

BEGINNINGS OF LEADERSHIP : MUSTAFA KEMAL'S FIRST VISIT TO LIBYA, 1908.

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Mustafa Kemal's role during the Turkish - Italian war (1911-12) is well known; He was the commander of the front near Derna, in 'Ain al - Mansur. Enver Bey, who was the commander of the whole of Cyrenaica, stayed at the same camp. In the Presidential Archives in Ankara there are documents written by Mustafa Kemal during the war. In addition, there appeared contemporary journalistic descriptions and photographs of the Derna front. Later on, quite a few people described Mustafa Kemal's role there and his confrontations with Enver Bey. The area and its problems were not new to him.

Mustafa Kemal's first visit to Libya was a short one and had more than a military aspect. He was sent there by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) at the end of September 1908, to investigate the reasons for political and military insubordination in Libya and was ordered to strengthen the Young Turks' status there. The descriptions of this visit are based to a great extent on Mustafa Kemal's memoirs as published posthumously.¹ Contemporary docu-

¹ Afetinan, "Atatürk'ü dinledim: Trablusgarp'ta Hürriyete Karşı İsyân," *Bellekten*, vol. 8, no. 31, (1944), pp. 387-401. This article was republished in her book *Atatürk'ten Hâtıralar*, Ankara, 1950, pp. 65-83. The following references will be from the latter. Biographies that mention this visit are: Lord Kinross, *Atatürk. The Rebirth of a Nation*, London, 1964, pp. 31-33; Y. H. Bayur, *Atatürk. Hayatı ve Eseri*, Ankara, 1963, pp. 31-34; J. Bénoist - Mechin, *Le Loup et le Léopard. Mustafa Kemal ou la Mort d'un Empire*, Paris, 1954, pp. 110-111; A. F. Cebesoy, *Sınıf Arkadaşım Atatürk. Okul ve Genç Subaylık Hatıraları*, İstanbul, 1967, pp. 144-145; H. Froembgen, *Kemal Atatürk. A Biography*, New-York, 1937, p. 61; D. von Mikusch, *Mustafa Kemal. Between Europe and Asia. A Biography*, London, 1931, pp. 73-74; I&M. Orga, *Atatürk*, London, 1962, pp. 30-31; C. H. Sherrill, *A Year's Embassy to Mustafa Kemal*, New - York, 1934, pp. 27-28; H. C. Armstrong, *Grey Wolf; Mustafa Kemal*, London, 1945, pp. 19-20; C. Erikan, *Komutan Atatürk*, Ankara, 1972, pp. 81-83; J. Mélia, *Mustafa Kémal*, Paris, 1929, p. 15; "Atatürk," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. I, p. 721; Be - Se, "Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin Bânisi Ata'mızın Hayatı, Hizmetleri ve Ölmez Eserleri," *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası*, vol. 7, no. 74, (1956), p. 141.

ments shed new light on his mission. Their authors were impressed by the character of this, to them yet unknown, young officer: they were aware of some of his virtues and realized the great future in store of him.

The situation in Libya at the time was troublous, which was nothing new. The Ottomans conquered Tripoli in 1551 and later took other positions, yet their rule in this area, renowned for its part in sea piracy, was quite nominal. Between 1711-1835 the real rulers of Libya were members of the house of Karamanli. In the second Ottoman period there (1835-1911) the area was divided most of the time to the provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, that were governed separately. During the Hamidian period, the Ottoman army in Libya shrank from about 8400 men in 1890 to about 5000 in 1911 and their equipment was old. On the other hand, although many local inhabitants were armed, they did not add to the military capacity of the area, since they were not recruited, and at times were even a threat to the government. As in other remote and tribal areas, the Ottomans did not manage to mobilize the local population. Indeed, one of the major conflicts between the government and the local population, at the late Hamidian period, was caused by the government trying to change this situation and to enforce general conscription, that was accomplished only in 1911.

Some governors tried to introduce modernization to Libya, but generally the population was reserved and reluctant to accept innovations. During that period, many Young Turks and political suspects, who seemed dangerous to the régime, were exiled to Libya. Many of them were not in prison, and served there in the administration and the army, or were teachers, physicians and merchants. They tried to implement their political, social, cultural and economic ideas all over the country, and quite succeeded in their educational efforts. Later events seemed to indicate, that theirs was not of a lasting influence. The last governor of Tripolitania at the Hamidian period was Receb Paşa (1904-1908), who was also the military commander of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Being thought of as dangerous to the régime, he was removed to this remote province in 1896, at first only as a military commander. Receb Paşa was very helpful to other exiles and encouraged their modernizing efforts. The population was fond of him and saw him as a benign and understanding governor. His

close contacts with the Young Turks emerged most clearly, when exiles in Europe tried to launch a coup d'état, with him at the command. The plan did not materialize due to negligence not his fault.²

The reactions in Libya to the Young Turks' revolution (23. 7. 08) went through a number of phases. This was due mainly to misunderstandings, concerning the meaning of the changes and their implication on Libya. Personal grievances also played an important part in the change of attitude towards the revolution. On the night of the 26. 7. 08 thousands of people - Turks as well as Arabs - demonstrated in Tripoli in favour of the restoration of the 1876 Constitution and the general amnesty. They carried slogans blessing the Sultan, the Constitution, Justice and Liberty, showing rejoicing and enthusiasm.³ The mood changed quickly, when the population realized, that some of the developments were not to their liking. First and foremost: the amnesty was not general, as they had thought, but only for political offences. Thus in Tripoli, all those who were set free, were not local inhabitants but exiled prisoners. The local prisoners and their relatives, who had all expected a general amnesty, were disappointed and considered this a breach of promise. On the 7. 8. 08 a prisoners' mutiny broke out in Tripoli and they almost escaped, but the guards' shooting checked them.⁴ Another misconception was in the meaning of "Liberty," which the population understood as something near to anarchy. In addition, they did not approve of "Equality" that included non-moslems.⁵ The Young Turks in the administration of

² S. Story, (ed.), *The Memoires of Ismail Kemal Bey*, London, 1920, passim; F. Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, Oxford, 1969, p. 176; G. W. Swanson, *Mahmud Şevket Paşa and the Defence of the Ottoman Empire*, Ph. D. thesis, Bloomington, 1970, pp. 150-151; PRO, Alvarez to Lowther (Ambassador at Istanbul), Tripoli, 12. 9. 08, F. O. 195/2271; N. S. "Redgeb Pacha," *RMM*, vol. 6, no. 9, (1908), pp. 154-157. Prof. N. Slousch was in Cyrenaica when the revolution broke, but reached Tripoli only after Receb Paşa left.

³ PRO, Alvarez to Lowther, Tripoli, 27. 7. 08, no. 48, F. O. 195/2271; N. Slousch, "Le nouveau régime turc et Tripoli," *RMM*, vol. 6, no. 9, (1908), (henceforth: Slousch), p. 54; L. C. Feraud, *Annales tripolitaines*, Tunis, 1927, p. 443.

⁴ PRO, Alvarez to Lowther, Tripoli, 9. 8. 08, no. 53, F. O. 195/2271; Slousch, p. 55; *The Jew*, (a Hebrew weekly in London), vol. 12, no. 25, 27. 8. 08, p. 3; Undated and unsigned report by Mordekhay Hacohen in Genazim Archive, Tel-Aviv, Slousch Collection, file 109-A.

⁵ *The Jew*, loc. cit.

Tripolitania started to see themselves in a strong position after years of harassment and began to abuse political opponents in the army and the local government.⁶ It is quite probable, that the local population was aware of the behaviour of the new régime's members towards the old guard, and this strengthened the people's permanent negative attitude to government officials.

After the revolution, representatives of CUP in Istanbul (Talat, Cavid and Rahmi) induced Kamil Paşa, the Grand Vezir designate, to elect Receb Paşa as Minister of War and at last the Sultan agreed.⁷ Notice on the appointment reached Tripoli on 6. 8. 08 and three days later the governor left town. He did not manage to serve in his new role, because he died on the 16. 8. 08, shortly after his arrival in Istanbul. The first reaction in Tripoli to the appointment was of rejoicing. Many people: Turks, Arabs and Europeans alike came to congratulate the governor on his advancement, hoping he would continue to act in favour of Libya.⁸ But the pleasure was short-lived when it became known, that Receb Paşa intended to leave as acting governor his former secretary (and at that time the Mutessarif of Jebel Garbi), Bekir Sami Bey, whom the population hated. In the past they had tried to no avail to kick him out of the province, but Receb's protection prevented this.⁹ The popular resentment of this appointment was tremendous. On 8. 8. 08 more than 3000 people demonstrated against it near the Municipality and later moved on to the main mosque, named after Ahmed Paşa Karamanli, just opposite the Government House. The people protested against a telegram, sent by the Young Turks of Tripoli, claiming that the whole population had approved of the appointment of Bekir Sami Bey as acting governor, though nobody was asked about it. In their excitement the local inhabitants called for the total removal of Young Turks from the province. They had even attacked an official who tried to

⁶ Alvarez, loc. cit. note 4; ASD (Archivio Storico e Diplomatico, Roma), Saman to MFA, Tripoli, 7. 8. 08, Tel. no. 2442, SP, pac. 5.

⁷ Ahmad, pp. 20-21.

⁸ Alvarez, loc. cit. note 4; *The Jew*, loc. cit.; G. Castellini, *Tunisi e Tripoli*, Torino, 1911, pp. 196-197 gives a different view.

⁹ ASD, Bernabei to MFA, Tripoli, 28. 9. 07, no. 1377/493, SP, pac. 5; Slousch, pp. 56-57; Orga, p. 30; A. M. Sforza, *Esplorazioni e prigionia in Libia*, Milano, 1919, pp. 155-156.

calm them down, and was saved only thanks to the intervention of the Mayor of Tripoli, Hasuna Paşa Karamanli. Many delegations were sent to the governor, demanding that he change his mind regarding his deputy. They also urged him to take away with him all the Young Turks. Receb Paşa had to capitulate: General Muhammed Ali Sami Paşa, chief of staff of the army unit of Tripoli, was appointed as acting governor. The governor himself left quietly early on 9. 8. 08 morning, without any ceremony and took with him, at his own expense, between 198-250 exiles.¹⁰ The news of these occurrences must have reached Istanbul no later than the middle of August 1908, when Receb Paşa and the exiles arrived there.

Tripoli was not the only place in Libya and in the empire, that was not too happy with the changes.¹¹ The mood in Benghazi was not sympathetic from the very beginning. The governor Galib Paşa read aloud to his men the telegram, announcing the restoration of the Constitution and said it was a favour one should be grateful for. The news spread immediately in town, but only Young Turks demonstrated in honour of the event.¹² The Arabs of position were reserved and suspicious. They did not feel great confidence in the stability of the Constitution and considered the reversion to the former state of things possible. These notables regarded with disapproval the licence of speech and the tendency to insubordination caused by the sudden fall of autocratic régime.¹³ Although no specific examples were given, it is probable, that the attitude in Benghazi, being more traditional and secluded, due to its remoteness and the influence of the Senussia and the bedouins, was really more opposed to the revolution. In addition to that, the governor of Cyrenaica was an indolent person, who did not belong to the Young Turks, though he was not against the Constitution. R. Fontana, the British consul in Benghazi, commented on the governor's character: "The Mutessarif of Benghazi is well-meaning, but weak and even anaemic in will.

¹⁰ Slousch, p. 57; N. Slousch, "À Tripoli," *RMM*, vol. 6, (1908), p. 272.

¹¹ E. Kedourie, "The Impact of the Young Turk Revolution in the Arabic-speaking Provinces of the Ottoman Empire," *Arabic Political Memoires and Other Studies*, London, 1974, pp. 124-161 (on Libya: pp. 130-132, 139, 145-146).

¹² PRO, Fontana to Lowther, Benghazi, 20. 8. 08, 21. 12. 08, nos. 16, 25, F. O., 195/2271,

¹³ PRO, Fontana to Lowther, Benghazi, 7. 9. 08, no. 17, F. O., [195/2271.

With the Arabs he has little influence, and over the Turkish Officials he seems to have no particle of Authority. His promises are mostly unfulfilled, and even the simplest duties which he could well perform without risk of opposition he seems inclined to shirk. And he evinces no zeal for duties the performances of which would elicit approval from friends and enemies alike, because such performances may appear arduous or require his personal attention. Nevertheless he is regular in his attendance at the Government House and has, apparently, plenty to do. But he does nothing really thoroughly."¹⁴ This governor was very careful not to act in a way, that might incriminate him, would this régime fall. Thus, for example, he did nothing to improve education in Benghazi, in contrast to the energetic educational activities of the Young Turks in Tripoli right after the revolution.¹⁵ These consular reports show popular resentment of the revolution in Benghazi, but no marked resistance. In the village of Zliten near Tripoli, people attacked the local governor and shot at him, but he escaped.¹⁶ Although actual political violence was limited, the tense political situation gave cause to apprehension.

The Central Committee of CUP decided to act swiftly to improve the political situation in Libya. The fact that so many Young Turks were thrown out of the province must have alerted the Committee. Being a remote province, with a weak administration, a small army and an armed turbulent society, many of whom more loyal to their own tribal and religious chiefs than to the government, the danger of a rebellion and separation was an acute one. The Central Committee sitting in Salonica decided to send there staff - adjutant (erkan-i harp kolağası) Mustafa Kemal on a mission of investigation. He arrived in Tripoli at the end of September 1908.¹⁷

In his memoirs¹⁸ Mustafa Kemal mentioned his belief, that some members of the Committee had wanted him out of the way

¹⁴ PRO, Fontana to Lowther, Benghazi, 21. 12. 08, no. 25, F. O., 195/2271.

¹⁵ Ibid. On the educational activities see: PRO, Alvarez to Lowther, Tripoli, 26. 6. 10, F. O., 160/27; ASD, Pestalozza to MFA, Tripoli, 24. 6. 10, no. 734/306, SP, pac. 7; N. S., "L'Enseignement de la langue turque à Tripoli," *RMM*, vol. 6, (1908), p. 153.

¹⁶ PRO, Alvarez to Lowther, Tripoli, 17. 10. 08, no. 65, F. O., 195/2271; *The Jew*, loc. cit.

¹⁷ PRO, Alvarez to Lowther, Tripoli, 9. 10. 08, no. 63, F. O., 195/2271.

¹⁸ Afetinan, pp. 65-76; see note I and C. T. Karasapan, *Libya, Trablusgarb, Bingazi ve Fizan*, Ankara, 1960, p. 206; C. Kutay, "Trablusgarb'da bir avuç kahraman," *Tarih Sohbetleri*, vol. 4, Istanbul, 1967, p. 52.

and that was the reason for this dangerous mission. He hesitated, but then decided, that the task was an important one and he should go. In Tripoli he discussed the political-military situation in the province with Ibrahim Paşa, who was in command of the army. It became clear to Mustafa Kemal, that the Military on the spot did not intend to take any steps against the rebellious crowd, who held the town. At last he decided to meet the opposition in their stronghold in the main mosque. He went there alone, accompanied only by a reliable translator. Meeting the ringleaders he realized, that these were officials afraid of losing their positions; He promised them, that the Government had no intention of firing them. Later on Mustafa Kemal talked to one of the leaders, an old and respected sheikh. Through this conversation he grasped, that CUP had already sent three other men on a similar mission as his, bearing identical terms of reference. His assumption that CUP wanted him out of the way became stronger and his desire to prove his ability increased. He demanded to be treated in his own right and not due to CUP's backing. The sheikh saw he could rely on Mustafa Kemal's word and agreed to release the former investigators, who were imprisoned. Mustafa Kemal turned his attention also towards the crowd, who gathered around. He called them his brothers in faith and thus evoked in them the connecting sentiment they understood best. He emphasized the power of the new régime, based on internal unity. Mustafa Kemal promised, that this power would be used only to protect the State and called upon the people to unite their powers and efforts in favour of the Empire.

The British and the Italian consuls in Tripoli reported only on Mustafa Kemal's public appearances, which they attended. In addition, they had personal talks with him and thus came to know him better. They merely alluded to the rebellious atmosphere, which is stressed in the memoirs. Political awareness grew and in Tripoli Turks and Arabs began to organize political parties. Mustafa Kemal associated himself naturally with the Constitutionalists. The British consul J. Alvarez reported on the activities in Tripoli of "a representative of the Salonica Committee of the Young Turkey party, in the person of Adjutant Kemal Bey"¹⁹:... "As was to be expected, he

¹⁹ Alvarez, loc. cit. note 17.

has found a great deal of ignorance as to the policy pursued by the Salonica Committee of Union and Progress and its objects, and a still greater confusion of ideas as to its principles. His mission has therefore been to a large extent of an educational character and in a number of conferences he has endeavoured to dissipate such unfounded notions as that of the Constitutionalists being fundamentally opposed to the union of the Khilafet (Caliphate) and the Sultanate or to the Sacred Law etc.”²⁰ Alvarez spotted two main reasons for the people’s unrest: lack of information, which caused misunderstandings of CUP’s motives and actions; anxiety about the state of religion and traditional concepts of State and Society. Piacentini, the acting Italian consul in Tripoli reported, that Mustafa Kemal met with many Arabs and announced to them the benefits of the constitution. He explained the programme of the Young Turks and called upon all the inhabitants of Turkish Africa to unite their efforts towards the social and cultural regeneration of their country (“la patria”), that was liberated from slavery after 32 years.²¹ Here again Mustafa Kemal stressed the feeling of unity that should prevail among the compatriots and urged them to march towards progress.

The British consul observed some of Mustafa Kemal’s qualities, that became famous in his later career. After telling at the beginning of his report that the “mission has therefore been to a large extent of an educational character,” Alvarez continued to describe Mustafa Kemal’s way with the people: “He is an eloquent and fluent speaker, as I can testify, having heard him expound the principles and objects pursued by his party with remarkable lucidity, some five days ago, when he was enthusiastically applauded by a large audience representative of every class of the population.”²² From the twenties onwards, Mustafa Kemal was a renown speaker, convincing his audience, who were always eager to listen to his clear and absorbing reasoning. Even at this early stage, his public in Tripoli, who possibly was not all fluent in Turkish (Mustafa Kemal used a translator for Arabic), was convinced by his arguments and enjoyed listening to him. Years later Mustafa Kemal saw himself as the people’s educator, explaining

²⁰ Alvarez, loc. cit. note 16.

²¹ ASD, Piacentini to MFA, Tripoli, 18. 10. 08, no. 940/394, SP, pac. 5.

²² Alvarez, loc. cit. note 16.

to them the necessity of changes and difficult situations, teaching the masses rudimentary knowledge. This quality was already noticed during his visit to Tripoli.

After a private conversation between Mustafa Kemal and the British consul, the latter commented: "He called on me the other day and I had the opportunity of observing that he was very silent and of a reserved disposition. He gave me the impression, which I trust will be confirmed later on, of an energetic character and resolute temper, both of which may eventually be required, should certain anarchical tendencies, which I have observed locally, continue."²³ Alvarez noticed in 1908, that Mustafa Kemal, who was an exciting speaker and conversationalist, was at the very same time a solemn and reticent personality. The consul was confident, that thanks to his guest's special nature, he was bound to play a major role in the future.

This visit had some influence on the political life in Tripoli. "Since Kemal Bey's arrival... the two parties of *Muttehidyn* (sic) and *Watania* have coalesced and now form one designated *El Ittehad El Watany* or Patriotic Union. Neither the Progressists or Patriotic Unionists probably come up to the standard required of them by the Liberal Modernism of Salonica, but consideration will doubtless be taken of the facts that political parties of any kind are complete novelties in Tripoli, that politically speaking this country stands on a different footing towards the Empire in comparison with the European and Asiatic dominions of the Sultan and consequently Ottoman national feeling requires development locally."²⁴ From the consular reports it seems, that Mustafa Kemal was satisfied with the progress of events in Tripoli and some of the leading personages were reacting favourably to his suggestions. In the public meeting, mentioned above by Alvarez, Mustafa Kemal "has been ably seconded by Sheikh Ali Hayat Efendy, (the chief clerk of the shari'a court in Tripoli) the leader of the Progressists, who has made himself conspicuous by his outspoken denunciation of the evils of absolutism on the same occasion, and the necessity for common action on behalf of Progress on the part of all Ottomans, irrespective of differences of race, religion or language.

²³ Alvarez, loc. cit. note 17.

²⁴ Ibid.

Such an avowal of Liberalism, unprecedented on the part of an Ulema here, has, I am informed, greatly excited the reactionary Ulema, who talk of unfrocking him or of depriving him of his post. . . .”²⁵ Winning over an influential local religious personage was an important achievement for CUP, even though Alvarez suspected, “that personal hatred or pique has largely entered into the formation of the parties.”²⁶ This is quite probable, by reason of the local set-up, but does not diminish the value of the feat. Some inhabitants did not think, that Mustafa Kemal had a sweeping success. Many years later Dr. Muhammad Fu’ad Shukri commented in his biography of the Libyan nationalist leader Beshir as-Sa’dawi, that the latter deeply hated CUP, believing that it wanted to destroy the Caliphate and many other Libyans shared the same view. According to him, the Committee had tried to attract them to the party and for this purpose they sent Mustafa Kemal to Tripoli, but he had no success: the people continued to regard the Young Turks as idolaters. Only influential religious figures from the Madaniya confraternity made them change their minds towards CUP.²⁷ It appears from contemporary reports, that CUP’s grasp over Tripoli was strong from the beginning. It seems that Shukri’s impression was biased due to political developments and the long time that had elapsed. Another person had greater faith in the prospects of positive changes, thanks to this visit. Mordekhay Hacoheh, a Jewish teacher and scholar, was concerned about law and order in Tripoli, when he commented in a Hebrew London weekly: “We hope that thanks to the emissary of the Young Turks, who came here to investigate the affairs, truth will prevail. In addition to that, the peace and security of the population will increase, due to policemen stationed in the streets of the town to ensure order.”²⁸ As mentioned in a later description, Mustafa Kemal was ordered to reorganise the local militia as well,²⁹ and it seems that Hacoheh refers to these activities.

²⁵ Alvarez, loc. cit. note 16.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Muḥammad Fū’ad Shukrī, *Milād dawlat Libīa al-ḥadītha*, Cairo, 1957, vol. 2, p. 423.

²⁸ *The Jew*, vol. 12, no. 40, 10. 12. 08, p. 16.

²⁹ Amīn Muḥammad Sa’īd, *Sīrat Muṣṭafa Kamāl bāshā*, Cairo, 1922, p. 6.

On the morning of the 19. 10. 08 the soldiers of the garrison of Tripoli took an oath of allegiance to the Constitution. On the same day Mustafa Kemal left by boat to Benghazi, to continue his mission of inquiry into the general situation and the prospects of the Constitutional Party there.³⁰ He arrived in Benghazi accompanied by two civilians.³¹ According to his memoirs,³² a friend who stayed there, Dr. Mustafa Şevket, urged him to investigate the area and welcomed him on his arrival. Later on he met the chief of the local police Hüseyin Bey, the Mutessarif Galib Paşa and the military commander Arif Bey.³³ Mustafa Kemal realized very soon, that the real power lay in the hands of the tribal sheikh Mansur, who had many armed men under his command. Since the officials did not dare to fight sheikh Mansur, Mustafa Kemal decided to act: he commanded a fake military manoeuvre, in which the troops encircled the sheikh's residence and he capitulated. Before that, Mustafa Kemal managed to pacify the soldiers, who had risen from the ranks (*alaylı*) and feared that he was looking for faults in their actions. He reassured them, that this was not the case and succeeded to gain their respect and trust.

Fontana, the British consul in Benghazi, described what must be the first and interim phases of the above mentioned occurrences. His report was sent about six to eight weeks afterwards and has some inaccuracies. On his arrival Mustafa Kemal was greeted according to protocol: "Early in October a young Turkish Major belonging to the Committee of Union and Progress at Salonica, accompanied by two civilians, arrived at Benghazi. They were met at the landing-stage by the Mutessarif, accompanied by the Military band, and were treated with great consideration and respect."³⁴ This is in some

³⁰ Piacentini, loc. cit. note 21; Alvarez, loc. cit. note 16; PRO, Alvarez to Lowther, Tripoli, 21. 10. 08, no. 66, F. O., 195/22 71.

³¹ Fontana, loc. cit. note 14. Mustafa Kemal was not a Major at the time and he arrived in Benghazi at the later part of October. Kedourie, p. 146, cited from this document the part referring to the visit, without identifying the investigator. He did not mention the visit to Tripoli.

³² Afetinan, pp. 77-83; Kinross, pp. 32-33.

³³ On Arif Bey see: ASD, Bernabei to MFA, Benghazi, 4. 8. 08, no. 753/277, SP, pac. 5.

³⁴ Fontana, loc. cit. note 14.

contrast to the memoirs, which gave the visit a more private character. Afterwards Mustafa Kemal began looking into the political affairs of the town: "They at once started reorganising the existing Young Turks' Club, which they criticised as composed exclusively of Turkish Officials and a few officers, and not including representative members of the great Arab Community at Benghazi; and they remodelled it into a Committee or Club affiliated to the Committee of Union and Progress at Salonica, and working upon similar lines at a similar programme. Two Arab Notables, Emhaishi Pasha and Regeb Ali Yussef, were induced to join this Club, and the Mutessarif was elected as its President."³⁵ In Benghazi as in Tripoli, Mustafa Kemal saw his political role as a double one: To correct the political programme of the local Young Turks by amalgamating it with CUP's doctrines; Making it an Ottoman movement and not a secluded Turkish Club, including only Government people without any local inhabitants. After reorganising the Club politically and getting into it some Arabs of influence, Mustafa Kemal decided to launch a propaganda campaign in favour of the Club by calling large meetings and addressing them, as he had done in Tripoli as well. His difficulties in Benghazi were greater than in Tripoli, because the area was more secluded and the people more religious and traditional in their thoughts and behaviour. It is quite probable, that for some of them the political and social changes were too quick and they could not acknowledge any authority except the old one, they were accustomed to. "The Major meanwhile called together a meeting of the influential Arab Notables with the object of expounding the programme and political aims of the Committees at Salonica and Constantinople, and their efforts to obtain the loyal cooperation of all the various races and creeds in the Ottoman Empire, owing allegiance to the Sultan, to ensure the consolidation of liberty and the peaceful development of the new Constitution.

As soon as the Major has concluded his preliminary remarks, an elderly Arab rose and requested permission to speak. He said that the Arabs recognised three Authorities, viz. God, the Prophet, and the Sultan, or Khalif. And he asked whether the Major or his colleagues had any letter of recommendation from the latter, or other

³⁵ Ibid.

credentials to shew that his Imperial Majesty recognised and approved of their mission. The answer being in the negative, the Arab declared that he and his friends were unable to recognise that mission as a serious one, and the meeting was dissolved.

After reorganising to the best of their ability the Young Turks' Club at Benghazi, the Major and his two companions started on their return journey. Their efforts to reconcile the Arab Notables and the careless Arab people to the ideas of the Young Turks seem to have failed, although their efforts to that end were not unskilfully directed. One of the foremost Arabs at Benghazi afterwards informed me that the Arab Notables and leaders in general looked askance upon the proceeding of the Young Turks, that they recognised only the Sultan in his quality as Khalif as their legitimate ruler, and that they shunned participation in the proceedings of a Club where their very presence might later on be imputed to them as a crime."³⁶

This sounds like a big failure, but it seems that on other occasions the success was greater. It should be remembered, that influential Arabs did participate in the local CUP's activities and that the Benghazi delegates to parliament were from that party.³⁷ Fontana did not mention any other event from Mustafa Kemal's stay in town, neither did he comment on the latter's character. The only personal view he gave was by reporting that "their efforts to reconcile the Arab Notables and the careless Arab people to the ideas of the Young Turks . . . were not unskilfully directed," which sounds as a typical British consular understatement to describe Mustafa Kemal's efficient and energetic treatment to promote the Young Turks' status among the inhabitants. His task in Benghazi was harder than in Tripoli and as a result the outcome less successful. CUP continued to have a special sentiment for Libya, perhaps because many of its members had had long years of sufferings and hopes there. The Committee tried to improve conditions there, but at the very same time reverted to a policy pursued by the old régime: Libya continued to be a land of exile, this time for the "Enemies of the Constitution."

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ahmad, pp. 87, 173; ASD, Mayor to MFA, Istanbul, 7. 5. 11, no. 1922/568, SP, pac. 24; PRO, Adviser on internal affairs to HC, Egypt, Cairo, 10. 5. 15, no. 340/25, F. O., 141/653.

It is always interesting to try to trace the inner development of a celebrity and to follow the way his personality was formed. At times it is amazing to notice, that quite a few of a person's characteristics were already felt at a very early stage. There are not many primary sources on Mustafa Kemal's early life and even though many of the later descriptions are correct, they might be blurred by admiration and forgetfulness or rivalry. Every piece of contemporary evidence adds to the better understanding of his personality. Already in Libya he was noted for his qualities as an organiser, orator and teacher as well as for his solemnity and reserve. He was to put the political life in Libya in some order and discipline. It might even be assumed, that later contacts between Ottomans and Libyans during the war benefitted from these relations.