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## Mehmet Sharif Pasha's Thought on the Committee of Union and Progress and the Critical Events of the Period (1909-1914)

### *Mehmet Şerif Paşa'nın İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Dönemin Kritik Olayları Hakkındaki Düşünceleri (1909-1914)*

**Abstract:** In the history of the Ottoman press, newspapers published in French are very important in terms of describing the political and social life of the period. In addition to reflecting the political developments of the Ottoman period, the French-language press also conveyed the views of European countries on the Ottoman state in a very detailed manner. Meşrutiyet (Mèchrouitette), the newspaper in question, was an opposition newspaper published in Paris by Mehmed Sharif Pasha. Mehmed Sharif Pasha, who had previously served as ambassador to Stockholm, was an active member of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) during the proclamation of the constitutional monarchy, but later had disagreements with the Committee and travelled to Paris. In the newspaper he published there, He was so critical of the CUP that his newspaper was denied entry to the country and its distributors were arrested. The newspaper, which was published between 1909 and 1914, included articles on the 1908 revolution, relations with European states, Ottoman debts, Ottoman-German rapprochement, the Tripolitan War, Albanian and Macedonian revolts, the Aegean islands, political assassinations and many other topics. The aim of this study is to shed light on the political environment of the period through the articles published by Mehmed Sharif Pasha in the Meşrutiyet newspaper.

**Key Words:** Mehmed Sharif Pasha, The Journal of Mèchrouitette, Second Constitutional Monarchy, Opposition Press

**Öz:** Osmanlı basın tarihinde Fransızca yayımlanan gazeteler dönemin siyasi ve içtimai hayatını anlatmaları açısından oldukça önem taşımaktadırlar. Fransızca basın Osmanlı dönemindeki siyasi gelişmeleri yansıtılmalarının yanında Avrupa ülkelerinin Osmanlı Devleti'ne bakışını da oldukça ayrıntılı bir şekilde göstermektedir. Konumuz olan Meşrutiyet (Mèchrouitette) gazetesi Mehmed Şerif Paşa tarafından Paris'te yayımlanmış olan muhalif bir gazetedir. Daha önce Stockholm Büyükelçiliği görevinde bulunmuş olan Mehmed Şerif Paşa, Meşrutiyetin ilanı sırasında İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyetinde aktif bir üye iken daha sonra cemiyet ile anlaşmazlığa düşerek Paris'e gitmiştir. Burada çıkarmış olduğu gazetede İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyetine oldukça sert eleştirilerde bulunmuş, bundan dolayı gazetesinin yurda girişi engellenmiş ve dağıtıcıları tutuklanmıştır. 1909-1914 yılları arasında yayımlanan gazetede 1908 devrimi, Avrupa devletleri ile ilişkiler, Osmanlı borçları, Osmanlı-Alman yakınlaşması, Trablusgarp Savaşı, Arnavutluk ve Makedonya isyanları, Ege Adaları, siyasi suikastlar, sansür uygulamaları ve daha birçok konuda yazılan makaleler bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Mehmed Şerif Paşa'nın Meşrutiyet gazetesinde yayımlanmış olduğu makaleler çerçevesinde dönemin siyasi ortamına ışık tutmaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mehmed Şerif Paşa, Meşrutiyet Gazetesi, II. Meşrutiyet, Muhalif Basın

### Introduction

In the late 19th century, Ottoman political life was dominated by the political authority of the Committee of Union and Progress. The Committee first overthrew the 33-year rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II and then restored constitutional government. When the Committee took power in 1909, the Ottoman economy was on the brink of bankruptcy. Nationalist movements against the central government were growing, while the European powers, believing that the Ottoman state

would disintegrate, were planning to divide up the country.<sup>1</sup> At this point, a polyphonic structure was established for a short period of time, both in parliament and in the political arena, and the multinational structure of the empire found the opportunity to represent itself thanks to the political parties that were established. The Committee fought long and hard for the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy (Meşrutiyet), believing that liberal ideas such as equality of all peoples, freedom and national solidarity would save the empire from disintegration. During this period, rebellions broke out in many parts of the empire, especially in the Balkans, and much territory was lost. In order to prevent this, the Unionists adopted the ideal that the only way forward was constitutional democracy and that the rights of all citizens would be protected by an Ottoman policy. However, the situation did not develop as planned. When the Unionists came to power, they did not take over the administration directly, but first tried to control the governments according to the ideologies set by the organisation. The institution that supported them most was the army. The fact that the army took on the protection of constitutionalism and solidarity with CUP increased the legitimacy of unionist.<sup>2</sup> In the following period, the more active role of the army in politics and the practices of the committee to consolidate its political position led to the emergence of many individuals and organisations opposed to the committee. Particularly in the period following the 31 March incident, the CUP used harsh practices to control the government and received harsh criticism, especially from liberal circles. The opposition accused the Unionists of looking after their own interests, of being unqualified to govern the state, of perpetuating the tyranny of the Sultan Abdulhamid era and many other things.<sup>3</sup> The development of the press during this period led to the publication of many newspapers and enabled us to follow this rivalry. Mehmed Sharif Pasha, our subject, is an important figure in understanding the relations between the government and the opposition in the last period. He was an important figure who served as ambassador to Stockholm during the reign of Abdulhamid II and later as the head of Bangaltı in the CUP administration. It is generally believed that the reason for his separation from the Unionists at this time was to obtain a better position. However, in order to prevent the disintegration of the empire, he expressed views such as the establishment of a constitutional regime that included all ethnic groups, the need to establish closer relations with the British and French in Europe, and the pursuit of a more moderate political path. Since Mehmed Sharif Pasha came from a wealthy family in Paris, he maintained relations with the rich and tried to take the lead in the opposition to the Unionists abroad. In his newspaper, Meşrutiyet (Constitutional Monarchy), he accused the Unionists of treason and was very critical of them.

### 1. The Life of Mehmed Sharif Pasha

Mehmed Sharif Pasha is known as the Kurdish Sharif Pasha. His family came from Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. His father, Said Pasha, was Minister of Foreign Affairs and Head of the Council of State. Because of his family's wealth, he received a good education. After studying at the Mekteb-i Sultani, he graduated from the Saint Cry Academy in France. During his studies, he entered the civil service as a second clerk at the Paris Embassy. After his training, he began his civil service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, he served as attaché at the Brussels and Paris embassies and then as deputy chairman of the Council of State, a sub-committee of the Assembly of Ayan.<sup>4</sup> He was then appointed to the post of Deputy Ambassador at the Embassy in Stockholm.<sup>5</sup> Sultan Abdulhamid II wanted to remove him from the capital because of his liberal ideas.<sup>6</sup> An incident he experienced during this period

<sup>1</sup> Oral Sander, *Anka'nın Yükselişi ve Düşüşü Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihi Üzerine Bir Deneme* (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2014), 276.

<sup>2</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma* Yay. Haz: Ahmet Kuyas (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 401-404.

<sup>3</sup> Stanford J. Shaw ve Ezel Kural Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye* C. 2 (İstanbul: E yayınları, 1982), 329-333.

<sup>4</sup> Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), İrade Hususi (İ. HUS.), 33/67, Date: 18 Recep 1312 (15 Ocak 1895).

<sup>5</sup> BOA, Y.PRK.PT., 16/124, Date: 13 Şevval 1315 (7 Mart 1898).

<sup>6</sup> BOA, İ. TNF., 19/28, Date: 8 Rebiülevvel, 1327 (30 Mart 1909).

brought him closer to the liberals. In 1895, he bought Edhem Pasha's mansion in Kuruçeşme for 8000 liras, renovated it for 1000 liras and registered it in the name of his wife Emine Hanım, the daughter of Halim Pasha. However, in a will written during this period, he was asked to transfer the villa to Mediha Hanım, the wife of the Sultan's sister Ferid Pasha. Mehmed Sharif Pasha's villa was later raided by soldiers and forcibly evicted.<sup>7</sup> His good looks earned him the nickname *Beau Sharif*, which means handsome in Sweden and Norway. He was awarded the Order of Epe for his successful diplomatic activities. During this time, he developed close links with the Young Turk movement in Europe. As he could not get used to the weather in Stockholm and fell ill, he was treated in Karlstad for a while. His salary was increased by 60 liras during this period.<sup>8</sup> And he was honoured with the medal of Mecidian.<sup>9</sup> Mehmed Sharif Pasha was decorated by many countries during his diplomatic activities. He received state decorations from the French Legion of Honour, Spain, Romania, Iran and the Papal States.<sup>10</sup> During this period, he was found to have travelled to Egypt on several occasions without authorisation for property he owned and was warned.<sup>11</sup> Then He had difficulty adapting to the climate in Stockholm and was transferred to Madrid.<sup>12</sup> Sharif Pasha came to Istanbul after the 1908 revolution. He was offered the post of *Istabl-ı Âmire* Chief (The sultan's stable) by the Committee, but he did not accept the post. He then served as the Pangaltı chairman of the Union and Progress Committee. In 1909, Sharif Pasha entered into trade and pioneered the establishment of the National Bank of Turkey together with British capitalists.<sup>13</sup> Later, he applied for an ambassadorial post in London and Paris, but when this was not accepted, he left the CUP and went to Paris. During this period, he claimed that Ahmed Rıza<sup>14</sup> Bey wanted to kill him. Mehmed Sharif Pasha, who had fallen out with the committee, was accused of being an informer. With the help of his father's inheritance, he began to publish anti-Unionist publications in Paris. He also gave financial support to individuals and organisations opposed to the CUP.<sup>15</sup> The opposition to the committee abroad was led by Prince Sabahaddin and Sharif Pasha. However, there was no consensus between these two important figures. Sharif Pasha thought that if the Unionists were overthrown, everything would be fine. Prince Sabahaddin, however, was the one whose ideas were more respected in opposition circles. For this reason, a complete unity of the opposition could not be achieved in the early stages.<sup>16</sup> One of the famous dissidents who fled abroad was Mevlânzâde Rifat. He first went to Egypt and then to Paris, where he met Sharif Pasha. They agreed to publish the newspaper *Serbesti* in Paris. However, the publication of the newspaper was cancelled due to financial problems between the two of them.<sup>17</sup> While Sharif Pasha continued to write articles in the anti-Unionist newspapers *Serbesti* and *Revue*, he also began to publish a monthly newspaper called *Meşrutiyet* (Mêchrouitette) during this period. He also founded the *Islahât-ı Esasiye-i Osmaniye* Party. Since the Radical Party was in power in France

<sup>7</sup> "Le Droit de Propriété en Turquie", *Les Nouvelles d'Orient : organe spécial des intérêts français en Turquie*, 19.11.1895, no :28, 9.

<sup>8</sup> BOA, *BEO.*, 2071/155272, Date: 20 Safer 1321 (18 Mayıs 1903).

<sup>9</sup> BOA, *İ. TAL.*, 319/16, Date: 24 Şaban 1321 (15 Kasım 1903).

<sup>10</sup> Ali Birinci, "Mehmed Şerif Paşa (1865-1951)" *DİA* (İstanbul: 2010, C. 39), 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> BOA, *Y. A. HUS.*, 507/39, Date: 19 Ramazan 1324 (6 Kasım 1906).

<sup>12</sup> BOA, *Y. EE.*, 14/207, Date: 1 Rebiyülevvel 1326 (3 Nisan 1908).

<sup>13</sup> BOA, *İ. TNF.*, 19/28, Date: 8 Rebiyülevvel, 1327 (30 Mart 1909).

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed Rıza Bey, who played an important role in the Young Turk movement by publishing the newspaper *Meşveret*, was one of the leaders of the Union and Progress Committee. After graduating from Mekteb-i Sultani, he worked in the Foreign Ministry's translation office. He then went to France to study agriculture. In Paris he became interested in positivism. At the suggestion of Dr. Nazım, he became president of the Paris branch of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1895. He wrote reform proposals to Sultan Abdulhamid II under the names of "Letter" and "Lahiya". He published the journal "Meşveret". He also published a newspaper supplement called "Mechveret Supplement Français". İbrahim Temo ve Ahmed Rıza, *Biz İttihatçılar*, Ed. Ö. Andaç Uğurlu (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi, 2009), 287.

<sup>15</sup> Nihat Karademir, *Sultan Abdülhamid ve Kürtler* (İstanbul: Nühbar Yayınları, 2014), 514.

<sup>16</sup> Sedef Bulut, "Paris Konferansında Şerif Paşa'nın Faaliyetleri ve Doğu Anadolu Ahalisinin Durumu", (M.A Thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi, 1998), 80.

<sup>17</sup> Naci Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler* (Ankara: Beybun Yayınları, 1992), 83.

at that time, Sharif Pasha, in order to influence the Ottoman intellectuals, gave the party a similar name and called it "Le Parti Radical Ottoman". Among the founders of the party were Ali Kemal, Mevlânzâde Rifat, Pertev Tevfik, Dr. Refik Nevzat, Albert Fua and Kemal Avni Bey.<sup>18</sup> The party's activities continued until 1913, when it joined the *Hürriyet and İtilaf* (Freedom and Entente Party). The Ottoman Socialist Party also supported groups opposed to the Committee of Union and Progress, such as the Ahrar Party.<sup>19</sup>

In an article entitled "*Our Programme*" published in the journal of *Meşrutiyet*, Mehmed Sharif Pasha explained in detail the purpose of the newspaper and its political programme.<sup>20</sup> The CUP responded to the press, which portrayed them as reactionary revolutionaries and a secret organisation set up to overthrow them. They stated that they had no secret activities and that their general demands were as follows:

- 1- Freedom of the press, freedom of assembly.
- 2- Immediate abolition of military courts and full implementation of constitutional laws.
- 3- Amendment of the civil and military reorganisations, which in practice lead to favouritism due to the unfairness of their basis, and at the same time review of all illegal trials.
- 4- The establishment of credit institutions in the provinces with a maturity of one year to grant loans at moderate interest rates to merchants, farmers, building owners and landowners, as well as the distribution of vacant and state lands suitable for cultivation to the poor or nomadic population.
- 5- In order to ensure true brotherhood among all Ottomans, the principle of absolute equality in the rights and duties of the various elements of the country and the implementation of proper social education should be observed.

During this period, all his publications were subject to a ban on entry into the country. Since he was nicknamed Beau Sharif, his opponents changed this nickname to Empty Boy. And he was accused of conspiring against the government to assassinate Ahmed Samim Bey. Mehmed Sharif Pasha claimed that the CUP had prepared this assassination and published a letter in the newspaper to a man called Sevket Bey showing that he had been threatened by the Society. Taking a lesson from the 31 March incident, the CUP immediately started arresting the opponents of the regime and in early July they arrested Rıza Nur, the deputy for Sinop, who they thought was preparing a reactionary conspiracy.<sup>21</sup> It was during this period that he published an article entitled "*My Conviction*". He was accused by the military court of being the head of a secret society conspiring against the CUP.<sup>22</sup> Mehmed Sharif Pasha declared that this

<sup>18</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler: C.1; İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi 1908-1918* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı, 1984), 253.

<sup>19</sup> Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası II. Meşrutiyet Devrinde İttihat ve Terakki'ye Karşı Çıkanlar* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1990), 24. The Ahrar Party was founded on 14 September 1908. The official founders were Nureddin Ferruh, Ahmed Fazlı, Kıbrıslı Tevfik Bey, Nazım Bey, Sevket Bey, Celaeddin Arif Bey and Mahir Said Bey. Mehmed Sharif Pasha joined the party as soon as it was founded, along with Hasan Fehmi Bey and Dr. Rıza Nur. The main figures behind the Ahrar Party were Prince Sabahattin and Kamil Pasha. Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 267.

<sup>20</sup> For the complete party programme: Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, 258-265.

<sup>21</sup> Feroz Ahmed, *İttihat ve Terakki (1908-1914)* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1999), 109.

<sup>22</sup> He wrote another article with the title "*Fiasco*", stating that the Committee had conspired against him. The article was written upon the arrest of Sinope MP Dr. Rıza Nur Bey for a visiting card he had received from Mehmed Sharif Pasha. During this period, it was claimed by the Unionists that the İslahât-ı Esasiye Party had established a secret society in the country and started to act. The Tanin newspaper stated that the secret society was led by Rıza Nur and Mustafa Natık Beys and that Mahmud Sevket Pasha, Talat and Necmeddin Molla would be killed under the guidance of these two people, and at the same time, a rebellion would be organized with justified agitation. Rıza Nur was arrested on the allegation that the name of this secret society was the "Builders' Society" and that he was the director of the secret society. During this period, Rıza Nur was kept in prison for 3 months and was eventually released. Rıza Nur, *Cemiyet-i Hafiyeye: Gizli Örgüt*, (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1995), 28-29. Because the evidence of the offence sought was not found. Mehmed Sharif Pasha stated that he told this anecdote to show the situation of

conviction was a conspiracy and therefore this life sentence was his medal, and he would wear it with pride.<sup>23</sup> In 1912, Ahmed Muhtar Pasha became Grand Vizier, and it was during his term as Grand Vizier that the opponents of the CUP became stronger. During this period, the death sentence against him was lifted and he had the opportunity to meet Sultan Mehmed Reşad V. in Istanbul.<sup>24</sup> During the period of Ahmed Muhtar Pasha's cabinet, rebellions continued in northern Albania. At the same time, under the pretext that the Unionists had not handed over the administration and were still active, the cabinet was changed, and Kâmil Pasha was appointed Grand Vizier. During the reign of Kamil Pasha, the CUP was relieved of all its duties and sent into exile. The army, which had been trained in Albania, was demobilised. Meanwhile, with the outbreak of the Balkan War, the Ottoman Empire suffered a great defeat. The willingness of Kamil Pasha, who was seen as a friend of the British, to make peace and the loss of Edirne and Kırkkilise led the Unionist under the leadership of Enver Bey to take action again. The Bâbiâli raid took place. In this turbulent process, Sharif Pasha, Prince Sabahaddin, Gümülcineli İsmail and Basri Bey prepared for another revolution. However, they did not succeed and went abroad.<sup>25</sup> Mehmed Sharif Pasha had to return to Paris. And the government of Mahmud Sevket Pasha was established. During this period, after the assassination of Mahmud Sevket Pasha, he was implicated and sentenced to death again. He was stripped of all his titles.<sup>26</sup> and was the target of two assassination attempts. The first attempt was made in 1913 by a doorman who was released from prison by İsmail Canbolat and sent to Paris, and the second was organised by Azmi Bey, the former Istanbul police chief.<sup>27</sup> During the First World War, Sharif Pasha settled in Monte Carlo. He lived a luxurious life thanks to the wealth inherited from his father and that of his wife Emine Hanım. And he wrote many articles on the Armenian policy of the committee.<sup>28</sup> Although it is rumoured that he offered his services to the British during the First World War to give Mesopotamia to the Kurds, this could not be confirmed. It is known that his relations with the Unionists improved during the last period of the war and that he even communicated with some members of the committee, especially Cavid Bey.<sup>29</sup> He organised meetings in Geneva with Prince Sabahaddin, Ahmed Reşid, Cemil Pasha and some Turkish officers and journalists and received full authority to defend Turkish interests during the Paris

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political opponents and the constitution in Turkey. At this stage, it was stated by Lutfi Fikri Bey in the parliament that Rıza Nur was a member of a so-called secret association, and therefore, denunciations were received, and investigations were carried out by an extraordinary commission appointed for this purpose. In the rest of the article, it is explained in detail that Dr. Munir, who was thought to be Rıza Nur Bey's informant, was tortured in order to force him to accuse. In addition, it is also stated that the committee tried to enact some laws in order to disregard the will of the parliament, for example, the decisions that should have been taken with the majority of the parliament, for example two thirds, were not implemented. Therefore, Unionists wanted to give a new design to the Parliament. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, although they labelled Sultan Hamid's spies as reactionaries and corrupt, the Committee of Union and Progress today labels all those who oppose them as reactionaries. Chérif Pacha, "La Débâcle", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1911, no:14, 2-6.

<sup>23</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Ma Condamnation", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.11.1910, no:12, 2.

<sup>24</sup> In 1913, after four and a half years of exile, Mehmed Sharif Pasha travelled to Istanbul at the invitation of his political friends after the death sentence imposed on him by a military court was overturned. He stated that he was received in a consoling manner after the accusations he had been subjected to during the Ittihad and Progress government. During his visit to Istanbul, he met with the Sultan Mehmed Reşad V twice. During these meetings, he stated that Sultan was following even the smallest details about the causes of the national disasters and that he was agonized. He also states that he had difficulty in holding back his tears at the prospect of the loss of Balkan territories. And Sultan asked him the reason for Europe's enthusiasm four years ago and its indifference now, and that this indifference would increase even more if the reforms the country needed were not carried out. Mehmed Sharif Pasha was pleased that during his three weeks in Istanbul, he met with all those in power and those who were asked to play a political role and observed that they agreed that the realization of general reforms should be entrusted to European experts. Chérif Pacha, "Retour de Constantinople", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1913, no: 38, 1-6.

<sup>25</sup> Murat Çulcu, *İttihat ve Terakki I. Meşrutiyetten II. Meşrutiyet'e* (İstanbul: E yayınları, 2011), 325-327.

<sup>26</sup> Rohat Alakom, *Şerif Paşa: Bir Diplomatın Fırtınalı Yılları (1865-1951)* (İstanbul, AvestaYayıncıları, 1998), 81.

<sup>27</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, 256.

<sup>28</sup> Rohat Alakom, *Şerif Paşa*, 81.

<sup>29</sup> Taner Aslan, "Saidpasazade Mehmed Şerif Pasa Muhalefeti ve İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Yasaklanan Bir Risalesi", (*Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, C.30, S.50), 11.

Conference of 1919. It was in these meetings that decisions were taken on the preservation of Turkish independence and law, the return of Turkish prisoners and minority rights. Mehmed Sharif Pasha believed that the Kurds would not make any demands if the areas where they lived remained under Ottoman rule, but if they were given to Armenia, the Kurds should have an independent state. It is clear that Sharif Pasha, whose views were considered separatist, did not always hold this view. In particular, he published a memorandum on Turkish demands against Greek demands. In this memorandum, he tried to prove with evidence that the lands that the Greeks claimed belonged to them actually belonged to the Turks. Another opinion about him is that he openly defended the Kurdish demands at the Paris Peace Congress and, in agreement with the Armenian delegates Avatis Ohoranian and Bogos Nubar Pasha, stated that two separate Armenian and Kurdish states should be established in the eastern provinces of the Empire. The fact that he was the Kurdish delegate at the Paris Conference was not initially accepted by the Kurds. During this period, many critical articles about him and the Kurdish Association were published in Istanbul newspapers. Later, in response to these criticisms, he rejected the separatist ideas and announced his resignation from the delegation.<sup>30</sup> After the establishment of the Republic, he was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Bank of Reputation.<sup>31</sup> After this, Sharif Pasha, who was not very interested in politics, had his second marriage and began to live with his daughter, who had married a nobleman in Italy. However, he continued to make occasional statements about Turkey in the foreign press. After the admission of the Republic of Turkey to the League of Nations, he made a number of statements to French newspapers. He stated that Turkey had played an important role in the history of Europe. In particular, he stated that the partition of Poland was considered a great injustice in Europe, but that Turkey had been partitioned since the 18th century.<sup>32</sup>

During the Second World War, Sharif Pasha thought that the Turkish state should be used to end the war. he declared that the Turkish army should fight with the French against the Bolsheviks. he presented this idea to M. Clemenceau. However, the American and British allies, who thought that the shedding of Christian blood by Muslims would cause great outrage, rejected this proposal.<sup>33</sup> In 1950, he was deprived of his citizenship by a decision of the Ministry of Interior on the grounds that he had not participated in the War of Independence and had not returned to his homeland between 1923 and 1927.<sup>34</sup> He later passed away in Italy in 1951.

## 2. The Articles of Mehmed Sharif Pasha in the Journal of Mèchrouitette

French newspapers in Ottoman press history are important sources for us to understand the conditions of the period. In the early 19th century, newspapers such as Smyreen, Spectateur oriental, Courier de Smyrne published in İzmir are the first examples. These newspapers were published mainly to inform the Levantines living in the region about French commercial life. They also provided important information about France and Europe. Later, the first official newspaper Takvim-i Vekâyi, published by Alecsandre Blacque in 1831, and the Moniteur Ottoman in French were published, and the French press found an opportunity to develop in the Ottoman Empire. If we analyse the French newspapers published in the Ottoman Empire in general, we find news about Europe, commentaries, news about the Ottoman government and politics, events in the main port cities and a lot of news about trade.<sup>35</sup> Apart from these newspapers, the struggle against political power through the press began with the Young Turks. The leaders of this movement, which discussed Western thought and institutions together with

<sup>30</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, *İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete Türkiye'de Etnik Çatışma* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 95.

<sup>31</sup> Presidency of State Archives Republican Archive (DCA), Kutu no:3, Gömlek no:5, Sıra no:10, Date:18.02.1924.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Turkish Diplomatic Archives (TDA.), Kutu no:525, Gömlek no:8, Date: 11.04.1932.

<sup>33</sup> TDA, 525/5, Date:12.12. 1941.

<sup>34</sup> DCA, 123/67/8, Date:16.08.1950.

<sup>35</sup> Edhem Eldem, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Son Döneminde Fransızca Basım için Kullanım Kılavuzu" *Kebikeç* 53 (2022): 284-285.

the references of Islamic civilisation and appealed to the leadership of both civilisations, were people like Namık Kemal, Şinasi, Ziya Pasha and Ali Suavi, who had close relations with the Ottoman bureaucracy. Those involved in the New Ottoman movement published newspapers such as *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, *Muhbir*, *Hürriyet*, *İttihat*, *İnkılap*, *İbret*, *Hadika* in Ottoman geography and in Europe.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, these newspapers are very useful for us to understand the political conditions of the period. The newspaper *Meşrutiyet* (*Mèchrouitette*), which is our subject, was published between 1909-1914 under the administration of Mehmed Sharif Pasha. The newspaper was published in French as *Mèchrouitette: The Ottoman Constitution: A monthly newspaper dedicated to the defence of the political and economic interests and equal rights of all Ottomans, regardless of race or religion. (Mècheroutiette: constitutionnel ottoman: organe du Parti radical ottoman: journal mensuel consacré à la défense des intérêts politiques et économiques et des droits égalitaires de tous les Ottomans sans distinction de race ni de religion)*. The newspaper was published in a total of 54 copies. The address of the paper was given as 26 Betta rue Paris. In addition to Mehmed Sharif Pasha's articles, the paper contains many letters sent to him and articles by other opposition writers.<sup>37</sup> The articles published by Mehmed Sharif Pasha, in addition to his harsh criticism of the Union and Progress administrations, generally dealt with the current issues of the time.

### 2.1. The despotism of the Party of Union and Progress and the political situation in the Journal of *Mèchrouitette*

In the journal of *Mèchrouitette*, Mehmed Sharif Pasha's most frequent topic was the political despotism of the Unionists. In almost all the articles he wrote in the newspaper, Mehmed Sharif Pasha complained about the practices of the Unionists. In particular, he gave examples of how the rulers deviated from their main objectives, suspended the constitution, imposed censorship on newspapers and used torture to silence the political opposition. In the first issue of *Mèchrouitette*, published on 15 October 1909, Mehmed Sharif Pasha wrote an article in which he explained in detail to his readers why he had left the CUP. He believes that if he had put his personal interests first and kept quiet, he could have obtained a good position in the committee. In his own words, however, he explains that he made this decision after seeing the realities and because of the despotic practices of the committee. In particular, he said that the Minister of the Interior, Talat Pasha, had transferred his powers to society and that the military had become too involved in politics. According to the article, the committee saw itself as having a monopoly on patriotism. The slogan they used during this period was "There is no salvation except for us" (*Hors de Nous, Pas de Salut*), and the article argues that this would lead to segregating the different races and religions in the Ottoman state.<sup>38</sup>

Mehmed Sharif Pasha says that the Ottoman people, regardless of religion, language and nationality, rejoiced after the constitutional regime proclaimed. Muslims, Armenians and Jews embraced in the streets of Istanbul and visited each other in churches, mosques and synagogues. The Committee should have taken advantage of this situation and fed this enthusiasm with reasonable concessions, but it did not. The authoritarian practices of the committee created dissatisfaction in the public and political arena, which soon turned into anger. According to the article, the 31 March incident of April 1909 was a product of this anger. However, the committee considered this uprising against despotism and tyranny as a reactionary rebellion and

<sup>36</sup> Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı Dönemi Basının İçeriği* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Yayınları, 2010), 150-153.

<sup>37</sup> Rohat Alakom, *Şerif Paşa*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Constitution en Turquie et les Agissements du Comité", *Mècheroutiette*, 15.10.1909, no:1, 1.

a movement to revive the regime of Abdulhamid II. Mehmed Sharif Pasha states that as a result of this uprising, hundreds of innocent people were hanged and killed in dungeons.<sup>39</sup>

According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, one of the main causes of the 31 March incident was the murder of Hasan Fehmi Efendi,<sup>40</sup> editor-in-chief of the Serbesti newspaper, on the Karaköy Bridge. He thought that the murderer was one of the committee's doormen, but the police did not reveal the suspect. This anger spread to the clergy and the Istanbul garrison, setting the stage for an attempt at revolution. According to the article, Abdulhamid II briefly hoped that this initiative would allow him to regain his former power, but then he realised that this distorted constitutional order had to be improved. At this stage, Mehmed Sharif Pasha emphasises that the biggest mistake was made when the army of the movement entered Istanbul. According to Pasha, all the garrisons in Istanbul laid down their arms and returned to their barracks. However, the Movement Army, made up of Greeks, Jews and Bulgarians, killed unarmed soldiers and the Ulema. In addition, the army increased its influence in politics, and young officers in the naval and army command put pressure on the Parliamentary Assembly to overthrow the Grand Vizier Kâmil Pasha. Mehmed Sharif Pasha, after seeing the armed officers in the Assembly, declared that he had resigned from the organisation because he knew the terrible harm of the military's involvement in politics and in order to avoid political responsibility. He also emphasised that some members of the army had resigned with him.<sup>41</sup>

In the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha uses anecdotes to explain the political situation in Istanbul and to highlight the despotic methods of society: *"One day, Ahmed Rıza Bey was having lunch at my house in Istanbul with some friends, including one of our present ambassadors. The conversation turned to the political parties to be formed in our young parliament. The president of the assembly declared in a stern tone that there could be only one opinion in our legislative assembly, the opinion of the benevolent delegation of the nation, and that no other opinion would be tolerated in any way"*.<sup>42</sup> As can be seen, the article emphasises that the Unionists were not in favour of multi-party government and that they only wanted their own political parties to be representative. However, one of the people Mehmed Sharif Pasha criticised most in his articles was Hussein Cahid Bey, the editor-in-chief of Tanin. Mehmed Sharif Pasha said that Hussein Cahid Bey, because of his article *"Dominant Races"* published in Tanin, the party's newspaper, said that Turks were the dominant element and that he guaranteed his seat in parliament after this article. Mehmed Sharif Pasha thought that this article reflected the ideology of the committee. He even states that this article caused a huge reaction in the non-Turkish press and that the government threatened to close the churches as a result of the protests organised by Greeks and Armenians. It was also said that this inexplicable fanaticism caused the Armenians to die in 1909.<sup>43</sup> He also stated that due to the fear of the society in the financial field, they only accepted Jews into the society and kept Greeks and Armenians in the

<sup>39</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Constitution en Turquie et les Agissements du Comite", *Mèchroutiette*, 15.10.1909, no:1, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Süleyman Teyfik Bey describes the murder of Hasan Fehmi Bey on Galata Bridge as follows: *"Hasan Fehmi Bey one of my old friends and the chief writer of the newspaper Serbesti, was murdered with a revolver by unknown assailants on Galata Bridge at midnight last night. it was a political murder. Hasan Fehmi was a teacher. he had continuously published against Committee of Union and Progress in the newspaper Serbesti. he said that he had received unsigned threatening letters from Salonica. Hilmi Bey, one of the district governors of the province, who was with him, was wounded. after the incident, all the newspapers without exception reported the incident. opposition MPs brought the incident to parliament. Hasan Fermi's funeral was held with great controversy. the funeral was incredibly crowded. Those who gathered were not friends of Hasan Fehmi. Political goals were to be achieved through political murder. if not for my friendship with the deceased, i would not have attended this gathering."* Cemal Kutay, *31 Mart'in 90. Yılında Laik Cumhuriyet Karşısında Derviş Vahdetiler Cephesi* (İstanbul: Aksoy Yayıncılık, 1994), 51.

<sup>41</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Constitution en Turquie et les Agissements du Comite", *Mèchroutiette*, 15.10.1909, no:1, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Constitution en Turquie et les Agissements du Comite", *Mèchroutiette*, 15.10.1909, no:1, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Constitution en Turquie et les Agissements du Comite", *Mèchroutiette*, 15.10.1909, no:1, 2.



background. He believed that the Ottoman Empire had to ensure understanding between all its elements in order to be a respected and viable state.<sup>44</sup>

In the October 1910 issue, Mehmed Sharif Pasha wrote an article entitled "*Equality of Races*" on the situation of the nations living in the Ottoman Empire. In the article, he again criticised the situation of the existing races in the Ottoman Empire and the CUP's failure to respect the constitution and its racist nationalism. According to him, the riots that broke out in some parts of the empire recently were reported by European newspapers and interpreted as a reaction of the people due to the non-implementation of the constitution. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the reason for the riots was the non-existence of the constitution, or to be more precise, the non-implementation of the constitution. The people know very well that the constitution that has been implemented is on paper and that it is a fictitious constitution. The people say that this yoke is heavier than before. That is why they have been yearning for a real constitutional solution. The CUP, on the other hand, although aware of these aspirations, established an order that defended its own interests and ruthlessly suppressed any threat to them. Mehmed Sharif Pasha continues the article as follows: "*During the reign of Abdulhamid II, the people were condemned to social, intellectual and even physical inactivity. A great event happened. The people changed their ruler. Muslim and non-Muslim elements, who were supposed to hate each other, were so happy that they embraced each other with great enthusiasm. This period of euphoria was short-lived. It was expected that under a neutral leadership there would be friendly competition between these different elements in all fields of activity. But the new masters immediately showed their preference. This naturally led to protests not only from the Christian elements, but also from other Muslim nations whose electoral rights had been violated. And in order to restore the disturbed order, it was necessary to resort to the above-mentioned method of coercion, which has been used ever since. These new masters of an old species spend the time they should be using to orientate a wide variety of people, to educate them in social, intellectual and economic life, mainly by punishing them, by shooting them indiscriminately*".

The article continues with an anecdote. It describes the environment created by this policy. He claims that as a result of this nationalist environment created by the Unionists, young people began to attack any foreigner, in their own words, they attacked those who wore hats. He states that the Italian ambassador and his entourage were attacked and that this incident, which was reported in the European press, was attributed to Muslim fanaticism. He claims that the police officers who witnessed this shameful scene were indifferent and that the incident was therefore planned. Later in the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha explains that the Ottoman Empire was not the only place where ethnic diversity was high and that other countries also had difficulties to overcome. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, the Austro-Hungarian government initially failed with its harsh policy, but later achieved great administrative success by treating all races with tolerance. So much so, in fact, that the Bosniaks brought to Macedonia by the CUP now want to return to their homeland.<sup>45</sup>

Another problem mentioned by Mehmed Sharif Pasha was the censorship practised by the Unionists. He strongly criticised the fact that the newspaper he published at the time was not allowed to enter the country. According to the decision of the Council of Ministers and Article 35 of the New Press Law, the newspaper *Mèchrouitette* (Constitutional Monarchy), published by Sharif Pasha in Paris and written in French, was banned from being imported and distributed in the Empire due to its harmful nature, and the publishers and distributors of the said newspaper would be fined between 2 and 15 liras. Due to this situation, Mehmed Sharif Pasha thought it appropriate to publish the issue of the newspaper in black. He said that the CUP was spreading sedition and anarchy in the country and was leading the country to destruction

<sup>44</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Constitution en Turquie et les Agissements du Comité", *Mèchrouitette*, 15.10.1909, no:1, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Chérif Pacha, "L'égalité des Races", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.10.1910, no: 11, 1-8.

through such practices. He said that by implementing this censorship law, the CUP had acted no differently from the Abdulhamid regime, and that those in power today who owned newspapers written in French and published in Paris at that time, and those who claimed to have liberal ideas, should remember this. Sharif Pasha protested against the censorship of the newspaper, saying that the Unionist's only concern was to remain in power, that they had neglected the principles they had adopted in their time, and that they were putting their interests and their pockets above all else.<sup>46</sup>

Mehmed Sharif Pasha believed that the effect of the violent publications against Europe in Tanin, the society's organ, was to isolate the Ottoman Empire. He also felt that the publications were provoking ethnic groups. As an example, he quotes the following sentences from Hussein Cahid's article: "*The Jamanak*" (Armenian) newspaper accuses us of creating discord and attacking other races. He says: "*We are proud of the conflicts we create. This is one of Tanin's greatest services to our country*". Another important example given by Mehmed Sharif Pasha is that the *Sada-yı Millet* newspaper was accused by the CUP administration of publishing Greek propaganda, although it was a Greek-Ottoman newspaper published in Turkish under the editorship of a Greek named Cosmidi Efendi. The article said that the newspaper was against the CUP administration as well as other Greek newspapers. It was also stated that Greek newspapers such as *Prodos*, *Theojogos* and *Takkidromos* were also against the committee and that the reason for this was that the CUP was against Greeks and in general against anyone who was not a member. It was added that the CUP had closed down the Greek newspaper *Neologos* for publishing an article attacking the Martial Law Court and the editor-in-chief of the newspaper Tanin, Hussein Cahid Bey, as well as an article reporting on the mistreatment of Christian soldiers in the Taksim barracks. With these examples, it was stated that as long as the CUP government continues with this harmful racist attitude, there will be many incidents that will disturb the peace in Turkey.<sup>47</sup>

Mehmed Sharif Pasha claims that the constitution was not implemented in the Ottoman Empire. He explains this situation by giving examples of how some articles of the constitution were violated. In fact, according to the 47 article of the constitution, the deputies have full freedom to express their opinion or will and none of them can be instructed or threatened. However, Sharif Pasha claims that the society, which he calls a secret power, not only violated their will before the parliamentary sessions, but also threatened the representatives of the nation with death.<sup>48</sup> As another example, Article 98th of the Ottoman Constitution clearly states: "*The budget shall be analysed and voted upon item by item. The tables containing the details of income and expenditure shall be divided into sections, chapters and articles in accordance with the model laid down in the regulations. These tables shall be voted on item by item*". However, it is alleged that the budget was not presented in the Legislative Assembly by section or article and was not approved by roll call vote in accordance with the provisions of the relevant law.

Similarly, Article 10th of the Constitution states that "*Individual liberty is absolutely inviolable. No one may be arrested or punished except in the manner and under the circumstances prescribed by law*". However, it is mentioned that the unionist arbitrarily arrests dissidents.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, despite the inviolability of homes and private property under Article 22 of the constitution, house searches continue to be carried out as under the previous regime. Article 21 prohibits the confiscation of property and the imposition of fines. However, according to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the CUP continued to confiscate the property of people who had committed crimes without the slightest authorisation from the court. For example, the former Serasker, the Chief of General Staff Rıza Pasha and the famous eunuch Nadir Agha were

<sup>46</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Plus de Constitution en Turquie", *Mèchrouitette*, 15.11.1909, no:2, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Les Dangers Extérieurs", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.02.1911, no: 15, 2-6.

<sup>48</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Plus de Constitution en Turquie", *Mèchrouitette*, 15.11.1909, no:2, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Plus de Constitution en Turquie", *Mèchrouitette*, 15.11. 1909, no:2, 1.

fined. Although Article 26 of the Constitution states that "torture and all forms of interrogation are completely and absolutely forbidden", it is reported that there were a number of people in Paris and Egypt whose mutilated bodies showed the most horrific signs of torture. The article emphasises that, in addition to these people, many other unnamed people were tortured to death. In addition to these violations, Mehmed Sharif Pasha states that the CUP violated religious privileges, imposed harsh censorship and levied illegal taxes.<sup>50</sup>

Another issue that Mehmed Sharif Pasha criticized in his articles was nationalism. In the issue published on 1 March 1910, Mehmed Sharif Pasha wrote an article entitled "The dangers of nationalism in Turkey". In the article, Sharif Pasha emphasised that since the unionists had no broad ideas, they tried to feed some groups and put others to sleep in order to maintain their power. The harmful consequences of this situation were seen in the events in Adana and the people had to suffer under the so-called constitutional regime. However, Mehmed Sharif Pasha states that the common sense of the people prevailed, and they did not harm each other despite all the divisive efforts of the unionist. However, this situation was perpetuated in order to stir up xenophobia, using nationalism in favour of the Turks. In the article, Sharif Pasha quotes the words of Jean Rodes, Le Temps' special correspondent in Asia Minor: "Wherever I went, the CUP clubs were blamed for this current of hostility".

The article also criticised the CUP's bureaucratic practices. During the period of unrest that lasted for about a year from 24 July 1908, unplanned purges were carried out. After the 31 March incident, a number of commissions were set up in Istanbul and a planned purge of the bureaucracy was carried out. However, it took a few months to establish the legal basis for this practice, and the practice of dismissing hundreds of civil servants began in the summer of 1909. Huseyin Cahid, in his newspaper Tanin, supported the censure, saying that the state administration would be improved by dismissing the routine people from the state and appointing young people as ministers and governors.<sup>51</sup> Mehmed Sharif Pasha says that the commissions set up to review the reforms, known as "tenkîsat", have caused many victims and that the former officers and civil servants who were dismissed are trying to be reinstated.

For example, it was stated that a gendarmerie lieutenant named Bekir Efendi committed suicide because he was paid 100 kurus and could not live on it, and that the wives of 170 dismissed naval officers came to the parliament and petitioned for an improvement in their husbands' situation. On the other hand, Ahmed Rıza Bey was quoted in Tanin newspaper as saying: "One of the criticisms of our parliament is that it usurps the role of the executive. We have to admit that this criticism is justified in many respects. On the other hand, as a result of the constant changes in responsibilities, the governor of Istanbul, the police chief and other public administrators are in conflict because they do not know the exact boundaries of their own areas of responsibility", which shows that the criticism is justified and emphasises that there is chaos in the administration.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Plus de Constitution en Turquie", *Mèchrouitette*, 15.11.1909, no:2, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Abdülhamit Kırmızı, "Meşrutiyette İstibdat Kadroları: 1908 İhtilali'nin Bürokraside Tasfiye ve İkame Kabiliyeti", *100. Yıl'da Jön Türk Devrimi*, Edited by: Sina Akşin, Sarp Balcı, Barış Ünlü, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), 339-341.

<sup>52</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Les Dangers du nationalisme en Turquie", *Mècheroutiette*, 01.03. 1910, no:5, 1-2. In his articles, Mehmed Sharif Pasha mentioned the dismissals and victimisation in the bureaucracy, but he did not give any information about the restoration of the dignity of those who had been dismissed and sent into exile during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II. In fact, one of the most important issues that interested the CUP during this period was the restoration of the rights of those who had suffered injustice under the old regime. Between 1908 and 1912, the reasons for the dismissal and exile of many bureaucrats and officers were investigated and efforts were made to reinstate them in their former positions. In addition, many lawsuits were filed regarding their retroactive salaries and personal rights, and efforts were made to compensate for damages. Özgür Türesay, "Political Victims of the Old Regime under the Young Turk Regime (1908-11)". *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire the Aftermath of 1908* Edited by Noémi Lévy-Aksu and François Gorgeon. (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Lt 2017), 71-73. In addition to this situation, another important point that should not be overlooked is the fact that the practice of

In the rest of the article, Said Pasha states that rivalry and inexperience in the bureaucracy persist in many regions, and that even former gang leaders have been appointed to the bureaucracy because of the lack of trained men. Again, citing the reports of Le Temps correspondent Jean Rodes, it claims that Jovo Jvalnavich, a former member of the Bitola provincial committee, has been appointed inspector of schools in the province. It is also reported that Chernopief, a former Bulgarian gang leader, has been appointed as a judge in a court of first instance. It is also said that the problems of public order in and around Izmir are caused by the tolerance that is shown to these gangs, and that the region has been invaded by Greek gangs. It is said that Kara Said Pasha was assigned to deal with these gangs, but he had to train them for three months because of the inexperience of the officers and privates under his command, and he had to resign because he could not get the orders he wanted from the bureaucracy. Kara Said Pasha accuses the authorities in both the capital and İzmir of not working in a coordinated way.

Citing such examples, Sharif Pasha says that officials who have been dismissed from the bureaucracy have not been replaced and that foreign experts should be assigned to some institutions and their experience should be used. However, he stresses that the CUP government's desire to purge the remnants of the old regime has left the state in administrative chaos, and that it has failed to recognise this situation. He concludes the article with the following quote from an unnamed person who worked as a civil servant for 40 years, 14 years as Foreign Minister and 25 years as President of the Court of Accounts. *"The Ottoman nation can prolong its existence for another fifty years with despotism and its harsh methods. With a constitution that is faithfully implemented, it will gain new vigour and youth, but with a constitution whose implementation is prevented by illegal means, it will not last fifty months."*<sup>53</sup>

Mehmed Sharif Pasha's next article was published under the title 'The Right Conclusion'. Looking at the current state of the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed Sharif Pasha described the leaders of the CUP as *"Abdulhamid's successors"*. He notes that Abdulhamid committed many crimes but made very few mistakes, which is perhaps why he was able to rule for thirty-three years. As for the current rulers, he says they are bad students of the West and are nothing but *"failures"*. He says that they presented the constitution as the magic word, but then the *"divan-ı harb"* came and civil war broke out everywhere. He said that he had compared the constitution with other existing constitutions and that it was one of the most liberal constitutions and that with very small changes it would be almost perfect. However, the CUP ignored the constitution and appointed three quarters of the deputies, creating a strange fusion between the military court and the parliament.

He also said that this year the CUP was planning to dissolve the existing parliament, whose authority was diminishing by the day despite all its efforts, and hold new elections, or more precisely, new appointments that would restore its rule to its original position. Therefore, according to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, *"the day is not far off when they will be blown up as victims of a laboratory accident"*. In order to prevent this, he recommends that a large number of advisers and experts be brought in from Europe as responsible officials in the service of the state and subject to the laws of the empire during their term of office. They were to be employed

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*Tenkisat* began during Kamil Pasha's term as Grand Vizier. It is known that Mehmed Said Pasha was appointed grand vizier just before the declaration of constitutional monarchy, but the unionist considered this appointment as an intervention against the constitutional monarchy. In particular, the appointments to the Ministries of War and the Navy disturbed the CUP and Mehmed Said Pasha was forced to resign as grand vizier. Mehmed Kamil Pasha formed a government on 6 August 1908. The CUP saw Mehmed Kamil Pasha as a person who would meet the requirements of a constitutional monarchy and as a reassuring figure in foreign policy. On the day Mehmed Kamil Pasha took office, he dismissed and arrested many people in order to clear up the past. A large number of these people were even sentenced to compulsory residence on the large island of Istanbul. Erkan Tural, "II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Devletin Restorasyonu Bağlamında 1909 Teşkilat ve Tensikat Kanunu" (Phd. These, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 2006), 46-47.

<sup>53</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Les Dangers du nationalisme en Turquie", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.03. 1910, no:5, 1-2.

in all branches of the civil and military administration, both in the provinces and in the capital.<sup>54</sup> If necessary, they will receive two or three times the salary they receive in their home countries and will continue to serve until a new generation is formed.<sup>55</sup>

## 2.2. Military-Political relations in the Journal of Mèchroutiette

It is well known that the army was very active in politics after the revolution of 1908. But it was not the only determining factor. There were many groupings within the army during this period. The first group were the junior officers, who were educated in military schools and were the biggest supporters of change and progress; the second group were the senior officers, such as Mahmud Sevket, Muhtar and Pertev Pashas. They were professional soldiers who represented discipline. These soldiers fought to prevent a repetition of events such as the 31 March incident.<sup>56</sup>

One of the issues that Mehmed Sharif Pasha dealt with extensively in the journal of Mèchroutiette was the relationship between the military and politics. In many of his articles during this period, he used examples to show that the soldiers who had relations with the committee were showing indiscipline and that the concept of subordinate-superior had disappeared. He also talked about the harm of the military getting involved in politics and taking over the protection of the constitution. He tried to explain this situation with some examples. According to an article he wrote, a group of young officers held a secret meeting in Maslak. After this meeting, a delegation of officers went to Mahmud Sevket Pasha and asked him to pass the law on the reorganisation of the ranks, for which they had previously prepared regulations, and gave him a deadline of eight days. They said that if this law was not passed, the ranks of the favourite officers, especially Mahmud Sevket Pasha, would be demoted. As a result, the ghost government in the Sublime Porte (Bâbiâli) was forced to accept this situation. However, before the law on the organisation of ranks was passed by the parliament, Mahmud Sevket Pasha protested the situation by wearing a uniform of a lower rank than his own. However, Mehmed Sharif Pasha accused Mahmud Sevket Pasha and declared that Article 55 of the Constitution had been violated by stating that "*a bill shall not be considered adopted unless it is voted on article by article by the House of Representatives and the Senate and unless it is adopted as a whole by a majority of votes in both Houses*". With this example, Mehmed Sharif Pasha draws attention to the fact that the CUP government was under siege by the officers and that they allowed the army to intervene in politics in this way, thinking only of their own position. He added that this situation could lead to a government crisis in the future and that the army, which was used as a tool by the organisation, was oppressing the people.<sup>57</sup>

He declared that military service and politics should be kept separate, as in other countries. He stressed that the result of mixing military and politics was, as expected, anarchy. He said that some officers did not recognise the superiority of ranks and obeyed their superiors. He stressed that the Thessaloniki Congress had adopted the principle that the army should stay

<sup>54</sup> Having reached this conclusion, Mehmed Sharif Pasha believed that if a new government was formed, the future of Turkey should be entrusted to Kamil Pasha. He had gained a lot of experience during his career and he was the only one who could lead the country back to the right path, the constitutional path. According to Sharif Pasha, there are two people in the empire, Reşid and Kamil Pasha, who have a European perspective. If Kamil Pasha is lucky enough to take the reins of government and hold them for three years before things get worse, then we can see how far we have come. According to him, Kamil Pasha does not make commitments easily and, like others, he will not be distracted from his goal, which is the general interest. Later in the article, Sharif Pasha emphasises that the Ottoman Empire was seriously lacking in statesmen. He argued that the transfer of foreign advisers, which the Unionists had done in the army, should be carried out throughout the central and provincial administrations. In this way, he argued, it would take less time for reforms to move from the project stage to the implementation stage, and the revolts that bloodied the Empire would be avoided. Chérif Pacha, "Un Nouvelle Ugolin", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.01.1912, no: 26, 1-6.

<sup>55</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Bonne Intervention", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.08.1911, no: 21, 1-5.

<sup>56</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 48.

<sup>57</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Plus de Constitution en Turquie", *Mèchroutiette*, 15.11.1909, no:2, 2.

out of any kind of politics, but this had not been respected and the army was now acting as the protector of the constitution. In order to conscientiously fulfil the task entrusted to it, the army would inevitably have to closely follow the changes made to constitutional laws by parliament and intervene in politics to determine whether the constitution was being weakened or endangered. On the other hand, he argues that the military must define against whom it will rigorously protect the constitution, and that attempting to protect it against the nation would lead to despotism.<sup>58</sup>

Another article by Mehmed Sharif Pasha on this subject was published in *Mèchrouitette* under the title "*The Janissaries*". As in the previous issue, the article is about the consequences of the military's involvement in politics. In particular, it gives information on the historical processes of the janissaries and explains the consequences of their involvement in politics in the Ottoman Empire. He explains that the janissaries, who were initially a disciplined unit, pursued their own political ambitions after conquering neighbouring peoples and dethroning the sultans; in short, they became a political plague. He goes on to say that during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, the officers of the Yıldız garrison were able to disobey their superiors because of the journals they were given, and that this situation is now also seen among the young officers who are members of the CUP. In the article, he says the following about this situation.

*Two recent incidents are further proof of this. When General Imhoff Pasha came as usual to give an artillery course at the Taksim barracks, a Turkish officer, Major Receb Bey, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, declared that the training given by the German instructor was too complicated and should be changed. General Imhoff, enraged by this warning, responded by announcing that he would refer the matter to the higher authorities. Following this incident, Mahmud Sevket Pasha summoned the artillery officers who had seen fit to criticise the German instructor and severely reprimanded them. He demanded that they submit or resign. However, these warnings did not impress the young officers and when General Imhoff asked them to continue his course, they did not respond to his salute and their attitude towards him was such that he had to resign.*

*The other incident took place at the Taşkısla barracks, where a German officer had the audacity to call one of his students a "donkey" during an exercise. The officers responded by insulting the German. Mahmud Sevket Pasha took this second incident into his own hands and demanded that the six officers who had stood by their friends and insulted their instructors apologise or resign from the army. The officers refused and demanded an apology."<sup>59</sup> Apparently, these incidents were presented as examples of the significant increase in insubordination due to the army's involvement in politics.*

### 2.3. Political Assassinations in the Journal of *Mèchrouitette*

Political assassinations were often criticised in Mehmed Sharif Pasha's newspaper articles. His first article on the subject was published under the title "*By Revolver*". First, he stated that Hasan Fehmi Bey, the writer of the newspaper *Serbesti*, had been murdered on the Karaköy bridge in early April and that the perpetrator had not been found. Then, on 9-10 June 1910, Ahmed Samim Bey, the journalist of *Sada-yı Millet*, was killed with two bullets in Istanbul and the perpetrator could not be found. Mehmed Sharif Pasha said that these two assassinations were organised by the CUP because no dissenting voices were allowed in parliament or in the press. Mehmed Sharif Pasha stated that the assassination of Ahmed Samim Efendi, the editor-in-chief of a Turkish-language newspaper that defended the rights of minorities, incited Muslims and non-Muslims against the CUP. He said that the Unionists had challenged the nation with these assassinations, but that the nation could no longer tolerate this treatment.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Notre Programme", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1910, no:3, 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Les Janissaires", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.02.1910, no:4, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Par le Revolver", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.06.1910, no:8,1.

The following issue of the newspaper carried an article by Mehmed Sharif Pasha entitled "*The Government of Thieves and Murderers*". The article was about the murder of Ahmed Samim Bey, the editor-in-chief of the Sada-yı Millet newspaper and was a continuation of the article published in the previous issue. The article states that the last issue of the Mèchroutiette had been printed when Mr. Ahmed Samim was murdered, so they decided to devote space to the incident again. He also states that the newspapers in Istanbul kept silent about the incident due to censorship, and surprisingly there was no news about the incident in European newspapers, with a few exceptions. He describes the incident as follows: "*Ahmed Samim Bey was a writer of great talent at the age of twenty-six, a man of the highest integrity who, like many others, could not accept tyranny. His attacks on the committee were always gentle and his criticisms were cautious. He received several letters warning him that misfortune would befall him if he continued his attacks. He showed these letters to several friends (one of whom we published in our last issue) and calmly told them that he would soon be murdered. At around 9pm on the night of 9/10 June, he was shot dead with two pistol bullets in one of the capital's busiest streets. Police officers had blocked traffic at the corner where the shooting took place, undoubtedly, to help the suspect escape and to prevent the bullets from hitting passers-by. The assassin who shot Mr. Ahmed Samim in the back managed to escape and his identity is unknown. The body of the victim was immediately taken to a police station, where it was loaded into military vehicles and secretly buried the next day*". He also states that the reason why the committee prevented Ahmed Samim Bey's relatives and friends from accompanying him to the grave was for fear of a riot, as happened at the funeral of Hasan Fehmi Bey.<sup>61</sup>

The assassination of Mahmud Sevket Pasha was the most important case in which Mehmed Sharif Pasha was accused of political murder. According to the sources of the time, the funds for the assassination were provided by Sabahattin Bey and Damat Salih Pasha, and Çerkez Kazım and Sabahaddin Bey worked together. According to another view, a coup called *Taklib-i Hükümet* was planned in the first phase, but it was later abandoned. Later investigations revealed that Sabahaddin Bey, Ahmed Reşid Bey, Sharif Pasha, Kemal Midhat, Pertev Tevfik, Gümülcineli İsmail, Muhip, Çerkez Kazım, Miralay Fuad Bey and Damat Salih Pasha were the main planners of the movement. The investigation revealed that the assassination was planned to take place in Constanta. If the assassination took place, Kamil Pasha would be appointed Grand Vizir and Sabahaddin Bey would be appointed Foreign Minister.<sup>62</sup>

The February issue of Mèchroutiette was published at a politically turbulent time, when Mahmud Sevket Pasha was assassinated. During this period, Mehmed Sharif Pasha was again sentenced to death for his alleged involvement in the assassination. Mehmed Sharif Pasha published a short article about the accusations against him regarding the assassination of Mahmud Sevket Pasha. In the article, he stated that he had nothing to do with the assassination:

*"In order to formally deny the slanderous accusations made by my political opponents, I declare upon my honour and conviction that I did not participate, directly or indirectly, in the assassination of Mahmud Sevket Pasha, that I did not know the plans of the persons involved and that I have no connection with them, and I challenge anyone to prove otherwise. The second death sentence to which I am subjected is as unfounded as the first".<sup>63</sup>*

#### 2.4. Foreign policy in the Journal of Mèchroutiette

In the journal Mèchroutiette, Mehmed Sharif Pasha wrote many articles on foreign policy. At that time, on the eve of the First World War, the European powers were divided into

<sup>61</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Un gouvernement de voleurs et d'assassins", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.07.1910, no: 9, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası II. Meşrutiyet Devrinde İtihat ve Terakki'ye Karşı Çıkanlar*, 211.

<sup>63</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Un Démenti Formel", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.02.1914, no: 51, 14-15.

blocs. He published articles on the dangers posed by Russia to the Ottoman Empire, the political situation in the Balkans, the dangers of Ottoman-German rapprochement, Tripolitan and the Balkan Wars. Mehmed Sharif Pasha's first article on the subject was entitled "*Shadow Empire*". He said that Macedonia was in as much turmoil as it had been during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, with Albanians in revolt, riots in Havran<sup>64</sup> and Yemen, and the Cretan problem back on the agenda. The CUP, on the other hand, did not take a moderate approach to these events. The organs of the press, in particular, insisted that the rebels should be crushed.

Another point that Mehmed Sharif Pasha emphasised was the alliance treaties between the European powers. He considered the CUP's continuation of the close relations with Germany, especially during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, to be a major strategic mistake. The Committee had pinned its hopes on Germany but was disappointed by General Keim's remarks at the Postam conference. According to this General, who occupies a very important political position, Austria and Italy had limited and divided their mutual political and commercial spheres of influence in the Balkans by an agreement signed in Turin two months ago. Albania and Montenegro remain on Italy's side. Austria will have Macedonia up to Thessaloniki. In addition, he quotes from German newspapers and claims that if Germany is torn between Russia and the Ottomans, it will choose Russia. Some time ago the *Hamburger Nachrichte* wrote as follows:

*"When it comes to choosing between Russia and Turkey, we have to say the following: We are more interested in good relations with Russia than with Turkey. Meanwhile, General Keim said that the Russians were close to a treaty with the French, that there was now a struggle between liberalism, represented by France and England, and autocracy, represented by Germany, and that groups had begun to form. Consequently, the fate of the Ottoman lands was in the hands of German despotism and tyranny, and he thought that the future was bleak."*<sup>65</sup>

Mehmed Sharif Pasha continued to evaluate the developments in foreign policy and wrote an article entitled "*External Dangers*" on Ottoman foreign relations based on Rifat Pasha's speech on the consequences of the Russo-German treaty of 21 January. Referring to Rifat Pasha's declaration that no state could interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed Sharif Pasha said that international politics would not allow this and that a political crisis would eventually occur. According to Pasha, the war in Tripolitan was on the agenda at the time and there were rumours that the Italians would soon be landing troops in the region. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire's image abroad was as bad as it had been under Abdulhamid II, so there was no power to ally with. There were riots in Albania, Macedonia, Havran, Yemen and it was possible that these riots would spread to Mesopotamia. In other words, there was general discontent in the country against the CUP government.

According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, although Germany seems to be our friend, he believes that if he had to choose between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, whose interests are in conflict with the Ottoman Empire, he would choose Russia without a moment's hesitation. As an example of this, he cites Iran's promise not to build railway branches from Baghdad near the border with Russia or in areas close to the Russian border. Mehmed Sharif Pasha claims that the Russian threat was also felt in the Balkans during this period, but that the Ottoman Empire had major problems with the Balkan countries due to the mismanagement of the CUP. He says there have been customs problems with the Bulgarians and that the defence minister, General Nikolayef, said in a secret meeting that Bulgaria was ready to send 450,000 well-armed men into the field. Mehmed Sharif Pasha added, this situation raises the possibility of a more difficult war than those in Yemen and Havran. He also says that the boycott against Greece is

<sup>64</sup> The most important of the problematic regions in Syria, which troubled the Ottoman Empire in the centralist period after the Tanzimat, was Havran. The Bedouin and Druze population of the region did not allow the state to assert its authority in Havran. Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, "Havran" *DİA* (İstanbul:1997, C.16) 540.

<sup>65</sup> Chérif Pacha, "L'Empire des Ombres", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.12.1910, no: 13, 2-6.



more intense than ever, which will lead to an agreement between the Bulgarians and the Greeks. He even mentions that during this period Bulgarian students would form a fraternity with those in Athens, a development unimaginable until then. And he stressed that another important development was taking place in Albania. Thousands of Albanians and Serbs, especially in the Berane region, had taken refuge in Montenegro and were begging King Nikola to invade Albania, occupy part of former Serbia and avenge Turkish barbarism:

*"Unfortunately, these Balkan peoples, suffering from their isolation, are now turning against us as a whole because we mistreated and tortured the Bulgarians; we are still mistreating the Greeks and Serbs in Macedonia, as confirmed in a memorandum recently sent to the Grand Vizier by the Ottoman Bulgarian deputies. But if we could be just and humane towards the inhabitants of Macedonia, and in general towards all Ottoman citizens, regardless of race or religion, a Balkan Union with the Ottoman Empire at its head would not seem like a utopia."*<sup>66</sup>

Another article on the subject was published under the title *"A Final Warning"*. The article deals with the discrediting of the Ottoman Empire in the eyes of the European powers as a result of the mistakes made by the CUP administration. The article stated that Russia and Austria had not taken action against the Ottoman Empire for the time being because of the financial problems caused by the former's defeat in Manchuria and the latter's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that they would not hesitate to do so in the future. For example, it is said that Tsar Nicholas II was invited to Istanbul by the government before travelling to Italy, but the Russian monarch declined the invitation because there was no real government in Turkey. He also claimed that the kings of Serbia and Bulgaria did not obey Russia and tried to gain economic concessions by signing advantageous trade agreements with the Ottoman Empire. In conclusion, Mehmed Sharif Pasha stressed that the Unionists had discredited the Ottoman Empire in the eyes of the European powers, that most of them supported rapprochement with Russia and Austria, and that the situation was even worse than in the time of Sultan Abdul Hamid. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the country must be saved from the CUP committee in order to prevent foreign intervention.<sup>67</sup>

In his next article on foreign policy, Mehmed Sharif Pasha analysed the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. The article was published under the title *"Russian Intervention"*. Mehmed Sharif Pasha argues that the Russians have lost their interest in the Far East and have resumed the defence of Balkan rights. Mehmed Sharif Pasha, who claims to have served as ambassador in Stockholm during the Manchurian War, in which Russian absolutism suffered its worst wound, says that he had the opportunity to observe the consequences of Russia's military failures in domestic and foreign policy. Accordingly, he stresses that Russia's participation in the Triple Alliance was a budgetary necessity. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the fact that Russia was part of the Triple Alliance could only relieve the Ottomans to a certain extent. Britain, France and even Italy would now like to see a reformed and strong Turkey. On the other hand, he believes that a German-Austrian-Russian treaty would greatly favour the prolongation of administrative anarchy in Turkey and gradually accelerate our downfall. The article goes on to say that in 1906 an agreement was reached between Russia, Austria and Italy, with the approval of Germany, to keep Turkey under control in Europe. In 1907, an agreement was also signed between Russia and Great Britain. A few weeks later, at a meeting between the representatives of these three countries in Vienna, new provisions were added to the Italian-Austrian-Russian agreement. The plan to build a railway connecting the Bosnian lines with the Macedonian lines through the Sanjak of Novibazar caused great discontent in Russia, but a compromise was imposed by Berlin. He also claims that in June 1908 the Tsar promised the King of England radical and decisive reforms in Macedonia, and

<sup>66</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Les Dangers Extérieurs", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.02.1911, no: 15, 2-6.

<sup>67</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Printanières effervescences", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.04.1911, no: 17, 2-5.

that the partial dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire was about to begin, but Kaiser Wilhelm officially opposed it, and that the main thing that prevented this dismemberment from taking place was the proclamation of the constitution in Turkey. According to Sharif Pasha, the whole of Europe, seeing the enthusiasm with which all the components of the empire were preparing to work for national emancipation in their newly won freedom, thought it right to appreciate the new regime. Therefore, the presence of the officers in Macedonia was considered unnecessary and the reform project itself became invalid. the Bechaleu meeting approved the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the independence of Bulgaria. Russia was also promised free passage through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.<sup>68</sup>

However, he notes that freedom of passage was delayed by British intervention. Meanwhile, he says, the uprising of 13 April 1909, which was an outburst of national anger against the CUP, demonstrated to Russia and the rest of Europe the durability of a regime established on the basis of arbitrariness and the most ruthless cruelty. He then notes that Russia warned the Babiâli about Montenegro, which was threatened by Turkish troops massing in Albania, and that the Russian government once again proved that it was the protector of Montenegro in particular and all Balkan states in general. He says "*It is impossible to build a Balkan union with Turkey*", the newspaper *Novoié Vrémiá* quoted him as saying. "*It will now be built against Turkey*". He went on to say that Russia believed that for the time being it was enough to rely on its diplomacy alone, that it had achieved considerable success and that it would now be able to remove the last obstacles that Britain had placed in the way of freedom in the Straits.<sup>69</sup>

In 1911, Mehmed Sharif Pasha's last article on the subject was published in the newspaper *Mèchroutiette* under the title "*Fishermen in Troubled Waters*". The article spoke in general terms about the dangers posed to the Ottoman Empire by the great powers. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the prolongation of the Tripolitan War had serious consequences for the Ottoman Empire. As stated in other articles, it was a strategic mistake that would deepen the eastern crisis for the Union and Progress administration. As the article continues, Sharif Pasha sees Russia as the greatest threat to the Ottoman Empire. At that time, he saw Russia's establishment in Iran as a great danger to the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. "*At a given moment, she could make a commitment against us on our eastern border and then play the same game with the Ottoman Empire that Germany played with France. Just as Germany had given up a large part of the Congo as the price for her political indifference in Morocco, would Russia not hope to wrest free passage through the Straits from us by promising to leave us alone in Asia Minor?*" According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, in 1909 Russia tried to obtain this free passage for its fleet directly from Turkey by diplomatic means. The Tsar, who was travelling to Italy by sea and would be the first to cross the straits with one of his warships, would have stopped in Istanbul to thank the Sultan for this small gift. However, this was prevented by the uprising of Ottoman public opinion. At the same time, Russia does not have the strategic superiority it seeks in the Balkans. The consequences of its policy of pan-Slavism are likely to be felt in the Balkans. He therefore predicts that Russia has not yet received anything from the Ottoman Empire and that this situation will not continue. He also notes that the bellicose temperament and conquering desires of Archduke Ferdinand, who was to become Emperor of Austria-Hungary, were well known and that his ambitions in the Ottoman Balkans continued. Continuing the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha states the following:

<sup>68</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Printanières effervescences", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.04.1911, no: 17, 2-5. Russia's policy of weakening Turkey is one of the issues on which the Unionists focus most. Talat Pasha says that Russia wants to establish a Bulgaria in Rumelia, ready to carry out its orders, and an Armenian state in Anatolia in order to weaken Turkey. In this way, Turkey would be encircled and the Ottoman Empire's relations with the Muslims of the Caucasus would be severed. Alpay Kabacalı, *Talât Paşa'nın Anıları* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2020), 22-23.

<sup>69</sup> Chérif Pacha, "L'Intervention Russe", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.06.1911, no:19, 1-6.

"In the face of all this greed, fuelled by the uncertainty of the present, what do we see in Turkey? We see the selfishness of a committee and a government that see the prolongation of the Turkish-Italian War only as a means to maintain their power a little longer, to artificially support their shattered prestige with exaggerated victories, to cynically deceive the public, to exchange patriotism for the homeland itself". Sharif Pasha went on to say that during the Tripolitan War there was a lot of criticism in parliament against the Minister of War, Mahmud Sevket Pasha, and while he was expected to resign, he was saved from resignation by the recapture of Derne. However, he stated that the prolongation of the war was causing our soldiers and Arabs to die for no reason and that many soldiers were facing starvation because of the army's inability to provide material aid in the region. Therefore, he said, it was a crime to subject the soldiers to this useless resistance.<sup>70</sup>

### 2.5. The CUP-German rapprochement in the Journal of Mèchrouitette

One of the points on which Mehmed Sharif Pasha criticized the CUP the most in the journal of Mèchrouitette was the rapprochement between the CUP and the Germans. He used examples to explain that committee was getting closer to the Germans, as it had been during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid, and that this situation would lead the country to disaster. In the first issue of Mèchrouitette in 1914, an article by Mehmed Sharif Pasha was published under the title "*The Will of the Committee*". The article analysed the rapprochement between the Committee of Union and Progress and Germany and drew conclusions about Italian-Ottoman relations and the Dodecanese. The most criticised point in the article was the location of the German military mission in Istanbul. Mehmed Sharif Pasha called this a betrayal. In particular, it was pointed out that while France and England supported the 1908 revolution, Germany was on the side of Sultan Abdulhamid, and the reason for this unity was questioned. Mehmed Sharif Pasha explained this unity as follows:

"The reasons for the relations of Abdulhamid and the Committee with Germany are exactly the same. Abdulhamid, a great national villain, hated by his own people and others, needed a protective friendship and at the same time Germany needed a way out. An agreement was quickly reached, and the treaty was signed not on parchment but on Turkish soil. With a signature in which the Baghdad railway line appeared as the dreaded initials, Germany had got its claws into our poor country. The CUP which opposed the absolutism of Abdulhamid II, was understandably very hostile to Germany at first and, once in power, should have tried to limit the dangerous development of German influence in Turkey. However, due to the criminal problems of its domestic policy, it was unable to win over Ottoman public opinion and felt that it had to be supported in return. This role, which no other power was willing to play, was soon taken up by Germany, and the Committee, among other favours, gave her Constantinople without any bargaining".<sup>71</sup>

According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, one of the issues that Germany claimed to be interested in was the Armenian demands. According to the article, he says that Germany, like other states, wants these reforms to be carried out, and that Armenian representatives even stated during a trip to Europe that they had received the support of the Tripartite Alliance. However, he believes that these are vague promises. He believes that Germany will support anarchy in a country it considers its colony and will even protect its interests by selling arms to both sides. Mehmed Sharif Pasha says that by cooperating with the Germans, the committee will refrain from carrying out long-awaited reforms. At the same time, he claims, they want to secure the support of the other members of the Tripartite Alliance and create the political environment they want in the country. He was not convinced by the then Grand Vizier's claims that the German military mission was confined to its mission and had no influence on the

<sup>70</sup> Chérif Pacha, "L'Intervention de Russe", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.12.1911, no: 25, 1-5.

<sup>71</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Le Testament du Comité", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1914, no: 50, 1-10.

country's politics. According to him, the Committee had held power for years only through the army. Now that the army had abandoned it, it was handing over administration to the Germans. Again, according to the government, the head of this mission will have nothing to do with the military tribunal in Istanbul, but will not the management of this institution go to the commander of one of the divisions of the First Corps, General von Sanders? At this stage, Mehmed Sharif Pasha declared that the Triple Entente was preferable to Germany. The Triple Entente also suffered many disappointments during this period. For example, it had placed great faith in its Balkan allies, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro; these allies were seen as a formidable force that would stand up to Austria in a general war. But he admits that the Second Balkan War and the defeat of the Bulgarians changed all that.

According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the British were now busy handing over the Italian occupied islands to the Ottomans. The Unionists, on the other hand, sided with the Italians who wanted to settle in the Dodecanese and sympathised with the Triple Alliance. He points out that newspapers such as Young Turk and Tanin openly supported the Triple Alliance and that this was a betrayal. Later in the article, he states that the Ottoman government claims the islands occupied by Greece because it voluntarily left the others to Italy. Therefore, he believes that whatever solution is found to the problem of the islands, it will always be to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. If Greece kept the islands, it would pose a constant threat to the coast of Asia Minor. If the islands are reclaimed, they will become a constant source of trouble for the Ottoman Empire and Europe because they are populated by Greeks.<sup>72</sup> As we can see, Mehmed Sharif Pasha claims that the Unionists have made serious mistakes in foreign policy and advocates a policy closer to the Triple Entente. As in his other articles, he stresses that German admiration continued as it had during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II.

## 2.6. The Tripolitan and the Balkan wars in the journal of Mèchrouitette

While evaluating the foreign relations, Mehmed Sharif Pasha wrote articles on the most important wars fought by the Ottoman Empire during this period, namely the Tripolitan and Balkan Wars. As is well known, the territorial losses of the Ottoman state, which began after the Treaty of Berlin, continued after the Second Constitutional Monarchy. The Italians coveted Tripolitania to get a piece of this cake. In 1911, they mobilized in the political atmosphere created by the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis. At that time, the cabinet of Hussein Hilmi Pasha had resigned and İbrahim Hakkı Pasha had formed the new cabinet. Among the important members of the cabinet were the Minister of War Mahmud Sevket Pasha and the Minister of Foreign Affairs İbrahim Hakkı Pasha. During this period, the Unionists emphasised the policy of Turkism and therefore dealt with the uprisings in Albania, Macedonia and Yemen.<sup>73</sup> Mehmed Sharif Pasha published many critical articles about this period in the journal of Mèchrouitette.

The first article on the subject was published in Mèchrouitette under the title "*A bitter but necessary solution*". Mehmed Sharif Pasha drew attention to the disorganised and anarchic situation in which the CUP had plunged the Ottoman Empire and stated that he had tried to shed as much light as possible on the dark relations through the articles he published in the newspaper. He says that the CUP tried to make everything look rosy, but the Tripolitan War revealed the mediocre state of the Ottoman army. However, he claims that the CUP did not accept this situation and claimed that they were more indispensable than ever and that they presented themselves as a committee to save the people after endangering the country. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, they are trying to save themselves first and foremost. At the same time, they called anyone who refused to entrust them with the future of the state a traitor. Later in the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha states that the Tripolitan War continued with ups and downs and that there was a danger that the prolongation of the war would lead to the Oriental Problem, as Said Pasha had said. But he points to a more important issue. During the

<sup>72</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Le Testament du Comité", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1914, no: 50, 1-10.

<sup>73</sup> Fahir Armaoğlu, *19. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi (1789-1914)* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1983), 614.

war, the inhabitants of Tripolitan welcomed the invaders almost enthusiastically in the first days, especially when the new governor announced that he would respect all their rights and treat them with justice. This is a sign of hope for positive change. He added:

*"Let's face it, although Islam is based on justice and Muslims love justice more than anything else, we Turks have never been able to apply the true principles of Islamic justice or justice in the defeated countries. Can there be progress where there is no justice? This is the stagnation of social life, collapse and death. That is why, in the name of civilisation, in the name of life, the great powers are confiscating our property one by one. And that is why the Ottoman Empire is threatened if it is not destroyed."*

Later in the article, he gives examples from the foreign press that confirm this situation. Germania, one of the most important German newspapers, writes as follows:

*"Like Turkey, China was created to be shared. Who will get the lion's share? Although the Ottoman Empire still has a long presence in Europe and Asia, there is not a single authoritative statesman in Europe or the Balkans who can say with certainty whether Turkey will still be a European power in twelve months' time."*

In the continuation of the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha says that an eminent statesman told him that the agreement of the great powers on the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire was no longer as difficult as it was in 1896, and that a map was prepared by M. Victor Bérard, but it was changed due to disagreements over Istanbul. Mehmed Sharif Pasha says that the main reason for the current situation is the policy of the CUP, and that instead of trying to protect what we have by recognising and guaranteeing the rights of all with a wise policy and good governance, they were caught up in dreams of great conquest, abandoned Ottomanism, became interested in pan-Islamism and dreamed of returning to the gates of Vienna. He goes on to explain that the Committee tried to suppress the Christian population of the Empire under Muslim immigration and sent ambassadors to every corner of the Muslim countries under Christian power, to Crimea, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and even India in a pan-Islamist effort, but this situation backfired, and the French and British supported the Italians in Tripolitania and sympathised with the replacement of this abusive and aggressive authority by a Christian power. He predicted that if the Italians made Tripolitania financially prosperous, other peoples dissatisfied with Ottoman rule would also revolt, thus facilitating the disintegration of the empire. To deal with this situation, he said, they should have good relations with the European powers and organise the country in such a way that it would adapt to Europe. In the rest of the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha claims that the CUP tried to buy time by making some changes in the government. He says that after the fall of Hakkı Pasha as Grand Vizier, they went to Kamil Pasha, but he did not accept the post, and then they had to go to Said Pasha; Said Pasha did not accept the post either, but he was threatened with his family. Regarding the Tripolitan War, he said that the committee knew that Tripolitania was definitely lost, but they were endangering the existence of the Empire by prolonging the situation and taking steps to provoke European intervention.<sup>74</sup> According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, if the Ottoman Empire had been able to maintain the sympathy and trust of the British during the Tripolitan War, it could have received a share of Egyptian aid, and the British would not have pursued a neutral policy of strict surveillance along the Suez Canal.<sup>75</sup>

The next article was again devoted to developments in foreign policy, particularly the Balkan wars. In the March 1914 issue, Mehmed Sharif Pasha's article was entitled "*Unchangeable*". The article explains in general terms how the CUP brought together the Balkan Alliance, and also mentions the government's pretence of siding with the Allied Powers while the loan agreement negotiations with France were ongoing. In the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha first ironically states that Greece, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria should give medals to the

<sup>74</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Solution Pénible Mais Nécessaire", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.11.1911, no: 24, 1-7.

<sup>75</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Un Nouvel Ugolin", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1912, no: 26, 1-6.

Committee for the CUP's Balkan war policy. At the same time, he claims that it was through this policy that the Unionists dealt a fatal blow to the Ottoman Empire. He says that when there was talk of a Balkan confederation a few years ago, it would not have been possible, but then the political manoeuvres of the Unionist made it possible. In fact, he argues that when the First Balkan War broke out, the alliance broke up again with the defeat of Turkey, but the Unionists drew attention back to the Ottoman Empire when they should have been concentrating on the internal affairs of the Empire.<sup>76</sup> What Mehmed Sharif Pasha interpreted as drawing attention to the Ottoman Empire at this stage was the Ottoman purchase of the warship *Rio de Janeiro*. He predicted that the German military mission would support this purchase, which in turn would lead to the reunification of the Balkan bloc. With this new threat, Bulgaria could no longer remain on the sidelines and would rejoin the Balkan confederation.<sup>77</sup>

Another issue that Mehmed Sharif Pasha wanted to draw attention to in his article was the problem of the islands. Mehmed Sharif Pasha states that the situation of Crete played an important role in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan War. *"In my opinion, it was necessary to come to an agreement with Greece about Crete before the foreign problems, in order to obtain either an alliance with that country or its neutrality. If Greece had remained outside the Balkan Union, we would have had every possibility of bringing more than enough troops and material from Asia Minor to the battlefield. And perhaps things would have turned out differently. Since then, in August last year, I had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Turkey with distinguished British politicians, and my well-informed interlocutors agreed with me that the possession of islands near Asia Minor was necessary for the security of that country. Therefore, the Unionists used the language of threats and threatened the people by saying that they would do their best to defend their legitimate demands"*. The article goes on to say that the failure to reach an agreement on the islands and the threatening language were also important for the Ottoman delegation in the financial negotiations with France, but that, as usual, society followed a policy of mistrust. Talat Bey told the *Le Temps* correspondent: *"We are counting very much on the material and moral support of France"*, while the Minister of Public Works, Djemal Pasha, told the *Agence Havas* correspondent: *"If Turkey wants to live again, it must be loyal to the Triple Entente"* and *"I will not mention Austria or Italy, they are always negative. As for Germany, it always promises. It has supported us on small issues. But when it comes to the big issues, it lets us down"*. However, according to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, these statements were only meant to take advantage of credit facilities with France. Referring to Tanin, the publication of the CUP, he says that France, England and Russia are ironically called the three famous powers and advises not to trust them.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Un Nouvel Ugolin", *Mèchrouiette*, 01.01.1912, no: 26, 1-6. At this stage, Mehmed Sharif Pasha argues that the Balkan states were united only as a result of the wrong policies of the CUP. However, before the war, Muslim Turks constituted the largest population in the Balkans. In addition, the borders drawn by the Treaty of Berlin after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878, namely the creation of Bulgaria, the expansion of Serbia and the borders of Greece, stand out as one of the main causes of the war. Justin Mccarty. "Lessons of the Balkan Wars". *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Dağılma Sürecinde Trablusgarp ve Balkan Savaşları*. Edited By: Mehmed Arslan, Nuri Karakaş, (Ankara: TTK, 2013), 20-21.

<sup>77</sup> The Brazilian dreadnought *Rio de Janeiro* was bought by the Ottoman Empire and renamed *Sultan Osman*. This provided an important counterweight to the Greek navy in the Mediterranean and the Aegean. Before the dreadnought was purchased by the Ottoman Empire, on 23 November 1913, Winston Churchill asked the British Foreign Office to make arrangements for Greece to purchase the ship. At this stage, efforts were made to provide Greece with a loan. However, the Ottoman Empire acted quickly and purchased the dreadnought with the loan provided by France. In this way, the French showed the British that they did not recognise the sovereignty that the Greeks were trying to establish in the eastern Mediterranean and that they could not ignore French interests. Therefore, Mehmed Sharif Pasha's statement that the dreadnought was purchased only at the request of the Germans is unfounded in light of the political conditions. Stanford J. Shaw, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu* C. 1, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2021), 526.

<sup>78</sup> Chérif Pacha, "L'Irréformable", *Mèchrouiette*, 01.03.1914, no: 52, 1-7.

## 2.7. Albanian Events in the Journal of Mèchrouitette

One of the issues that Mehmed Sharif Pasha dealt with extensively in his journal of Mèchrouitette was the rebellious movements that took place in Albania during this period. Mehmed Sharif Pasha criticized the Albanian policy of the CUP during this period. He claimed that the society tried to solve the problems through violence, but they could not achieve this. He said that the CUP should learn from the past and that Albania had never really been conquered. Firstly, in 1443, when an attempt was made to take control of Albania, 15,000 people defeated the Ottoman army of 40,000. He then recalled that Firuz Pasha and Mustafa Pasha were defeated at Debre and had to evacuate Epirus with 10,000 prisoners. Sultan Murad II conquered Debre in 1447, but lost 20,000 soldiers, while Skanderbeg II conquered Debre. He states that he refused Murad's offer to come under his rule. He also states that after many defeats, the Ottomans established a so-called authority in 1467.

Regarding the current rebellion in Albania, the CUP stresses that this rebellion is reactionary, and that the government has declared that it is determined to destroy the rebels. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the main reason for the uprising is the failure to implement the constitution as promised to the Albanians. In addition, the disturbances in the administrative structure and the old practices of despotism revived the rebellion. He says the people of the region, who are extremely poor, find it difficult to pay their taxes. They generally live on products such as wood and milk, which they bring down from the mountains to the towns. Their dissatisfaction at having to pay most of their income in taxes led to an uprising. During this period, the CUP accused the Albanians of nationalist tendencies. But according to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, despite the accusations, they live together in harmony, whether they are Christians or Muslims. The rest of the article mentions that the Albanians have an armed force of 140,000 people and that they know a lot about guerrilla warfare, and that the government has sent 50 battalions to the region to suppress the rebellion, but this is not enough. However, the Unionists did not accept the visit of a delegation of Albanian MPs to the region as mediators. As a result, Mehmed Sharif Pasha, who believed that the Albanians would be of great use on the Ottoman side during the unrest in Macedonia, said that it would be a big mistake to alienate them out of pride.<sup>79</sup>

In the next issue, Mehmed Sharif Pasha wrote an article about Sultan Mehmed Resad's visit to Albania. He says that the CUP had two main aims in carefully organizing the Sultan's trip to European Turkey: to use the Sultan's prestige to boost its own political prestige and to put an end to the Albanian rebellion. According to him, both objectives failed. The rest of the article discussed the Sultan's meeting with the journalist Huseyin Cahid Bey, and he claimed that society had made a show of power by taking control of the Sultan. In particular, he stated that the demands for constitutional amendments that would increase the Sultan's powers were seen by the public as a return to the absolutism of Abdulhamid and were aimed at increasing pressure. At the same time, he stated that this situation created discontent, especially among the Muslim population, and humiliated the Sultan. He also states that the Sultan was undoubtedly aware of the situation he was in and cried during the ceremony in Kosovo. Sultan Mehmed Resad V may have felt that he was a humiliated Sultan at a time when all the cannons were firing. Mehmed Sharif Pasha assessed the visit as follows:

*"The Committee, mired in the quagmire of bloodshed in Albania, tried to get away with intrigue and managed to endanger not only itself but also the throne. This is the latest in a*

<sup>79</sup> Chérif Pacha, "En Albanie", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.05.1910, no:7, s. 1. One of the most striking details in Mehmed Sharif Pasha's articles on the events in Albania is the support he gave to the Albanians in declaring constitutionalism in the 1908 revolution. In his articles, he almost emphasised that the constitutional monarchy would not have been proclaimed without the Albanians. But it is a fact that the Albanian liberals were more interested in the independence of the Albanian nation than in strengthening the Ottoman Empire. The majority of the officers and the organisation that prepared the revolution are Muslim Turks. Erik Jan Zürcher, *Millî Mücadelede İttihatçılık* (Ankara: Bağlam Yayınları, 1987), 49.

series of diplomatic and political blunders in the region over the past three years. This year, as the Albanians rose up region by region, they thought it would be enough to bring the caliph to the famous battlefield of Kosovo to prevent the Muslim inhabited regions from rising up. Muslim Albanians have a special reverence for the tomb of the martyr Sultan Murad, and a pilgrimage to such a place in such circumstances, at a time when their Christian brothers were fighting the imperial army, is likely to have a strong effect on them. The speeches tended to give a religious character to the current rebellion in Albania and to show that this rebellion was encouraged and supported by Christian forces. The statements of Adil Bey, General Secretary of the CUP, confirm this tendency. The demonstration in Kosovo was not only religious; it was also a glorification of that memorable day when Sultan Murad received a complete victory from God by sacrificing his life against the Crusader defenders who had massed on the plains of Kosovo to drive the Turks out of Europe.”

In the rest of the article, Mehmed Sharif Pasha argues that it would be wiser to try to solve this sensitive problem calmly and with the help of reason and cold-bloodedness, as he has long recommended, rather than making such calls, which also challenge the European powers. "The Balkans have long been compared to a powder keg and it is now more dangerous than ever to spread fire and flames in these regions. Therefore, reforms in the region must be implemented immediately and it is obvious that if the government does not implement these reforms voluntarily, it will be forced to do so under pressure from the government. And this intervention will have serious consequences and enormous repercussions. Because the Macedonians, the Kurds, the Druze, etc. have said that they will not lay down their arms until they have achieved equivalent improvements in the same way". In the end, according to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the Sultan's visit was too much fanfare. He explained that the league could not get out of the current situation, after 10,000 of our soldiers had been killed in Albania, and at a time when the financial situation was so precarious, without damaging their personal reputations and, more importantly, the integrity of the Empire.<sup>80</sup>

It was during this period that the parliament was dissolved. In the continuation of the article, he claims that with the dissolution of the Assembly, the reforms that the Albanians had been waiting for so long were no longer possible, and that is why they took up arms. In the continuation of the article, he does not fail to add the following on the subject:

"Who can blame them? The Albanians laid down their arms after two official promises to improve their situation. And these long-promised reforms have not been implemented, with the dissolution of the Assembly, against which the deputies strongly protested. The Albanians, so concerned and courageous about their personal and national dignity, have no hope of a better future unless they themselves work to create it. Is it any wonder that they have once again taken up arms? We can only point out to them that they have many comrades in misfortune, that the whole Ottoman Empire suffers from the same evils as they do, that their anger is directed against a common enemy, the CUP. Thanks to their invaluable help, the absolutist regime of Abdulhamid came to an end. Three years later, there was nothing left to do but to start again against another absolutist regime."<sup>81</sup>

In particular, Mehmed Sharif Pasha argued that a government determined to carry out liberal reforms would both solve the Albanian problem and make an honorable peace with Italy without the help of foreign powers.<sup>82</sup>

## 2.8. The Ottoman debt in the Journal of Mèchrouitette

Another important issue that Mehmed Sharif Pasha highlighted was the debt of the Ottoman Empire. In the articles he wrote, he addressed the debt situation of the Ottoman Empire and warned foreign governments against granting loans to the CUP administration. After the

<sup>80</sup> Chérif Pacha, "La Dernier Atout", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.07.1911, no: 20, 1-7.

<sup>81</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Un Nouvel Ugolin", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1912, no: 26, 1-6.

<sup>82</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Un Nouvel Ugolin", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.01.1912, no: 26, 1-6.



declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, loans were taken to carry out reforms in the fields of land, navy, public works and education. In the first phase, the French were asked to improve the gendarmerie and the British to modernise the navy.<sup>83</sup>

A total of 8 loans were taken between 1908 and 1914. In 1908, the constitutional government borrowed 4,711,124 liras from the Ottoman Bank to reform the army. Then, in 1909, 7,000,000 liras were borrowed from the Ottoman Bank again, using the agnam (sheep) taxes of some provinces as collateral. In 1910, 1,712,304 liras were borrowed from the Alaşehir-Afyon Railway Company for the Soma-Bandırma Railway. In 1911, 1,000,000 liras were borrowed from the company building the Hodeidah-Sana railway against the customs revenues of the cities of Hodeidah and Jabane. In the same year, 7,040,000 liras were borrowed from the Deutsche Bank in the name of stabilising the customs revenues by pledging the customs revenues of Istanbul. In 1913, 818,970 liras were borrowed from the Anatolian Railway Company for the irrigation of the Konya plain and 1,485,000 liras were borrowed from W.G. Armstrong Whitworths and Company for the improvement of the shipyard within the framework of the dock borrowing against the Sivas agricultural product tax (Aşar). In 1914, due to the high costs of the Tripolitan and Balkan wars, 22,000,000 liras were borrowed from the Ottoman Bank using part of the customs duties of Istanbul and Trabzon as collateral.<sup>84</sup>

On this issue, Mehmed Sharif Pasha evaluated the loan negotiations between France and the Ottoman Empire and wrote an article entitled "*Manoeuvres for a New Loan*". In general terms, the article stressed why France should not lend money to the CUP government. He argued that the CUP government was friendly to France at that time and that if the loan was refused, it would use the technique of jealousy by offering more favours to Germany. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, the Germans were not very willing to lend to the Ottoman Empire. In fact, if you look at the interest rates, while the French were lending at 4 per cent, the Germans were lending at 6-6.5 per cent. Instead of lending, the Germans were more interested in selling arms and ammunition. When France or any other nation lends money to the Ottoman Empire, they take almost all the money from the Ottoman Empire by selling arms and ammunition. He states that this tactic was often used by the Germans during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II and that the same situation continues today. He claims that they have bribed great statesmen in the process. Mehmed Sharif Pasha adds an anecdote:

*"In Turkey, the CUP had an excellent buyer in Mahmud Sevket Pasha, the Minister of War, whom they kept in reserve as a dictator in case the CUP lost power. Mahmud Sevket Pasha, whose fortune came from the commissions he received in Germany, was even interested in maritime affairs. Here is an example. One day in the Council of Ministers, he told his colleague Vice-Admiral Halil Pasha about the need to buy two battleships from Germany. The Navy Minister asked what kind of battleships they were and, after being told, said he was prepared to buy them for £50,000 each. Mahmud Sevket Pasha rejected this figure, which would make the deal possible, and said that it was necessary to increase this figure for reasons of great political importance. It was for these political reasons that Halil Pasha raised the price to £100,000. His successor, Salih Pasha, soon bought two German warships for a million pounds sterling".*

Mehmed Sharif Pasha went on to say that they were using many cruel methods such as imprisonment, torture, flogging and assassination against their political opponents and at the same time were working against British, French and Russian influence with pan-Islamist methods as under Sultan Abdulhamid II. At that time, he claimed that if France lent money despite this situation, it would be giving a great trump card to its worst enemies both in Europe and in the East.<sup>85</sup> Mehmed Sharif Pasha's next article on the subject was published under the

<sup>83</sup> Sait Açıba, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Dış Borçlanması (1854-1914)* (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 2004), 132.

<sup>84</sup> Bültekin Özdemir, *Osmanlı Devleti Dış Borçları Yüz yıl süren Cendere* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 2017, 121-124.

<sup>85</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Manœuvres en vue D'un Nouvel Emprunt", *Mèchrouitette*, 01.03.1911, no:16, 2-6.

title " *Financing and Borrowing*". In the article, he stated that the financial situation of the Ottoman state was in a very bad state and therefore a bankruptcy like that of 1876 might occur. In the article, the debts of the Ottoman Empire were presented as follows:

- 1- Debts subject to the Muharram Decree: 50,973,335 T.L.
- 2- Debts not covered by the Muharram Decree: 58,549,570 T.L.
- 3- Independent loans: 23,650,968 T.L.
- 4- Total: 131,173,873 T.L.

This amounts to 3,016,999,079 francs. The annual repayment is approximately 110 million francs. There is also a variable debt of at least 100 million francs. An analysis of these conditions shows that the government has spent too much money on the army and navy in the last three years, neglecting the development of the country, while the present government should have been more prudent. The army and navy budget, which was £11,641,549 in 1909, rose to £13,436,205 in 1910, an increase of about 2 million Turkish lira or 45 million francs, and accounted for 40 per cent of total expenditure. He added that such a situation did not exist in any European country. In the rest of the article, the revenues of the Ottoman Empire are summarized as follows:

*"As can be seen from the analysis of any of our 1910 budgets, direct taxes have a significant weight in the section of our resources. Out of a total of 25,848,332 Turkish liras, 13,725,892 liras came from direct taxes, while the rest came from indirect taxes, stamp duty and registration, monopolies, commercial and industrial activities of the state, land, tributes, etc.'. Indirect taxes thus exceed 50/0, a ratio not found in any other European budget. And from a fiscal point of view, indirect taxes are clearly preferable to direct taxes, especially in a country where agriculture and livestock are the only sources of wealth. Indirect taxes are much more regular than direct taxes, which are subject to significant reductions in years of bad harvests and epidemics. In any case, the budget deficit, which amounted to 5 million Turkish liras in 1909 and almost 7 million in 1910, would be at least 14 million in 1911, excluding the cost of the Albania and Yemen campaigns, according to the finance law approved by Parliament."*

The new finance minister, Nail Bey, was, according to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, more conscientious than his predecessor, Cavid Bey. He opposed such practices and proposed great savings. But he could not be effective. The government is counting on the second part of the loan (nominal 3,960,000 Turkish Liras) signed in Germany last year and guaranteed by the revenues of the Istanbul customs. However, the Germans, who have an option in this matter, do not intend to grant this second part this year. Therefore, according to a special clause in the contract with Cavid Bey, they asked for an extension of their option until March 1912. Meanwhile, knowing that the Ottoman treasury was in a very unstable situation and that it would be difficult to find money from elsewhere, they offered only advances. In any case, assuming that the German group would provide one or two million Turkish liras in the short term and that the Treasury could obtain the same amount from the Ottoman Bank, this would not be enough to cover the deficit of 14 million. Therefore, according to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, something else had to be found. Of course, the Porte asked France for 10 or 11 million Turkish liras. He explained that France was reluctant because of the unrest in Albania, which was in full swing at the time, and that they were still considering whether or not to lend. Mehmed Sharif Pasha said that France had already invested two and a half billion francs in Turkey. Of these investments, 1 million 500 thousand francs were invested in state funds, 375 million francs in railways, 100 million in real estate, 87 million 500 thousand francs in mines and industrial companies, 66 million in commercial companies and 50 million in shipping companies. Germany came second with 900 million and Great Britain with 750 million. As for the Ottoman debt, France's share was 55/0, Germany's was 30/0 and Britain's was only 5/0. Therefore, he believes that anything that affects Turkey's finance, industry or trade should attract the justified

interest of French investors. In conclusion, Mehmed Sharif Pasha advised the French to be prudent in their investment advice and to refuse these loans in order to force the CUP to surrender through starvation.<sup>86</sup>

### 2.9. The end of the Journal of Mèchroutiette

The last issue of Mèchroutiette was published on 1 April 1914. The title of Mehmed Sharif Pasha's last article was "*Farewell to Mèchroutiette*". In this article, after explaining the purpose of the newspaper in general, Sharif Pasha explained the assassination attempt in Paris and why he felt the need to close the newspaper. According to Mehmed Sharif Pasha, when he founded Mèchroutiette in French and Turkish five years ago, his aim from the first issues was to defend Turkish and French interests in the East, which were closely linked politically and economically. To this end, he stated that he had launched an attack against the CUP government, that in the course of this struggle he had twice been sentenced to death and that in January 1914 he had been the target of an attempt on his life in Paris. He explained that, in addition to violence, persuasion had been used against him and that, through Mr. Finot, the director of a magazine, he had been offered a meeting with an influential member of the association's committee, which he had refused because of the atrocities committed by the Unionists.

Mehmed Sharif Pasha said that France, which was expected to be his closest ally in this long process of struggle against the CUP, made a big mistake and gave loans to the CUP, which was a big disappointment for him. The French economic aid to Turkey during this period amounted to 800 million francs. Mehmed Sharif Pasha was very upset that the French, whom he considered to be liberal, were giving such a large amount of money to the CUP, whose domestic policy was nothing but terrorism and whose foreign policy was totally hostile to Turkey's old traditions. He therefore described the loan to the Ottomans as an embarrassment. He predicted that this loan, which was granted under duress, would further increase their destructive armaments and thus once again become the greatest source of concern for the Balkans and Europe. Later in the article he states:

*"In trying to prevent this loan, I remained faithful to my programme and at the same time defended the political interests of my country and the financial and political interests of France against the CUP. But the fact that France was giving material and moral support to the CUP against the Ottoman people and to its own material and moral detriment disturbed me more than all the acts of violence that had been directed against me over the years... And for the first time, in the face of the work I had undertaken, I asked myself: What is the point? What is the point of continuing a very unequal struggle if you are not supported by the people you are defending?"*

Mehmed Sharif Pasha added that the loan was unproductive and would soon run out, and that the committee had deceived the French in order to reform them. He thought that the committee had started to spread a pan-Islamic brotherhood and had excluded Christians, so it would be better to just watch them and keep quiet after this stage. Mehmed Sharif Pasha concluded his article by saying that he had not given up his campaign but had realised that it was no longer possible in France.<sup>87</sup>

### Conclusion

During the last period of the Ottoman Empire, the foreign press played an important role in monitoring the political environment of the time. The articles written by Mehmed Sharif Pasha in the journal of Mèchroutiette (Constitutional Monarchy) describe in great detail both his world of ideas against the CUP and the European view of Ottoman politics. In all his articles,

<sup>86</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Finances et Emprunts", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.09.1911, no: 22, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Chérif Pacha, "Les Adieux du Mècheroutiette", *Mèchroutiette*, 01.04.1914, no: 55, 1-4.

Mehmed Sharif Pasha criticised the committee for deviating from its objectives. He emphasised that the constitutional monarchy had been regained after a long struggle and that the Europeans had been sympathetic to the Ottoman Empire during this period, but that the Unionists had thrown away this opportunity. The CUP ignored every single message it gave when the constitutional monarchy was proclaimed and became a nest of interests of a group of people who only thought about their own interests. One of his main themes is the CUP's Islamist and Turkish policies. The most important point that he ignores here is that the policy of nationalism was also pursued by states that were hostile to the Ottoman Empire. During this period, Russia's policy of pan-Slavism in the Balkans incited all Orthodox Slavs to a better future. At the same time, the Austro-Hungarian Empire supported nationalist elements in many places, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As he himself often said, both Russia and Austria-Hungary wanted to divide up their share of the Balkans. At this stage, in an environment where everyone was eager to expand their territories, there was no guarantee of reforms or liberal policies where everyone was treated equally. In such a confused political environment and on the eve of the First World War, the CUP, like the politics of any country, wanted a government dominated by the dominant element. Although this was not a desirable situation, it can be said that the uprisings in every region of the Empire forced the Unionists to adopt this policy.

One of the main points on which Mehmed Sharif Pasha criticised the Unionists was their admiration for Germany. He stressed that the same policy had been followed during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, whom he described as a tyrant, and that in this situation the Unionists should distance themselves from the Germans and adopt a pro-British and pro-French policy. During this period, he stressed that the CUP had chosen to side with the Germans in order to create a basis for their tyrannical rule, and that they had placed advisers in important positions in the army. In his articles, he exaggerated the situation a little and said that Turkey had been handed over to Germany, which was a big mistake in foreign policy. He stressed that the Germans were given special attention in the modernisation of the army and the purchase of weapons, which drew the reaction of other countries. At that time, Mehmed Sharif Pasha's conclusions were correct. Entering the war on the side of Germany during the First World War raised these concerns. However, taking into account the conditions of the time, he also realised that both alliances and allied blocs would be formed and that a war of partition would eventually break out.

The question is to what extent the governments, which he sees as liberal, want the Ottoman Empire on their side or not. One of the issues to be considered is the policy of these powers during the Balkan wars and the Macedonian problem. He explained that the British supported Greece in Crete and that the British were the pioneers in uniting all the countries at the beginning of the Balkan wars. At the same time, the British and the French turned a blind eye to the Italian occupation of the region during the Tripolitan War and did not show any diplomatic reaction. He even stated that the British did not allow the Ottoman Empire to send troops to the region because of Egypt's neutrality during the Tripolitan War, attributing this situation to the Unionists incompetence in foreign policy. This situation creates a contradiction when one considers the behaviour of the British and the French during the war. Both countries were prepared to make concessions in order to win over the Italians in the colonial race.

Other one of the important issues that Mehmed Sharif Pasha dealt with in his articles was the question of political assassinations. His sensitivity to this issue is evident in his treatment of the assassinations of Hasan Fehmi, editor-in-chief of the journal of Serbesti, and Ahmet Samim Bey, editor-in-chief of the Sada-yı Millet. Undoubtedly, the murder of journalists and arbitrary censorship practices were undesirable policies. The fact that the murders could not be solved is an indication that the political environment at that time was quite complicated. It can be said that the failure of Unionists to grasp the concept of opposition had a major impact on this situation. They fought for a long time for constitutional government, but because of their lack of administrative experience they made mistakes that can be described as serious. One of the

biggest mistakes was to regard any criticism as hostile and to silence dissenting voices. In such an environment, political ideas could not be freely expressed, and differences would breed enmity. But in a crumbling empire, a government lacking in trained staff and experience did not have the resources to listen to every voice. It was at this time that the CUP, believing that the country was out of its hands, panicked and had to take harsh measures. Undoubtedly, this situation does not justify the assassinations. As we will see below, these assassinations led to a reactionary mentality and Mahmud Sevket Pasha suffered the same fate.

One of the important issues that Mehmed Sharif Pasha highlighted was the rebellious movements in Albania. In his articles, he generally dealt with the historical processes of the Albanians as a community under difficult control. He explained that the Albanians had been under the control of the Ottoman Empire for a long time and that They were a warlike people, so it was useless to send an army against those who tried to revolt in the region at that time. In this process, he says that the uprisings increased because the Unionists did not fulfil the promises they had made during the constitutional period. An important issue that is highlighted here is the visit of Sultan Mehmed Reşad V to the region. It is emphasised that the Sultan went to the region with the encouragement of the unionists and that it was a political show. Considering the complicated situation of the region, the Sultan's trip to the region to ensure calm and solve the existing problems can be seen as a positive move. At the time, there was a lot of gang activity in the region and the Ottoman army was suffering heavy losses. Opposing the deployment of the army and seeing the Sultan's well-intentioned trip to the region as a political show will not help solve the problem.

The other issue that Mehmed Sharif Pasha criticized was the involvement of the military in politics. In the articles he wrote, he evaluated this problem in a historical perspective through the Janissaries and tried to explain the damage of this issue. He gave examples of how the involvement of the military in politics led to indiscipline within the army. He also dealt with the expulsion of some soldiers from the army during this period because they were not close to society. An analysis of the press during this period shows that the army's involvement in politics and its self-importance was one of the main issues on the opposition's agenda. In fact, the bad situation in which the army found itself during the Balkan wars supported this criticism. It is well known that the main reason for this defeat was the political division of the army. Mehmed Sharif Pasha also wrote articles on many subjects, such as the possibilities of foreign policy and the Ottoman debt. The reason he stopped writing for the paper was because he was disappointed with the loans the French were giving to the unionists. In particular, he predicted that the CUP would use these loans not for reforms but for armaments. As he himself said, his aim at that time was to get rid of the unionist government, install a more liberal government and move closer to the French and British bloc. At such a time, however, even a liberal government was unlikely to stay out of the war. The Treaty of Sèvres, signed at the end of the First World War, therefore clearly showed the main objective of the Entente powers. Moreover, the fact that he was the spokesman for the minority demands in Lausanne raised questions about his sincerity in defending the territorial integrity of the Ottoman state.

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### Appendices

A photograph of Mehmed Sharif Pasha with his son-in-law in Paris.



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