

The Young Turks: Who Were They?

During the last quarter of the 19th century, the Near East Question passed into its critical phase. As a result of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, the Ottoman Empire lost extensive territory mainly in the Balkans where the "autonomous" states of Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Herzegovina passed into the *de facto* administrative sphere of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thessaly and the prefecture of Artas were ceded to Greece, and in Asia, Russia annexed the territories of Kars and Ardachan in Turkish Armenia. In Africa, the English claimed Egypt, and the French Tunisia, while the Italians did not bother to conceal their territorial ambitions toward Tripoli. Meanwhile, the dissident movements in Crete, Armenia, and Macedonia were beginning to reach worrisome levels for the Turkish Sultanate.

One of the first real threats to the Ottoman Throne was a hard-core, conspiratorial group that formed in 1889 among the students of the Military Medical School in Constantinople. The dissatisfaction, though, was widespread throughout the entire military, and had to do with what might be considered today to be union demands: low wages that were paid sporadically and after months of waiting, a promotion system that was torturously slow and not based on merit but on connections, and a cynical disappointment engendered by the promised but never actualized modernization of the military. The main motivating factor in the ever-widening discontent, however, was an agony and concern over the independence of the Turkish State and how best to ensure its continuance. Added to this, and of equal concern, was the problem having to do with the welfare and perpetuation of the Muslim populations living among the many other ethnicities within the Empire.

The conspiratorial leadership, who came to be known as the Young Turks, expressed their dissatisfaction with the status quo, throwing all of the blame on the Sultan, Abdul Hamit, who they proclaimed to be too dictatorial. They demanded his exile -- though not the abolishment of the Sultanate -- together with the restoration of the constitution of 1876.

Union and Progress

The Young Turk movement -- after many mishaps and near dissolution -- finally achieved its first goal. In early July of 1908, led by the officer-members of the Committee of Union and Progress (*Itihât vè Teraki*), the Turkish troops stationed in Macedonia refused to obey orders coming from Constantinople. The Young Turks then sent a telegraphed ultimatum to the Sultan from Serres on the 21st of July. They demanded the immediate restoration and implementation of the constitution, and threatened him with dethronement should he fail to comply. On the 24th of July, Abdul Hamit announced that the constitution had been restored and was in full force and effect.

The subsequent mid-20th century overthrow of King Farouk in Egypt by the Nasserite revolutionaries bears some striking similarities to the Young Turk movement. There are,

however, some very striking differences as well. Some of these are: 1) the diverse ethnic background of the conspirators; 2) the significant and crucial role played by the allied movement of fellow-conspirators known as the *Donmè* (Jews who had converted [?] to Islam); and, 3) the enthusiastic way in which the conspiracy was embraced by Masonic elements.

As far as the multiethnic composition of the conspirators is concerned, one need only read their names to verify their diverse background: Tserkès (Circassian), Mehmet Ali, Xersekli (Herzegovinians), Ali Roushdi, Kosovoali (Kosovars) and others. In many cases, the ethnic origin of the conspirator was not evident from the name: Ibrahim Temo was an Albanian, as was Ismail Kemal. Murat Bey Dagestanos and Achmet Riza had an Arkhazian father and an Austrian mother. One of the theoreticians of the movement was Ziyia Ngiokali, a Kurd, while one of the major planners of tactics and theory was a Jew from Serres who went by the name of Tekin Ali (real name, Moshe Cohen).

The telegraph-office clerk who became one of the ruling troika of post-revolutionary Turkey, Talaat Pasha, was Bosnian, Pomack, or Gypsy; the point being that he was not a Turk. We should also make note of the fact that the Committee of Union and Progress admitted many members from areas outside of the Ottoman Empire, and that some of these even served on its Central Committee.

Masonic elements

The strong connection between the *Itihàts* (conspirators) and Masonry is a well-documented fact. The leftist Turkish writer, Kamouran Mberik Xartboutlou, in his book, *The Turkish Impasse* (from the Greek translation of the French publication of 1974. p.24), wrote: "Those who desired entry into the inner circle of that secret organization [the *Itihàt*], had to be a Mason, and had to have the backing of a large segment of the commercial class." The true nature of the relationship between the Young Turks and the Masonic lodges of Thessaloniki has been commented upon by many researchers and writers. In her well-known and extensively documented book, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (London. 1928, p. 284), author and historian Nesta Webster writes that "The Young Turk movement began in the Masonic lodges of Thessaloniki under the direct supervision of the Grand Orient Lodge of Italy, which later shared in the success of Mustapha Kemal."

Of course, the precise nature of this relationship is clouded in mystery, but enough facts exist allowing for more than just informed conjecture based on circumstantial evidence. An example of the *Itihàt*-Masonic connection is the interview that Young Turk, Refik Bey, gave to the Paris newspaper *Le Temps*, on the 20th of August 1908: "It's true that we receive support from Freemasonry and especially from Italian Masonry. The two Italian lodges [of Thessaloniki] -- *Macedonia Risorta* and *Labor et Lux* -- have provided invaluable services and have been a refuge for us. We meet there as fellow Masons, because it is a fact that many of us are Masons, but more importantly we meet so that we can better

organize ourselves."

The Jewish Component

The *Donmè* ("convert" in Turkish), was a Hebrew heresy whose followers converted [?] to Islam in the 18th century. They were most heavily concentrated in Thessaloniki. According to the *Great Hellenic Encyclopedia [Megali Elliniki Enkiklopethia]*: "It is generally accepted that the *Donmè* secretly continue to adhere to the Hebrew religion and don't allow their kind to intermarry with the Muslims."

The disproportionate power and influence (in light of their number) that the *Donmè* had on both the Ottoman Empire and on the Young Turk movement has been the subject of a great deal of commentary by many observers and researchers. The eminent British historian, R. Seton Watson, in his book, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans* . London, 1917 (*H Gennisi tou Ethnikismou sta Valkania*), wrote the following: "The real brains behind the [Itihàt] movement were Jews or Islamic-Jews. The wealthy *Donmè* and Jews of Thessaloniki supported [the Young Turks] economically, and their fellow Jewish capitalists in Vienna and Berlin -- as well as in Budapest and possibly Paris and London -- supported them financially as well.

In the January 23rd, 1914, issue of the Czarist Police [*Okrana*] Ledger (Number 16609), directed to the Ministry of the Exterior in Saint Petersburg, we read: "A pan-Islamic convention of *Itihàts* and Jews was held in the *Nouri Osman* lodge in Constantinople. It was attended by approximately 700 prominent *Itihàts* and Jews, including "Minister" Talaàt Bey, Bentri Bey, Mbekri Bey, and (*Donmè*) Javit Bey. Among the many Jews in attendance, two of the most prominent were the Head of the Security Service, Samouel Effendi, and the Vice-Administrator of the Police, Abraham Bey."

Donmè and Constantine

The numerous *Donmè* in positions of authority within the machinery of the *Itihàt* government, as well as on the powerful Central Committee, strengthens the conviction that their influence was widespread and vital to the cause. Ignoring the names mentioned in the Czarist Police Ledger, and even ignoring such Jews as the fanatical Pan-Turkic [Marxist revolutionary and

poet, Hikmet] Nazim, or even the many casual allusions [as if it were common knowledge at the time] to the Jewish descent of that most dedicated believer in the Young Turk movement, Mustapha Kemal "Atatürk," one still finds oneself wondering by what authority and under whose auspices was such an obscure Jewish

Donmè

from Thessaloniki, by the name of Emmanouel Karasso, able to become a member of the three-man committee that announced his dethronement to Sultan Abdul Hamit after the counter-coup of April 1909?

Compelling, too, is the widely-referenced document which states that Constantine, the King of Greece at the time, characterized the entire Young Turk movement as composed of "Israelites." According to the facts presented in her book, *Glory and Partisanship*, the Greek professor of the University of Vienna, Polychroni Enepekithi, contends that Constantine made that characterization while complaining to the German Ambassador in Athens about the outrages committed by Young Turks against Hellenes living in the Ottoman Empire.

d by anti-Semitism or Masonophobia. Rather, we are attempting to shed some light on what to us seems like a puzzling paradox in this revolutionary movement, which is: Why it is that this non-Turkish leadership struggled so hard under the banner of justice for the Turkish people? Also, why is it that others, having nothing to do with Sunnite Islam [the form of Islam practiced in Turkey] struggled equally hard under the banner of justice for Islam? **The only answer to this paradox demands that we consider that there may have been another reason behind their fervid struggle, and that this unstated cause is what bound these "ideologues" together.**

Source

***Nemesis.* by Ioanis Kassesian. September 2001. pp. 64-66.**

From: -This is a list for Action [mailto:ACTION@HEC.GREECE.ORG] **On Behalf Of** Capt. Evangelos Rigos

Sent: Thursday, March 25, 2010 5:22 AM

To: ACTION@HEC.GREECE.ORG

Subject: [Bulk] Fw: stories kept in the shadows

This message is a long one but you will read information unknown to us all.

it is worth your time.

Evangelos

Η ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΚΑΤΑΓΩΓΗ ΚΑΙ ΔΡΑΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΣΦΑΓΕΑ

ΜΟΥΣΤΑΦΑ ΚΕΜΑΛ ΑΤΑΤΟΥΡΚ

ΠΟΙΟΙ ΣΤΗΝ ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ ΗΤΑΝ ΟΙ ΝΕΟΤΟΥΡΚΟΙ

