peoples, and when he founded his Tesebbusu Sahsi ve Ademi Merkeziyet Cemiyeti (The League for Private Initiative and Administrative Decentralization), he set up

5. K. Karpat, Turkey's Politics, p.19. For a brief account of Sabaheddin and his ideas and bibliography see, Ibid. Also, B. Lewis, Emergence, pp.203-204, Ramsaur, pp.81-89. All four authors were agreed that Sabaheddin was influenced by the writings of the French writer, Edmond Demolins.

branches, particularly in Asiatic Turkey, in Erzurum, Trabzon, Izmir as well as in Damascus and Latakia in Syria, while a certain Maḥmūd al-'Alāyilī started a branch in 'Aley in Lebanon.⁶ It is significant that the Damascus branch was set up by two Muslim Damascenes who were to play an eminent role in the agitation and organisation of the decentralisation movement in the years 1912-1913, namely the cousins Rafīq al-'Aẓm and Ḥaqqī al-'Aẓm.⁷ The former was to be the president of the Ottoman Administrative Decentralisation Party, which was founded in Cairo towards the end of 1912, while the latter became its secretary. Thanks to the efforts of Prince Sabaheddin to disseminate his ideas of a federalised Ottoman state, the Syrian movement for decentralisation found the tradition to draw upon and the pretext which its leaders would so often cite.

Prince Sabaheddin's League, and ultimately his ideas, were in fact to meet considerable opposition from the powerful CUP and were as a result foredoomed to failure.

6. T. Tunaya, Partiler, p.142. For the Programme of the League see, ibid., pp.142-144, Buru, p.56.

7. Tunaya, Partiler, p.143, Buru, p.55. For a short biography of Rafīq al-'Aẓm, see, Majmū'at Athār, preface written by M. Rashīd Riḍa. For that of Ḥaqqī al-'Aẓm, see Majallat Lisān al-'Arab, (Baghdad) Vol.1, Part 3 of May, 1913, pp.113-119.

Fearing any sort of opposition, and certainly that of a well-known figure like Prince Sabaheddin, whose ideas were becoming too popular with the non-Turkish nationalities, the CUP took care to nip the Prince's League in the bud. The CUP brought pressure to bear on the Prince, who being a theoretician and idealist, gave in; in November 1908 he dissolved his League, and publicly declared his support for the programme of the CUP.⁸

The concept of decentralisation, however, did not disappear from the scene of Turkish politics. It revived in the programmes of two opposition parties, namely the Osmanli Ahrar Firkasi, the Liberal Party, formed in September 1908, and the Hürriyet Ve Itilaf Firkasi, the Liberal Union founded in November 1911. Like most of the Turkish opposition parties and groups the common feature of their programmes was severe criticism of the CUP centralisation policy.⁹ Among the founders of the Liberal Party were men from Sabaheddin's entourage, and though the Prince himself was anxious not to have a link with this party, it was undoubtedly inspired by his ideas, and he came to be considered, by both his enemies and supporters,

8. A. Mandelstam, Le Sort de l'Empire, pp.14-16. Buru, p.87. Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, p.97.

9. Tunaya, Partiler, pp.239 ff.

as its spiritual head.¹⁰ The Ahrar formulated a programme which outwardly was not different from that of the CUP,¹¹ for to them it was not the programme but its execution, that mattered; and they saw in the execution of the CUP's programme a "lack of liberalism and tolerance, and a tendency towards the Turkish nationalism".¹² The Ahrar was furthermore, associated in the minds of many non-Turkish deputies and patriots, who rallied to its cause, and more significantly, in the minds of the leaders of the CUP, with the concept of decentralisation advocated by Sabaheddin. In the words of a Young Turk, the Ahrar, "promised equal chances to all nationalities in Turkey to develop on their own nationalist lines".¹³ The Ahrar as a party did not have a chance of playing an important role in Turkish politics, and beyond securing for itself one member in the Chamber of Deputies, and organising for its purposes a group of deputies composed of Arabs, Albanians, Greeks and Armenians, it left little lasting effect on the Turkish scene. As a result of the strict laws issued after

10. Serebesti, No.96 of 21 Feb., 1909, pp.1-2; also No. 124 of 20 March, 1910, p.3, col.1-3; and No.140 of 6 April, 1910, p.4.

11. For the programme of the Ahrar see, Tunaya, Partiler, pp.239 ff.

12. Mandelstam, p.15.

13. Halil Halid, "The Origins of The Revolt In Turkey" in: The Nineteenth Century And After, Vol.65, No.CCCLXXXVII May, 1909, p.757.

the April 1909 counter-revolution against all forms of opposition to the Young Turks regime, the Liberal Party transferred itself to Paris, and was finally dissolved in 1910.¹⁴

On the 21 November 1911, the first opposition party, which was to form a real challenge and threat to the CUP, was founded. The Liberal Union, as this party came to be known in western sources, emerged from the union of almost all opposition parties, dissatisfied national groups in parliament and personalities opposed to the CUP.¹⁵ This party, composed of various and divergent groups, was united only in its opposition to the CUP and in its determination to oust it from power. Though this party failed to work out a positive and constructive programme,¹⁶ it tried to win the support of the non-Turkish nationalities by declaring that its aim was, "the consolidation of the principles of the constitution and the promotion of good understanding between the various elements of the Empire,"¹⁷ and by advocating a limited measure of

14. Tunaya, Partiler, p.318.

15. Yeni Ikdam, No.585 of 22 Oct., 1910, p.3, col.6, talked of meetings and efforts which preceded the formation of Liberal Union. No.586 of 26 Oct. 1910, gave details of one such meeting. Tanin, No. 1158 of 23 Nov., 1911, p.3, col.2, wrote under the title, "Yeni Bir Firka", of fusion of various parties and groups in the formation of such party and gave details about its formation. See also, B. Lewis, Emergence, p.221, Karpat, Turkey's, p.17.

16. See Tunaya, Partiler, pp.319 ff.

17. Lowther to Grey, No.864, conf., Const., 25 Nov., 1911, F.O. 371/1253/48319. Also, Tanin, No.1158 of 23 Nov., 1911, p.3.

decentralisation. Only in contrast to the programme of the CUP, could that of Liberal Union be branded as decentralist. Though the Ententists, to use a word deriving from the official term given to the Liberal Union in French, Entente Liberale, declared in their election manifesto that they were ready to concede certain points in education and the powers allotted to the General Council of the Vilayet, points which could be described as of a mild decentralist nature, the gist of that manifesto fell quite short of what the Syrian decentralisers were to demand in January 1913.¹⁸ Nonetheless this new party struck the fancy of the Syrian Arabs both at Istanbul and at home. Among the leaders of the party, which gathered around itself a number of prominent Ottoman politicians, were also some Arabs. Nearly all of them were previously either supporters of the CUP or sympathisers with its political programme. This fact indicated the increasing tension between the emerging Arab nationalists and the CUP leaders, who showed themselves more inclined to work towards the furtherance of the interests of a Turkish nation rather than the interests of an Ottoman nation.

18. al-Muqattam, No.6962 of 22 Feb., 1912, p.1, gives the Ententists' manifesto and compares and contrasts it with that of the Unionist. As well, the same issue of al Muqattam furnished details of decentralist points in the Ententists' programme. On such points see also, Tunaya, Partiler, pp.340 ff.

In fact some of the Syrian deputies in the Chamber played an important role in the negotiations leading to the formation of the Liberal Union party.¹⁹ The list of its founders included the name of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī, the deputy for Ḥama, a former sympathiser of the CUP and a prominent decentraliser who was to pay for his views with his life. Rushdī al-Sham'a and Shukrī al-'Asalī, both, deputies for Damascus, and bitter opponents of the CUP's Arab policies, were among the members of the party's executive committee.²⁰ The Syrian press, whether in Egypt or in Syria itself, welcomed the new party.²¹ Branches were set up in the main Syrian towns: Beirut, Damascus, Jerusalem, Aleppo, as well as in Baṣra and Baghdad. Other centres in the Arab vilayets, such as in the Ḥijāz and the Yemen, being backward or engaged in revolts, and as such of little or no importance in the political life of the Empire, were of no interest to the

19. Yeni İkhda, No.586 of 26 Oct., 1911; al-Muqattam, No. 6893 of 28 Nov., 1911, pp.1-2.

20. Tanin, No.1158 of 23 Nov. 1911, p.3, col.2, gives the names of the founders and of the executive committee of the party. For a French translation of formation and names of this party see Stamboul, of 22 Nov., 1911, being an enclosure in Lowther to Grey, No.864, conf., Const., of 25 Nov., 1911, in F.O.371/1263/48319.

21. See for example, al-Muqattam, No.6893 of 28 Nov., 1911, and No.6898 of 6 Dec., 1911; al-Mufid, No.848 of 6 Dec., 1911; al-Muqtabas, (daily) No.844 of 7 Dec., 1911 and No.847 of 11 Dec., 1911 gives such a welcoming article by Ḥaqqī al-'Azm, Nos.869-873 of 4 Jan., 1912, to 9 Jan., 1912 give the programme of this party.

leaders of the Liberal Union and consequently no branches were established there. Moreover the Liberal Union fought the elections of 1912, and it had great hopes of winning the majority of the seats in Syria. One of its leaders, Luṭfi Fikri, deputy for Dersim and an outspoken critic of the CUP, accompanied by Shukrī al-'Asalī, toured the Syrian vilayets preaching their programme.²² Their efforts were, however, in vain, for the CUP was to rig those elections and consequently to establish its absolute control over the Chamber. The leaders of the CUP seemed never to have forgotten or forgiven the leaders of the Syrian decentralisation movement their association with the opposition parties and in particular with the Liberal Union. Izahat, the book published by the Fourth Army on Cemal Pasha's orders to justify and defend the famous trials of 1916 in which many Arab nationalists were tried and subsequently hanged, is at pains to try and establish a close link between the formation of the La Markaziyya party in Cairo towards the end of 1912, and the designs of the CUP's opponents, namely the Liberal Union, to bring about the downfall of the CUP cabinet.²³ It was only

22. al-Muqattam, No.6962 of 22 Feb., 1912, pp.1 & 4 for Luṭfi's activities in Damascus and talk. Yeni İkdām No. 697 of 16 Feb., 1912, p.3, Col.2, for Aleppo.

23. See Izahat, (Turkish copy) pp.40-44, where proof of links between the Syrian decentralisers and the Liberal Union were produced, Izahat, relied heavily on confessions of some of the accused, mainly those of 'Abd al-Chanī al-'Araysī, the editor of the nationalist paper al-Mufīd, and Sayf al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, a young Arab nationalist. Some letters written privately by some leading decentralisers, such as Rafīq al-'Aẓm, to

natural that opponents of any regime would seek its downfall, a fact that makes the accusations of Izahat look absurd. However, the opposition parties and societies such as the League of Prince Sbaheddin, the Ahrar after it and the Liberal Union kept talking about administrative decentralisation as an alternative to the centralisation policies of the CUP, and by so doing provided the Syrian decentralisers with a tradition to draw upon and a formula for expressing their discontent with the government, which in their opinion, had persistently ignored the political rights of the Arabs in the Empire.

Thus the Syrian decentralisation movement was essentially an anti-CUP movement which had been mounting to a climax under the impact of the general political situation in the Empire during the years 1911-1912. Throughout 1911 and until its fall on 17 July 1912 the Unionist regime was getting extremely unpopular, and its policies were meeting with increasing opposition both inside and outside parliament.²⁴ The position of the CUP was further

F/note 23 cont. from previous page.

friends and other persons were also produced, see for instance pp.42-44. For a French translation see French copy, La Verité, pp.58-63.

24. Foreign Office material, press and sources, Turkish and non-Turkish, narrate in great detail the difficulties of the CUP during 1911 and 1912, Files F.O. 371/1228 ff. are full of such reports. For a brief account see, Lowther to Grey, No.100, conf., Const., 31 Jan., 1912, forwarding the Annual Report for 1911, pp.1-58, in F.O. 371/1491/4966. See also, B. Lewis, Emergence, pp. 220-224. For a detailed account see F. Ahmad, The Committee of Union and Progress, pp.160-212.

undermined by the dissension and strife between two factions among its leaders. A group of moderates led by Colonel Sadik Bey, an officer who played a leading role that is often overlooked in the 1908 revolution, came to oppose successfully the domination of the CUP by men like Talât, Cavid, Ismail Hakki and their associates, who were closely connected with the harsh and unpopular policies of the various CUP-dominated governments.²⁵ Notwithstanding strenuous efforts to heal the schism within the CUP,²⁶ Sadik Bey and his friends left the ranks of the party to form, with other dissident groups and opponents of the Unionist regime, the Liberal Union in November 1911, which demonstrated the declining fortunes of the once-powerful CUP by spectacularly winning the by-election, held in Istanbul on 11 December 1911.²⁷

Moreover the Committee's majority in the Chamber was fast dwindling, and its leaders soon realised that if their party was to stay in power, a general election conducted under their auspices had become exceedingly

25. The Annual Report For 1911, as above, pp.2 ff. Also, Memorandum in F.O.371/1249, F.O.16 May, 1911, pp.17-21. F. Ahmad, The Committee of Union and Progress, pp. 170-179. See also, Yeni Ikdam, No.400 of 21 April, 1911, and No.402 of 23 April, 1911, and No. 430 of 21 May 1911.

26. Yeni Ikdam, No.402 of 23 April, 1911.

27. al-Muqattam, No.6911 of 21 Dec. 1911, Lewis, Emergence, pp.221-222.

necessary. Hence they decided to introduce to parliament their scheme of modifying Article 35 of the Constitution. The modification which had been approved by the Committee's Congress of September 1911 was intended to restore to the Sultan the power, enjoyed by him under the Constitution of 1876, of dissolving the Chamber, in the event of continued dispute between the Cabinet and the Chamber, without the consent of the Senate. The opposition leaders, such as Lutfi Fikri, found it difficult to believe the CUP's concern for the prerogatives of the Sultan, and not without good reason, concluded that the real aim of the CUP was to dissolve parliament and conduct new elections in which they would use their influence to secure a majority over the newly formed Liberal Union.²⁸ The opposition leaders were right, for this was exactly what the CUP did. After bitter parliamentary debates,²⁹ the government failed to have its bill of amendment passed, and in accordance with certain constitutional provisions, parliament was dissolved on 17 January 1912.³⁰ In the elections that

28. Lowther to Grey, No.934, Conf., Const., 18 Dec., 1911, F.O.371/1263/51583; and No.935, same to same, Conf., Const., 18 Dec., 1911, F.O.371/1263/51584. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī expressed similar views in an article in his paper al-Idāra, (previously al-Ḥadāra) of Istanbul, which al-Muqattam No.6935 of 22 Jan., 1912, p.2 reproduced.

29. For these debates see Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Cerıdsı, Sittings Nos. 31-36 of 24 Dec., 1911-11 Jan., 1912, p. 649-772.

30. Text of Trade in Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Cerıdsı, pp. 831, Sitting No.40 of 16 Jan., 1912. Translation in Lowther to Grey, No.52, conf., Const., 17 Jan., 1912, F.O.371/1487/2877. See also, same to same, No.69, /cont.

followed, the CUP secured itself an overwhelming majority by dishonest means.³¹ By thus illegally removing the legal parliamentary opposition, the Committee hastened its own downfall. This action, together with other policies of the CUP which were causing mounting discontent in Albania, Macedonia and Syria, convinced its adversaries that the Committee intended to persist in its centralising and oppressive policies. Dissatisfaction with the Committee's policies united Albanian nationalists in their successful efforts to oppose militarily the Unionist regime, and resulted in the renewal of the terrorist activity in Macedonia and had ultimately led to the action of Halâskâr Zabitan Grupu, Group of Saviour Officers, in May - June 1912 which precipitated the fall of the CUP.³²

The fall of the CUP cabinet on 17 July 1912, created the first and most vital prerequisite for the emergence of the Syrian decentralisation movement. It meant

F/note cont. from previous page.

conf., Const., 24 Jan., 1912, F.O.371/1487/3939. al-Muqattam, No.6935 of 22 Jan., 1912, p.1.

31. See for instance: Lowther to Grey, No.324, conf., Const., 18 April, 1912, F.O.371/1494/17830, also, Iktiham Nos., 154 of 26 July 1912, p.3 and No.159 of 31 July 1912, p.3. al-Muqattam, 7008 of 18 April, 1912, al-Ahram, No.10357 of 29 March, 1912.
32. Marling to Grey, No.592, conf., Const., 10 July, 1912, F.O.371/1495/29823. Major Tyrrel to Marling, No.55, Const., 29 July, 1912, enc., in F.O.371/1495/33863, forwards programme of Saviour officers. Also, Marling to Grey, No.233, teleg., conf., Const., 18 July, 1912, F.O.371/1496/30444. F. Ahmad, The CUP, pp.207-216. B. Lewis, Emergence, pp.223-224.

the removal of the Unionist regime which was adamant in its refusal to consider any call to decentralise the system of administration, and its replacement by cabinets which the Syrian decentralisers hoped would be amenable to their aspirations - a hope that was to be dashed. Nonetheless, the collapse of the Committee's regime was, "hailed with general relief, and the country looked for the formation of a strong liberal government, which would rid the nation of the incubus of the occult Committee, and extricate it from its thickening difficulties".³³ Ghazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha formed the new cabinet on 21 July 1912,³⁴ and proceeded to set right some of the Committee's oppressive policies. The state of siege was lifted the very next day, and on the 15 August the Committee-dominated parliament was dissolved.³⁵ In fact the whole programme of the new cabinet was an indictment of the CUP administration.³⁶

33. The Annual Report For the Year 1912, p.3, in Lowther to Grey, No.315, conf., Const., 17 April, 1913, F.O.371/1812/18393.

34. Hatt appointing Muhtar Pasha in Takvim-i Vekayi, No. 1185 of 23 July, 1912, p.1. Ikitiham, No.149 of 22 July, 1912.

35. B. Lewis, Emergence, p.224. Also, Ikitiham, No.148 of 22 July, 1912. Marling to Grey, No.250 teleg., conf., Const., 23 July, 1912, F.O.371/1496/31301.

36. Marling to Grey, teleg., conf., Const., 30 July, 1912, F.O.371/1496/32320. al-Muqattam, No.7102 of 6 Aug., 1912, Lisan al-Hal, No.7102 of 13 Aug., 1912, for an Arabic translation of programme.

Moreover, the cabinet showed a willingness to ascertain and deal with the Albanian demands. A commission composed of two Albanian members, Marshal Ibrahim Pasha and Danish Bey, was sent to Albania to discuss their grievances with the rebels.³⁷ It was acts like this that made the CUP press accuse the cabinet of Muhtar Pasha of being an Ententist, an accusation that it was quick to deny.³⁸ However, the Syrians were jubilant. Notables from both Beirut and Damascus sent telegrams to the Sultan congratulating him on appointing such a well-chosen cabinet, and requesting him to dissolve the parliament and order elections for a new one.³⁹ Al-Muqtabas, a famous Damascene paper, which had been suspended by the Unkonist regime on account of its continuous attacks, resumed publication, and showed its joy over the fall of the CUP.⁴⁰ Numerous articles in al-Muqattam, al-Ahrām, and Lisān al-Hāl, all of which were to preach the cause of decentralisation persistently, welcomed the new cabinet and put high

37. Marling to Grey, No.255, teleg., conf., Const., 27 July, 1912, F.O.371/1496/31847. al-Muqattam, No.7097 of 31 July 1912.

38. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7062 of 11 Oct., 1912, and No.7063 of 12 Oct., 1912.

39. For ^{the}Beirutis' telegram see, al-Muqattam, No.7098 of 1 Aug., 1912; For Damascene one see, Iktiham, No.154 of 26 July, 1912, p.3.

40. Falastīn, No.163/62 of 17 Aug., 1912, p.3.

hopes on it.⁴¹ In one such article, Rafīq al-'Aẓm appealed to his fellow-countrymen to support the new government, and to leave it alone to find time to deal with the pressing problems of the Empire which the misguided policies of the Unionists had created.⁴² Men like Rafīq al-'Aẓm, known for their opposition to the CUP were anxious to enlist support for the cabinet of Muhtar Pasha for fear of the return of the CUP to power. They shared with this cabinet and its successor their opposition to the Unionist way of governing the Empire, together with a strong desire to destroy the Committee as a political force. To the Syrian decentralisers, the destruction of the CUP as a political power meant the partial end of its centralising policies, and a fair chance that the Arabs - a term synonymous in their minds with Syrians - might secure some of their political rights in the Empire. To them the only way to achieve that was through reforming the system of government of the Empire by introducing administrative decentralisation.

41. al-Muqattam, No.7097 of 3rd July, 1912, and No.7098 of 1 Aug., 1912, and No.7105 of 9 Aug., 1912, for examples of such articles. See also, al-Ahram, No.10464 of 1 Aug., 1912. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7012 of 13 Aug., 1912, and No.7021 of 25 Aug., 1912.

42. Article in, al-Muqattam, No.7105 of 9 Aug., 1912, p.4.

The word "Reform" - Islāh - was much in the air throughout the latter half of 1911 and the whole of 1912. The Armenians, the Albanians and the Syrians were all to ask for it. It gained momentum from the day Ahmed Muhtar Pasha assumed power on 21 July, 1912, and continued to be a much discussed subject until the Ottoman government entered the First World War on 5 November 1914. It was not social or economic reform which was much under discussion then, but reform of the administration on the basis of decentralisation. The first definite demand for such reform was put forward to the central government by a number of Albanian nationalist groups. As a result of the Albanian insurrection of 1912, three sets of demands were presented.

The first list was drawn up by the insurgent Muslims of the vilayet of Kossovo, and was known as the Prishtina programme. It contained 14 articles which dealt with the right to carry arms, regional military service, respect of customary law, the principle that government officials should know the Albanian language and customs, and that Albanian should be taught in the schools. An interesting demand was the one for the impeachment of both Hakki . . . and Said cabinets. The second programme contained most of the items of the previous set of demands, and some others, "which were considerably far-reaching in the direction of decentralisation, and the recognition of

Albania as a national and geographical entity".⁴³ A third memorandum of demands formulated by the Gheg Albanians went a step further by stipulating an Albanian National Assembly, independent of the Ottoman parliament in Istanbul, and controlling its own finance and army. Albania was geographically defined as comprising the four vilayets of Monastir, Kossovo, Janina and Scutari.⁴⁴ It was the Albanian insurrection of 1912 and the demands generated by that insurrection as well as the conciliatory attitude shown by the government towards the Albanian rebels which made a tremendous impression on the Syrian opponents of the CUP, and set their hearts on a movement of their own.

The future leaders of the Syrian decentralisation movement must have viewed the events in Albania with great interest. The Albanian and the Syrian deputies had always worked jointly, inside and outside parliament, in opposing the Unionist regime. They participated in the formation of all the opposition parties, and the veteran

43. The Annual Report For 1912, p.31, in Lowther to Grey, No.315, conf., Const., 17 April, 1913, F.O.371/1812/18393.

44. For all these demands see, The Annual Report For 1912, as above, pp.30-31. For a brief account of the insurrection, see, pp.28-30. For a series of articles on the "Albanian Problem," see, The Times, Nos. 39943 of 5 July 1912, and 39946 of 9 July, 1912, p.5. See also No.39962 of 27 July, 1912, p.5, for an account of the policy of the Committee there and other provinces. al-Muqattam, No.7082 of 13 July, 1912.

Albanian deputy for Berat, Ismail Kenal, came to be regarded as the spiritual father of all opposition to the CUP. He was respected and trusted by the Syrian deputies, some of whom he came to know during his official stay in Beirut as vali in 1890. Because of such respect, and of his leading role in the insurrection, some of the leading Syrian deputies such as Shukrī al-'Asalī, deputy for Damascus and known for his bitter opposition to the CUP, felt jubilant over the success of the Albanian rebellion. He expressed such feelings in a telegram which he addressed to Hassan Bey of Prishtina, one of the leaders of the Kosovo rebels.⁴⁵ Hassan Bey, who probably knew al-'Asalī from the Chamber of Deputies, where both of them played a large part in the heated anti-CUP discussion which characterised the last days of 1911, thanked al-'Asalī for his telegram. He added that what the Albanians had done was inspired by their love for the Ottoman land.⁴⁶ Muḥibb al-Dīn al Khaḍīb 's Arabic translation of a book written by a certain Captain Ahmet Hamdi, about the defeats of the Ottoman army by the Albanian rebels, was according to a cabinet decision, "a dangerous publication which would cause discord among the [Ottoman] peoples", whose

45. Falastīn, No.170/69 of 11 Sept., 1912, p.3, refers to this telegram. Izahat, p.41 gives text of this telegram. French translation in French copy of Izahat, La Verité, p. 60.

46. Falastīn, No.170/69 of 11 Sept., 1912, p.3.

entry to the Empire should be prohibited.⁴⁷

It is no wonder, then, that Izahat made the most of feelings such as those of al-'Asalī, and charged the Syrian decentralisers with cherishing the same hopes as the Albanians, namely: wanting to separate from the Empire.⁴⁸ The same accusation was indeed a recurring theme in the Committee's press.⁴⁹ Needless to say the Syrians replied to these accusations and assured the government and the CUP of their never-ending loyalty to the state and their earnest desire to maintain the integrity of the Empire. Out of such desire, they declared, stemmed their movement for reforming the administration in their provinces as well as in the rest of the Empire. Only by such reform could the Ottoman Empire survive, and in its survival lay a bright future for both the Arabs and the Turks.⁵⁰ Such arguments and counter-arguments, however, seemed academic, for they failed to admit the fact that the reform movement

47. B.A. (Istanbul), Meclis-i Vukala Mazbatasi, No.179, of Shaaban-Ramazan 1351, July-Aug., 1913, Mazbata Said book had seal of Halaskar Zabitan. Muhibb al-Din was resident in Cairo at the time and hence the reference to the prohibition of the translation's entry.

48. Izahat, pp.41-42.

49. See for example article written by Ahmed Agayef in Jeune Turc, and reproduced by Lisan al-Hāl, No.7145 of 18 Jan., 1913, Sabah (no date given) Turcuman Hakikat (no date given) as in al-Ahram No.10595 of 8 Jan., 1913.

50. This is the underlying argument used by the decentralisers in numerous articles in the press; see for instance, al-Ahram, No.10606 of 21 Jan., 1913, and al-Muqattan, Nos.7311, 7321 of 5, 26 Apr., 1913. Also, Lisan, No.7139 11 Jan., 1913.

was the logical conclusion of three years of harsh rule by the various Committee dominated governments. Sir Gerald Lowther, the British Ambassador in Istanbul, wrote of the Syrian decentralisation movement, "This movement is in great part a reflex of the 'Turkification Policy' of the Committee."⁵¹ Moreover, the success of the Albanians, and the fact that administrative decentralisation was a favourite demand of the Albanians, and the feature of the "Berchtold proposals" gave the Syrian movement its main characteristic and made it, in a sense, inevitable.

No sooner had the Albanians achieved their demands, than another set of suggestions as to the way the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire ought to be administered, were presented to the Porte by Count Berchtold, the Austrian Foreign Minister. These proposals came to be known as the "Berchtold proposals". They merely invited the Powers, "to consider the advisability of recommending to the Porte the adoption of the principle of 'decentralisation' in dealing with the question of the future of the European Provinces".⁵² This ill-timed proposal, though harmless in itself, implied that the Porte

51. Lowther to Grey, No.238, conf., Const., 24 April, 1913, F.O.371/1775/14474.

52. The Annual Report For 1912, pp.4-5, in F.O.371/1812/18393.

was incapable of decent government, and was thus a moral encouragement to the discontented elements both inside and outside the Empire as well as a staggering blow to the prestige of the government, which was struggling to remedy the disastrous results of the Committee's 'Turkification' policy.⁵³ Public opinion as expressed in the press agreed that reform was necessary, but it must not take the form of autonomy or decentralisation.⁵⁴ Tanin warned that the cabinet should not accept the principle that Europe had a right to interfere directly or indirectly in Ottoman affairs.⁵⁵ In view of all this pressure on the cabinet, the Grand Vezir told the Austrian ambassador that the Porte would not accept any advice on its domestic policy, but he added that the government was ready to extend the reforms conceded to Albania to other European provinces.⁵⁶

This willingness of the cabinet of Muhtar Pasha to consider reforms for some of the provinces of the Empire greatly encouraged the Syrian decentralisers in formulating their own demands. If the Albanians could

53. The Annual Report For 1912, p. 5, in F.O.371/1812/18393.

54. Ikdam, of 8 Oct., 1912. Tanin of 8 Oct., 1912.

55. Article by Huseyin Cahid, "Devletlerin Tesebbusu", in Tanin of 10 Oct., 1912. See also, Tanin of 22 Oct., 1912. The Annual Report, p.5, referred to the pressure on the cabinet by the Committee's press.

56. The Annual Report For 1912, p.5.

talk of desiring a decentralised system of government for their country and get their way, and if the same demand could be put forward by the Powers on behalf of the inhabitants of European Turkey, why could not the Syrians, who had complained for so long that their political rights and their interests within the constitutional Ottoman Empire had been utterly neglected by the Unionists, formulate similar demands to those already presented to the government? The argument seemed sound, but perhaps more important, the moment was most opportune for the presentation of such demands.

The Impact of the Turco-Italian War and the Balkan Wars:

The immediate origins of the Syrian decentralisation movement are, however, to be sought in the effects of the Turkish-Italian war of 1911-12, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan wars of 1912-13, and the ensuing revival of the whole question of the European interests in the Empire. Both wars made it quite clear, not only to the Syrian decentralisers, but to the European Powers, that the Ottoman Empire, despite the advent of the constitutional era, and the lavish expenditure on its army, was still hopelessly weak. The tone of the Syrian press suggests a growing apprehension on the part of the Syrian journalists and leaders as to the fate of their country from rumoured European designs for the

partition of the whole Empire. The Syrian reformists indeed argued that it was this fear of Europe's intentions that gave them the incentive and pretext to start their movement of decentralisation in an attempt to stave off foreign aggression and by so doing to ensure the continuity of the Empire.⁵⁷

The outbreak of the war between Italy and the Ottoman Empire at the end of September 1911 had further added to the rising misfortunes of the CUP and was one of the important factors that finally led to its fall from power in July 1912. Moreover, it strengthened the cause of the opposition parties. When parliament was convened from its annual recess to discuss the war and the situation arising from it, there was an uproar in the Chamber of Deputies against the policies of the cabinet of Hakki Pasha, which, according to the opposition, had lost the Empire one of its provinces.⁵⁸ Both the supporters and the opponents of the CUP government blamed it for not paying full attention to the defence of the North African province. During the sitting of 16 October 1911, a motion was handed to the president by the two deputies of African

57. al-Muqattān, No.7302 of 4 April, 1913, the first article of Rafiq al-'Azm on: "The Syrian Movement, Its Causes and Results". al-Manār, Vol.16, part 3 of 8 March, 1913, pp.237-238, for Riḍā's arguments. al-Islāh, No.29/1424 of 12 June, 1913, for Ṭabara's views. Falastīn, No.200/99 of 25 Dec., 1912, p.4.

58. For those sittings see, Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi, pp.39 ff. Tanin, No.1140 of 4 Nov., 1911 and following numbers give summary of all these sittings.

Tripoli, Nājī and Şādiq Beys, demanding the trial of the cabinet of Hakki for its intentional negligence in the defence of Tripoli.⁵⁹ It was clear to the CUP, which dominated and influenced the policies of the cabinet of Hakki, that the demand for the trial of that cabinet was a total condemnation of all that the CUP stood for.⁶⁰ Centralisation was one of the major items of the CUP policies, and discrediting the Committee's regime was a denunciation of that item of policy. Hence the talk of the necessity of introducing a measure of administrative decentralisation in the system of the Ottoman government.

However, the memorandum of the two deputies of Tripoli, was valuable to the leaders of the Syrian decentralisation movement not only because it was an anti-CUP manifesto signed by two Arab deputies, but because it provided them with one of their future demands. The memorandum did not advocate any sort of administrative decentralisation either for Tripoli or for the rest of the Arab provinces of the Empire, but it suggested that Tripoli should have been allowed to organise its own

59. Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi, sitting No.5, of 16 Oct., 1911, pp.41-44 for Turkish text of motion of Nājī and Şādiq Beys. For a full Arabic translation, see al-Manār, Vol.14, part II, of 21 Nov., 1911, pp.862-867. Also, al-Ahrām No. 10223, of 24 Oct., 1911, p.2. For an English Summary see Lowther to Grey, No.728, conf., Therapia, 18 Oct. 1911, F.O.371/1255.

60. Yeni İkdām No.587 of 27 Oct., 1911, p.1, editorial which also discussed previous incidents of trials of Grand Vezirs.

local militia if it was expected to defend itself against the Italian invasion.⁶¹ Using exactly the same argument in connection with their provinces, the Syrian decentralisers, were to formulate their demand for local military service, a demand that the Turkish authorities found most objectionable.

Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā, the editor and owner of the Islamic monthly al-Manār, and one of the founder members of the Ottoman Administrative Decentralisation Party, published a series of articles in al-Mu'ayyad, which he later on republished in his own periodical, on the Turkish-Italian war. Because he saw in the war and its consequences a revival of the whole Eastern Question he appropriately entitled his articles "The Eastern Question - and Italy's Aggression on Tripoli".⁶² Riḍā saw in the fact that Europe maintained a complete silence with regard to the Italian aggression and that none of the Powers objected effectively to Italy's action, a clear proof that this aggression had been agreed upon by the Powers.⁶³ This complicity on the part of Europe, Riḍā pointed out, had revealed "Europe's bad intentions towards the Islamic world".⁶⁴ He then argued that the loss of Tripoli would

61. al-Manār, Vol.14, part II of 21 Nov., 1911, p.863.

62. For these articles see, al-Manār, Vol. 14, part 10 of 22 Oct., 1911, pp.750-755 and pp.833-838.

63. al-Manār, Vol.14, p.754 and p.833.

64. Ibid., p.751.

mean the beginning of a process of disintegration in the Ottoman Empire, and Austria would soon capture Salonica and its neighbourhood, while the Syrian vilayets would be placed under the protection of the Powers.⁶⁵ Riḍā concluded by putting the blame for the loss of Tripoli on the misguided policies of the Unionists,⁶⁶ and by urging his Muslim readers to guard against the disappearance of the Ottoman state, for its disappearance would mean "the eclipse of Islamic rule from this planet".⁶⁷ These arguments by Riḍā became the standard arguments which the Muslim leaders of the Syrian decentralisation movement used in justifying their preference for a decentralised system of government. The Muslims who initiated and dominated the movement in both Cairo and Beirut had always maintained that their sole aim was to prevent the territorial disintegration of the Empire.

When, in January 1912, rumours started circulating in Beirut to the effect that the government was about to sign a peace treaty with Italy, some Beirut notables sent a telegram to the president of the Chamber of Deputies

65. al-Manār, Vol.14, pp.754-755.

66. Ibid. Like Riḍā, most of the opponents of the CUP naturally blamed it. However, Hüseyin Cahid, editor of the CUP organ Tanin replied at length to these accusations in an editorial entitled, "Tarablus Garb ve Ittihad ve Terrakki", see Tanin, No.1140 of 4 Nov., 1911, p.1.

67. al-Manār, Vol.14, p.754.

in which they pleaded with the government neither to give way nor to compromise over the question of Tripoli. They declared that "to give a handful of the soil of Tripoli away, would lead to the dissolution of the bond of Ottomanism".⁶⁸

This deep concern for the future of the Ottoman Empire, the last of the powerful Islamic states, which was shown by Rashīd Riḍā, and shared by the Beirut notables and other leading Muslims, did not, however, reflect the attitude of the Syrian masses. The British consular reports on Syria during and after the war show a marked indifference on the part of the population to the war and to its results. The war was too distant to raise issues directly affecting the political and the financial lot of the Syrians. Trade was hardly affected, and apart from the Italian attack on the harbour of Beirut,⁶⁹ Syria was in no way affected by the war. Only in Damascus, and probably because of an Islamic feeling of solidarity with the inhabitants of Tripoli, had some feelings been

68. al-Muqattam, No.6933 of 19 Jan., 1912, p.1.

69. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.11, conf., Beirut, 28 Feb., 1912, F.O.195/2395/1076. Also, same to same, No.12, conf., Beirut, 29 Feb., 1912, F.O.195/2395/1077. al-Ahrām, Nos.10327 to No.10335 of 24 Feb. - 4 March, 1912.

expressed for the Tripoli war.⁷⁰ However, public opinion remained firmly against the government, for the British Consul-General in Damascus reported that, "the people - but not the press - are inclined to grumble against the government, and to remark that since the establishment of the constitution, provinces have been lost to Turkey"⁷¹. The same anti-government sentiments were recorded in Aleppo where there was a suspicion that the Unionist regime had merely sold the province of Tripoli to the Italians.⁷² It was also believed that Tripoli, "like the other lost Ottoman provinces, [was] likely to be more prosperous under European administration than ever under the Turks."⁷³ The Beirutis were equally apathetic, for the Consul at Beirut reported that the Turkish-Italian war generated no patriotic reaction other than, "a general alarm caused by the false rumours of Italian intentions to land in Beirut".⁷⁴ The Consul went on to report that, "in Mount Lebanon the news [of the war] probably only revived speculations among many Lebanese as to when

70. Devey to Lowther, No.50 conf., Damascus, 2 Oct., 1911, F.O.371/1255/41637.

71. Ibid.

72. Consul W. Young to Lowther, No.38, Conf., Aleppo, 28 Oct., 1911, F.O.371/1257/44803.

73. Ibid.

74. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.12, conf., Beirut, 29 Feb. 1912, F.O.195/2395/1076. For further reports, see, Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.65, conf., Beirut, 9 Nov. 1911, F.O.371/1258/47158. Also, al-Ahrām, No.10238 of 10 Oct., 1911.

their turn would come to be placed under some European administration".⁷⁵ This indifference of the Syrians, which was coloured with a strong mistrust of the policies of the government, and the emergence of separatist attitudes among some Syrians - apparent in their preference for foreign rule - gave a great boost to the cause of the decentralisers. The Turco-Italian war had made the political leaders in both Syria and elsewhere realize that the Empire was weak, and that in case of aggression against Syria, the government might not be able to defend it. It was this fear which lay behind the emergence of the Syrian decentralisation movement.

The Balkan wars of 1912-13 further helped the cause of decentralisation by adding to the fears of the Syrians and convincing them that Ottoman Empire was nearing its death and that its disintegration was imminent.

War broke out on 18 October 1912. On the previous day, peace with Italy was signed at Lausanne. Italy retained Tripoli but allowed the Porte to save face by permitting the Sultan to keep his right of appointing the qādī. A representative of the Sultan was to stay in Tripoli, and the name of the Sultan was to be mentioned in the prayers as before. It was clear that to all intents

75. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.61, conf., Beirut, 10 Oct., 1911, F.O.371/1256/41727.

and purposes Tripoli had ceased to be part of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁶ With the outbreak of the war the experienced and Anglophile Kâmil Pasha was made Grand Vezir, and on 29 October he assumed office.⁷⁷ This veteran Turkish statesman was known for his very strong opposition to the CUP and its methods of government. His last hostile act against the Committee had been the memorandum which he sent to the Sultan from Egypt on 20 December 1911, in which he ascribed all the misfortunes of the Empire to the Committee's policies. He, for instance, held the Committee responsible for the loss of Tripoli, and condemned the secretive nature of the Committee which made it unconstitutional.⁷⁸ Because of such acts and because of his reputation as an opponent of the CUP, Kâmil Pasha was looked upon as the deliverer from the tyranny of the Committee, and the Syrian decentralisers thought that he was completely in sympathy with their aspirations.

76. For a brief summary of the treaty, see, Buru, pp.404-406. Also, Nicola Ziadeh, Libiyya Fī al-'Usūr al-Hadītha, Cairo, 1966, pp.83-84.

77. Ikdam of 30 Oct., 1912.

78. Full text of Kâmil's memorandum - Arida, in Tanin, No. 1242 of 16 Feb., 1912, p.3. In p.1, Cahid in an editorial replied at length to Kâmil's accusations. Yeni Ikdam, No.698 of 17 Feb., 1912, gave text of Arida, and replied to Cahid's article. See also, Lowther to Grey, No.152, conf., Const., 19 Feb., 1912, F.O.371/1486/8187, for an English translation of Kâmil's memorandum. B. Lewis, Emergence, p.222.

Thus the coming of Kâmil Pasha to power was another encouragement which the decentralisers received. It has been suggested that Kâmil Pasha had incited them to action, and that he had allowed their agitation to grow and assume large proportions, out of a desire to avenge himself on the Unionists.⁷⁹ This is an oversimplification of the whole issue; for as was later evident, the Syrian demands went further than Kâmil, or indeed his successors, the Unionists, were ever willing to grant.

It was the defeat of the Ottoman armies by the allied Balkan states which shocked the inhabitants of the Empire as well as the Great Powers. No one had expected it. The Turkish armies were caught unprepared, lacked organisation, faced a struggle in a new theatre of war, and were thus routed everywhere. By early November 1912 the Turks had been driven back to the Çatalca line of defence, about forty miles from Istanbul. The weakness of the Empire was brought to the eyes of all Ottomans as well as to the notice of all European Powers. The Syrian decentralisers once more raised the cry that Syria and the rest of the Empire were in danger of passing under European rule, that the system of centralisation was to be blamed for the present misfortunes of

79. Şeyh Muhsin-i Fani (el-Zahirî) / Hüseyin Kazım Kadri/, On Temmuz İnkılabı Ve Netayıcı: Türkiye İnkırazının Saikleri, Makedonya, Ermenistan Ve Suriye Meseleleri, İstanbul, 1336, p.109.

the Empire and that the only way to strengthen and preserve the Empire was through the introduction of a decentralised form of government.⁸⁰

The truth of the matter was that the loss of European Turkey shifted the centre of gravity of the Empire to the Arab provinces. There was some talk by a number of Syrian and Turkish journalists of transferring the Ottoman capital to either Anatolia or Syria. For varying reasons the names of Damascus, Konia and Aleppo were mentioned.⁸¹ Coupled with this tendency there was another: to consider the Ottoman Empire as an Asiatic rather than a European state, now it had lost all its possessions in Europe. Yūsuf al-'Īsā, the editor of Falastīn, a journal ardently supporting the CUP and

80. This argument was put forward in a wide number of articles, see for example, al-Nasīr, No.1423 of 7 Dec., 1912, article by Shiblī Shumayyil. al-Muqattam, No.7192 of 22 Nov., 1912 p.4, and No.7217 of 21 Dec., 1912, p.4, article by Rafīq al-'Azm. Lisān al-Hāl, No. 7125 of 24 Dec., 1912, editorial. al-Ahram, No.10585 of 26 Dec., 1912, article by Mukhtar Beyhum. al-Manār, Vol.15, part 12 of 9 Dec., 1912, pp.954-958, for the views of Rashīd Riḍā.

81. Article by Shumayyil in al-Nasīr, No.1423 of 7 Dec., 1912. See English translation of two articles by the Turkish journalist, Ahmed Ferid Bey, in his paper, Vazife, enclosure in Lowther to Grey, No. 475, conf., Const., 25 May 1913, F.O.371/1822/24944. Rashīd Riḍā, though for other reasons of his own, also suggested the transfer of the capital to Damascus, see, al-Manār, Vol.16, part 2 of 6 Feb. 1913, p.112.

appearing in Jaffa, argued in favour of the Empire being an Asiatic power, and reminded the Turks of the fact that Anatolia and the Arab provinces had become the new base for the Empire, and he further urged the government to introduce wide reforms in these places.⁸² Moreover, the Syrians became more conscious of their numerical preponderance in the Empire and consequently of their strength. Hence their eagerness to share power in that Empire with the Turks. From this eagerness stemmed their demand for a decentralised federalised system of government. A certain 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Anṭākī went as far as to suggest, "the Arabization of the Turks".⁸³ This suggestion is indicative of the mood prevailing among the Syrians after the end of the Balkan wars.

However, the Syrian decentralisers were able to follow up their original argument that the evident weakness of the Empire had made its disintegration more imminent. Rumours were rife that Syria was about to be annexed by a foreign power. Circumstantial evidence indicated that this power was France. The campaign conducted by the French press, and in particular by Le Temps with

82. See leading article in, Falastīn, No.227/24 of 5 April, 1913.

83. Suggestion made in an article in al-Muqattam, No.7262 of 15 Feb.,1913. Further discussion of this suggestion in, al-Muqattam, No.7264 of 18 Feb., 1913, and No. 7266 of 20 Feb., 1913.

regard to the alleged French interests in Syria,⁸⁴ combined with the famous declaration of Poincaré, in which he reiterated the same point,⁸⁵ greatly alarmed the Muslim leaders of the Syrian community in both Cairo and Beirut. Their conviction that France was working to annex their country was further strengthened by "the ostentatious activity of French consular representatives in all matters connected with the protection of Catholic institutions in Syria",⁸⁶ and by the constant visits which French cruisers paid to the Syrian coasts.

In fact the rumours of an impending division of Asiatic Turkey into spheres of influence among the European Powers, were circulating so widely that the Italian ambassador in London found it necessary to call on the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, and convey the fears of his government over the subject. He told Grey that "some people thought the armistice [between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan states] was only an

84. Bertie to Grey, No.39, conf., Paris, 24 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1522/55334, gives summary of such an article in Le Temps, of 24 Dec., 1912. Also, same to same, conf., No.41, Paris, 27 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1775/4171, for a passage from Le Temps, of 27 Jan., 1913.

85. The Times, No.40089 of 23 Dec., 1912, p.7. Also, The Memoirs of Raymond Poincaré, translated and adapted by Sir George Arthur, London, 1926, Vol.I, p. 336, and p.338 for declaration. Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence, p.117.

86. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.79, conf., Beirut, 4 Dec., 1912, being enclosure in Lowther to Grey, No.1072, conf., Const., 15 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1522/54463.

'entr'acte' between the liquidation of European Turkey and Asiatic Turkey. The Italian ambassador in Paris and the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Rome have had their apprehensions aroused by the persistent articles in the Temps about Syria".⁸⁷ Grey, however, assured the ambassador that Britain had no designs in Asiatic Turkey.⁸⁸

But the matter was not to rest there, for there were reports in the French press that British agents were active in Syria, working for the annexation of that country either to Britain or to Egypt.⁸⁹ Kitchener, the British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt, and Cumberbatch, the British Consul-General in Beirut, were named by the French press as the British agents.⁹⁰ After the British Foreign Office had established that these reports were false,⁹¹ Grey told Cambon, the French ambassador in London, that "His Majesty's Government had neither the intention of taking any action nor any design nor political

87. Grey to Rodd, No.37, conf., Foreign Office, 30 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1775/5141.

88. Ibid.

89. Minute in, Grey to Goschen, No.32, conf., F.O., 24 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1775/4261. The Times, No.40090 of 24 Dec., 1912, p.3.

90. Grey to Viscount Kitchener, No.92, teleg., conf., F.O., 7 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1522/52330.

91. Ibid. See also Kitchener's reply in, Viscount Kitchener to Grey, No. 85, telegr., conf., Cairo, 8 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1522/52354.

aspiration of any sort".⁹² Grey, we are told, agreed to allow the French Premier, Poincaré, to quote his assurance to the French parliament.⁹³ Poincaré did exactly that in his statement of policy which he read to the parliament on 21 December 1912.

The French press, anxious to sustain French public opinion in the interests of their country in Syria, seized on the opportunity of Poincaré's speech, and gave the whole issue a completely different colouring.⁹⁴ Grey had reason to complain to the French ambassador in London that, "though what M. Poincaré had said in the Chamber had repeated what I had said with regard to Syria, I was made anxious by the use to which the French press had made of this statement. My denial of intrigues and political designs on our part was being interpreted in some organs of the press as if I had given some new emphatic recognition of French interests, and as if France was going to take some step to consolidate and strengthen those interests".⁹⁵ Grey, then, went on to assure the ambassador that the British government's aim was the preservation,

92. Minute in, Grey to Goschen, No.32, conf., F.O.24 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1775/4261. Also, R. Poincaré Memoirs, p.336 and p.338.

93. R. Poincare Memoirs, pp.336 and 338.

94. The Times, Nos. 40089 and 40090 of 23 and 24 Dec., 1912, respectively.

95. Grey to Bertie, No.635, conf., F.O.London, 31 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1775/253.

and not the disturbance of the status quo in Asiatic Turkey.

Nevertheless, the campaign in the French press increased the rumours of an impending division of Asiatic Turkey into spheres of influence by the Powers. These were so strong that a question about them was asked in the German Reichstag. When the Imperial Chancellor replied that he was aware of the rumours, but had no official confirmation of them, and that their existence had been denied to him by the concerned governments, his answer, it was reported, was received with laughter.⁹⁷

The Ottoman Decentralisation Party of Cairo:

Poincaré's declaration, and the controversy which followed it in the press and some diplomatic circles, had a tremendous impact on the Syrians both inside and outside Syria. The declaration certainly roused to enthusiasm "les coeurs Libanais", and met with the approval and gratitude of the Maronites of Mount Lebanon, and other pro-French elements in the Lebanon and Beirut.⁹⁸ The Journal De Debats of 7 January 1913 recorded an example of such

96. Ibid. See further, Jukka Nevakivi, Britain and France in the Arab Middle East, 1914-1920 (London, 1969) pp. 1-12.

97. Goschen to Grey, No.37, conf., Berlin, 29 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1775/4684.

98. Bertie to Grey, No.72, conf., Paris, 9 Feb., 1913, F.O.371/1775/6488.

gratitude of the Maronites and their eagerness for the installation of French rule in Syria.⁹⁹ As was later evident, Muslims and other elements were in favour of British rule. However, a third group of leading Muslim Syrians viewed the prospect of any Western rule in Syria with concern and apprehension.

Among this last group were some of the Muslim Syrian émigrés in Cairo. Disturbed by the military weakness of the Empire, which was made so vivid by the results of the Balkan war, and "frightened by a voice from Paris which so emphatically declared that France had interests in Syria, and that France was not going to renounce those rights",¹⁰⁰ those Muslim émigrés went into action. Together with other leading Syrian émigrés they formed a delegation which called on the Ottoman representative in Cairo, Rauf Pasha, to convey to him their fears of a French attack on Syria similar to that of the Italians on Tripoli. They further informed him that they had formed a "Committee of themselves" to prepare and organise the defence of Syria, and they requested him to solicit the support of the Sublime Porte for their project.¹⁰¹

99. For extract of Journal and more details see, Bertie to Grey, No.31, conf., Paris, 22 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1775/3548. For further instances see, Corresp. d' Orient, of 1 Jan., 1913, pp.46-47, as quoted by Buru, al-'Arab wal Turk, p.430, see also, Buru, p.429.

100. al-Manār, Vol.17, Part 5 of 25 April, 1914, pp.395-396.

101. al-Manār, ibid. Amin Sa'īd, al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya, Vol.1, p.14. al-'Azamī, vol.3, p.41, repeats Amin Sa'īd. All three sources agree on the details of the formation of the Decentralisation party of Cairo.

Rauf Pasha having done nothing about the request, the delegation together with some more Syrian émigrés who became interested in the subject, proceeded to discuss ways and means of defending Syria against any foreign attack. From the suggestion that a local militia was the answer, their discussion developed into the belief that only a system of government based on wide administrative decentralisation would provide for the defence and the material benefit, not only of Syria, but of the rest of the Empire. Thus, late in the year 1912, they formed a political party, which they called Hizb al-Lāmarkaziyya al-Idāriyya al-'Uthmānī, the Ottoman Administrative Decentralisation Party.¹⁰² Rafīq al-'Azm was chosen as its president, Iskandar 'Ammūn, a Lebanese Christian, as vice-president, Ḥaqqī al-'Azm as secretary and Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb as assistant secretary. Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā, Dr. Shiblī al-Shumayyil, a prominent Lebanese man of letters,¹⁰³ Da'ūd Barakāt, the editor of the Cairo daily al-Ahrām, Sāmī al Jaradīnī, a lawyer, and others were among the founders of the party.¹⁰⁴

102. al-Manār, Ibid. Amīn Sa'id, al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya, Vol.1, p.14. al-'Azamī, vol.3, p.41. al-Ahrām, No. No.10606 of 21 Jan.1913.

103. For a general discussion of Rashid Riḍā's views and those of Shiblī Shumayyil see, A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp.222-244, and pp.245-259, respectively.

104. al-'Azamī, Vol.3, pp.41-42 gives list of names of founders. So does, Darwaza, Vol.1, p.34, al-Shihābī, p.81, Buru, footnote No.2 in p.434. They all give the same names. Antonius, footnote 2 in p.109 gave only three correct names, the first three names. The rest of the names in the list of Antonius were not founders as asserted by him, but were charged by the military tribunals of Cemal Pasha in 1915-1916 of being members of the Decentralisation party.

In an interview with Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, who still resides in Cairo, he confirmed to me the fact that the party was originally thought of and created by the leading Muslims of the Syrian émigrés in Cairo. The Christians, he said, were invited to join in order to avoid complications and division. He indicated that the Muslims knew too well the leanings of the Christians towards certain Foreign Powers to leave them out of the Lāmarkaziyya party.¹⁰⁵ In using the term Muslims, and Christians, Muḥibb al-Dīn seems to mean the leaders, and not the rank and file, of both communities. The Muslims, who also initiated the decentralisation movement in Beirut, dominated that of Cairo to the end.

On 17 February 1913 the Decentralisation Party published a statement in the press explaining the advantages of decentralisation as a system of government in dominions with so many difference races, customs, traditions, creeds and languages as the Ottoman Empire. Decentralisation, and not centralisation, declared the statement, would be the answer to all the ills of the Empire. To emphasise its point, the statement made a comparison between the Ottoman Empire, which was ruled by a centralist system of government, and Switzerland,

105. Interview with Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb in his Cairo residence on 10 Sept., 1967.

which employed decentralisation as its method of government. The comparison, needless to say, was to the advantage of Switzerland.¹⁰⁶ The statement went on to criticise the existing system of centralised administration used by the Unionists and ascribed all the problems of the Empire to it. To strengthen the Empire against internal and external dangers, to preserve it and maintain unity among its peoples, administrative decentralisation had become a necessity. The statement was then followed by the programme of the Party containing sixteen articles, and all sincere Ottomans, to whom the programme was addressed, were asked to support the Party.¹⁰⁷

Articles One and Two of the programme declared that the Ottoman state is a constitutional representative state composed of vilayets which are inseparable parts of the Sultanate. Every vilayet should be administered on the basis of administrative decentralisation, it being understood that the sultan will appoint the vali and the Chief Judge. The administrative Council of the vilayet should appoint the rest of the officials and the vali

106. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 3 of 8 March, 1913, pp.227-228. For the full Arabic text of the statement, see, Ibid., pp.226-229. al-Ahrām, No.10629 of 17 Feb., 1913, pp.1-2, and al-Muqattam, No.7262 of 17 Feb., 1913, p.1, give the statement and the full programme of the Party.

107. al-Manār, ibid, pp.229-231 gave the whole programme. al-Ahrām, ibid. al-Muqattam, ibid.

ratify the choice.¹⁰⁸ Then the programme specified a set of rules for the promotion, discipline and the pensioning of the officials.¹⁰⁹ It also stated that in the capital of every vilayet there should^{be} a General Council, an Administrative Council, a Council of Education and another one of Awqāf, and defined their rights and duties in a series of articles.¹¹⁰ For instance, Article Six gave the powers of the General Council. Those were very wide powers. Except for matters concerning military and external affairs, which were the responsibility of the central government, the Council was to have full responsibility for all the administrative work of the vilayet. It had the right to organise the budget, to supervise the work of the government, to regulate and draft all the laws necessary for the maintenance of law and order, and to see to the educational and local needs of the inhabitants. Finally, the decisions of this council were declared¹¹¹ to be irrevocable, and should be carried out immediately.

While the Administrative Council was made responsible for the choice of all the officials of the vilayet, other than the vali and the Chief Judge, all

108. al-Manār, ibid, p.229-230.

109. Article three, see ibid., p.230. al-Muqattam, ibid., p.1.

110. Article four, al-Manār, ibid. Articles 5-11, ibid.

111. Articles five and six, ibid.

matters connected with education, such as the programme and financing of the schools were left to the Council of Education. Similarly all affairs of the Awqāf were to be dealt with by the Awqāf Council.¹¹²

Articles Ten to Thirteen recommended that the members of these various councils should be elected and that the system of electing them as well as the parliamentary representatives should be reformed so that all elements of the nation should be fairly represented. Where customary law had been in use, the practice should be adhered to. Measures for reforming the system of the land tenure, and laws for settling nomadic tribes would be looked into by the Party.¹¹³ The programme then went on to stipulate in its Fourteenth and Fifteenth Articles, that every vilayet would have two languages, Turkish and the local language of its inhabitants. The last article of the programme specified that military service was to be performed locally in time of peace, and in times of war the Ministry of War in Istanbul would be responsible for the despatch of soldiers to the theatre of war. At such times the General Council should provide for and organise the defence of the vilayet.¹¹⁴

112. Articles 7-9, al-Manār, ibid., p.230.

113. For articles 10-13, see al-Manār, ibid., pp.230-231.

114. For articles 14-16, see, ibid., p.231. For a detailed commentary on the programme of the Party see article by Rafiq al-'Azam entitled, "What Reform Do We Want?" in al-Muqattam, No.7370 of 24 June, 1913, pp.1-2, and No.7374 of 28 June, 1913 and No.7375 of 30 June, 1913.

The programme was a step further towards administrative decentralisation than the Liberal Union ideas. It gave, for instance, wide powers to the General Council of the vilayet, specified two official languages in every vilayet and made the language of the inhabitants of the vilayet the language of instruction in the schools. The Liberal Union, being mainly ^a Turkish opposition party, was not ready to concede such points. On the whole, however, the programme of the Decentralisation Party was a moderate one, and it did not include an article requesting the appointment of foreign advisers to reorganise the police, the gendarmerie, justice and finance as has been erroneously asserted.¹¹⁵ It was the Reform Society of Beirut which made such a demand much to the disapproval of some members of the Decentralisation Party in Cairo.¹¹⁶

The Decentralisation Party, however, intended to pursue its aims by open constitutional means. It was the first political party which had its headquarters in a place other than Istanbul, and which proposed to conduct a sober constitutional opposition to the Unionist regime. The Unionists viewed the emergence of the new party with apprehension. The fact that Cairo, the centre of ^{the} party, was beyond their reach, the presence of the British in Egypt and the notoriety of the founders of the

115. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, p.283, for this assertion.
 116. See below, pp. 269-270.

Party for their strong opposition to the CUP, raised the suspicions of the Unionists as to the motives of the party. Hence the allegation of Cemal Pasha in Izahat that the Decentralisation Party had other secret and separatist aims. Whether they entertained hopes of establishing an autonomous Syria on the Egyptian model, under a local ruler and with foreign protection,¹¹⁷ is uncertain. The allegation is only supported by the evidence produced by Izahat, a document that should be treated with great care and reservation.

Despite the appeals of its founders,¹¹⁸ the Decentralisation Party was never recognised as a legal political entity by the Turkish authorities. On the contrary after the closure of the Reform Club of Beirut, there were reports that the local authorities had started confiscating its programme from many Syrian towns.¹¹⁹ The branches of this Party set up in Syria were, therefore, without legal sanction from the local government. Consequently, correspondence between those branches and their headquarters were conducted with great secrecy.¹²⁰

117. Izahat, pp.48-56, also, pp.83-88. For French translation, see, pp.69-78, p.103, pp.112-119.

118. For an example of such appeals, see articles by Rafiq al-'Azm, the president of the Party, in al-Muqattam, No. 7314 of 18 April, 1913, p.4 and No.7321 of 26 April, 1913.

119. al-Muqattam, No.7311 of 15 April, 1913, p.4, and No. 7309 of 11 April, 1913.

120 Darwazza, Vol.I, p.35

When some of that correspondence fell in^{to} the hands of the Turkish authorities at the outbreak of the First World War, Cemal Pasha and his military tribunal were puzzled as to the nature of the whole decentralisation movement, and concluded that the Decentralisation Party must have had a secret programme beside its published one.

Though the Decentralisation Party declared itself to be an Ottoman party which all Ottomans could join, it remained and came to be considered as a "purely Arab party". Only "Arabs" joined it, and it set branches only in "Arab lands".¹²¹ In this fact lies the significance of this Party in the history of the Arab movement. It furthermore provided the first organised step¹²² in the agitation of the Syrian Arabs against the Unionist regime. For the first time an opposition party was formed outside Istanbul whose entire membership was Syrian. Muslims and Christians showed signs of willingness to work together. Nevertheless, the Party gradually came to be dominated by the Muslims. The hearts of the Christians were not in it as Muhibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb seemed to imply in an interview.¹²³ Despite the considerable means of propaganda,

121. Ibid.

122. Antonius, p.109.

123. Interview with Muhibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb in Cairo, 18 September, 1967. Rashīd Riḍā in his preface Majmū'at Athār, p.v, stated that some of the members of the Party had other motives. Riḍā, however, did not define those members.

which this Party possessed- for al-Ahrām, al-Muqattam and al-Manār freely preached its cause - thanks to the British administration in Egypt which granted the country a reasonable amount of freedom of the press, it failed to achieve its ultimate aim. It remained to the end negative. Its leaders merely agitated for a form of administrative decentralisation, and were content to forward to Istanbul and to publish in the press protests against certain acts of the CUP government. However, the anti-CUP activities of some of the Syrian leaders continued for a time to revolve around the agitation of the Decentralisation Party. Yet like the Reform Society of Beirut, it completely failed to appeal to the masses of the Syrian people. It was an elite party, thought of and supported by the few 'enlightened' and educated Syrians. Finally there was no evidence, whatsoever, to justify the accusation of Mīr Shakīb Arslān and other ardent CUP supporters that the formation of the Decentralisation Party was "a foreign plot"¹²⁴, and that its founders were tools in the hands of the foreigners who desired to destroy "our glorious Islamic Kingdom".¹²⁵ The decentralisers of Cairo and

124. Shakīb Arslān, Ilā al-'Arabi, pp.15-16, and p.19. See also, al-Iqbal, No.496 of 12 May, 1913. Tercuman Hakikat, as quoted by al-Ahrām of 10595 of 8 Jan., 1913.

125. Shakīb Arslān, Ilā al-'Arab, pp.33-34, in pp.34 ff. Shakīb developed his argument.

Beirut argued that their motives were patriotic, and that not only the foreigners, but men such as 'Izzat al-'Ābid, whose name was often mentioned in connection with the decentralisation movement,¹²⁶ had no hand in the formation of their party.¹²⁷ The movement, however, was not confined to Cairo alone.

The Beirut Reform Society:

Almost simultaneously with the formation of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo, and probably with some encouragement from it, the General Reform Society for The Vilayet of Beirut¹²⁸ (hereafter called Beirut Reform Society) came into existence. Like that of Cairo the Beirut Reform Society was prompted into action by the concern of its members for the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and by their desire to prevent their vilayet from passing under foreign rule. However, the Beirut reformers were to concern themselves with demanding a form of administrative decentralisation for the vilayet of Beirut alone, and they never attempted to interest themselves in the affairs of the rest of the Empire.

126. Izahat, p.91 tried to establish a connection between 'Izzat al-'Ābid and the formation of the Party. A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp.282-283 repeated the accusation of Izahat.

127. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 3, of 8 March, 1913, p.239, Rida refuted the above accusation which he claimed to have been stated by some newspapers in America. He did not specify what newspapers he meant.

128. Its full Arabic title was: al-Jan'iyya al-'Umūmiyya al-Isłāhiyya fī Beirūt. Lisan, No.7141 of 14 Jan., 1913.
al-Isłāhiyya fi Beirūt
1913.

Nonetheless sporadic and uncoordinated signs of this movement were evident in other Syrian towns. The whole movement was to a great extent the result of the impact of the Balkan War on the Syrians.

Besides reemphasising the shocking weakness of the Ottoman Empire, the defeat of the Ottoman troops in the Balkans had two immediate effects on the majority of the inhabitants of Syria. It added to the rising unpopularity of the CUP among some sections of the Muslim community which held the Unionist régime responsible for those defeats, and it generated a strong agitation among both the Muslims and the Christians in all the Syrian vilayets for foreign intervention in Syria.¹²⁹ In Beirut, for instance, it was reported that such an agitation existed among the Muslims and the majority of the Christians. It was "in favour of British or Anglo-Egyptian intervention in Syria or the establishment of a sort of local autonomy".¹³⁰ The British Consuls in Beirut, Aleppo and Jerusalem wrote at length about the unmistakable existence of this agitation, its persistence and

129. al-Manār, Vol. 15, part 12 of 9 Dec., 1912, pp. 958-960, article by Riḍā entitled "The Syrian Question" arguing against such agitation for foreign rule. al-Muqattam, No. 7192 of 22 Nov., 1912, p. 4, discussed such tendencies for foreign rule. See further, Lowther to Grey, No. 1072, conf., Const., 15 Dec., 1912, F.O. 371/1522/54463.

130. Lowther to Grey, No. 1072, conf., Const., 15 Dec., 1912, F.O. 371/1522/54463.

the sincerity of its advocates.¹³¹ No such reports were received from Damascus, but it can be ascertained from a report from the Consul at Aleppo that such agitation was also apparent in Damascus.¹³² Presumably it was not as intense as that of Beirut.

In Beirut, which was to become the centre of the reform movement, the desire for foreign, and in particular for British, rule, was more evident than in other parts of Syria. In one of his many reports on the subject, the British Consul-General in Beirut wrote to Sir Gerald Lowther, the British ambassador to the Porte, in the following terms,

"Not only is the Moslem feeling bitter against their government on account of their defeats in European Turkey, but they also see no hope of a betterment in the future of the administration of the country, and openly discuss the advisability of paving the way for tutelage, the possibility of which is vividly suggested by the renowned designs in this direction of France, to which I have had occasion to call the attention of H.M.embassy."

131. See for instance, Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.79, conf., Beirut, 4 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1522/54463. Fontana to Lowther, No.4, conf., Aleppo, 13 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1776/3921. McGregor to Lowther, No. 4, conf., Jerusalem, 22 Jan., 1913, F.O.371/1776/6024.

132. Fontana to Lowther, No.17, conf., Aleppo, 25 March, 1913, F.O.371/1773/16941.

"Before the war with Italy, this question was merely discussed from time to time as a more or less distant possibility owing to Turkish misgovernment in general and the apparent failure of the constitutional regime to bring about an improvement in the general situation".

"The war with Italy and the facility with which the loss of Tripoli took place encouraged a greater freedom of speech on the subject of possible further dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, and the people in Syria, especially the Christians, began talking pretty openly about the possibility of foreign intervention in the affairs of Turkey, and it reached from many sources that the general feeling both among the Moslems and Christians alike was that, should circumstances necessitate a foreign annexation, local preference was for England or Egypt under British auspices".¹³³

The Consul then went on to say that there was a considerable feeling of mistrust of French intentions in Syria, and a fear that the British government "may be inclined to acquiesce in the pretensions of the French government, and give it a free hand as regards Syria."¹³⁴

133. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.76, conf., Beirut, 14 Nov., 1912, being enclosure in Lowther to Grey, No.984, conf., Const., 21 Nov., 1912, F.O.371/1507/50279.

134. Ibid.

As a reaction against the French intentions in Syria, the Consul reported that, "I have been indirectly approached by leading Moslems of Beirut with the object of finding the views of H.M. Government with regard to a possible "extension of Egyptian rule to Syria, and how far they can rely upon its support of their wishes, which they declared are shared by all the Moslems and by sixty per cent of the Christians in Syria!"¹³⁵ The Consul also stated that approaches and appeals were made to the Khedive, "as head of a British dependency" to intervene in Syria.¹³⁶

The Consul said that he refrained from giving them any encouragement. Grey approved his action because "it is neither practicable nor desirable that we should entertain such an extension of territorial responsibility."¹³⁷

Unlike the Muslims and the non-Catholic Christians who wanted British rule for Syria, the Catholics, and especially the Maronites of Mount Lebanon, preferred French rule, and were actively trying to counteract the pro-British agitation.¹³⁸ While the British government

135. Ibid.

136. Ibid. See also copy of telegram from Cumberbatch to Lowther, (no number given), Beirut, 13 Nov., 1912, being enclosure in Lowther to Grey, No.984, conf., Const., 21 Nov., 1912, F.O.371/1507/50279.

137. A minute by Sir E. Grey to despatch No.984, above despatch.

138. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.79, conf., Beirut, 4 Dec., 1912, being encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.984, conf., Const., 15 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1522/54463.

showed indifference to the agitation in favour of British rule for Syria, and instructed the British Consuls not to encourage its advocates, the French government was very much interested in the Maronite movement, and did all it could to encourage it. France had always claimed to be the champion of the Christians in the East,¹³⁹ and as Le Temps declared, "the policy of France merely aims at not allowing the name of France to fall into discredit among the Christians of the East".¹⁴⁰ It is not without significance that Le Temps entitled this article "France, Angleterre, Syrie", and devoted it wholly to the question of French interests in Syria. French cruisers paid regular visits to the Syrian coast; whenever they made their appearance they raised the fears of the Muslims,¹⁴¹ and encouraged the Maronites and the Catholics to look forward to the day when France would finally occupy their land.¹⁴² Even the Ottoman government showed signs of being uneasy at the persistence with which France continued to emphasise

139. For a Turkish point of view about this claim see, Ikdam, No.5700 of 1 Jan., 1913, p.1, editorial.

140. Le Temps, of 24 Dec., 1912, being an encl. in Bertie to Grey, No.39, conf., Paris, 24 Dec., 1912, F.O. 371/1522/55334.

141. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.76, conf., Beirut, 14 Nov., 1912, being encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.984, conf., Const., 21 Nov., 1912, F.O.371/1507/50279.

142. Cumberbatch to Lowther No.79, conf., Beirut, 4 Dec., 1912, encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.1072 of 15 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1522/54463. al-Muqattam, No.7198 of 28 Nov., 1912, Buru, pp.432-433.

her interests in Syria.¹⁴³

The Muslim leaders in Beirut were equally disturbed. Thinking that French intervention in Syria was imminent, in despair they turned to Britain.. To justify their act they argued that British administration was credited with being more responsible, liberal and beneficial than French rule. They pointed out that Egypt was more prosperous under the British than Algeria under the French.¹⁴⁴ The debate on which system was better for Syria, British rule or French, occupied prominent and wide space in the press of the Syrian émigrés in America.¹⁴⁵ However, Riḍā in an illuminating article advised the Syrians to uphold the cause of their Ottoman Empire and to trust neither France nor Britain.¹⁴⁶

Britain was in any case reluctant to accept political involvement in Syria. Having failed to interest Britain in their cause, and having realised that foreign intervention in Syria was not so imminent, the leading Muslims

143. See Dis. Arsivi, Carton No.125/33, for several despatches from the Ottoman Ambassador in Paris to Minister for Foreign Affairs, Said Halim Pasha, e.g. teleg. No.45 of 26 Nov., 1912, Rifat to Halim Pasha, letter No.9687/135 of 18 Feb., 1913, same to same.

144. Cumberbatch to Lowther No.79, as in Fn. 142.

145. See Dis. Arsivi, Carton 125/33, for several cuttings from those papers, e.g. al-Fajr.

146. al-Manār, vol.15, part 12 of 9 Dec., 1912, pp.958-960.

in Beirut decided to start a movement of their own by means of which they hoped to secure the long neglected political rights of the Syrian Arabs.

Thus the Beirut decentralisation movement stemmed from another movement that was separatist in character and which had originally aimed at inviting foreign intervention, and ultimately foreign rule into Syria. Both the opponents and the supporters of the Beirut movement were aware of the fact that among its leaders were men who had once desired British rule and others who yearned for French rule, as well as a third group who wanted nothing but administrative reforms.¹⁴⁷ The presence of the first two groups, of whose seditious agitation the Turks must have been aware, were probably the main reason why the cabinet of Kâmil Pasha and its Unionist successor found it difficult if not impossible to trust the motives of the reformers, who never failed to assure the Turks of their patriotic intentions.

The Muslim leaders of Beirut who initiated the reform movement there were, furthermore, alarmed by the activities of the Christian Lebanese nationalists. At the end of 1912 there was a marked increase in the ever growing movement of those nationalists for the extension of the boundaries of the Lebanon to include the Biqā'

147. Falastīn, No.201/100, of 28 Dec., 1912, editorial article.

and other adjacent areas.¹⁴⁸ Some Lebanese nationalists went so far as to ask for the inclusion of the town of Beirut, Sidon and Tyre in the boundaries of Lebanon.¹⁴⁹ This demand which was known as Dayr al-Qamar scheme, was according to al-Muqattam's correspondent in Beirut the direct incentive for the Beirutis to start their movement of reform. It was this demand, he suggested, which made the leading men in Beirut rise in opposition to it, and in an attempt to strengthen their country they contacted the vali and requested that the government should introduce reform in their vilayet.¹⁵⁰ The correspondent made a very revealing point when he wrote, "Syria is situated between the Lebanon and Egypt, both of which are developing. Therefore, Syria has either to develop, or will ultimately be absorbed by the Lebanon or Egypt".¹⁵¹ Amin Sa'id writing at much later date, put it even more bluntly when he ascribed the agitation of the Muslim leaders for reforms to their fear of the intrigues of the Maronites of Mount Lebanon. Because the Muslims were a minority group in Beirut, and because their town was bordered by

148. The Lebanese were also pressing for reforming some aspects of their Reglement Organique, for this movement see, Al-Ahram, No.10576 of 14 Dec., 1912 and No.10589 of 31 Dec., 1912. al-Muqattam, No.7215 of 19 Dec., 1912, and No.7192 of 22 Nov., 1912. File F. O.371/1491 contains abundant and useful information on the subject. Dis. Arsivi, (Istanbul, Carton No. 574/14 deals with the same subject.

149. al-Muqattam, No.7198 of 29 Nov., 1912, and No.7216 of 20 Dec., 1912.

150. al-Muqattam, No.7216 of 20 Dec., 1912, p.4.

151. Ibid.

the Lebanon on three sides they were alarmed by a possible cooperation between the Maronites and the French in an attempt to occupy Beirut.¹⁵²

Salīm 'Alī Salām, a leading Muslim among the reformers of Beirut, and a deputy for that town in the 1914 parliament, says in his unpublished memoirs,¹⁵³ that the pro-French and the pro-British agitations were the direct reasons that gave rise to the reform movement.¹⁵⁴ Salām also claimed that it was he who contacted the vali, Edhem Bey, revealed to him the gravity of the situation, and consequently suggested to him that the government should introduce "wide and extensive reforms in all the vilayets", if it desired the country to remain under its control.¹⁵⁵ On hearing this the vali sent a telegram to Istanbul repeating the substance of what Salām told him, and emphasising that "if we do not take the initiative

152. Anīn Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, Vol.1, p.18.

153. The Memoirs Of Salīm 'Alī Salām, are in the form of a microfilm in the American University of Beirut. They are in Salām's handwriting, and are undated. They cover the period 1908-1918. Salām says, because of the loss of his private papers and its destruction during the First World War and the Mandatory period, he has to rely on his memory and the newspapers' reports at the time. Nonetheless Salām's memoirs contain some original and interesting material, and are in no way mere copying from the press. Apart from a few errors, which arose mostly from the normal failing of a human memory, the memoirs are fairly accurate.

154. Salām, Memoirs, pp.8-9.

155. Ibid., p.10.

with reforms the country will escape us".¹⁵⁶

The cabinet of Kâmil Pasha did not immediately agree to the request of the vali as is commonly presumed.¹⁵⁷ In fact the Grand Vezir's reply stated that until the convening of parliament, which the government hoped would be soon, the vali could call the General Council of the vilayet to ascertain the necessary reforms, which should then be forwarded through the deputies of that vilayet for consideration.¹⁵⁸ Salâm tells us that neither the vali nor the Beirutis were satisfied with this evasive reply, and that in order to calm the people of Beirut, Edhem Bey, apparently on his own initiative, decided to form a Committee under his chairmanship to draft a scheme of reforms which he would then send to Istanbul as soon as possible.¹⁵⁹ On Salâm's commenting that the vali's scheme was going to be an official one, Edhem Bey told him

156. Khairallah, Les R gions Arabes Lib rees, Paris, 1919, p.39, as quoted by Zeine, The Emergence, p.101. For Arabic version of telegram see, al-'Azani, Vol.3, p. 47, Amin Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, Vol.I, p. 18. Mu ammad Kurd 'Ali, Khi at al-Sham, Vol.3, p.129, Buru, p.444. All these sources do not give a precise date for this telegram other than the last days of the year 1912.

157. Most of the Arabic sources make this assumption. See for instance, al-'Azani, vol.3, p.47, Amin Sa'id, al-thwara al-'Arabiyya, Vol.I, p.18. Even some of the papers made this mistake, see, al-Ahr n, No.10579, of 18 Dec. 1912.

158. Sal m, Memoirs, p.10, al-Muqattam, No.7216 of 20 Dec., 1912, al-Ahr n, No.10585 of 26 Jan., 1913, Izahat, p. 31.

159. Sal m, Memoirs, p.10.

that he (Salām) and his friends could draft another scheme of reforms.¹⁶⁰ Salām is the only one of our sources that mentions the fact that the Beirut Society of Reforms was formed on the actual suggestion of the vali himself. All other sources said that the Society was created by the reformers themselves, but it had the tacit approval of the authorities in that neither the vali nor the central government raised objections to its existence or to its activities.¹⁶¹ In fact the Society held its first formal meeting in the Municipality Office which was a government building.¹⁶²

It seems possible that the government, which was busy with the Balkan question, was not much interested in what was going on in Beirut as long as it did not assume dangerous proportions. There was no evidence, however, that Kâmil Pasha's cabinet was willing in any way to grant the Beirutis their demands. On the contrary, there was evidence that the cabinet understood something completely different by the word "decentralisation" from what the Beirutis had in mind. Reşid Bey, the Minister

160. Salām, Memoirs, p.10.

161. See for instance, Lisān al-Hāl, No.7210 of 12 April, 1913. al-Ahrām, No.10674 of 12 April, 1913. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.34, conf., Beirut, 17 April, 1913, F.O.371/1775/20328.

162. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7141, of 14 Jan., 1913, and No.7210 of 12 April, 1913.

of Internal Affairs in the cabinet of Kâmil Pasha made it quite clear that the government understood by administrative reform when he told the editor of Jeune Turc in an interview, that the cabinet intended to give the vali more powers to enable him to deal with the local affairs of his vilayet without interference from Istanbul. Reform to Reşid Bey was the draining of marshes, improvement in the roads and public works and making rivers navigable.¹⁶³ The decentralisers' papers found the views of Reşid Bey disheartening, and Lisân al-Hâl commented that the difference between the government and the nation (Umma) was wide, for while the majority of the people (Ahālî) wanted to reform the basis of administration, the cabinet desired to concentrate on reforms "which we consider as secondary".¹⁶⁴

Thus the reformers were under no illusions when they started preparing their demands. Nor were they discouraged by views such as those of Reşid Bey. Both the vali's committee, which came to be known as the "Official Committee", whose activities have been completely overlooked by historians,¹⁶⁵ and the Beirut Reform Society

163. Interview reproduced in al-Ahram, No.10613, of 29 Jan., 1913, al-Muqattan No.7237 of 4 Jan., 1913. Lisân al-Hâl, 7130 of 31 Dec., 1912.

164. Lisân al-Hâl, No.7130 of 31 Dec., 1912.

165. Almost all the Arabic sources are silent about the activity of the Official Committee. Zeine, The Emergence, and Antonius, said nothing about this committee, this is to mention only two authors who wrote in English. There was a tendency in the press at the time of reluctance to report fully on the work of this society.

proceeded in an atmosphere of enthusiasm to hold their meetings without showing any signs of discouragement. The Beirut Reform Society held more meetings than the Official Committee and its activities captured the limelight. Lisān al-Hāl, al-Mufīd of Beirut as well as al-Ahrān, al-Muqattam, al-Manār, of Egypt and al-Muqtabas of Damascus together with other local Syrian papers reported its activities regularly and in detail. This is probably the reason why the Beirut Society and its scheme have completely overshadowed the work of the Official Committee.

The Muslim leaders who started the decentralization movement in Beirut ¹⁶⁶ were anxious to avoid division and to present the government with one front. Hence their invitation to the Christian leaders in Beirut to join them.¹⁶⁷ To gain their friendship and cooperation the Muslim leaders were obliged to forgo certain rights of the Muslim community of the vilayet of Beirut; for instance they had to accept that the Christians should have half the seats in the proposed General Council of the vilayet, despite the fact that the Christians were in the minority.¹⁶⁸ Ardent supporters of the CUP who were at the same time opponents of the reform movement such as

166. al-Muqattam, No.7126 of 20 Dec., 1912, and No.7227 of 4 Jan. 1913.

167. al-Muqattam, No.7227 of 4 Jan., 1913.

168. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 4 of 7 April, 1913, p.280.

Shakīb Arslān, often accused the Muslim reformers of deliberately forsaking the rights of the Muslims of Beirut for their own personal benefits.¹⁶⁹ Arslān pointed out that if the Christians were in the majority in the vilayet of Beirut they would have never agreed to the Muslims sharing the seats of the General Council with them.¹⁷⁰ al-Muqattam's correspondent in Beirut recorded in one of his despatches that there was some reluctance among several leading Christians to participate in the reform movement, and they believed that the best alternative for them was to join hands with Lebanese nationalists.¹⁷¹ This preference for more cooperation with Christian Lebanese nationalists was indicative of an attitude prevalent among the Christian nationalists, namely, to consider the Lebanon as their refuge.

However, the advocates of reform decided to press on with their demand for administrative decentralisation. To give their scheme a popular aspect and to broaden its base, they resolved to compose a 'national' Society of Reform. They consequently asked the heads of the various religious communities of Beirut to send their representatives to a society that was to draft a scheme of reforms for the vilayet.¹⁷² They also wanted to give

169. Shakib Arslan, Ila al-'Arab, pp.38-40, where he argued the point convincingly.

170. Ibid., p.39.

171. al-Muqattam, No.7227 of 4 Jan.,1913.

172. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7129 of 30 Dec., 1912. al-Muqattam, ibid.

their Society an official touch by inviting the Administrative Council and the Municipality to send representatives.¹⁷³ This was never done and the Society remained to the end an unofficial body.

The administrative councils of the various religious communities finally elected eighty-six members who formed the Society of Beirut for Reforms. To mark the inter-communal solidarity, forty-two members were Muslims, forty-two Christians and two Jews.¹⁷⁴ In its first official meeting held on 12 January 1913, a Muslim, Shaykh Ahmad 'Abbās al-Azharī, was chosen president, and a Christian, Dr. Ayyub Thābit, as secretary. After passing a resolution establishing the necessity of reforms for Beirut, the members elected a working committee of

173. al-Muqattam, ibid.

174. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7141 of 14 Jan., 1913, gives a complete list of the 86 members, the votes of each member, the numbers allotted to each religious community. Lisān gives the composition of the Society of 86 as follows: 42 Muslims, 16 Greek Orthodox, 10 Maronites, 6 Greek Catholics, 2 Protestants, 2 Syrian Catholics, 2 Armenian Catholics, 2 Latins, 2 Jews and 2 Orthodox Armenians. The British Consul at Beirut gives the same list except for the 2 Orthodox Armenians, see, Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.8, conf., Beirut, 24 Jan., 1913, being encl. in Lowther to Grey No.82, conf., Const., 2 Feb., 1913, F.O. 371/1775/6020. The same despatch in F.O.195/2451. al-Muqattam, No.7238 of 18 Jan., 1913, p.1. Salām, Memoirs, pp. 12-13 gives names of 86, identical with Lisān. Less informed sources give inaccurate numbers, Izahāt, p.31 give numbers as 80, Burū, p.445 gives number as 84. al-'Azamī, vol.3, p.47, and Amin Sa'id, vol. I, p.18 gives number as 90.

twenty-five, composed of twelve Muslims, twelve Christians and a Jew, "to draw up a list of the necessary reforms and to work for their adoption".¹⁷⁵ This committee held several meetings in which, al-Muqattam's correspondent in Beirut reported they discussed a scheme of reforms which the decentralisers of Cairo had sent to them.¹⁷⁶ This is the first mention of an attempt by Cairo Party to establish a direct link with the Society of Beirut, and to try and influence it. The Beiruti reformers were, however, to show their independence of the Cairo Party by formulating demands which were not in line with the programme of that Party, and were to become typical of their movement.¹⁷⁷

Of the two organisations which were discussing and drafting reform schemes for the vilayet of Beirut, the vali's committee was the first to finish its task. On 20 January 1913 the General Council of the vilayet was convened to discuss the reform scheme. After raising objections to the proposed right of the vali to appoint and dismiss qā'immaqāms and the mutaşarrifs, and to the ¹⁷⁸ time limit within which he could object to its decisions,

175. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7141 of 14 Jan., 1913, also for names of 25 members.

176. al-Muqattam, No.7237 of 17 Jan., 1913.

177. Ibid. Also Shakīb Arslān, Ila al-'Arab, pp.36-37.

178. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7147 of 21 Jan., 1913.

the General Council passed the vali's scheme which was subsequently published in the papers.¹⁷⁹

The scheme of 12 articles started by dividing the affairs of the vilayet into matters pertaining to the central government (such as defence, foreign affairs, customs and posts) and local matters relating to the internal concerns of the vilayet, its administration and development which were the responsibility of the General Council. The vali, the representative of the central government, had to execute the decrees of that government and those of the General Council. He could appoint some officials, and had, under certain conditions, the right to object to the decisions of that Council.¹⁸⁰

The scheme then went on to provide for the formation and the rights and duties of the General Council of the vilayet. The Council which was to have a joint Christian and Muslim membership (15 Christians and 15 Muslims, no provision was made for the Jews) was a non-political organisation whose function would be to conduct the local administrative affairs of the vilayet. Unless the vali objected to the decisions of this council, they would be valid and should become law as soon as possible.¹⁸¹ The vali was in no way made inferior to that Council.

179. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7147 of 21 Jan., 1913. Al-Ahrām, No.10611 of 27 Jan., 1913.

180. Articles 1 and 2, Lisān al-Hāl, No.7141 of 21 Jan., 1913.

181. Articles 3, 4 and part of article 8. Lisān, ibid.

After providing a set of rules for the appointment, promotion, dismissal and disciplining of the officials of the vilayet,¹⁸² the scheme made the administration of awqāf the responsibility of the local religious councils concerned.¹⁸³ It made Arabic admissible in government offices, though Turkish remained the official language,¹⁸⁴ and put some local revenues to local use.¹⁸⁵ The scheme was, however, completely silent as to the language of instruction in the schools and the question of regional military service, both of which were important items in the programmes of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo and the Beirut Reform Society.¹⁸⁶

Perhaps the most striking feature of the scheme, which made it almost treasonable in the eyes of the Unionist regime,¹⁸⁷ was its provision for foreign inspectors

182. Articles 5 and 7, Lisān, Ibid. All officials, except the vali, were to know Arabic according to article 5. Mutasarrifs and qā'immaqāms and all junior officials were to be from the inhabitants of the vilayet.

183. Article 9, Lisān. Ibid.

184. Article 11, Lisān, Ibid.

185. Article 8, Lisān, Ibid.

186. See above, pp. 240-41 and pp. 267.

was

187. Izahat, p.31 stated that the vali's scheme/contradictory to the laws of the Empire, and found the articles dealing with foreign inspectors most objectionable, and accused Lebanese members of al-Nahda al-Lubnāniyya society of being behind the introduction of such articles, in an attempt to pave the way for foreign intervention in Beirut. Izahat, probably had Zainiyya, Hānī and the others who wrote to the French Consul in Beirut asking for French rule for Syria, for it went on to quote this letter in pp.34-37. For French text see French copy, La Verite, pp.50-54. See also, pp.45-57.

and advisers to be attached to the various governmental departments of the vilayet. Like the scheme of the Beirut Reform Society, it gave them wide powers. For instance the decision of any particular inspector in matters relating to his concern would be final. They were, however, to be appointed from the U.S.A. or from small countries with no interests in the Ottoman Empire, and were to know French, Turkish or Arabic. They would serve in governmental departments such as the police, the gendarmerie, and the postal and telegraphic services, as well as the customs, finance and justice departments. A foreign inspector was to be appointed to the General Council and to all the livas of the vilayet. In every liva the inspector would be charged with the duty of supervising the government of that liva and advising on improving it. The initial contract of such inspectors would be for an initial period of fifteen years.¹⁸⁸

The vali's scheme bore striking similarity, even in the wording of most of its important items, to that of the Beirut Reform Society. The twelve articles¹⁸⁹

188. Articles 6 and 12, Lisān, Ibid.

189. For the complete Arabic text of the 12 articles, see, Lisān al-Hāl, No.7147 of 21 Jan. 1913. Salām, Memoirs, pp. 17-21. al-Ahrām, No.10611 of 27 Jan., 1913. For a French translation, see Reveil, of 28, 30 Jan. and 4 Feb., 1913, all three being enclosures in Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.26, conf., Beirut 27 March, 1913, enc. in Lowther to Grey, No.238, conf., Const., 24 March, 1913, F.O.371/1775/14474, same desp. in F.O. 195/2451.

contained most of what the Beirutis were to present in their own scheme. In fact the four Beirutis whose help the vali sought in drafting his scheme,¹⁹⁰ found nothing to complain about, in a letter which they sent to the press, except that the vali's scheme did not make Arabic the official language of the vilayet.¹⁹¹ The presence near the vali of those four Beirutis, who were also active among the reformers of Beirut, may well be the explanation of the revealing similarity between the two schemes.

To turn now to the activities of the Beirut Reform Society: on 31 January, 1913 the sub-committee, which was drafting a scheme of reforms, put its final scheme of fifteen articles before the Society, which after thoroughly discussing it passed it for publication.¹⁹²

The scheme of the Beirut Reform Society merely echoed demands that were already specified in either the programme of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo or the vali's scheme. It was more detailed and more specific about certain demands, as for instance the wide and specific powers which it gave to the General Council of the vilayet. This Council which was to be composed of thirty

190. They were Aḥmad Mukhtār Beyhum, Kāmil al-Ṣulḥ, Petro Ṭarād and Ibrāhīm Thābit, see, Salām Memoirs, p.10.

191. Text of letter in Lisān al-Ḥāl, No.7148 of 22 Jan., 1913.

192. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 4 of 7 April, 1913, p.275.

members, half Muslims and the other half Christians (no provision was made for the Jews), had powers to run the internal administration of the vilayet, to contract loans not exceeding half the amount of the revenues of the vilayet, to interpolate the vali, and could demand his dismissal by a two-thirds majority. In short the vali was made a mere executive officer of the Council.¹⁹³

Over the question of language, the Beirut scheme went a step further than that of the vali and that of the Syrian émigré in Cairo. It demanded that Arabic should be recognised as the official language of the vilayet, and with Turkish should be an official language in Parliament.¹⁹⁴ Like the programme of the Decentralisation Party it asked for regional military service and requested that the military exemption tax be reduced to 30 Liras for the Nizami regiments (active army), and to 20 Liras for the Ihtiyat (active army reserve) and the Redif (reserves).¹⁹⁵ Like the other two schemes, the scheme of the Beirut Reform Society specified that all officials should know Arabic, and gave the administration of the Awqāf to the local religious councils.¹⁹⁶ Unlike the other two it was

193. Articles 3-5, see, al-Manār, Ibid. pp.276-277. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7155 of 30 Jan., 1913.

194. Article 14, al-Manār, Ibid., p.279, Lisān, Ibid.

195. Article 15, al-Manār; Lisān, Ibid.

196. Article 11, Ibid.

more specific as to what revenues ought to be spent in the vilayet and what should be sent to Istanbul. Article 8 stated that revenues obtained from customs, postal services and the military exemption tax were to go to the Imperial Treasury in Istanbul. All other revenues were to be spent locally, and their expenditure to be controlled by the General Council.¹⁹⁷ The articles providing for foreign inspectors and advisers and stipulating their wide powers were an exact reproduction of the articles in the vali's scheme dealing with the same subject. For instance both schemes made provisions for a Higher Council to be composed of all the foreign inspectors serving in the capital of the vilayet and of the president of the General Council. This Council was to be under the chairmanship of the vali. Wide powers were given to it. For instance it could interpret all the laws and decisions made by the General Council, . . . it could decide whether any official ought to be dismissed or not, and it could settle all matters of disagreement between any inspector on the one hand and the General Council or any governmental department on the other and its decision should be final.¹⁹⁸

In the Beiruti scheme the vali could only object to the

197. Article 8, al-Manār, Ibid., p.278.

198. Article 7, 13 and parts of article 4, 5 and 6, all deal with the foreign advisers. Article 13 deals with the Higher Council see, al-Manār, Ibid., p.279. For vali's scheme see article 12, in Lisan al-Hāl, No.7147 of 21 Jan., 1913, dealing with Higher Council.

decisions of the General Council if he had the approval of this Higher Council.¹⁹⁹

Such provisions raised criticisms of no other than Rashīd Riḍā. He wrote in al-Manār, "we deprecate the fact that they [the Beirutis] have sacrificed their most sacred rights to the foreign advisers. They have given them more powers than was expected; those powers constitute a great danger to the future of the country. The Beirutis have not even given themselves the right of making the advisers accountable for their actions".

Riḍā then advised the Beirutis to revise their scheme and withdraw such as the articles dealing with the powers of the foreign advisers.²⁰⁰ Elsewhereⁱⁿ al-Manār, Riḍā voiced more detailed criticisms on the subject, and he expressed his doubts whether the central government would accept this project of reforms. He then concluded by calling on the reformers of Beirut to join hands with the Decentralisation Party of Cairo to create a united front.²⁰¹ Naturally Syrian supporters of the CUP were against the whole of the reform scheme and in particular against items in it which gave foreigners such wide powers in the affairs of their country, and which in the words

199. al-Manār, Ibid., p.276, for article 4.

200. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 4 of 7 April, 1913, p.280.

201. Ibid., p.314, pp.312-314 for detailed criticisms.

of these supporters, made of the whole decentralisation movement, "a by-product of foreign intrigues that aim at the destruction of the bond of Ottomanism and Islamic unity".²⁰²

Though the programme of the Society of Beirut²⁰³ was more detailed than the other two schemes, it was like that of the vali, of a more local nature. Unlike the Decentralisation Party of Cairo, which declared itself to be an Ottoman party, the Society of Beirut had neither claimed to be concerned with vilayets other than Beirut, nor did it try to extend its activities to the other vilayets of Syria.²⁰⁴ In an editorial, Yūsuf al-'Īsā criticised the failure of the reformers in Beirut to make other neighbouring Syrian towns participate in the movement of reform. If such participation had taken place, then the Ottoman government would have been obliged

202. Shakīb Arslān, Ila al-'Arab, p.19.

203. For the full Arabic text of the 15 articles, see, Lisān al-Hāl, No. 7155, of 30 Jan., 1913. al-Muqtabas (daily) No.1112 of 10, Feb., 1913. Salām, Memoirs, pp. 19-23. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 4 of 7 April, 1913, pp.275-279. Muhsin Fani, On Temmuz, wrongly gives this scheme (in Turkish) as the vali's scheme. For a French translation of the scheme, see, Diş. Arşivi, (Istanbul) Siyasi Kısmı, Surriye Ahvali, Carton box No.125, File No.33. Also, Carnegie to Grey, No.340, conf., Paris, 24 June, 1913, F.O.371/1827/29038. Also, Reveil, of 20 Feb., 1913, being enc. in Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.26, conf., Beirut, 12 Feb., 1913, F.O.371/1775/14474.

204. Lowther to Grey, No.238, conf., Const., 24 March, 1913, F.O.371/1775/14474, wrongly asserted that the Society intended to extend its scheme "to other Arab speaking vilayets".

to consider the reform movement as a desire of all the Arab vilayets and "not as a luxury commodity for Beirut alone".²⁰⁵ However, the Society remained a purely Beiruti organisation, and perhaps it was this parochial aspect of the movement which encouraged and enabled the Turkish authorities to suppress it, and by so doing put an end to the attempt of the Beirutis to secure their rights in the Empire.

The Reform Movement in other parts of Syria:

The movement was so confined to the town of Beirut that the rest of the vilayet remained utterly indifferent to it. They neither echoed the enthusiasm of Beirut for reform, nor followed its example. In Tripoli a list of demands was prepared by some enthusiasts for reform and a committee of forty was nominated to discuss it, but nothing resulted from this effort for none of the forty members, according to al-Muḥāmī, a local paper, turned up to discuss the list.²⁰⁶ al-Naṣīr of Beirut reported that a meeting, held in Sidon by a committee of

205. Falastīn, No.204/1, of 15 Jan., 1913, pp.1-2.

206. As quoted in Falastīn, No.206/3 of 22 Jan., 1913, al-Muḥāmī thought the list of reforms was similar to the list of food in restaurants (menu), the implication being that it included a variety of demands which, besides being incongruous, were meant to satisfy the desires of many customers.

Sunnī Muslims, Shī'īs and Christians, to discuss the necessary reforms for their town, came to no result because of division between the members of the committee. Being a minority group, the Christians believed their presence in the committee would have no effect, and consequently withdrew from the meeting. The^e Shī'īs demanded that they should have their own muftī, qadī, and members of the Bench in law courts, and that their lands should be exempted from the 'ushūr tax. The Sunni Muslims, unwilling to share the power which they held in Sidon with the Shī'īs, opposed the demands of the latter, and as a result of this discord the meeting ended without having achieved any results.²⁰⁷ In Haifa the qā'immaqān invited the "notables and the enlightened" to formulate their demands for reform. The demands presented to the qā'immaqān were in way similar to those of Beirut. They did not go beyond requests for the repairs of certain roads, the building of a new government house, the founding of a new school and the improvement of security in the town.²⁰⁸ Not only in the rest of the vilayet of Beirut did the Beirut movement of reform fail to strike a strong echo, but also in the rest of Syria, where very little interest in it was shown.

207. As quoted in Falastīn, No.206/3 of 22 Jan., 1913.

208. al-Iṣlāḥ, No.11/1406 of 22 May, 1913.

There were some feeble and insipid manifestations of reform, in the vilayets of Damascus and Aleppo as well as in the mutasarriflik of Jerusalem. These manifestations, which achieved little, were mostly the work of certain individuals, known either for their strong opposition to the CUP, or their association and in some cases, friendship with the reformers of Cairo and Beirut. However, in all three centres opponents of the reform movement, who were usually adherents of the CUP, conducted a strong and successful opposition to the sporadic activities of the decentralisers there.

In Aleppo the reform movement was reported to be unwelcome and making slow progress owing to the propaganda of its opponents who were misleading the simple people by telling them that the movement was contrary to the Islamic religion and was unpatriotic.²⁰⁹ It seems the opponents of the movement had some success: for, beside a very brief report in al-Muqattam of a reform scheme, no mention was made in our sources of a reform movement in Aleppo. Al-Muqattam's report merely said that among the important items of the Aleppine scheme was the demand to make Arabic the language of instruction in the schools in addition to making it an official language like Turkish. The report, however, added that the dismissal of the vali

209. Falastin, No.229/26 of 12 April, 1913, p.4, quoting al-Muqtabas.

of Aleppo, Refik Bey, had delayed the despatch of the scheme to the authorities.²¹⁰

The British consular reports were completely silent on this movement. Instead they reported a marked and lively agitation in favour of British rule for the vilayet, an agitation led, we are told, by Muslim notables, Arab tribal chiefs and Kurdish chieftains.²¹¹ The agitation continued throughout March and April,²¹² and the British Consul put it on record that on two occasions he was contacted by leading Muslims asking for British rule for Aleppo.

On the first and more important occasion, the British Consul was visited by six Arab shaykhs of importance who presented a petition written in French²¹³ and signed by fifty-six Arab notables on behalf of the Muslim population of northern Syria, expressing their "unanimous

210. al-Muqattam, No.7285 of 14 March, 1913, p.5.

211. For an early report on such agitation see, Lowther to Grey, No.1131, conf., Const., 31 Dec., 1912, F.O. 371/1773/572. See also, Fontana to Lowther, No.78, conf., Aleppo, 14 Dec., 1912, being an enclosure in Lowther's above despatch No.1131, F.O.371/1773/572. Also, Wooley to Fontana (no no. given), Beirut, 5 Dec., 1912, being an encl. in Fontana's above despatch No. 78, F.O.371/1773/572.

212. See for example, Lowther to Grey, No.279, conf., Const. 5 April, 1913, F.O.371/1773/16736.

213. The petition was written in French and not in Arabic because its authors were intending probably to present it to the French Consul with whom they had been in contact. French was also the language of diplomacy, see, Fontana to Lowther, No.17, as below.

and earnest desire" to be placed under British rule.²¹⁴

Talking about the deputation of six the consul said,

"In the course of conversation they told me that the entire Moslem population of Aleppo, high and low, feel that the state of things is such as to admit of no hope of improvement under the Ottoman Government, either in the near or distant future; that the Muslims were fairly contented under the rule of Abdel Hamid, but that they know those of their faith in Egypt and India enjoy a government far preferable to his, and that with one common accord they were praying for a British government of the country, whether similar to that of Egypt or of India. " ²¹⁵

On the second occasion the British consul was called upon by two prominent Arabs, one of them, the president of the local branch of the Liberal Union party.²¹⁶ Thus at a time when the reform movement in Beirut was reaching its

214. The text of the French petition, which makes interesting reading in, Fontana to Lowther, No.17, conf., Aleppo, 25 March, 1913, being encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.299, conf., Const., 10 April, 1913, F.O.371/1773/16941. Text also in F.O.195/2453/1966.

215. Ibid.

216. Fontana to Lowther, No.24, conf., Aleppo, 21 April, 1913, F.O.195/2453/1966. Same desp. in Lowther to Grey, No.381, conf., Const., 3 May, 1913, F.O.371/1773/21752. See also, Lowther to Fontana, telg. (no No. given), conf., Const., 2 May, 1913, F.O.371/1773/21752, where Fontana was instructed that "in case of such applications you should confine yourself to intimating that we cannot encourage projects which are inconsistent with the views of the Central Ottoman Government." This telegram was approved by the Foreign Office in a minute to Lowther's despatch No. 381 of 3 May, 1913 - above.

climax, Aleppo not only failed to follow its example but merely echoed sentiments which Beirut had expressed months before it started its agitation for reform.

Half-hearted attempts by the supporters of the Liberal Union in Damascus to follow the example of Beirut failed.²¹⁷ Even then the Ententists were not the initiators of the brief attempt to formulate demands of reforms necessary for Damascus. It was the vali, Kazim Pasha, who, in accordance with instructions from Istanbul to ascertain the demands of the inhabitants, had called upon the heads of the various governmental departments to prepare schemes of needed local reforms.²¹⁸ It was then that some Damascenes who in the words of the al-Muqattam's correspondent "were seeking to please the government" took the initiative by asking the president of the Municipality Council to invite about 160 of the leading men in Damascus to elect a committee to draw up a scheme of reforms. On the afternoon of 17 January 1913, the 160 persons, who included Muslims, Christians and Jews, held their first meeting in the Municipality Office.²¹⁹

The meeting came to nothing, for those present were unable to agree as to the meaning of the word

217. Lisān al-Hāl, No.7141 of 14 Jan., 1913, al-Ahrām, No.10603, of 17 Jan., 1913.

218. al-Muqattam, No.7243 of 24 Jan., 1913.

219. Ibid.

"reform" - iṣlāh. While the Unionists understood by reform such material improvements as the draining of marshlands, the construction of roads and the founding of schools, the Ententists understood the introduction of a decentralised form of government.²²⁰ Efforts to reconcile the two hostile groups failed, and it was decided that each of them should draw up its own scheme of reform, and forward it to the General Council. al-Muqattam of 31 January 1913 published a scheme of 23 articles which it said "a group of educated and trustworthy" Damascenes had drafted. This group seemed to be Ententist, for it held a meeting in the Ententists' club to which some others were invited. The meeting passed the scheme, after discussion, for forwarding to the General Council.²²¹ No further information on the fate of this scheme was available.

The scheme, which was quite different from that of Beirut, could not be described as decentralist in any way. True, it provided for an elected General Council that would be responsible for certain aspects of local administration, but it did not place it over the vali, or

220. Ibid., for details of that meeting and the arguments used by each group. It was also stated that the Ententists opposed the election of a committee from among the 160, who were invited, for they realised that the Unionists were in the majority in the meeting, see, ibid.

221. al-Muqattam, No.7249 of 31 Jan., 1913, p.1.

subject the vali to it, as the Beirutis had done. The Council could interpolate the vali, but it had no right to dismiss him. In cases of disagreement the disputed matter was to be referred to the Council of State in Istanbul. The scheme made Arabic the language of instruction, though it retained the compulsory teaching of Turkish in schools. Officials should know Arabic, which must be used in all official business connected with the public. Military service was to be local in peace-time and for two years only, and the military exemption tax/^{was}to be reduced. Certain taxes were to be reformed, and provision made for the settlement of nomadic tribes.²²² Unlike the Beirut scheme, it did not ask for the appointment of foreign inspectors and advisers. This is significant, for it strengthens the impression that the inclusion of articles dealing with foreign inspectors and advisers was the work of Christian Lebanese nationalists.

Another scheme of reforms of a general nature which did not mention foreign inspectors, was that forwarded to the cabinet of Kânîl Pasha by Najîb Malḥama.²²³ Najîb, who, together with his brother Salîm had so loyally served Sultan Abdülhanîd and as^a result was completely

222. Ibid., for all the 23 articles of the scheme.

223. For a short biography of Najîb and that of Salîm Malḥama, see, extract from report on Turkey 1906, in F.O.371/1822/25544/13.

discredited after the advent of the constitutional era, was making a bid to re-enter public life. The Times believed that the scheme of Najīb Maḥama/^{was} supported by some Muslim notables, and that he was working for a decentralist system of government for Syria.²²⁴ Najīb, who drafted his scheme after touring Syria, specified reforms of a general nature. Syria should not be totally linked to Istanbul. Officials, or at least heads of departments, should be acquainted with Arabic, and should be given wider powers. The General Council should be more representative of the inhabitants of the vilayet, and because of its knowledge of local needs, should be permitted to deal more freely with such needs. Education should be made general; the system of justice was to be reformed, and the coasts of Syria were to be properly defended.²²⁵ Najīb probably knew from his previous experience at the Porte that only such reforms would be listened to by the authorities. However, nothing is known of what became of this scheme.

In the mutasarriflik of Jerusalem the decentralisation movement met with a poor response.²²⁶ No

224. The Times, No.40103 of 8 Jan., 1913.

225. For Najīb's scheme, see, Lisān al-Hāl, Nos.7143 and 7144 of 16 Jan. and 17 Jan., 1913, respectively.

226. al-Muqattan, No.7296 of 28 March, 1913, attempted to explain why.

schemes of reforms were put forward by the inhabitants, and apart from telegrams sent from Jaffa by its ex-deputy Ḥāfiẓ al-Sa'īd, and from Gaza by 'Ārif al-Ḥusaynī and others to the authorities in both Jerusalem and Istanbul asking that the reform scheme of Beirut be applied to their sanjak, there was no talk of administrative reform in Jerusalem.²²⁷ Ḥāfiẓ al-Sa'īd and 'Ārif al-Ḥusaynī were well known for their strong opposition to the CUP in the first Chamber of Deputies. Their efforts to initiate a movement of reform were made towards the second half of April 1913, after the closure of the Reform Club of Beirut,^{and} may well be connected with that event. Perhaps it was an attempt to step up the agitation for reform in order to overawe the Ottoman authorities. Owing to the firm attitude taken by the authorities after the closure of the Beirut Club, and the opposition which the activities of al-Sa'īd and al-Ḥusaynī encountered from the Unionists in Jerusalem,²²⁸ this insipid interest in reform came to nothing.²²⁹

227. Falastīn, No.228/25 of 9 April 1913, For an English translation of Ḥāfiẓ's telegram, see, Hough to Lowther, No.27, conf., Jaffa, 12 April, 1913, being encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.346, conf., Const., 25 April, 1913, F.O.371/1814/19789 - Desp. also gives further details.

228. For these opposing telegrams, see, Falastīn, ibid. Hough to Lowther, Ibid.

229. Falastīn, No.229/26 of 12 April, 1913. For an account of the reform movement in the mutasarriflik, see, McGregor to Lowther, No.35, conf., Jerusalem, 12 April, 1913, being encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.341, conf., Const., 24 April, 1913, F.O.371/1814/19326.

Thus George Antonius was completely inaccurate when he wrote, "About the middle of February 1913, the Committee of Reform [Beirut] gave publicity to their scheme. It was greeted with demonstrations of popular favour not only in the Syrian provinces, but also in Iraq. Public meetings were held in Danascus, Aleppo, Acre, Nablus, Baghdad and Basra, and telegrams acclaiming the scheme as being the expression of the universal desire in the Arab provinces poured into Constantinople".²³⁰ To start with, the Beirut Society published its scheme on 31 January 1913 and not "about the middle of February". As we have seen, no public feeling acclaimed this action in other parts of Syria. Iraq was equally indifferent, and Sayyid Ṭālib al-Naqīb, the man behind the Reform Society of Baṣra,²³¹ reacted to the closure of the Club of Beirut rather than to the publication of the scheme of the Beirut Reform Society. Moreover, the programme of the Society of Baṣra was more in line with that of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo than of Beirut. Finally the Beirut Reform

230. Antonius, p.113.

231. For this society and the reform movement in Iraq as a whole, see, Buru, pp.489-502. Also, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-'Umārī al-Muṣillī, Ṭārikh Muqadarāt al-'Irāq al-Siyasiya, Baghdad, 1925, Vol.1, p.168. Amin Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, Vol.1, p.24. Also, Marling to Grey, No.818, conf., Const., 25 Sept., 1913, F.O.371/1845/45367, enclosing Crow to Marling, No.51, conf., Baṣra, 28 Aug., 1913. See also same to same, No.52, conf., Baṣra, 30 Aug., 1913, F.O.371/1845/45368.

Society did not send its scheme to Istanbul until the second half of March.

Dissolution of the Beirut Reform Society:

The coming of the CUP to power on 23 January 1913 caused distress among the Syrian reformers who considered it as the deathblow to their movement.²³² Though the new government promised to condone the action of its predecessor in as far as reform was concerned it reminded its Syrian subjects that defending the fatherland in face of the renewed war in the Balkans had priority over all other demands.²³³ Moreover, the valis of Aleppo, Damascus and Beirut were changed. Hazim Bey, a devoted supporter of the CUP, who twice served as vali of Beirut, replaced Edhem Bey²³⁴ whom the Beirutis believed to be in sympathy with their movement. Al-Ahrām prophetically commented, "Edhem was dismissed because he was a reformer who encouraged the reformers. It had been said Hazim, who replaced him, was instructed to kill the reform movement."²³⁵

232. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.12, conf., Beirut, 20 Jan., 1913, encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.104, conf., Const., 7 Feb., 1913, F.O.371/1788/7281. al-Ahrām, No.10618 of 4 Feb., 1913.

233. Circular by the Minister of the Interior, in al-Ahrām, No.10618 of 4 Feb., 1913, p.2, al-Muqattam, No.7262 of 14 Feb., 1913.

234. Baş. Arşivi (Istanbul), Irader, Dahiliye, No.2749, of 13 Feb., 1913. Takvim-i Vekayi, No.1377 of 18 Feb., 1913.

235. al-Ahrām, No.10639 of 28 Feb., 1913.

To achieve that end Hazim used several means. For instance he tried to sow dissension between the Muslims and the Christians in Beirut in an attempt to break up the Beirut Society.²³⁶ He further attempted to bribe the Muslim reformers by offering leading figures among them such as Shukrī al-'Asalī, the former deputy for Damascus, important administrative posts.²³⁷ His efforts, however, failed and produced opposite results, for instead of appeasing the Muslim reformers he angered them, and as a result many resigned their posts in protest.²³⁸ Hazim also tried to create an opposition group to the reform party, and to apply pressure on the press of the reformers.²³⁹ None of Hazim's tactics met with success and the reform continued to grow and assume dangerous proportions.²⁴⁰

Thus on 8 April, 1913, after careful preparations, Hazim issued an order dissolving the Beirut Reform Society and closing its Club, on the grounds that it was illegal

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236. al-Ahrān, Nos. 10653 and 10655 of 17 and 19 March, 1913, respectively. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No. 39, conf., Beirut, 13 May, 1913, F.O. 371/1775/24349. Lisān al-Hāl, No. 7197 of 28 March, 1913.
237. al-Muqattam, No. 7286 of 15 March, 1913, and No. 7297 of 29 March, 1913. al-Ahrān, No. 10652 of 15 March, 1913. They all relate the interview between Hazim and al-'Asalī, who refused the job.
238. Lisān al-Hāl, No. 7190 of 19 March, 1913 and No. 7197 of 28 March, 1913. Salān, Memoirs, pp. 23-24.
239. Salān, Memoirs, pp. 22-23. al-Ahrān, Nos. 10625 of 12 Feb., 1913 and 10651 of 14 March, 1913, and No. 10688 of 30 April, 1913. al-Muqattam, No. 7297 of 29 Mar. 1913.
240. al-Muqattam, No. 7359 of 11 June, 1913 for interview of Hazim with the editor of Jeune Turc in which he indicated this.

and that some of its demands were of an unconstitutional nature. Hazim further stated that after the promulgation of the New Law of the Vilayets there was no raison d'être for the Reform Club. On the same day Hazim communicated his order to the press.²⁴¹ On 9 April all Beirut papers, with the exception of Abābīl and al-Ra'y al-'Ām, appeared framed in borders of black, with this order as their sole contents.²⁴² As this form of protest was without precedent in Syria, the British Consul in Beirut sent a copy of al-Mufīd with the order and its translation.²⁴³

The Beirutis talked widely of demonstrations, but the Society decided to send a petition of protest to the Grand Vezir. The yali being wrongly informed that members of the Society collecting signatures for the petition were inciting the inhabitants to demonstrate, arrested five of them on 11 April. As a result, shops were closed in protest,²⁴⁴ an incident that was settled largely

241. For the Arabic text of the order, see, Lisan al-Hal No.7207 of 9 April, 1913, Photostat copy of which in, Zeine, The Emergence, p.189. al-Mufid, No.1248, of 9 April, 1913. For a French translation, see Reveil, of 10 April, 1913, being encl. in Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.31, conf., Beirut, 10 April, 1913, F.O.371/1775/18783.

242. Falastīn, No.229/26 of 12 April, 1913. al-Muqattam, No.7309 of 11 Apr., 1913, p.4. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.31, ibid.

243. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.31, ibid.

244. Lisān al-Hāl, Nos.7210 & 7211 of 12 & 13 Apr., 1913. al-Muqattam, No.7310 of 14 Apr., 1913. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.34, conf., Beirut, 17 April, 1913, F.O. 371/1775/20328.

by the efforts of the British Consul.²⁴⁵ The Decentralisation Party of Cairo showed its solidarity with the Beirutis by sending two strongly worded telegrams of protest, one to the Grand Vezir Mahmut Shevket Pasha and the other to the vali himself.²⁴⁶ It also despatched telegrams to the Foreign Ministers of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and to The Times, Le Temps and to the Congress of Ambassadors in London discussing the peace settlement for the Balkan wars.²⁴⁷ The Society protested but without avail,²⁴⁸ for the Grand Vezir replied to its telegram by another one confirming the action of the vali.²⁴⁹ The government took the view that the newly published Law of the Vilayets granted a wide measure of administrative decentralisation, which would be sufficient for the Empire now.²⁵⁰ The Syrian decentralisers rejected the new law as another step by the Unionists towards further centralization.²⁵¹

245. For Consul's part as intermediary, see, Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.34, ibid. Also, Lowther to Grey, No. 190, teleg., conf., Const., 13 April, 1913, F.O. 371/1775/16900.

246. Text in al-Muqattan, No.7310 of 14 April, 1913, p.5.

247. Ibid., text of one such telegram (to the Ambassadors Congress) in F.O.371/1779/17138 (no No.given), 13 April, 1913.

248. For texts of such protests, see, Lisān al-Hāl, No. 7210, of 12 April, 1913.

249. al-Ahrān, No.10676 and 10678 of 15 & 17 April, 1913. al-Muqattan, No.7314 of 18 April, 1913.

250. For the Turkish text of the Law, see, Idare Unumiyet Vilayet Kanuni, Istanbul, 1329. For an English analysis of the law, see, Lowther to Grey, No.300, conf., Const., 12 April, 1913, F.O.371/1801/17400.

251. Article by Rāfiq al-'Azm criticising the law in al-Muqattan, No.7308 of 11 April, 1913. See also, Cont...

Towards the end of April, probably because of the increasing agitation for reform, the government made an attempt to compromise with the decentralisers by passing a decree permitting the use of Arabic in law courts and making it the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools on condition that Turkish remained an obligatory subject.²⁵² Tanin published a series of articles complimentary to Arabic.²⁵³ The reformers were not impressed and both al-Ahrām and al-Muqattan bitterly criticised the decree. Al-Ahrām, after demanding the dismissal of Hazim Bey and the opening of the Reform Club and attacking the contradictory attitude of the government, said "Our thanks to the government for realising the importance of the Arabic language, but there is no room for bargaining and our demands should either be accepted as a whole or

F/note cont. from previous page.

al-Ahrām, 10718 of 4 June, 1913. Lowther to Grey, No.210 Teleg., conf., Const., 29 April, 1913, F.O.371/1801/19771.

252. Text of decree in official gazette, Beirut, No.1221 of 11 April, 1913. Tanin, No.1577 of 21 April, 1913. al-Ahrām, No.10683 of 23 April, 1913. al-Muqattan, No.7323 of 30 April, 1913.

253. Tanin, Nos. 1576 and 1577 of 20 and 21 April, 1913. al-Iqbal, No.495 of 5 May, 1913. English translation in Lowther to Grey, No.332, conf., Const., 21 April, 1913, F.O.371/1799/19319.

254. al-Muqattan, No.7335 of 14 May, 1913.

refused as such".²⁵⁵ al-Ahrān, then pointed out the government failed to realise that this whole question was a political and a national one.²⁵⁶

The story of reform in Beirut thus came to an end, and until the Paris Congress of June 1913, the whole movement degenerated into protests, accusations and counter-accusations in the press between the authorities and the reformers. In fact the agitation was more against the CUP than for reform. Kânil Pasha, who visited Beirut after his fall from power, summed up the attitude of the Turkish authorities to the Syrian decentralisation movement when he told some leading men in Beirut that, "he considered the demands for decentralisation, contained in the Beirut scheme, too drastic, and that he would have preferred to see the Moslems take the lead in demanding reasonable reforms from the government instead of seconding the Christians in insisting upon changes which it must be impossible and unpracticable (sic) for the government to accord."²⁵⁷

255. al-Ahrān, No.10688 of 30 April, 1913.

256. Ibid.

257. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.46, conf., Beirut, 27 May, 1913, being encl. in Lowther to Grey, No. 512, conf., Const., 7 June, 1913, F.O. 371/1822/26662.

Nevertheless the attitude of the Unionist government had embittered the Syrian decentralisers, hardened their opposition to the CUP regime and made them more than ever conscious of their rights and identity with the Empire. It was not a coincidence that some of those reformers began to voice clear and vivid ideas of a purely Arab nationalism. Dr. 'Izzat al-Jundī, a prominent Syrian decentraliser, wrote in protest against the closure of the Reform Club, that the Turks must realise that the unity of the Muslims and Christians was a fact," and he added, "Today there is no difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. An Arab bond unites us, for we are Arabs before we are Ottomans, or even Muslims or Christians Over and above everything else, we are Arabs: the Muslim is an Arab before he is a Muslim, so is the Christian and the Jew, and so are all the inhabitants in Syria and other Arab lands".²⁵⁸ Other references to a Syrian nation (Sh'ab Surri) and an Arab nation (Umma 'Arabiyya) were frequent in

258. al-Ahrān, No.10682 of 22 April, 1913.

newspaper articles and speeches by reformers. 259

It was in this atmosphere of rising tensions between the Unionist regime and the Syrian leaders, and the rapidly developing Arab movement, that the Arab Syrian Congress was to be held.

259. See for instance, al-Muqattam. No. 7311 of 15 April, 1913, and No. 7314 of 18 April, 1913 for articles by Rafiq al-'Azn, entitled "The Syrian Movement - its causes and Results". See further, al-Islah, No. 2/1397 of 12 May, 1913, for a revealing speech by 'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi in a meeting of the De-centralisation Party in Cairo.

CHAPTER V

THE ARAB CONGRESS OF PARIS

ITS PROCEEDINGS AND IMPACT.

The first Arab congress, held in Paris between 18-23 June 1913, was the last move by the Syrians to secure their demand for administrative decentralisation. It constituted the final chapter in the history of the Syrian decentralisation movement. The failure of the Congress to achieve its main aims, and the subsequent disillusionment of the Syrian Arabs with their government contributed to the main reasons that led to the appearance of separatist tendencies among their leaders.

With the closure of the Reform Club of Beirut, the dissolution of the Society of Reforms in that town and the repressive measures taken by the vali against the reformers' newspapers, the centre of agitation for reform shifted to Paris.¹ The idea of a Congress originated in the minds of five young Syrians studying in Paris.²

1. See Lisan al-Hal, Nos. 7227, 7243 of 1 and 20 May, 1913, respectively. Also- al-Ahram, No.10694 of 7 May, 1913.

2. They were: 'Abd al-Ghanī al-'Araysī (Beirut), 'Awnī 'Abd al-Hādī (Nablus) Muḥammad al-Maḥamassānī (Beirut), Jamīl Mardan (Damascus), Tawfiq Fā'id (Beirut). See, al-Lajna al-'Ulya li Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya, al-Mu'tamar al-'Arabī al-awwal, Cairo, 1913 (hereafter M:utamar), p.4. As'ad Dagher, Mudhakarattī, p.58. Aḥmad Qadri, p.14.

All were Muslims, and some authors have claimed that they were members of the secret Arab society al-Fatāt.³ The reason given by the preparatory committee for calling such a congress was to demand reforms based on administrative decentralisation in order to strengthen the Arab provinces and, in particular, Syria which were now threatened by western aggression. The committee believed that the centralist policies of the Ottoman government were the main reasons behind the weakness of the Empire and the subsequent dangers surrounding it.⁴ Al-Ahrām put it bluntly when it wrote, "there is a fear that a State is going to occupy their country, and hence the Syrians decided to convene a congress in Paris in order to declare to Europe their opposition to any foreign occupation".⁵ Rashīd Riḍā echoed the same justification for the Congress.⁶ Lisān al-Hāl stated that the reason for assembling in Paris was to make it plain to the French government that the Arab Umma generally, and the Syrians particularly, would not accept any substitute for their Ottoman

3. For example, Ahmad Qadri, p.14; Antonius, p.114; Muhibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, Sirat Jīl, p.30; al-Shihābī, p.85.

4. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 5 of 7 May, 1913, p.393. Amīn Sa'id, althawra al-'Arabiyya, Vol. 1, p.27.

5. al-Ahrām, No.10690 of 2 May, 1913.

6. al-Manār, Ibid.

government; and the Congress would then try to secure "reforms for the country, lest it pass into the hands of those who covet it."⁷

The originators of the Congress had, however, more sophisticated aims in mind. They hoped that the holding of the Congress would, besides securing administrative decentralisation for the Arab provinces, serve as a means for "the preservation of the identity of the Arab Umma, and for the removal of obstacles from the path of its progress so that it could strengthen itself by becoming civilised and by benefiting from the experiences of science and civilisation. By thus becoming strong the Arab Umma would also strengthen the whole of the Ottoman State (Dawla)".⁸ This is the first indication that the architects of the Congress considered 'westernization' as important as administrative decentralisation for the future of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In this indication lies the importance and the originality of the organisers of the Arab Congress. It is significant that the idea of the congress had sprung up among young Arabs living in Paris as a "result of their contact with the West, and their living in a free atmosphere".⁹

7. Lisān, No.7262 of 12 June, 1913.

8. M'utamar, p.5. See also, Thawrat al-'Arab, p.69; Buru, p.505; Amīn Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, 1, pp. 25-26.

9. Darwaza, 1, pp.36-37.

The originators of the idea of the Congress talked about their idea to Shukrī Ghānim and Nadra Maṭrān, two leading Syrian Christians in Paris, and then they revealed their plan to the Paris Arab community (al-Jaliyya al-'Arabiyya). The idea being approved and welcomed by all, the community elected a preparatory committee of eight persons whose job was to contact Arab organisations and leaders, and to prepared for the Congress.¹⁰ Significantly, the committee had four Muslim and four Christian members.¹¹

The appearance of an idea of a congress and the way its committee was formed had repeated distinctive features of the reform movement in Cairo and Beirut. In Paris, as well as in Beirut and Cairo, Muslims took the lead and invited the Christians to join them. In all three centres the reformers claimed to have been prompted by patriotic reasons to start their movement. It can, therefore, be suggested that the Arab Congress of Paris was the completion of the Syrian reform movement.

In fact the first decision of the preparatory committee, which was taken on 11 March 1913, stated that

10. M'utamar, p.r. Al-Shihābī, p.85. Anīn Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, 1 pp.25-26. Aḥmad Qadrī, p.14.

11. M'utamar, p.5 for the names of the committee. Of the five initiators the name of Tawfīq Fā'id was dropped. That of Ghānim, Nadra Maṭrān, Jamīl Ma'lūf and Charles Debbās (all Christians) were added to make the committee of eight. For the names with brief comments, see, al-Shihābī, ibid. Also, Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.10, conf., Beirut, 14 May, 1913, F.O.371/1822/24353.

the committee had resolved to affiliate itself to the Decentralisation Party of Cairo whose aims were the same as those of the proposed Congress.¹² The reason given by Ahmad Qadrī, a prominent member of al-Fatāt, for such a decision was "to spread the Arab movement" and spread its ideas through the agency of the Egyptian press with which the decentralisers of Egypt had already established good contacts.¹³ Moreover, the organisers of the Congress must have realised that they, because of their youth, had neither the national status among the Arabs nor the political reputation to win support for their idea of the Congress. The decentralisers of Egypt had both assets, and establishing links with them was imperative for the success of the Congress. There is no evidence that the architects of the Congress were influenced by the reformers of either Beirut or Cairo. They were acting entirely on their own initiative.

On 4 April the preparatory committee, which had already styled itself The Committee of the Arab Congress, wrote to the Decentralisation Party of Cairo conveying their decision of affiliation and asking them "to send a delegate representing the Syrian community in Egypt and who would be the president of the congress since you are

12. M'utamar, p.5. Al-Shihābī, pp.85-86. Buru, p.505.

13. Ahmad Qadrī, p.15. See further, Darwaza, 1, p.37.

the origin of our work and the example which we follow".¹⁴ Having thus made the Decentralisation Party the patron of the Congress, the committee went on to specify its agenda. The discussion would cover the following topics: the national life in the Empire and the opposition to any foreign occupation, the rights of the Arabs in the Ottoman Kingdom, the necessity of introducing reforms in the country on the basis of decentralisation (as specified in the programme of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo), and, finally, the emigration from and immigration to Syria. Speakers would be selected to discuss these topics, and the Congress would be open to the press. The preparatory committee left it to the Cairo decentralisers to decide whether the decisions of the Congress should be forwarded to the Ambassadors conference in London (where the Balkan Peace treaties were being discussed), to the various Embassies in Paris, or whether such decisions should not be forwarded at all. However, the broad outlines of that decision of the Congress would be: the recognition of the national life of the Arabs; the warding off of foreign occupation and the introduction of reforms on the basis of administrative decentralisation in the Arab lands.¹⁵

14. Text of letter in, M'utamar, pp.6-7. Also, al-'Azanī, III, pp.53-55. Amin Sa'id, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, 1, pp.25-26.

15. M'utamar, ibid. Also, al-Manār, Vol.16, part 5 of 7 May, 1913, pp.393-394.

Thus the preparatory committee had not only set the agenda of the Congress in advance but also its proceedings and decisions. The aim was not to reach new decisions but to impress on the Ottoman government the decision reached at Cairo and Beirut, namely the need for an administrative decentralist system of government for Syria, and the rest of the Arab provinces. However, the moderate programme of the decentralisers of Cairo appealed more to the committee than that of Beirut.

On 11 April the supreme committee of the Decentralisation Party accepted the invitation of the preparatory committee of the Congress,¹⁶ and on 14 April wrote to them that the representatives of their Party would be 'Abd al-Ḥanīd al-Zahrāwī, for the presidency, and Iskandar 'Ammūn.¹⁷ Al-Muqāṭṭam saw in the acceptance of the Decentralisation Party to take the lead of the Arab Congress "evidence that the Syrian nation (al-Sha'b al-Sūrī) is agreed on the demand for decentralisation, and united in the acceptance of this noble aim".¹⁸

On receiving this letter the committee of Paris published in the press a circular entitled "Invitation to the sons of the Arab Umma". The circular declared that in

16. M'utamār, p.8. Darwaza, 1, p.37. Al-Shihābī, p.86.

17. al-Manār, ibid.

18. al-Muqāṭṭam, No.7311 of 15 April, 1913.

view of the dangers surrounding the Arab lands, and in particular Syria, an Arab Congress, under the auspices of the Syrians, had been decided upon. The Congress would be attended by delegations of leading men from the Arab lands, and from Syrian communities in Egypt, the Americas and western Europe. After stating the aims of the Congress, the declaration appealed to all Arabs, and especially to their leaders, to send either their representatives or their telegrams of support to the Congress.¹⁹

The Congress was therefore intended to be an Arab one. In fact it came to be a congress organised by Syrians as an extension of the Syrian movement for decentralisation, and with the exception of two representing Iraq, all the participants were Syrians. Prominent among them were the Beirutis and Lebanese, whether representing emigrés of Paris and the Americas or representing their homelands. Even the two members who were supposed to represent Iraq were residents in Paris, one being a merchant and the other a law student. Another merchant residing in Paris represented the Syrian emigrés in Mexico. Two prominent Syrian journalists, Najīb Diyāb, the owner of Mirāt al-Gharb in New York, and Na'ūm Makarzal, the

19. Text of Circular in, M'utamar, pp.9-11. Also, al-Muqattan, No.7322 of 29 April, 1913. Al-'Azani, III, pp.55-57. For the text with an English translation see Zeine, The Emergence, Appendix M, pp.185-188. French Translation in La Vérité, pp.65-67. Izahat, pp.45-47.

owner of al-Hudā of New York, together with Ilyās Maqqūd represented the Syrian enigrês of the United States of America. Six delegates, three Muslims and three Christians, represented Beirut in their capacity as members of the Beirut Reform Society. One of them was, however, unable to attend the congress. Ba'albek was represented by two delegates, and the Arab community of Istanbul by 'Abd al-Karim al-Khālīl, the president of al-Muntadā al-Adabī.²⁰ Al Zahrāwī and 'Ammūn were the delegates of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo. The biggest delegation (four Muslims and four Christians) was that of the community of Paris.²¹

The Congress was attended by twenty-four delegates, half being Muslims and half Christians. It will be recalled that the membership of Beirut Reform Society was similarly divided between the Christians and the Muslims. Moreover, the Congress was dominated by journalists. At least ten members were professional journalists, five of whom owned newspapers, the other five being editors and correspondents. Nearly all the young Syrian Muslim participants were law students. Al-'Araysī, himself a journalist, was the only one studying political science.

20. For this society see above, pp. 175-187

21. For the complete list of the delegates see M'utamar, pp.14-16. Also, al-Ahrām, No.10737 of 26 June, 1913. al-Iṣlāḥ, No.44/1439 of 1 July, 1913.

Arab notables (a'yān) were hardly represented in the Congress, a factor utilised by the opponents of the reform movement to belittle the importance of that Congress. Furthermore, unity of purpose was lacking among the participants. While some delegates were working for the adoption of administrative decentralisation for the whole of the Arab lands, others desired reforms only for Syria or even a part of Syria such as Beirut. Izahat had indeed accused the Lebanese Christians in the Congress of working for the annexation of Beirut to the Lebanon,²² a coveted aim of Lebanese Christian nationalists. It is significant that some Muslim Arab writers repeated and believed in the accusations of Izahat.²³

'Abd al-Ḥanīd al-Zahrāwī, the president of the Congress, complained, in a letter to his friend Rashīd Riḍā, of the diversity of the assembly. He lamented that some of the Beirutis' delegation (the two Christians Khalīl Zainiyya and Ayūb Thābit) had as their "only interest Beirut and Beirut alone".²⁴ The British Consul in Beirut wrote that the aim of the Beirut delegation, whose expenses

22. Izahat, p.56. Also, La Vérité, pp.65-66.

23. For example, Salām, Memoirs, p.30; al-'Azanī, IV, pp. 71-83; Anin Sa'īd, al-thawra al-'Arabiyya, 1, p.31; Beyhun, Qawāfil, 1, p.24.

24. Text of letter in al-Manār, Vol.19, part 9, Sept.1916, pp.175-180. Also in Thawrat al-'Arab, pp.129-136. See further, S.G. Hain, "The Arab Awakening - A Source for the Historian?" Die Welt des Islams, n.s., Vol.II (1953), p.241.

were defrayed by public subscription, was to plead the cause of reform in some European capitals, including Paris, "in the hope of obtaining foreign intervention at Constantinople for the introduction of the scheme drawn at Beirut".²⁵ In another report the Consul stated that the Delegation had no written mandate but had letters of recommendation from some religious heads in Beirut and that "they have no connection with the 'Arab Syrian' Congress Committee, though they will no doubt meet and discuss matters with them".²⁶ Khalīl Zainiyya wrote in a message to al-Ahrān from Paris that the Beirut delegation decided to take part in the deliberations of the Congress" although they were not sent for this aim".²⁷ Hence the Beirut delegation remained a separate body within the Congress, a fact which led to some friction and discord.²⁸ It was this lack of unity among the delegates which the CUP government exploited and which contributed a great deal to the ultimate failure of the Congress.

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25. Cumberbatch to Lowther, No.36, conf., Beirut, 13 May, 1913, F.O.371/1775/22581.
25. Same to same, No.47, conf., Beirut, 30 May, 1913, being encl. in Lowther to Grey, No.504, conf., Const., 7 June, 1913, F.O.371/1775/
27. al-Ahrān, No.10737 of 26 June, 1913.
28. Evidence of such discord in Zainyia's messages from Paris in al-Ahrān, Nos.10780, 10797 of 15 Aug. and 5 Sept., 1913, respectively.

However, the launching of the idea of an Arab Congress in Paris aroused considerable opposition in the CUP and its Arab supporters. Tanin attacked the organisers of the Congress and raised doubts as to their real aims. It described the Congress as a 'strange' one, and tried to show that it was insignificant and that it was not representatives of all the Arabs since it had no delegates from Yemen, Baghdad, Egypt and North Africa.²⁹ Moreover the Committee government, according to some writers, tried to persuade the French government to ban the Congress.³⁰ The Committee, however, succeeded in inducing its supporters in Syria to send telegrams to Istanbul decrying the organisers of the Congress and deprecating their action as unrepresentative of the wishes of the Arabs. As'ad al-Shuqayrī, an ardent CUP supporter and the deputy for Acre, left Istanbul for Syria especially for this purpose.³¹ 'Abd al-'Azīz Jāwīsh, a former editor of al-'Allan, the organ of the Egyptian National Party - who was living in Istanbul at the time, busied himself with mobilising opposition to the Congress in the capital.³²

29. Tanin of 6 May, 1913. Arabic translation in al-Muqattab, No.7334 of 13 May, 1913, and al-Ahrām, No.106989 of 13 May, 1913. Also, thawrat al-'Arab, p.77.

30. For example, Thawrat al-'Arab, p.75. Buru, p.507. Antonius, p.115. Archival diplomatic material does not, however, reveal such attempt by the Ottoman government.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid. See further, al-'Azamī, III, pp.71-74.

These efforts, resulted in the despatch of the necessary telegrams,³³ but did not prevent the reformers from holding their Congress.

In one such telegram, a group of Damascene notables tried to minimise the significance of the call for an Arab Congress in Paris as a vengeful act against the government by three or four "amoral and aggrieved young men who had neither social position in Syria nor mandatory power to speak on behalf of its people".³⁴ It is true that the Congress did not represent the whole of Syria. Neither Damascus, nor Jerusalem, nor Aleppo were represented in it. The only Damascene in the Congress was Janīl Mardan, a young law student, who attended as one of the representatives of the Arab community in Paris.

Opposition to the Congress never took a religious form. Though it centred round two influential Damascene notables, namely 'Abd al-Raḥman Pasha al-Yūsuf, the wealthy leader of the Kurdish community of Damascus, and Muḥammad Fawzī Pasha al-'Aẓn, of the well known Aẓn family, it was not social in inspiration though it had some

33. Most of these telegrams are to be found in the Archives of the Foreign Ministry in Istanbul (Hariciye or Disisleri Arsivi) in the section: Suriye Islahati, Carton Box No.125, File No.33.

34. Dis. Ars. (Istanbul) Car. No.125/33, teleg. No.3716 dated 13 May, 1913. See also, Tanin, No.1612 of 16 May, 1913. al-Ahrān, No.10718 of 4 June, 1913 replied to the accusations of the telegram. Mu'tamar, pp.11-13, claimed that unfair means were used in order to obtain signatures for those telegrams. Also- al-Islāh, Nos.36/1431 and 37/1432 of 20, 21 June, 1913. See further, Buru, pp.507-511, Thawrat al-'Arab, pp.75-79.

social undertones. The line of division was between the opponents and the supporters of the CUP. All the participants in the Congress were its pronounced opponents who saw in its policies the biggest obstacle to the achievement of their demand for administrative reform.

Another criticism raised against the Congress was that it was to meet in Paris, "the capital of those who are covetous of our country".³⁵ Tanin, probably having Shukrī Ghānin in mind, commented that some of the signatories of the declaration calling for Congress were not Ottomans but naturalised French citizens.³⁶ Al-Iqbāl, an Islamic weekly appearing in Beirut and a supporter of the CUP, equated the holding of the Congress in Paris with treason.³⁷ The newspapers of the reformers, on the other hand, replied to such accusations assuring the government of their loyalty and patriotism.³⁸ Their arguments were the same as those given by al-Zahrāwī when asked by the editor of Le Temps, during an interview, why they chose Paris. Al-Zahrāwī told the editor of Le Temps in an

35. al-Iqbāl, No.496 of 12 May, 1913. Also Nos.497, 498 and 500 of 19, 26 May and 9 June, 1913, respectively.

36. Tanin, of 6 May, 1913.

37. al-Iqbāl, No.499 of 2 June, 1913.

38. See for example, Lisān No.7262 of 12 June, 1913; al-Islāh, No.23/1418 of 5 June, 1913; al-Ahrān, No.10690 of 2 May, 1913.

interview that they chose Paris as the place for their Congress because of the lack of freedom in Syria, a fact evident in the repressive measures taken by the government against the Beirut Reform Society. He further pointed out that the reformers wanted to make their "voice heard in Europe, whose interests are increasing day by day in the Ottoman dominions, and that by living among you we will be able to eradicate a number of misconceptions and to lay foundations for an understanding between the East and the West".³⁹ Paris, moreover, had the biggest Arab community. Al-Zahrāwī had merely repeated the same arguments used by the reformers' press.

However, the main reason for holding the Congress in Paris seems to have been the desire of the participants to draw European attention to their demands or even to secure diplomatic support for those demands. Though the papers of the reformers never hinted at the fact that the organisers of the Congress were following the example of the Armenians, who were at the time feverishly seeking the support of European Powers for their movement of reform,

39. M'utamar, p.19. For the whole interview see, pp.19-21. Also, al-Is̄lah, No.40/1435, of 26 June, 1913; Al-'Azani, III, 62-68.

40. File F.O.371/1815 deals with the Armenian reforms. For a short and lucid account see, Memorandum by Fitzmaurice, being an enc. in Marling to Grey, No.747, conf., Const., 27 Aug., 1913, F.O.371/1815/40170. See also, Grey to Lord Granville, No.236, conf., F.O. 22 July, 1913, F.O.371/1815/34337. Lowther to Grey, No.1129, conf., Const., 31 Dec., 1912, F.O.371/1773/570.

one Turkish writer was convinced that this was the aim of some of the Syrian reformers.⁴¹ Al-Zahrāwī and his associates were mainly concerned with the achievement of their ideal of administrative decentralisation, and they hoped that the government would listen to them this time more seriously from Paris. Nonetheless, by convening their Congress in Paris, the Syrian decentralisers brought to mind the memory of the Hamidian despotic rule and the struggle of the Ottoman liberals, in Paris and other European capitals, to end that rule.

The Congress lasted six days during which four formal sittings were held. Nine speeches were delivered, and their theme followed closely the published agenda of the Congress. The speeches were examined and approved by a committee of five before they were read to the listeners.⁴² Each sitting began with the reading of telegrams and messages of support sent to the Congress by various individuals and organisations, then the speech would follow and after a short discussion the meeting usually ended. The sessions were attended by some 200 Arab listeners, and on the last day of the Congress the doors were "thrown open to all visitors without restriction and the deliberations were held in French".⁴³ All the

41. Şeyh Muhsin Fâni, On Temmuz, p.168.

42. M'utamar, p.24 gives names of this committee. In pp.22-24 the programme of each sitting.

43. Antonius, p.115.

proceedings of the first three sittings were conducted in Arabic. The president and the committee were elected by secret ballot, and the offices of the committee were equally divided between the Muslims and Christians.⁴⁴

The speeches and the deliberations of the Congress emphasised the need for reforms on the basis of decentralisation, and laid strong emphasis on the Arab claim for full political rights in the Ottoman Empire, and to their right to participate in the administration of its affairs. There were also constant references in the speeches to the opposition of the Arabs to any foreign intervention in their lands. The reference here is clearly to the rumoured designs of France in Syria.⁴⁵ There was no talk, however, of separation from the Empire. On the contrary, loyalty to the Empire was most fervently expressed, and all the speakers stressed their desire to maintain its integrity, provided the demands of the Arabs for a decentralised form of government were granted. What, perhaps, marked the Congress as an important phase in the history of the Arab movement was the fact that its deliberations "give a vivid picture of the 'atmosphere' of moderate Arab nationalism at the time. It was an

44. For the names of the committee and details of the opening session see M'utamar, p.27. Also, al-Islāh, No.44/1439 of 1 July, 1913, al-Mufid, No.1315 of 1 July, 1913 and al-Ahrān, No.10737 of 26 June, 1913.

45. Antonius, p.115.

atmosphere of 'westernisation,,, "⁴⁶ Some of the speeches show that the younger Arabs, who were in touch with western civilisation and culture, were modelling their views on race and nationalism on western political theories prevalent at the time.⁴⁷ The road for the emergence of the doctrine of Arabism was thus being paved as early as the year 1913.

Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrāwī was the first speaker to address the Congress. He started his talk "Our Political Education" by stressing the necessity for such gatherings and by replying to the accusation of the opponents of the Congress that the participants had no social standing in their countries. He then argued that the essence of any political education was to teach the people (umma) the principle of keeping vigil over the acts of the government in order to safeguard their rights. The principle though not entirely unknown to the Arabs, was long known in Europe.⁴⁸ Al-Zahrāwī went on to emphasise the fact that politics which for ten centuries had made the Arabs and the Turks mix with each other had begun to divide them, and the Ottoman bond which had for so long united the two races was now grievously damaged. The only way to save that bond and to preserve the integrity of the

46. . Hourani, Arabic Thought, p.283.

47. H.Z. Nusseibeh, The Ideas of Arab Nationalism, Ithaca, New York, 1959, pp.51-52.

48. M'utamar, p.31.

Empire would be to admit the Arabs to its administration. He then declared, "From now on the basis of our political education will be to spread this idea and to adhere to it. We have found that decentralisation is the best of means for taking part in the administration outside the capital. As for the affairs of government in the capital, our brothers [the Turks] are not ignorant of the ways and means of sharing in their administration".⁴⁹ Al-Zahrāwī⁵⁰ wished the Armenians and the Kurds to adopt the same idea.

The concluding remarks of al-Zahrāwī were the most significant part of his address. Their significance lay in the compliments and flattery which he, a turbaned shaykh of strong religious background, paid to Europe. After refuting the allegation that the aim of the members of the Congress was to sell the Arab lands to the foreigners, al-Zahrāwī stated:

"We have not come to Europe for that We have come to Europe, and we hope many of us will follow suit, to enlarge and broaden our intellect and resolution by seeing the achievement of intellects. We have come to add to our knowledge of Europe's civilisation, and of its civilised social systems ."

Al-Zahrāwī wanted Europe to know more "about us". "Europe is not the ghoul; the ghoul is bad administration and corrupt management. If Europe is a ghoul it would not

49. Ibid., pp.36-37.

50. Ibid.

have given the Empire aid for the last hundred years".⁵¹ He finished his speech by hoping that the Arab nation would support the cause of the Congress.⁵²

The second speaker was a 'Abd al-Ghanī al-'Araysī, one of the initiators of the Congress, and subsequently one of its five secretaries. Together with another Syrian he owned and edited al-Mufīd of Beirut, a paper noted for its strong opposition to the CUP as well as its leaning towards a moderate Arab nationalism. Al-'Araysī who was studying journalism and political science in Paris at the time of the Congress, however, came to be identified with trends of extreme Arab nationalism which emerged after the outbreak of the First World War, and was consequently executed by the Turks in 1916.

In all the deliberations of the Congress, it was the speech of al-'Araysī which revealed, "how much the Arabs had already drunk from the springs of European nationalism".⁵³ It showed fully the direct influence of western political concepts on the minds of the younger generation of Arab leaders. Al-'Araysī echoed theories of race and nation, which were current in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century.

51. Ibid., p.38.

52. Full text of speech in, M'utamar, pp.28-38. Also, al-Islāh, No.44/1439 of 1 July, 1913, and al-Ahrān, No. 10737 of 26 June, 1913.

53. Nuseibeh, p.51.

Al-'Araysī told his audience:

"In every political system there are two kinds of rights: the rights of the individual, and the rights of the group (Haqq Janā'ah). The groups are many, but the most exalted is the national group. And the nations have a right which is quite different from that of the individuals." 54

Al-'Araysī, then, put the question whether the Arabs have the right of a group, and he answered:

"In the view of the German school [of political science], a group has no claim to any such rights unless they possess unity of language and of race; unity of history and traditions according to the Italian school. The French scholars require unity of political aspirations. If we consider the Arabs in the light of these political views, we find that they possess unity of language, unity of history, traditions and unity of political aspirations. The Arabs, therefore, are entitled to the right of group, of nation and an umma." 55

He went on to say, "The first right of any group is the right of nationality. The Arabs as a group, are no exception. We are Arabs before we acquire any political colouring [before we are Ottomans]. We have preserved our characteristics, our attributes and our entity over many centuries in spite of the efforts of Istanbul, aiming at political absorption, imperial exploitation and racial amalgamation. All these efforts, however, led to one result - zeal for our rights as a group and to the revival of this honourable and noble instinct, the instinct of race [in us]. We will oppose all that which might result in the weakening of this nationality, and we will seek all that which might revive the characteristics and attributes of the Arabs." 56

54. M'utanar, p.42. Al-Shihābī, p.89.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., p.43. Al-Shihābī, p.90. Buru, p.515. Nusbeibeh, p.53.

Al-'Araysī, then, denied that the Ottoman state could claim the right of conquest in the Arab lands. It might claim this in the Balkans, but it is common knowledge that the Arabs were not conquered. On the contrary, they helped the Ottomans to establish the basis of their state. "We are the basis of this state, and not exploited captives".⁵⁷ The Arabs were determined to preserve their position, their nationality and their equality in the Empire. They had no aspiration whatsoever to secede as long as their rights were maintained. "Our adherence to this State [the Ottoman State] depends on how far our rights are guaranteed. The stronger that guarantee, the greater the degree of ^{our adherence to} that State".⁵⁸ This declaration amounted to a mild threat. It shows how far the Arab leaders became conscious of their power in the Ottoman Empire in the period following the Balkan Wars.

Al-'Araysī went on to show at length how the rights of the Arab nation (umma) were completely neglected by the government. While the Arab population of the Empire amounted to 13 millions, more than half the population of that Empire, they had only five members in the Ottoman Senate, and far fewer representatives in the Chamber of the Deputies than their numbers seemed to justify. He complained that the Arab deputies were not elected

57. M'utamar, p.43.

58. Ibid., p.45.

but appointed, and that the Arabs, though the biggest ethnic group in the Empire, were not represented in the cabinet. Not only that, but the Arabs were hardly employed in the administrative posts of the Empire: there was one Arab vali in every thirty, half the posts in Istanbul "and all the posts in our countries (bilādunā) are not in our hands".⁵⁹

The speaker declared that as long as the Arabs remained half the population of the Empire, they should have a say in the way government loans assigned for public works were spent. Half ought to be spent in the Arab lands. As for Arabic, it must be made the official language in the Arab countries, not by a mere decree of the govern-⁶⁰ment, but by an article in the Constitution of the Empire. A decree passed by one government, he argued, might be rescinded by another. He concluded by declaring:

"We ask for our right as a group, as partners in this State: partners in the legislative and executive powers, and as partners in the general administration of the Empire. As for the internal affairs of our countries [vilayets] we are partners of ourselves: for instance in the funds for education, public works and awqāf - also in freedom of the press and of association. To attain such an end, the General Councils of the vilayets should be given extensive powers".⁶¹

The Arabs, he said, would use all legal means to reach their goal, and if Istanbul tried to silence them

59. Ibid., pp.45-48. See also, al-Shihābī, pp.91-92. Buru, p.516.

60. M'utamar, p.49.

61. Ibid. Also, al-Shihābī, p.92.

by force, they would fall back on other means; "In politics the end justifies the means especially if that end is just and noble."⁶²

Al-'Araysī's speech, typical of the first Arab Congress in many ways, was followed by a brief, tense discussion. The president of the Congress agreed with all the speaker had said. Ahmad Mukhtār Beyhun, a member of the Beirut delegation, suggested that the Congress should pass a resolution stating that all the reformers should refuse to accept any posts until the government carried out the desired reforms. The suggestion was postponed to the end of the session, when all resolutions would be taken. Another suggestion stated that in order to avoid weakening the Empire by allowing too many official languages, Arabic, the language of the Quran and of the majority group, should be made the sole official language of the whole Empire. Al-'Araysī replied that specifying more than one official language would not weaken the Empire. Belgium and Switzerland were examples in point. Moreover, he stated that making Arabic the official language of the Empire would be unfair to Turkish, and we wanted ^{no} more than to preserve our language. The president however, stopped the discussion at this point.⁶³

62. Ibid., p.50. For the full text of the speech see M'utamar, pp.42-50. The speech was entitled "The Rights of the Arabs in the Ottoman Kingdom". See also, al-Islāh, No.48/1443 of 6 July, 1913, and al-Ihrān, No.10744 of 4 July, 1913. Parts of the speech in al-Shihābī, pp.89-93.

63. For the discussion of al-'Araysī's speech see, M'utamar, pp.50-53.

In the afternoon session, Nadra Maṭrān, a member of a well known Greek Orthodox family in Ba'albek, and who was residing in Paris, delivered his address on "The preservation of the National Life in the Ottoman Arab Lands".⁶⁴ In a lengthy introduction to his speech Nadra emphasised the solidarity of the Muslim and Christian Syrians, and argued that the Arabs were worthy of a political life of their own. He told his audience that, until the massacres of 1860, which were engineered by the Ottoman government in order to introduce a more centralised form of administration in Syria, the Syrian Arabs were left under the rule of their local notables and ashrāf, and were subjected to a minimum of interference from Istanbul. Because of the bond of religion the Muslim Arabs never felt themselves a conquered people under the Seljuks, the Ayyubids and the Ottomans. They accepted their rule as a Muslim rule aiming at the support of Islam and the raising of the banner of the caliphate.⁶⁵ They felt that they were their brothers and partners in the administration of their countries. In making these remarks Maṭrān was trying to justify the long acquiescence of the Syrian Arabs to foreign rule, and he was not attempting, as Ernest Dawn put it, "To make the glory of

64. Nuseibeh, p.51, erroneously stated that the address of Maṭrān was entitled "Social Solidarity between Muslim and Christian Arabs".

65. M'utamar, pp.55-56.

Islam virtually equivalent to the glory of the Arabs".⁶⁶

Maṭrān went on to add that the idea of race had always held stronger appeal for the Arabs than religion. He said, "If racial pride is a virtue, then the Arabs possess it to an extent unequalled by other peoples."⁶⁷ His proof was that the Ghassanid Arabs, who were Christians, deserted the Byzantines, their fellow-Christians, and collaborated with their Arab kinsmen in the army of Abū 'Ubaydeh Ibn al-Jarāḥ, when the latter advanced on Syria at the head of his Muslim army. "The Arab solidarity shown by the Ghassanid Christians during that critical juncture is the strongest proof that the Arabs' pride of race takes precedence over religion. And this is indeed the virtue of living nations, the nations that refuse to die".⁶⁸ These comments, however, illustrate how far the ideas of the leaders of the Syrian Arabs have been affected by western political thought.

After assuring his listeners that the Arabs wanted real reform, and after denying any danger of European intervention in Syria, Maṭrān declared that the Arab umma was never desirous of replacing the Ottoman rule by a foreign one, nor were they anxious to establish an Arab

66. See C. Ernest Dawn "From Ottomanism to Arabism: the origin of an Ideology" in The Review of Politics, xxiii (1961), p.397.

67. M'utamar, p.58.

68. Ibid. See also, Nuscibeh, pp.51-52. Ernest Daw, The Review of Politics, 1961, pp.396-7.

State (Dawla 'Arabiyya).⁶⁹ "We Arabs," he concluded, "want fraternity with the rest of the Ottoman ethnic groups ('anāsir)."⁷⁰

In the discussion which followed, the president emphasised the fact that apart from the massacres of 1860, the Syrians lived in harmony. When Maṭrān was asked by a certain Maḥbūb al-Shartūnī if he denied the fact that France had some interests in Syria, the president reminded al-Shartūnī as well as the rest of the audience that there was "no need to discuss subjects other/^{than}those concerning our administrative and internal affairs".⁷¹ Khalīl Zainiyya, a member of the Beirut delegation and an alleged protégé of France, suggested to the participants, who accepted his suggestion, that no one should be allowed to discuss the foreign policies of the powers in that session and the coming ones. On that note ended the address of Maṭrān.⁷² His speech was a significant one because it was an attempt by a member of a religious minority to encourage the substitution of ethnic for religious solidarity.⁷³

69. M'utamar, pp.59-63.

70. Ibid., p.63.

71. Ibid., p.64.

72. For the text of the whole address see, Ibid., pp.54-64. Also, al-Iṣlāḥ, No.45/1440 of 2 July, 1913.

73. In the circumstances, the speech of Maṭrān, was interesting. Cf. the position of the Copts vis-à-vis Egyptian nationalism. See, Samir Seikaly, The Copts under the British Rule, an unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, presented to the University of London, 1967.

The Congress then proceeded with its programme and Najīb Diyāb, owner of the newspaper Mir'āt al-Gharb, and the representative of the "Syrian Unity Society" in New York, was called upon to deliver his address. It was entitled, "The Hopes of the Syrian Émigrés". Najīb supported his fellow Syrian reformers in their demand for reform, and their desire to secure their rights within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. He hoped that the fatherland would soon attain the standard of European constitutional rule and that the émigrés would return to their country equipped with European knowledge and science in order to benefit that country.⁷⁴ The sitting ended after the participants accepted the suggestion that no reformer should accept any government post unless the basic programme of the Congress was agreed to by Istanbul.⁷⁵

The main speeches in the third session of the Congress were those of Shaykh Aḥmad Ṭabbārah, one of the prominent Muslim delegates of Beirut, and editor of al-Itihād al-'Uthmānī and later of al-Isḫāḥ, and that of Iskandar 'Arḡūn, the delegate of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo. Ṭabbārah spoke on "Emigration from and Immigration to Syria". After giving a statistical survey of the area of Syria, its population and the number of the Syrian

74. Text of speech in, M'utamar, pp.66-74. Also al-Ahrān, No.10746, of 7 July, 1913. al-Isḫāḥ, No.49/1444 of the same date.

75. For more details see M'utamar, pp.76--80.

immigrants abroad and the reasons leading to such immigration,⁷⁶ Ṭabbārah went on to assure his audience that the reformers wanted to strengthen the Arab nation and that "We want reform in order that we may become the tongue and the beating heart of the State... We were born Ottomans, grew up as Ottomans and want to remain Ottomans. We will not accept any substitute for our Ottoman State".⁷⁷ When Ṭabbārah came to the part of his speech dealing with immigration to Syria he was very brief. In the eight lines which he devoted to this important issue, he told his audience:

"People are divided into two groups as regards the problem of immigration to Syria. One group disapproves of the immigration of non-Arabs to Syria, and is apprehensive that the intermingling between the newcomer and the native might corrupt the latter's morals and change his customs. The other group sees no objection to this immigration, and in contrast to the first group, believes that it has some gain for Syria because the Arabs, according to this group, have the quality of absorbing newcomers, and not being absorbed by them. As for myself, I believe that the country ought to welcome the near and the distant, and I see no objection to the immigration if it has a special form of organisation [nizām khāss]." 78

It was not clear whether Ṭabbārah was referring to Jewish immigration to Palestine, a question very much discussed at the time, or to the question of immigrants

76. Ibid., pp.84-88.

77. Ibid., pp.89-90. For the whole text of the speech, see, ibid., pp.84-94. Also, al-Muqtabas, (Daily) No.1242 of 13 July, 1913; al-Iṣlah, No.50/1445 of 8 July, 1913.

78. Ibid., pp.92-93.

from European Turkey which Tanin had suspected the participants in the Congress were determined to oppose.⁷⁹ It seems that Ṭabbārah was referring to both questions but in a rather ambiguous way.

As to why he adopted this vague attitude to such important issues, it is difficult to give a definite answer. One can only put forward a mere suggestion which evidence in the Arabic sources seem to augment. The Turkish and western sources do not deal in detail with this period in the history of the Turkish-Syrian relations, and are therefore almost silent over this issue. Ṭabbārah as well as the organisers of the Congress, however, must have realised that it would serve the purpose of their Congress better if they confined themselves to their major aim, namely the demand for administrative decentralisation. To fight on more than one front would have been folly, and to dwell on the complicated issue of the Jewish immigration to Palestine which involved European countries, would divert attention from their main purpose. After all, they came to Europe not to alienate it, but to seek sympathy and support. They always associated the Jewish immigrants

79. Tanin of 6 May, 1913. Arabic translation of article in al-Muqattān, No. 7334 of 13 May, 1913. Tanin's suspicions were based on a series of articles which appeared in al-Muqattān towards the end of 1912 opposing the coming of refugees and immigrants from the Balkans (following the Balkan war there) to Syria as an intentional effort by the government to weaken the Arab nation and their national movement. See al-Muqattān, Nos. 7210, 7211, 7212 and 7224 of 13, 14, 16 and 31 Dec., 1912, respectively.

with European culture and financial interests. As such they were welcome. But what the reformers wanted at the time was to be the masters in their own house, and once that happened, the coming of the Jews to Syria could be regulated by "a special form of organisation" as Ṭabbārah had already indicated. His point of view was shared by other Syrian leaders.⁸⁰ What worried them at that time was not the Jewish immigration as such, but uncontrolled Jewish immigration. They suspected the CUP of being in league with the Zionists and consequently of giving them free unregulated entry to Palestine.⁸¹

Another theory put forward as an explanation for the ambiguity of Ṭabbārah over the issue of Jewish immigration to Syria was that the speech of Ṭabbārah came at a time when an entente between the leaders of the Syrians and those of the Zionists was contemplated, and preliminary steps had already been taken towards achieving it.⁸²

80. See al-Ahrān, No.10718 of 4 June, 1913 where Raīq al-'Azn, the president of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo, told Sami Hochberg, the editor of the Zionist-backed Jeune Turc, that he and his party welcome the immigration of Jews if "a law for such immigration has been laid down as in all other foreign countries". Also, al-Islāh, No.24/1419 of 6 June, 1913.

81. See for example, Falaṣṭīn, Nos. 170/69, of 11 Sept.1912, and 196/95, 20099 of 11, 25 Dec., 1912 respectively. Al-Islāh, Nos.48/1442 of 6 July, 1913 and 72/1467 of 2 Aug., 1913, 156/1551 of 15 Nov., 1913. Also, al-Ikdān, Nos. 12, 19 of 15 March, and 3 May, 1914, respectively. Al-Ahrān, 10096 of 30 May, 1911.

82. N. Mandel, "Attempts at an Arab-Zionist Entente, 1913-14", in MES, Vol.I, No.3, April, 1965, pp.238-267. See also his article, "Turks, Arabs and Jewish Immigration into Palestine, 1882-1914", in St. Antony's Papers,

Thus any opposition which Ṭabbārah might have felt did not appear in his speech because either of his discretion or that of the committee whose duty it was to revise and approve the speeches of the Congress. Not only that but we are also told:

"A resolution was proposed in favour of such immigration as was capable of benefiting Syria economically. In the discussion which followed, Khairallah Kharallah, a delegate representing the Arabs in Paris, spoke against Turkish immigration, and said that only an immigration of people of means could be useful to the Arab provinces. At this Beyhum exclaimed, "Jewish immigration: yes, but Turkish immigration, no." There were some murmurs from the Arab students who had assisted in the organisation of the Congress, but none spoke against this remark. All the speakers concurred with Khairallah in opposing Turkish immigration." 83

The president, al-Zahrāwī, who was keen not to anger the Ottoman government, goes the narrative, intervened, and a decision to condemn Turkish immigration was

F/note cont. from previous page.

No.17, MEA, No.4, ed. A. Hourani, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965, pp.99-102. See further his unpublished thesis (same title as the previous article), Oxford, Ch.8 and Ch. 10. Mandel relied heavily on Jewish archival material (mainly the Central Zionist Archives) for the propagation of his theory of an Arab-Zionist entente. Though the Arabic newspapers, some of which Mandel read in translation toyed with the idea of coming to an understanding with the leaders of the Zionists in the Empire, none of these articles went as far as to put specific and definite proposals for an entente.

83. N. Mandel, "Attempts at an Arab-Zionist entente", in MES, April, 1965, p.248.

dropped.⁸⁴ Falastīn, an anti-Zionist paper appearing in Jaffa, commented on Ṭabbārah's speech by commending him on showing clearly the dangers of immigration from European Turkey to Syria, but "he looked at the problem from one angle, for he did not mention the dangers which Zionist immigration would bring to the country, nor the future problems which the leniency of the government with them would create".⁸⁵ There is no sign of anger in the commentary of Falastīn, and its reference to Ṭabbārah's speech as showing the dangers of immigration from European Turkey to Syria remains puzzling for the official text of that speech, and the press reports of it, made no mention of such dangers.

If the above-mentioned discussion of Ṭabbārah's speech is true, then it shows that there was much discussion and activity which were not recorded in the book, al-M'utamar al-'Arabi al-Awwal, published by the Ottoman Decentralisation Party of Cairo as the official account of the proceedings of the Congress. The book was published as early as 1913, and the Ottoman government, which found its contents harmful, prevented its distribution in the Empire.⁸⁶ Nevertheless there is no mention in the book of

84. Ibid.

85. Falastīn, No.252/49 of 9th July, 1913. See also, Mandel, "Turks, Arabs" St. Antony's Papers, 17, p.101.

86. B.A (Istanbul), Meclisi Vukla Mazbatasi, No.186/784 of 4 March, 1914; see also, Fata al-'Arab, No.93/1527 of 2 April, 1914.

any discussion after Ṭabbārah's address, and certainly no reference to the delegates discussing or condemning the Turkish immigration from European Turkey into Syria. Anīr Shakīb Arslān in his book Ilā al-'Arab, which was a reply to and a refutation of, the demand for decentralisation, declared in emotional and reciprocal language that the reformers of Paris had discussed and rejected the Turkish emigration from European Turkey.⁸⁷ What makes one doubt the validity of his statement is that he added that the reformers, while rejecting the immigration of the refugees from the Balkan states, did not mention the movement of emigration from Syria, which had devastated the Syrian lands.⁸⁸ Arslān was certainly wrong here, for most of Ṭabbārah's address was in fact devoted to the subject of emigration from Syria.

Iskandar 'Annūn, the vice-president of the Decentralisation Party, was the last to address the Congress in its last session of 21 June, 1913. In his address, "Reform on the basis of Decentralisation," 'Annūn summed up the aims and aspiration of the decentralisation movement. He pointed out the defects of the system of centralisation, and asserted that the call for decentra-

87. Shakīb Arslān, Ilā al-'Arab, pp.83-85.

88. Ibid., pp.83-84.

lisation was not a call for separation from the Ottoman Empire, nor was it a movement against the Turks. "It is the mere replacing of one form of government, which has nearly caused the death of the State, by administrative decentralisation which would benefit all the ethnic groups of the Empire."⁸⁹ He told the audience: "We want an Ottoman government, neither Turkish nor Arab, and in which all Ottomans have equal rights and obligations, and that no group would deprive the other ~~from~~^{of} its rights for reasons of either race or religion."⁹⁰

The discussion which followed 'Ammūn's address showed the cleavage that existed inside the Congress between the Beirut delegation supported by some Lebanese participants on the one hand, and the delegates of the Decentralisation Party, and perhaps the rest of the members on the other. Charles Dabbās, a representative of the Arabs in Paris, reminded 'Ammūn that there would be no real reform without the help of the foreign advisers. He cited the example of Japan, which employed foreign advisers, and as a result progressed and defeated Russia, while Indo-China felt apprehensive about foreign experts

89. M'utamar, p.103.

90. Ibid., p.104. For the full text of speech see, Ibid., p.98-104. Also, al-Ahrān, No.10742 of 2 July, 1913. Parts of the speech in al-Shihābī, pp.93-95.

and was dominated and exploited by the foreigners. Salīm 'Alī Salām, a leading Muslim among the Beirut delegation, agreed with Dabbās and added that the Beirutis included a demand for foreign advisers in their scheme. Ahmad Ṭab-bārah (Beirut) half-heartedly commented that every vilayet should be left to decide on the issue in accordance with their local needs. 'Ammūn replied that there was no difference between the programme of his Party and other reform schemes.⁹¹ It seems, thus, that the Congress was not a happy harmonious gathering, and differences existed between its members, a factor which the CUP government was to exploit in its attempt to kill the reform movement.

After two short speeches,⁹² the Congress
 proceeded to pass eleven resolutions and three appendices.⁹³
 These resolutions restated the principles of the decentra-
 lisation movement. Arabic should be acceptable in the
 Ottoman parliament and the official language in the Arab
 vilayets. Instruction should be in that language. Mili-
 tary service was to be performed locally except in time
 of war. The principles of employing foreign advisers and

91. For the discussion see, M'utanasar, pp.104-106.

92. See Ibid., pp.107-112.

93. For the list of the resolutions and appendices, See, Ibid., pp.113-120. al-'Azamī, III, pp.68-70. Ahmad Qadri, pp.16-18. Buru, 522-23. Thawrat al-'Arab, 72-73. For a French translation see, Carnegie to Grey, No.339, conf., Paris, 23 June, 1913, F.O.371/1827/29037. Also, Zeine, The Emergence, pp. 161-162, Appendix C.

extending the powers of the General Council of the vilayets (as in the reform scheme of Beirut) should be accepted and carried out immediately.⁹⁴ The central government should help the Lebanon to cover its deficit. This request was probably made as a friendly gesture towards the Lebanese nationalists in the Congress, possibly at their own instigation. The Congress expressed its support and approval for the Armenian demands which were based on decentralisation. In the appendices, all those who supported the Congress were thanked. The threat was repeated that all members of the various reform societies would refuse all governmental posts unless the resolutions were implemented. If their societies permitted them to accept such posts, then they might do so. Finally it was stated that these resolutions should be the "political programme of all Ottoman Arabs, and no candidate should be supported in the parliamentary elections unless he undertakes to support this programme".⁹⁵

The fourth and last session of the Congress was held on 23 June, 1913, and was open to all who wanted to attend. Moreover, its proceedings were conducted in French. Beyhum, Dabbās and Ghānin gave their speeches

94. Some murmurs and criticism of the demand for foreign advisers were heard, and replies by Beirutis were given. See, M'utamar, p.114.

95. Ibid., p.119.

which were more or less a résumé of what had already been said in the Congress. Their aim was to familiarise the press and foreigners who attended the meeting with the aims of the Congress.⁹⁶

The First Arab Congress ended officially when its president accompanied by six of its members called upon Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, to thank him for the hospitality of the French government, and afterwards called on Rifat Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris to hand him the resolutions of the Congress.⁹⁷

From this point onwards, the story of the Congress became that of delegations travelling between Paris and Istanbul, agreements signed, promises made and subsequently broken.

Perhaps the most important immediate outcome of the Congress was that it resulted in a short-lived honeymoon between the CUP government and the Syrian decentralisers. For a moment it looked as if the long-standing grievances of the Syrian Arabs had come to an end.⁹⁸ The tone of the CUP press completely changed; after opposing and attacking the reformers bitterly,

96. French text of Beyhum's speech in, *Ibid.*, pp.124-134. Translation of that of Debbas and Ghānīn in pp.135-9, pp.140-6, respectively.

97. The delegation were : al-Zahrāwī, Salān, Beyhum, Zainiyya, Ghānīn, Ṭabbārah and 'Annūn. For details of interview with Pichon and speeches see: *Le Temps* of 1 July, 1913, encl. in Carnegie to Grey, No.353, conf., Paris, 30 June, 1913, F.O.371/1827/30049. Also *M'utānār*, pp.147-8. *al-Ahrān*, 10748 and 10764, of 9 and 28 July, 1913, respectively.

98. *al-Ahrān*, No.10748 of 9 July, 1913.

papers such as Vazifat, the official organ of the CUP government, wrote as early as the end of June deprecating the fact that, "the Turkish press knows little of the nature of the Syrian problem, because it has no correspondents in Syria. Our press tackles Syrian affairs in an ignorant way". The paper went on to say that it was not enough to read the reports of the valis ^{of} Syria, and that much time and energy should be spent in learning the essence of the Syrian problem.⁹⁹ This optimistic and promising attitude was also reflected in the Arabic press.¹⁰⁰ It seems that both the Turkish and Arab journalists were aware of the fact that negotiations were in progress between the Syrian reformers of Paris, and Midhat Şukru, the secretary general of the CUP and, more or less, the spokesman for the government.

The CUP government, having failed to prevent the meeting of the Congress in Paris, decided to negotiate a settlement with the Syrian reformers.¹⁰¹ The reports of the talks and activity which preceded the actual agreement

99. Vazifat as quoted by Lisān al-Ḥāl, No.7277 of 1 July, 1913.

100. See Lisān, No.7288 of 14 July, 1913. al-Ahrān, ibid. al-Muqattam, No.7376 of 1 July, 1913. al-Iṣlah, No.377/1432 of 21 June, 1913.

101. al-Manār, Vol.16, part 8 of 2 Aug., 1913, p.635 ff. Thawrat al-'Arab, p.79. al-Ahrān, Ibid.

between the government and the Congress leaders are very confused. Most of the newspapers which reported the events of these few days between the beginning of the Congress and the conclusion of the settlement gave varied and often conflicting reports.¹⁰² The account of Rashīd Riḍā in al-Manār, however, is the most accurate narrative of the actual events of those few weeks.¹⁰³

The CUP reached a general understanding with regard to the main demands of the decentralisers with 'Abd al-Karīm al-Khalīl, the president of al-Muntadā al-Adabī. According to Riḍā this understanding was reached owing to the efforts of Sharīf 'Alī Ḥaydar, a supporter of the CUP who was desirous of reconciling the Arab reformers and the government.¹⁰⁴ After the terms of the understanding were signed by al-Khalīl and Talāt Bey, the former came to Paris to put them before the decentralisers. He was hoping to secure their support for the drafted agreement. Al-Ihrān wrote that the first condition which the reformers laid down was the removal of Hazin Bey, the vali of Beirut, "who was the sole reason

102. See for example: Ikdan, No.5874 of 28 June, 1913. Lisān, No.7283 and 7288 of 8, 14 July, 1913.

103. See, al-Manār, Vol.16, Part 8 of 2 Aug., 1913, pp. 635-640.

104. Ibid., p.636. Also, Djemal Pasha, Memoirs of a Turkish Statesman, pp.58-59. G. Stitt, A Prince of Arabia: The Emir Shercef Ali Haidar, London, 1937, is completely silent on the role of the Sharif in the settlement.

behind their coming to Paris".¹⁰⁵ Hazim was, however, removed, and the reformers' press hailed this as the herald of the promised reform.¹⁰⁶

The decentralisers of Paris revised the draft of the agreement, and after making slight additions, they declared they were ready to negotiate its contents with the CUP. Al-Khalīl went back to Istanbul and conveyed to the leaders of the Committee the views of his fellow reformers in Paris. Consequently Midhat Şukru and al-Khalīl "the messenger of peace and reconciliation" arrived in Paris, and after some discussions an agreement of twelve points was arrived at.¹⁰⁷

The agreement which the press of the reformers considered as a victory for their cause, was not published immediately. In fact what is known of it is mainly what that press claimed to be its unpublished draft. Al-Ahrān and al-Iṣlāḥ saw in the agreement a severe rebuff by the government to the opponents of the reform movement, and a tacit recognition of the pure intentions of the reformers.¹⁰⁸

105. al-Ahrān, No.10738 of 27 June, 1913. al-Iṣlāḥ, No. 50/1445 of 8 July, 1913 claimed that Hazim was dismissed as a move to gain the confidence of the Arabs, and that his successor Ali Munif was instructed by Talat to respect the wishes of the Beirutis.

106. See for example, al-Ahrān, ibid., al-Iṣlāḥ, ibid.

107. al-Manār, ibid., 636.

108. al-Ahrān, ibid. al-Iṣlāḥ, No.56/1451 of 15 July, 1913.

Jubilant reports kept coming from Istanbul that the government had decided to carry out reforms in Syria, and in one of these reports Talat Bey was reported to have said that all the demands of the Syrians were going to be accepted and that "the government desires to live in peace with the Arabs".¹⁰⁹ Al-Muqattam, always severe in its criticism of the CUP, admitted that the Arab demands had been accepted, but asserted that their acceptance was due to pressure by the Arab officers on the Unionists.¹¹⁰ In another lengthy article al-Muqattam alleged that most of the demands of the Congress of Paris were accepted by the government. It claimed that the Armenians were envious of the success of the Syrians, and were reported as saying, "The Syrians and the Arabs got more than we, although we struggled for longer years than they."¹¹¹

Though things looked unruffled on the surface, the leaders of the decentralisers were becoming exasperated by the long time the government had taken without issuing any official recognition of the Paris agreement. Rumours were getting wilder every day, and when Reuter published a telegram that the government had accepted the demands of the Arabs, Rafīq al-'Aẓm, the president of

109. Lisān, No.7282 of 7 July, 1913. al-Isḫāḥ, No.49/1444 of 7 July, 1913.

110. al-Muqattam, No.7376 of 1 July, 1913.

111. al-Muqattam, No.7386 of 12 July, 1913.

the Decentralisation Party, hastened to publish the terms of the Paris agreement in the press.¹¹² It seems that Rafīq al-'Aẓm intended this as a tactical move to pin the government down to what it had promised to the reformers. Al-'Aẓm was certainly mistaken in his calculation, for it was this publication of the terms of the alleged agreement (which the government had intended to keep secret in order not to incite the other ethnic groups of the Empire to similar demands) that jeopardized the harmonious relations which had for such a short time existed between the CUP and the Syrians.

In the letter which al-'Aẓm sent to the press, he stated that the agreement recognised the rights of the Arabs in the Ottoman Empire and the need for reforms in the Arab provinces, on the basis of administrative decentralisation. The agreement contained thirteen articles. Education in the elementary and secondary schools was to be in Arabic. Arab soldiers were to serve when needed in places near their homelands. It provided for the appointment of European inspectors in every vilayet, and for a special regulation specifying their duties and terms of reference. Official transactions in the Arab provinces were to be in Arabic. The decisions of the General Councils

112. See: al-Ahrām, No.10753 of 15 July, 1913. al-Muqattam, No.7388 of 15 July, 1913. Compare with al-Iṣlah, No. 58/1453 of 17 July, 1913.

should be valid and must be carried out immediately. The awqāf were to be left in hands of the millet councils. Public works to be dealt with by the local authorities. Three cabinet ministers were to be from among the Arabs. At least five valis and ten mutasarrifs to be Arabs; there should also be Arab advisers and assistants in the various ministries. The last article specified that in Beirut half the members of the council should be Muslims and the other half non-Muslims.¹¹³

The immediate result of the publication of the alleged agreement was extreme jubilation. A wave of optimism and gladness swept over Beirut and Cairo, and among the Arab students in Istanbul. This marked the climax of the Syrian-Turkish honeymoon.¹¹⁴ In Beirut, al-Islāh hastened to publish the text of al-'Azn's letter,

113. For the Turkish and Arabic text of the agreement see, al-Manār, Vol.16, part 8 of 2 Aug., 1913, pp.638-640. There is a difference between these texts and al-'Azn's letter in that the latter claimed the agreement to be 13 articles while the latter gave only 11 articles. Both articles 12 and 13 are absent from al-Manār's text. Most of the Arabic sources follow the text of al-'Azn's letter with slight variations.

114. For the banquets and celebrations and speeches on the occasion of the new Turkish-Arab understanding (which were going on in Istanbul) see al-Muqattan, No.7423, of 25 Aug., 1913. Thawrat al-'Arab, 82-90 for some examples. Zeine, The Emergence, pp.106-7.

and was at pains to prove that the agreement was based on the reform scheme of Beirut.¹¹⁵ In an earlier issue al-Is̄lāh published a slightly different version of the agreement in an attempt to silence the press of the opponents of the reform movement, which had claimed that the reformers had abandoned their "rotten scheme which they drafted in Beirut".¹¹⁶

The first reaction of the CUP was to send a declaration to its newspapers, including those of Beirut such as al-R'ay al-'Āmn, Abābīl, and al-Iqbāl, in which it gave its own version of the agreement. The reformers deduced from that declaration that things were not as bright and hopeful as the letter of al-'Āzn had depicted.¹¹⁷ The CUP was prepared to grant four articles only: Education in the Arabic language, officials chosen from the inhabitants of the vilayet when possible, regional military service, and public works to be the responsibility of local councils. This was the first blow to the high hopes which the leaders of the reform movement entertained in the weeks following the Congress of Paris.

The government's decree stipulating reform in the Arab provinces, which was all that the CUP cabinet

115. al-Is̄lāh, No.61/1456 of 21 July, 1913.

116. al-Is̄lāh, No.58/1453 of 17 July, 1913.

117. See for instance al-Is̄lāh, No.65/1460 of 25 July, 1913, for the four articles and commentary.

was prepared to offer, was published on 5 August, 1913.¹¹⁸ The decree put the administration of the awqāf in the hands of the millet councils, officials to be acquainted with the Arabic language, teaching in certain schools to be in Arabic, regional military service accepted and foreign inspectors to be appointed. On the eve of its publication al-Khalīl despatched a number of telegrams to the reformers' press in Syria claiming that the government had accepted the terms of the agreement which was signed by its representative and that of the Arab Youth (al-Shabība al-'Arabiyya).¹¹⁹ Lisān al-Hāl though describing the terms of the decree as "elastic" accepted it as the first step by the government towards reforms, and as showing its good intentions.¹²⁰ Other papers agreed that the decree was vague and illusive.¹²¹

On 8 August, the decree was confirmed by an Imperial Irāde, which made further alterations in its

118. Arabic text of decree in al-Manār, Vol.16, part 9 of 1 Sept., 1913, pp.718-19. Also, al-Muqattān, No. 7142 of 12 Aug., 1913. Thawrat al-'Arab, pp.80-81. al-Ahrām, No.10772 of 6 Aug., 1913.

119. al-Is'lāh, No.73/1468 of 4 Aug., 1913. From the reference to an agreement signed between the government and the Arab Youth in this telegram it seems possible to deduce that the government had ignored its original agreement with the reformers of Paris and had probably signed another one with al-Khalīl and his young friends in Istanbul. al-Is'lāh, ibid., hinted at this possibility.

120. Lisān, No.7306 of 4 Aug., 1913.

121. See for example, al-Ahrām, Nos.10772, 10773 of 6, 7 Aug., 1913. al-Is'lāh, No.75/1470 of 6 Aug., 1913.

contents.¹²² The concessions were considerably reduced. For instance the question of appointing foreign inspectors was completely omitted. The appearance of the Irade "caused dismay which presently turned to despair. For it gradually dawned upon the watchful Arabs that it, too, was only a blind, and the CUP's game was to sidetrack the issue".¹²³ Al-Muqattam commented "We have hastened and published a text of an agreement which was absolutely false,"¹²⁴ - referring to the text of the agreement published by Rafiq al-'Azm on 15 July, 1913. Despite the outward expressions of warm friendship between the various Arab delegations in Istanbul and the Turkish authorities, it was becoming apparent that the days of understanding between the reformers and their government were drawing to an end.

Moreover, differences among the reformers began to be noticeable after the middle of August, 1913. Even in Paris there were signs that the unity between Muslims and Christians was ending. When the three Muslims among the Beirut delegates agreed to go to Istanbul to negotiate with the government and supervise the execution of the reforms, this had been taken as a sign that the Muslims were

122. Turkish text of Irade in Takvim-i Vekayi, No.1560 of 23 Aug., 1913. Arabic translation in al-Manar, ibid., p.720.

123. Antonius, p.117.

124. al-Muqattam, No.7412 of 12Aug., 1913.

partly giving in to the government.¹²⁵ In Istanbul the government played the role of the hospitable host to the delegation, which ultimately returned to Beirut loaded with promises that the reform would be carried out.¹²⁶ The Muslims among the reformers must have realised that they could not secure more from the government, and decided to keep quiet for the time being. This attitude was more typical of the Beirut Muslim reformers than those of Cairo. While the leaders of the Decentralisation Party of Cairo maintained a hostile attitude to the Unionists' regime all through the second half of 1913 and the whole of 1914, the Beiruti Muslim reformers were less hostile. Even some of their papers which had previously maintained a very critical stand against the CUP such as al-Islāh and Fatā al-'Arab now adopted a more resigned attitude which was to remain unchanged until the outbreak of the First World War. Men like Salām were to accept becoming deputies in the Ottoman Chamber knowing full well that CUP was the master of that Chamber, and that to be a deputy in such a Chamber was to serve the cause of the Unionists.

125. al-Ahrān, No.10797 of 5 Sept., 1913.

126. al-Islāh, No.95/1490 of 29 Aug., 1913. Also, A. Consul-General Rawlins to Marling, No.72, conf., Beirut, 3 Sept., 1913, F.O.371/1775/42600.

However, the differences among the reformers were made more apparent by the acceptance of al-Zahrāwī, the president of the Congress, the seat of the Ottoman senate which the Unionists offered to him. Five other Arab notables were appointed to the Senate.¹²⁷ By such appointments the CUP was putting the final successful touches to buying off the leaders, and to sowing dissension among the reformers. The acceptance of al-Zahrāwī had caused a great deal of resentment among his compatriots and had practically split the whole movement of reform. While he defended his decision, other reformers were divided over this issue and some regarded his acceptance of the nomination as a betrayal.¹²⁸

This incident was a turning point in the history of the Syrian reform movement, and together with the realisation by the reformers that the CUP government was not ready to grant their demands, contributed greatly to the mood of despair and bitterness which marked the relations of the Syrian Arabs with the government in the period preceding the outbreak of World War I. The arrest

127. al-Zahrāwī was the only decentraliser among the six senators - For names See: Fatā al-'Arab, No.21/1455 of 7 Jan., 1914. al-Islāh, No.201/1596 of 7 Jan., 1914.

128. See Thawrat al-'Arab, pp.99-102. al-Islāh, No.258/1353, and 264/1659 of 16, 23 March, 1914, respectively. Fatā al-'Arab, No.42/1476 of 2 Feb., 1914, and following numbers.

of 'Azīz 'Alī al-Misrī in February 1914¹²⁹ had certainly added to the disappointment of the Arab leaders with the Unionist regime and had convinced the extremists among them that the only alternative was separation from the Empire. The indifference shown by the Syrian leaders to the parliamentary elections of April 1914 was also indicative of a prevalent mood of dejection and disillusionment. It was against this background that the relations between the Arab leaders and the Young Turk regime developed during the years of the war.

129. For a brief discussion of 'Azīz's arrest see: Antonius, 118-121. al-'Azamī, lv, pp.58-65. al-Islāh, No.242/1637 of 25 Feb., 1914. al-Muqattam, No.7569 of 18 Feb., 1914 and following numbers. Majid Khadduri "Aziz Ali". St. Antony's Papers, 17, p.144 and pp. 148-151.

CONCLUSION.

The period 1908-1914, which was characterised by an exceptional historical dynamism, marked the close of the last chapter in the history of the Turkish-Syrian relations. The advent of the constitutional era was hoped to give the decaying Ottoman Empire a new lease of life and to regenerate it. However, it ended in the destruction of *that* Empire. Among the various reasons which caused the downfall of Ottoman power in Syria two were paramount. The first was the rising tide of nationalism among the Syrians and the rest of the nationalities of the Empire and the second was the errors committed by the inexperienced Young Turks in handling problems and difficulties created by the rise of such nationalisms. The attempt of the Young Turks to 'Ottomanise' all the national groupings in the Empire had produced the opposite results. It encouraged the separatist movements which were already in operation among the Christian ra'iyya of the Sultan. It stimulated the emerging Syrian movement and brought it to political maturity.

By persistently ignoring Syrian Arab rights, the Young Turks alienated most of the Syrian Muslim nationalists, who until the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War, never contemplated secession. Their

nearest move towards secession, however, was their agitation for decentralisation. But not all the Syrian nationalists were at one, some Christians and a minority of extremist Muslims, had on more than one occasion contemplated secession from the Empire, but such attempts were sporadic, ineffective and unrepresentative of the bulk of the Syrian movement. The Syrian movement which remained before 1908 largely Christian and separatist, attracted ^{ing} little if any Muslim support, ~~and~~ underwent a radical change after that date. It became dominated by the Muslims, rather than the Christians, and it shed its separatist tendencies. It became primarily a reform movement working for the redress of certain political grievances which the Syrians came to entertain against the Young Turk regime. In as far as the aims and aspirations of that movement were concerned, the Syrian Christian nationalists were relegated to the background, and were content either to collaborate with the Muslims or to withdraw from the field of politics entirely. The Maronites of Lebanon had no intention of abandoning their national and separatist attitudes. Some Christian nationalists, however, maintained an opportunist attitude to the Muslim dominated Syrian movement.

Despite the domination of the movement by the Muslims there was evidence to suggest that the Islamic

bond which according to N. Zeine, held such a vital place in the relations of the Arabs and Turks, was weakening. Men such as 'Abd al-Ḥanīd al-Zahrawī, a turbaned Shaykh, were able to detect this feature as early as 1913. The bond that held the Muslim nationalists to the Empire was one of political expediency. It was better for them to live under the rule of the Ottomans than under the yoke of a foreign European rule. This attitude which marked that of the sober Muslim and Christian nationalists was not typical of certain extremists among both ranks.

Finally, it is my contention that any study of the Arab movement during this period of 1908-1914 is bound to be a study solely of the Syrian Arab movement. The Syrian movement is not only representative of the entire pre-War Arab movement but synonymous with it. The Syrians, by virtue of their better education which contributed greatly to their national political consciousness, created and dominated the 1908-1914 Arab movement. This is not to say that other Arabs were not active in that movement. They did take part, but their participation was rather accidental and complementary to the efforts of the Syrian nationalists. The Ḥijāz, for instance, was too backward and too busy with its incessant tribal strife, to interest itself in an Arab movement. Sharīf Ḥusayn ruled as the Sharīf of Mecca and as a

faithful client of the Young Turks until the eve of his revolt in 1916. Ibn Sa'ūd and Ibn Rashīd, the other important figures in Arabia, were too busy eliminating each other. Yemen was an abode of unrest and revolts for most of this period. Iraq remained a backwater of the Arab movement. Egypt was under British occupation and was in the process of developing its own Egyptian nationalism. The Arab North African Provinces of the Empire had either passed under the foreign yoke or were on their way to doing so. The word 'Arab' as used in the Arabic press of the time was used to mean 'Syrians' rather than any other category of people.

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III. Turkish Archives.

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