

YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION 1908

Preceded by (1) Persian Revolution which started in 1905 and continued till 1911.

(2) Revolutionary outbreak in Russia 1905-06.

Already in 1876 a liberal constitution (written by members of Young Ottoman especially Midhat Pasha) was accepted by Sultan Abdul Hamid II but within two years Sultan Abdul Hamid II suspended the implementation of the constitution and Turkey again lapsed into conservative rule. In 1890s Kiamal Pasha, one of the most respected statesmen had recognised the need of reform within the Ottoman Empire and as Grand Vizier (the Chief Minister) counselled Abdul Hamid II to put into effect the liberal constitution in 1876, but his requests went unheeded and Kiamal was dismissed in 1896.

Kiamal had gathered about him a sizable party of liberal – minded Turks. (These liberal-minded Turks were called Young Turks). They formed secret societies and carried on propaganda targeting the Turkish Army, preparing for a revolution to transform the Turkish Empire into a national state whose whole population would be infused with common patriotism and a common desire for modern progress.

Two events triggered the Young Turk Revolution:

- (1) The Anglo Russian Alliance settled the enmity between England and Russia by recognising the sphere of control in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. Britain promised to stay out of northern Persia where as southern-Persia was the British sphere of influence. Both countries promised not to interfere in Tibet. British influence in Afghanistan was recognised by Russia.
- (2) There was a meeting between Edward VII of England and Nicholas II of Russia in June 1908 in the Baltic port of Reval. The Turkish military officers feared that the meeting was a prelude to the partition of Macedonia. Army units the Balkans mutinied against Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

Major Ahmed Niyazi revolted in Resen and fearing that his political motives would be discovered by an investigating committee sent from capital, left

Resen with 200 followers demanding the restoration of Constitution of 1876. One of the most active "Young Turk" was Enver Bey, an army lieutenant stationed at Salonica who with fellow officers organised the revolutionary "Committee of Union and Progress" (CUP), also executed a military coup. Enver Bey proclaimed the long suspended constitution of 1876 and threatened Abdul Hamid II of deposition if he should offer resistance.

On July 24, 1908 Sultan Abdul Hamid II capitulated and announced the restoration of the 1876 Constitution. Censorship and espionage was abolished. Kiamal Pasha was made Grand Vizier on August 5, 1908 of the new Constitutional Regime- this is known as the Second Constitutional Era. The young Turk Revolution of 1908, ushered multi party politics in a two stage electoral system under the Ottoman Parliament- Committee of Union and Progress, Freedom and Accord party (Liberal Union or Liberal Entente) were the major parties. The Ottoman general elections took place during November and December 1908. On December 17, 1908 the Committee of Union and Progress won a majority in the Parliament. The Senate of the Ottoman Empire met on December 17, 1908; the Chamber of Deputies began its first session on January 30, 1909.

Though the Young Turk Revolution had promised organisational improvement, but initially the government proved disorganised and ineffectual. Kiamal Pasha tried to strike balance between the liberals and Committee of Union and Progress, but differences between Kiamal and Enver Bey led to Kiamal's removal on February 14, 1909.

The Sultan maintained his symbolic position, but in April 1909 attempted to seize power (Ottoman counter coup of 1909) by stirring populist sentiment throughout the empire. The Sultan's bid to return to power gained popularity when he promised to restore the Caliphate, eliminate secular policies and restore *Sharia* based legal system. The conservative powers that had lost power in the Young Turk Revolution supported Abdul Hamid II. On April 13, 1909 army units revolted supported by theological students and conservatives clerics, moving to restore to Sultan to absolute power, to dismantle the Second Constitutional era. 31 March Incident (due to date originating in old Rumi calendar) on 24 April 1909, reversed the actions of the conservative group and restored the parliament by Hareket Ordusu (Army of

Action) commanded by Mahmud Shevket Pasha. The deposition of Abdul Hamid II of Mohammed V, his younger brother followed. The liberal cabinet of Kamal Pasha was replaced by a Young Turk ministry and the parliament became the National Assembly.

Taking advantage of chaos caused by the Young Turk revolution of 1908 Austria-Hungary proclaimed in October 1908 the end of Ottoman sovereignty over Bosnia and Herzegovina and the incorporation of these provinces with the Dual Monarchy. Austria-Hungary gave to the Ottoman Empire the Sanjak of Novibazar which Austria-Hungary had been occupying since 1878. Simultaneously the autonomous Prince of Bulgaria declared the complete independence of his country, including Eastern Rumelia and assumed the title of King. The actions of Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria were against the provisions of Berlin Congress 1878. But the Turkish government helplessly agreed to these developments.

The military dictatorship of Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress in which Enver Bey (now Enver Pasha) was the most vigorous and influential figure, followed a policy of "Turkification" which alienated the non-Turks- the Muslims Arabs in Asia and Christians in the Balkans. Alarmed by the aggressive attitude of the Young Turk government, Italy in September 1911 attacked the Ottoman Provinces of Tripoli in northern Africa. The policies of Young Turks also encouraged the formation of Balkan League and the Balkan Wars 1912-1913.