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## THE OFFICER CORPS IN SULTAN MAHMUD II'S NEW OTTOMAN ARMY, 1826-39\*

On 15 June 1826, after some fierce though brief fighting in the streets of Istanbul, Sultan Mahmud II effectively crushed the last serious Janissary uprising in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Two days later the five-centuries-old Janissary corps, which had long resisted change and modernization, was declared legally abolished. In its place there was to be organized a modern army called the Trained Victorious Muslim Troops (*Muallem Asâkir-i Mansûre-yi Muhammediye*), or the Victorious (*Mansûre*) for short.

Though he seems to have been unaware of it, the most difficult problem facing Sultan Mahmud at this initial stage was the recruitment of the cadres needed to train and lead his new army. Another Middle Eastern military reformer, Muhammad Ali of Egypt, had earlier solved this problem quite satisfactorily, as his troops were then proving in Arabia, the Sudan and Greece. Advised by capable European officers, the ruler of Egypt approached the problem methodically. In 1816, in a special barracks set up at distant Aswan, the French Colonel Sève began training 500 selected youths. Only three years later, when one thousand officers had graduated from this school, did Muhammad Ali begin to recruit his first Egyptian regiments.<sup>1</sup>

The Sultan, however, was hard pressed for time. The Janissaries had been the central element in the Ottoman military system, and the vacuum left by their suppression rendered the empire temporarily defenceless against foreign attack. Indeed, as the summer of 1826 dragged on and European pressure over the question of Greece mounted, the Porte came to consider such an attack as increasingly likely. Moreover, the Janissaries had also discharged important police duties, and considerations of public security were an important contributing factor to the sense of urgency with which the organization of the new army was begun.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Abd-ul Raḥmân Zakî, *Al-Ta'riḫ al-Ḥarbî li-'Aṣr Muḥammad 'Alî al-Kabîr* (Cairo, 1950), pp. 161-2; M. J. Marcel, *Égypte depuis la conquête des Arabes* (2 vols., Paris, 1872), pp. 131-2.

<sup>2</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi, V. cilt., Nizam-i Cedid ve Tanzimat Devirleri, 1789-1856* (2nd rev. ed. Ankara, 1961), pp. 107-19; Rifat Paşa, *Rusya Muharebesi Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1275/1858), pp. 6-7; Harold W. V. Temperley, *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (London, 1936), pp. 52-6.

At the same time, since neither the Sultan nor his lieutenants enjoyed the benefits of European advice, they continued to believe—as had Europe a century earlier—that ‘military command was an art like music and sculpture which required inherent talent. Military competence could not be transmitted or learned... certain men were born to command and others to obey.’<sup>1</sup> The Sultan saw little advantage, therefore, in following the Egyptian example and preparing a trained officer corps first. Instead, he immediately proceeded to enroll *Mansûre* regiments while planning to staff them, according to the familiar patterns of the past, with those ‘born to command’—the Ottoman ruling élite.

Since the initial organization of Sultan Mahmud’s *Mansûre* army closely followed that of Selim III’s *Nizâm-i Cedîd*, it was only logical that commanders for the new regiments should be sought from among the remnants of the older military force, now defunct for nineteen years. Indeed, two of the first three officers who were appointed as regiment commanders were former members of the *Nizâm*.<sup>2</sup> It soon became apparent, however, that most of the *Nizâm* men were unsuited for their job because of advanced age, long military inactivity or the lack of appropriate experience. In August 1826 the Sultan therefore requested his nominal vassal Muhammad Ali to send twelve officers to replace the *Nizâm* men. Wary of Ottoman military rejuvenation, however, the wily governor of Egypt replied that his Egyptian officers were not yet ‘sufficiently prepared’ for such a task, while his foreign drill masters ‘had become accustomed in Egypt to high salaries and expensive uniforms, and their presence in Istanbul would be obstructive to the Ottoman Army’.<sup>3</sup>

Just as the Egyptians rejected the Ottoman request for their own reasons, European military assistance also was largely ruled out by international politics. France, which in the eighteenth century had assisted Ottoman military reform, now was drifting toward cooperation with Britain and Russia in Greece against the Porte, and was indisposed to offer any help. Indeed, the Greek question was adversely affecting Ottoman relations with most European governments. Furthermore, with Europe’s public sympathies decidedly on the Greek side, it was difficult to attract foreign officers of good repute even on a private basis.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Mehmed Esad Efendi, *Üss-ü Zafer* (2nd ed. Istanbul, 1293/1896), pp. 64–5, 107–8; Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lutfi* (8 vols., Istanbul, 1290–1328/1873–1910), vol. 1, pp. 132–3; Ahmed Cevdet Efendi, *Tarih-i Cevdet* (12 vols., 1st ed. Istanbul, 1270–1301/1854–1883), vol. XII, p. 175; Hızır İlyas Efendi, *Vakâi-i Letâif-i Enderun* (Istanbul, 1276/1859); Ahmed Cevad, *Tarih-i Askerî-i Osmânî*, vol. II, book IV (unpublished manuscript available at the Istanbul University Library; hereafter IUL TY 6127), pp. 4–5. The third officer was an Egyptian named Davud Ağa, who happened by chance to be in Istanbul.

<sup>3</sup> Lutfi, vol. 1, p. 196; Cevad, book IV, p. 39. Characteristic of the misinformation of the Western press was a report in *The Times* of London that the Sultan was to get 400 Egyptian instructors by the end of August 1826: *The Times*, 29 Sept. 1826.

<sup>4</sup> Lutfi, vol. 1, pp. 197–8; Cevad, book IV, pp. 39–40.

The greatest obstacle against an effective use of Western officers, however, remained the nature of Ottoman society and the mentality of its leadership. The Ottoman social structure rested on a strongly entrenched military establishment with long-standing traditions. In Egypt, where the traditional military caste was alien and superimposed, it was relatively easy for Muhammad Ali to cower the old military by destroying the *Mamlûks*. But not so in the Ottoman dominions, where the Janissaries, who had branched out from the military to penetrate and overlap other social strata, were nonetheless not the only military element. Although their destruction cleared away the most conservative and tradition-minded corps within the army, there still remained large segments of the old military order. Furthermore, the Ottoman system made no distinction between civilian and military government; the reins of authority from the Grand Vezir in Istanbul to the governor of the last province were usually in the hands of military men. The most important segment of the Ottoman ruling élite was thus made up of the old military, and it was to continue to be so. When Sultan Mahmud first sought a chief for his new army, in fact, he could find no one else but Ağa Hüseyin Paşa, a former Janissary who was also a supporter of reform.

The sense of pride with which the Ottoman élite regarded its past military tradition still was very strong, and even reformers were convinced that with the adoption of some aspects of European military tactics the old Ottoman martial genius would be quickly revived. While some leaders might have realized that even the superficial aspects of European methods could not be fully mastered without considerable foreign guidance, they were nonetheless certain that the innate military superiority of the Osmanlis would more than make up for this fact. In addition, the Ottoman mind still perceived the world in terms of the traditional Islamic concept of two opposing camps of believers and non-believers, between whom only temporary truce could reign. Infidels could be used in auxiliary capacities—as advisers or instructors—but they were not to be trusted with key military positions that carried with them command responsibilities. This policy was reflected in the following official directive: ‘In order to make certain that foreign officers will not gain influence and independence, they shall have authority only in matters of training, and in all other matters of command, discipline, and the like they shall operate only through . . . Ottoman officers.’<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, even when European officers offered their services to the Ottomans, there usually existed an unbridgeable gap between what those officers thought they deserved and what the Ottomans were prepared to offer. For one thing, most reputable European officers sought actual command posts. The British seaman and traveler Adolphus Slade relates that in 1828 ‘. . . a gallant and able French officer, General Count Hulôt, came to Constantinople . . . and offered his services *gratis* to lead the Turkish regular army against the

<sup>1</sup> *Baş Vekalet Arşivi* (Archives of the Prime Minister's Office, Istanbul, hereafter referred to as BVA); *Hatt-ı Hümayunlar* collection (hereafter HH), 48338 A (1254?).

Russians... The *Reis Efendi* offered him—a French general...—the post of instructor.<sup>1</sup>

Another point on which European officers and the Porte could not agree was the question of financial remuneration. Since the Porte viewed the services of Westerners as something less than indispensable, it was prepared to pay only accordingly. Thus, at about the same time as the episode just described, a British seaman, Captain Hanchet, offered to assume command of the Ottoman navy for the 'modest' fee of £20,000 per annum and the rank of vice-admiral. The Porte countered with an offer of £180 per annum and the position of an adviser. Needless to say, the appointment did not go through.<sup>2</sup>

In time, the Porte came to employ a handful of European soldiers of fortune, drifters and renegades, but their condition was far inferior to that of the Europeans in Egyptian service. In Egypt, Colonel Sève received a monthly salary of 17,500 *kuruş*, while in Istanbul Calosso, a Piedmontese who claimed to have been a captain in the French cavalry and a favorite of the Sultan,<sup>3</sup> received only 2,000 *kuruş* per month. Another soldier, the Frenchman Gaillard,<sup>4</sup> a former sergeant in Napoleon's expeditionary force to Egypt and now Sultan Mahmud's chief infantry instructor, received a monthly salary of 1,200 *kuruş*. Other Europeans drew even lower salaries of 500 to 800 *kuruş* per month.<sup>5</sup> A French military attaché observed that 'one can understand that such modest salaries could procure only little instructed officers'.<sup>6</sup> The only exceptions to this rule were the small Prussian military delegation and a few British officers. Both groups first arrived in Istanbul in 1836, but they were primarily concerned with technical projects and had little to do with officer training. Indeed, the contribution of Europeans to the evolution of a new Ottoman military leadership was insignificant, if not absolutely negative.

French, Italians, Austrians... were admitted without control... Since they did not know Turkish, interpreters were attached to them... All the instructors without exception were former non-commissioned officers or privates. They promptly offered to their recruits whatever they knew, which consisted of the manual of arms and personal combat training. But they soon engaged in maneuvers and evolutions of the line, and it was here that nothing could be taught. Each instructor, in order to please his Pasha, invented new maneuvers, ridiculous as well as useless. In 1828 a former corporal, in order to satisfy the desire for novelty of the Kapitan Pasha, had even invented a triangular and semi-circular deployment of his platoons and made them march in this formation.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Adolphus Slade, *Records of Travels in Turkey, Greece, etc., in Years 1829, 1830 and 1831* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1833), vol. I, p. 159.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 64–5.

<sup>3</sup> Although there is no evidence that he actually converted to Islam, he was known also as Rustem Bey. Cevad, book IV, pp. 18–19; Ahmed Ata Tayyazade, *Tarih-i Ata* (5 vols., Istanbul, 1291–1293/1874–1876), vol. III, pp. 109–10.

<sup>4</sup> Known also as Sardanyalı Hurşid. See İlyas, pp. 298–9; Ata, vol. III, p. 109; Cevad, book IV, p. 40; Archives de la Guerre, Paris (hereafter AG), MR 1619, piece 39 (memorandum by Lieutenant Foltz of 1 May 1831).

<sup>5</sup> Zaki, pp. 160–1; Marcel, vol. II, pp. 130–1; AG, MR 1619, p. 39, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 39, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 39, *op. cit.*

*Subalterns and non-commissioned officers*

The Founding Regulation (*Kanunnâme-i Hümayun*) of the new *Mansûre* army<sup>1</sup> issued on 7 July 1826 (beginning *Zilhicce* 1241) established that appointments to officerships and promotions would be determined by two principles, ability and seniority, as opposed to the favoritism and sale of office practised in the days of the Janissaries. However, the nonexistence of a graded military educational system, established norms of professionalism, and regular examinations left the first principle without much substance. In reality, favoritism and seniority remained the strongest considerations for military advancement.<sup>2</sup>

Appointments to junior officerships were made by simply picking men out of the ranks.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that many of those so commissioned had some natural ability to command, but they received no special training at all. Moreover, nothing was done to create among them a distinct *esprit de corps*. The junior officers not only came from the same social strata as their men, but shared living quarters with them, and their uniforms did not appreciably differ from those of their subordinates.<sup>4</sup> All this resulted in a lack of sufficient respect and subordination on the part of the troops. MacFarlane made the following observation in 1828:

To the eyes of the troops, the *Bimbashi* or colonel, with his scarlet cloak and diamond crescent, seemed, indeed, a great personage, and was properly honoured; but the subalterns dressed little better than themselves, and perhaps, generally, not much superior in condition, education or manners, were treated with great familiarity. For instance, a fellow in the lines would call or make a sign to his officer, and on his approach, whisper in his ear, or talk and laugh with him aloud; and this I have seen many times during drills.<sup>5</sup>

The deficient training of the junior officers and the widespread disrespect for them caused the new Ottoman regiments to behave more like unwieldy human masses than lithe and disciplined military bodies. During training and on campaign, senior officers were so overburdened by tasks which should have been

<sup>1</sup> Official copies of the Regulation are: BVA, HH 48112 (1); HH 17708; *Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi* (Archives of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul, hereafter referred to as TKS), E 4286. A draft of this document is BVA, HH 24038. Other copies are found in the following registers: BVA, *Kanunnâme-i Askerî Defterleri* (hereafter KAD), vol. 1, pp. 3–12; KAD vol. VI, 2a–9b; *Mâlîyeden Müdever Defterleri* (hereafter *Mal. Müd.*) 9002, pp. 1–7; IUL, TY 5824, fol. 2a–16a. Summaries and lengthy excerpts are found in Mehmed Esad Efendi, *Tarih-i Esad Efendi* (2 vols., unpublished manuscript. IUL, TY 6002, TY 6003 and TY 6004 make up the first volume covering the period 1237–1240/1821–1825. TY 6005 is the second volume covering the year 1241/16 Aug. 1825–4 Aug. 1826. Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, Esad Efendi collection, Y 2084, is another copy of vol. 1. References are made to the IUL MS.), vol. II, fol. 180b–188b; Lutfi, vol. 1, pp. 191–3; Cevdet, vol. XII, pp. 215–16, 316–22; Cevad, book IV, pp. 21–4.

<sup>2</sup> BVA, *Cevdet Askerî*, 877 (21 *Zilkade* 1242), 821 (25 *Rebiülevvel*, 1243).

<sup>3</sup> BVA, KAD, vol. 1, pp. 15–22 (end *Zilhicce* 1241).

<sup>4</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 39, *op. cit.*; Charles MacFarlane, *Constantinople in 1828* (London, 1829), p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> MacFarlane, *ibid.* p. 341.

carried out by their subalterns that they could not concentrate on their own duties. MacFarlane, who in the summer of 1827 was present at a military drill in Izmir, took the following notes:

The most striking deficiency, of course, was that of non-commissioned officers and subalterns; these being imperfect in their service threw all the work on a few of the superior officers who were seen running from place to place, performing the duties of drill sergeants: even the colonel did this and was seen racing and storming, and using the flat of his sword, until he appeared ready to drop from heat and fatigue. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This situation had not much improved even twelve years later. The army's weakness in maneuvering on the open field of battle was recognized by the Ottoman leadership itself. In 1839 Hafiz Paşa, commander of the army sent out against Syria, was put under strict orders that he 'should not risk any battle in the plain, but . . . keep his army in the strong country and in position where it [could] not be attacked but at a disadvantage to the enemy'.<sup>2</sup> The Porte's strategy in 1839 was to threaten Syria by land and sea so as to spark a general uprising against Egyptian rule, but to avoid a major confrontation with the Egyptian army. Ibrahim, however, maneuvered swiftly and forced Hafiz Paşa to give battle at Nizib on 24 June 1839. Moltke, who actively participated in that encounter, relates that disorder and demoralization were so great that the Ottoman command decided against ordering a retreat to a stronger position for fear that the army would completely disintegrate on the way. Furthermore, because the troops took up battle positions in such a slow and disorganized manner, they had to be maintained in combat positions for three days and nights while Ibrahim maneuvered in the area. As a result, the Ottomans were utterly exhausted even before the battle began, and a concentrated bombardment was enough to break them altogether.<sup>3</sup>

### *Senior ranks*

Senior officerships were reserved for those who came from a very particular social stratum. The households of the highest state functionaries had served for centuries as training schools where the military and administrative leadership of the state received its preparation to rule. The largest and most important of these institutions was naturally the Imperial Household itself. It was primarily through this training system that the so-called Ottoman Ruling Institution was able to perpetuate itself.<sup>4</sup> It was therefore only natural that the Sultan would

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office Archives (hereafter FO), 78/356, Ponsonby to Palmerston, no. 141 of 12 June 1839; repeated also in no. 169 of 8 July 1839.

<sup>3</sup> Helmuth von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839* (Berlin, 1841), pp. 384-397; cf. also: FO 78/374, enclosure from Suleyman Paşa (Colonel Sève) of 25 June 1839 in Campbell to Palmerston, no. 54 of 13 July 1839; Cevad, book IV, pp. 114-18.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. B. Miller, *The Palace School of Muhammad the Conqueror* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941).

look to this establishment to furnish the badly needed leadership for his new army.

Shortly after the suppression of the Janissaries, the Sultan founded the Battalion of the *Ağas* of the Court's Inner Service (*Enderun-i Hümayun Ağavâtı*), known hereafter as the Court Battalion. In this unit were enrolled both young slaves from the Sultan's household and free-born Muslim youths, usually the sons of grandees who were in training at the Court. While this was in effect the first Ottoman officer training institution, it was also a last effort to revive the declining educational system of the traditional Palace School.<sup>1</sup> No other example could better illustrate the conservatism of Mahmud's military reforms.

The organization of the Court Battalion was modelled after the regular army units already in training. At first, the Sultan appointed a former officer of the *Nizâm-i Cedîd*, Çokadar Mehmed Emin Ağa, to instruct the courtiers in infantry drill. In addition, he ordered that some men be trained as cavalry and others as a military music band. The cavalry drill master was at first a certain Ahmed Ağa, nicknamed Vay Bilim, who had served as a mere bugler in the *Nizâm-i Cedîd* cavalry. But it quickly transpired that he did not know proper military drill and he was soon replaced by the Piedmontese Calosso. The first instructor of the music band was the Frenchman Manguel, who was replaced in September 1828 by Giuseppe Donizetti, brother of the composer Gaetano Donizetti.<sup>2</sup>

By the beginning of July 1826—two weeks after the inception of the reforms—100 of the Court servants were enrolled as infantry and fifty as cavalry.<sup>3</sup> Their uniforms were basically the same as those worn by the regular troops, but of a superior quality and richly decorated.<sup>4</sup> When the number of infantrymen reached 200 they were divided into two companies, and the Sultan himself began to drill them regularly.<sup>5</sup> After the arrival of Calosso two squadrons of cavalry were formed, so that, at its peak in the fall of 1827, the court battalion could have had a maximum enrollment of 400 men.<sup>6</sup> The cavalry then was given priority over the infantry, and the Sultan, with Calosso's help, became a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 181–3.

<sup>2</sup> İlyas, pp. 375–6, 387–9, 394–6, 406–8; Cevad, book IV, pp. 18–19; Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani* (4 vols., Istanbul, 1308–1311/1890–1893; hereafter referred to as *SO*), vol. I, pp. 300–1; Ata, vol. III, pp. 109–10. The author of the last work, Tayyazade Ahmed Ata, and his brother Halil Edib were among the first to be enrolled in the Court Battalion. In the above numbered and subsequent pages, the author proudly relates his personal experiences at first with the infantry and later with the cavalry. His brother served with the music band. At times Ata's work reads like a personal memoir, an Ottoman source of information which is painfully scarce for this period. Giuseppe Donizetti, who was subsequently awarded the title of Paşa, served the Porte for twenty-eight years until his death in February 1856. See: Mahmut R. Gazimihal, *Türk Askeri Muzikaları Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1955), pp. 41–42.

<sup>3</sup> İlyas, pp. 376–77.

<sup>4</sup> Ata, vol. III, pp. 109, 113; MacFarlane, *Constantinople*, p. 351.

<sup>5</sup> Ata, vol. III, p. 110; Cevad, book IV, pp. 18–19; Carl Ritter von Sax, *Geschichte des Machtverfalls der Türkei* (2nd ed. Vienna, 1913), p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> İlyas, pp. 433–4.

cavalry drill master.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, the Sultan's favorite maneuver was to lead a frontal cavalry charge.<sup>2</sup> A European eyewitness asserted that 'Mahmood was indisputably the best horseman *à la Européenne* in his army; and this acquirement together with another proficiency... that of commanding and maneuvering a squadron of horse, formed then his pride and glory.'<sup>3</sup>

The Court Battalion had no established curriculum or course of training other than the usual military drill. Men were graduated according to the practical needs of the army and the personal judgement of the Sultan and his assistants. Nevertheless, within a short time these graduates were replacing the *Nizâm* men, who had proven to be useless.<sup>4</sup>

Promotions from the Court Battalion to regular units were extremely rapid. A corporal in the Court Battalion was often promoted to the rank of major in a battalion of the line (*Mansûre*) or in the Guards (*Hâssa*). The first officer to reach the new rank of colonel (*Miralay*) in the *Hâssa* corps was Nebil Bey, a Court Battalion graduate.<sup>5</sup> While there is room to criticize the appointment of courtiers to senior military ranks requiring high standards of professionalism, considering the prevailing circumstances the system had some merits. The men were at least all trained in the same methods by the best available instructors. In this way, a certain measure of uniformity gradually came to characterize the army. In addition, the graduates were personally known to, and picked by, the Sultan, and he could expect their loyalty to his person.

The good opportunities for advancement available through service in the Court Battalion prompted many dignitaries to try to enroll their sons in this unit. Many of these youths were under the prescribed age of fifteen, however. In order to meet this difficulty, and also to prepare a reserve for the Court Battalion, the Sultan directed in March 1827 that a special pre-military school be established in the building of the Soğuk Çeşme *mekteb* (religious school) on the grounds of Topkapı palace. The school was organized as a regular *mekteb* with some *ulema* giving instruction in religious subjects. But the students also received military training from army officers.<sup>6</sup> Since the school was considered to be the junior division of the Court Battalion, it became quite popular; in June 1829, its enrollment was doubled from 100 to 200 youths.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, it was not easy to keep the courtiers in line. Most of them were busy with various duties at the Court, and in time their initial enthusiasm for military training subsided. In May 1827 Husrev Paşa, a recently retired Grand

<sup>1</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 39, *op. cit.*; Rev. Robert Walsh, *A Residence at Constantinople* (2 vols., London, 1836), vol. II, pp. 278-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal des Débats*, 7 May 1828.

<sup>3</sup> MacFarlane, *Constantinople*, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Deval (pseud. M... C... D...), *Deux années à Constantinople et en Morée, 1825-1826* (Paris, 1828), p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> İlyas, pp. 405, 419-22, 426-7, 431-2, 435-6, 438, 450-1; Ata, vol. III, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> BVA, KAD, vol. I, pp. 109-11 (3 *Ramazan* 1242); *Mal. Müd.* 9002, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> BVA, KAD, vol. I, p. 118 (23 *Zilhicce* 1244).

Admiral of the Ottoman navy, brought about a further reform in the Ottoman army that required changes in organization as well as tactics. The army was to adopt a new drill system, and the Sultan ordered that it be introduced in the Court Battalion first. But a considerable number of courtiers refused to learn the new system. By the Sultan's orders, many were dismissed or demoted in rank.<sup>1</sup>

Even these disciplinary measures did not improve matters. During the war with Russia (1828–9), the Sultan grew increasingly dissatisfied with the Court Battalion's behaviour, and he was reported to have entertained the thought of completely suppressing the unit and assigning its members to regular battalions on the front. He refrained from carrying out this scheme because he was wary of alienating the many dignitaries whose sons and relatives made up the bulk of the battalion's membership. But the unit was finally abolished in May 1830, and many of its remaining members were given commissions with the regular troops.<sup>2</sup>

Together with courtiers who graduated from the Court Battalion numerous members of the households of prominent Paşas also received senior commissions in the army. The largest single group among the latter were former slaves of Husrev Paşa, who was appointed commander-in-chief (*Ser Asker*) of the *Mansûre* in May 1827 and who dominated military affairs until the beginning of 1838.

Husrev, who had no children of his own, carefully raised and educated an unusually large number of young slaves in his own household, and in time placed them in important administrative and military positions. It was estimated that between seventy and eighty of his household slaves attained the highest ranks in the army. While this group was outnumbered by the graduates of the Court Battalion, Husrev's slaves held the more prominent positions during the period of his ascendancy, particularly in the regiments of the *Mansûre*. The best known among them was Halil Rifat Paşa, who in November 1836, after holding some of the highest military positions, replaced Husrev as *Ser Asker*.<sup>3</sup> In addition, at least three of the first four officers to rise to the rank of colonel (*mîralay*) in the *Mansûre* army were Husrev's protégés.<sup>4</sup>

Other influential paşas also interceded to obtain senior posts within the new army for their slaves and retainers. Most prominent among them were Ağa Hüseyin Paşa, the *Mansûre's* first *Ser Asker*;<sup>5</sup> İzzet Mehmed Paşa, Grand Admiral from February 1827 until October 1828 and subsequently Grand

<sup>1</sup> İlyas, p. 401; Ata, vol. III, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> İlyas, pp. 492–6; Ata, vol. III, pp. 114–18; Cevad, book IV, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> SO, vol. II, 306–7; Walsh, *Residence*, vol. II, pp. 523–4.

<sup>4</sup> They were Iskender, Sa'dullah and Hayruddin Mehmed Ağas. All subsequently rose to higher ranks. The fourth colonel, Ali Ağa, cannot be traced. See: BVA, KAD, vol. II, p. 31 a–b (15 *Rebûlevvel* 1244), p. 32 a (beginning *Cemâzielâhîr* 1244); Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netâic ul-Vukûât* (4 vols., Istanbul, 1294–1327/1877–1909), vol. IV, p. 109; SO, vol. I, p. 348; vol. II, p. 317; vol. III, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> He held this post from June 1826 until May 1827. See: SO, vol. II, p. 226; Walsh, *Residence*, vol. II, pp. 502–18.

Vezir;<sup>1</sup> and Papuççu Ahmed Paşa, Grand Admiral from October 1828 to January 1830.<sup>2</sup> During the summer of 1826 these three men enrolled sizable contingents of their household slaves in the new army in order to secure for them senior military positions. They did so to safeguard their own continuing influence in the army and over affairs of state in general.<sup>3</sup>

After the disastrous war with Russia (1828–9), which clearly demonstrated the inadequacies of the officer corps, efforts were made to raise the professional standards of the army commanders. Intricate new regulations stressing ability and merit were issued to govern the granting of commissions and promotion. As of the end of 1831 every promotion was to be subject to an examination. Non-commissioned and junior officers up to the rank of lieutenant were required to know the battalion school and the principles of administering the unit they were to command. Candidates for promotion to ranks from captain to major had to know the regiment school.

The examinations were to be administered by *ad hoc* military boards. Regimental senior officers were to serve on the boards for junior officers, while colonels and general officers were to administer examinations for the ranks of captain and above. The tests were held orally, since in most cases both examiner and examined were illiterate. The questions and answers were recorded by an army clerk. When an officer passed his test, the chairman of the board sent a memorandum to the *Ser Asker* along with the records of the examination. All commissions had to be approved by the *Ser Asker*, and senior ranks from that of colonel upwards required the approval of the Sultan as well.<sup>4</sup>

Whenever possible, appointments to the rank of brigadier-general (*Mirliva*) and above were conferred by the Sultan in person. This was always the occasion for an elaborate ceremony, in which the Sultan granted presents, robes of honor (*harvam*), and—after 1831—also medals. Lower ranks received their commissions from the *Ser Asker*, the Commandants of the Guards and Artillery, and other senior officers.<sup>5</sup>

In theory, the new regulations required every officer to start at the bottom of the ladder as a private, and this principle was endlessly asserted in official newspapers and correspondence.<sup>6</sup> Since no minimum service period was required for any of the ranks, however, those with the right connections received

<sup>1</sup> *SO*, vol. III, pp. 460–1.

<sup>2</sup> *SO*, vol. I, p. 289; Walsh, *Residence*, vol. II, p. 519.

<sup>3</sup> Avigdor Levy, *The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II, 1808–1839* (unpublished Harvard University Ph.D. thesis, 1968), pp. 360–1.

<sup>4</sup> Cevad, book IV, pp. 36–8; *Takvîm-i Vakâi* (Istanbul; hereafter *Tak. Vak.*), nos. 1 (25 *Cemâzîlevvel* 1247), 3 (14 *Cemâzîlâhur* 1247).

<sup>5</sup> *Tak. Vak.* nos. 5 (28 *Cemâzîlâhur* 1247), 18 (14 *Şevvâl* 1247); *Le Moniteur Ottoman* (Istanbul; hereafter *Mon. Ott.*), nos. 34 (14 July 1832), 36 (28 July 1832), 103 (8 April 1836); Cevad, book IV, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Tak. Vak.* nos. 1 (25 *Cemâzîlevvel* 1247), 10 (4 *Şaban* 1247), 11 (11 *Şaban* 1247), 26 (17 *Zilhicce* 1247), 34 (5 *Rebîülevvel* 1248), 181 (28 *Rebîülâhur* 1255); *Mon Ott.* no. 12 (21 January 1832); BVA, *Cevdet-Askeri*, 15649 (end *Muharrem* 1254).

rapid successive promotions and could rise to a high position within a very short time. In 1831, for example, Zarif Paşa attained the rank of captain even though he was a mere boy of fifteen.<sup>1</sup> The skipping of ranks was not usually practised, but was not unknown.<sup>2</sup> The greatest offender in this respect was the Sultan himself, who continued to appoint his eunuchs and courtiers to high military ranks with little or no military preparation and in contradiction to the regulations which he had personally authorized.<sup>3</sup> Thus in 1833 Said Mehmed Ağa, one of the Sultan's attendants (*mabeyinci*), was suddenly made a brigadier-general in the cavalry. Within five years he was to rise to the post of *Ser Asker*.<sup>4</sup>

Since it was virtually impossible to attain a senior commission without being the recipient of favoritism, the top military ranks were monopolized by the ruling élite and its protégés. A French traveler who was well acquainted with the local scene testified that a virtual class distinction existed between senior and junior officers. The majority of the latter, if they had no sponsors in high places, were doomed to remain in junior positions.<sup>5</sup> Those with the right connections, on the other hand, were assured of promotion and treated with extreme leniency even when they completely neglected their duties. Under these circumstances, there were few incentives for officers to work hard.

The usual punishment for a senior officer was transfer to a unit stationed in the provinces, demotion in rank, and, in extreme cases, expulsion from the army or even banishment to some provincial town. These last measures were only temporary in most cases, and when the officer exhibited his remorse—that is, when his sponsors succeeded in making the right contacts—he was returned to his former rank.<sup>6</sup>

Under these circumstances, the examinations required for promotion became a mere sham even when they were actually administered, and officers continued to be ill prepared for their duties.<sup>7</sup> In 1834 a French military observer reported: 'Instruction of officers is little different from that of the soldier. The majority of the officers do not know how to read or write and learn that part of the military theory which concerns them through routine work.'<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Z. Karal, 'Zarif Paşa'nın Hürurati, 1816-1862', *Belleten*, vol. IV (1940), p. 444. Also see: AG, MR 1619, p. 52, anonymous report of 29 July 1834.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Tak. Vak.* no. 51 (20 *Ramazan* 1248).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Tak. Vak.* no. 27 (27 *Zilhicce* 1247). Western observers were greatly amazed at the sight of Negro eunuchs serving as senior officers. In 1834 Marshal Marmont met one of these officers, Reşid Paşa, a cavalry brigadier, and commented the following: 'A black eunuch as a general of brigade! In Turkey it does not seem contrary to reason to invest with a military dignity requiring strength, energy, and courage, a degraded being whose condition implies weakness and pusillanimity, and who can never be supposed to acquire an ascendancy over the minds of other men.' Marshal Marmont, Duc de Raguse, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (translated and annotated by Lieut. Col. Sir Frederic Smith; London, 1839), p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> *SO*, vol. III, p. 47; vol. IV, pp. 778-9; Slade, vol. II, p. 34 n.

<sup>5</sup> Ami Boué, vol. III, p. 331.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Mon. Ott.* nos. 19 (24 March 1832), 24 (28 April 1832), 66 (8 June 1833).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Tak. Vak.* nos. 2 (7 *Cemâzielâhur* 1247), 4 (21 *Cemâzielâhur* 1247), 72 (20 *Receb* 1249), 180 (6 *Rebiülâhur* 1255); *Mon. Ott.* nos. 51 (10 November 1832), 91 (28 February 1835).

<sup>8</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 52, *op. cit.*

*Foundation of an officers' school*

The year 1834 also saw the first tentative attempts to establish a modern officers' school in Istanbul. Technical and professional schools already were fulfilling some of the requirements of the Ottoman army. Though it led a rather tenuous existence for many years, the School of Mathematics (*Hendesehane*), founded in 1734 under the supervision of Bonneval,<sup>1</sup> developed under Selim III and Mahmud II into a military Land Engineering School (*Mühendishane-i Berrî-i Hümayun*) and a Naval Engineering School (*Mühendishane-i Bahrî-i Hümayun*).<sup>2</sup> In 1827 Sultan Mahmud founded a medical school to train doctors and surgeons for the army.<sup>3</sup> While the Sultan and his lieutenants readily acknowledged the need for such professional institutions, the thought of establishing a special school for the training of officers dawned upon them almost by accident.

The Ottoman military historian Ahmed Cevad gives an account of the opening of the Officers' School which he received from Mehmed Namık Paşa, the school's founder and an important figure in the reigns of four successive sultans. As a young man in 1834 Namık Paşa stopped at Paris on his return from a mission to London to meet with Marshal Maison, commander of the French expeditionary force which in 1828 had replaced the Egyptian troops in Greece. The two military men discussed the recent Ottoman–Egyptian conflict and 'the causes of the defeat of an Imperial army such as that of the Ottoman state by the army of a province such as Egypt'.<sup>4</sup> According to Cevad, the French marshal told his Ottoman interlocutor the following:

Since the entire world confirms and admits the superiority of the Turks over the Arabs in regard to courage and bravery, the recent defeat was not a result of cowardice. . . on the part of the Ottoman troops. Muhammad Ali has long trained his army and especially his officers with new military sciences, using the services of European instructors. But you do not have European instructors and at present not even a military school, and senior and junior officers are appointed from among the educated and uneducated sons of dignitaries and from the slaves of the *Vezirs*. The real reason for your defeat is this ignorance and lack of schools.<sup>5</sup>

On his return to Istanbul, Namık related this conversation to Sultan Mahmud. The marshal's words caused the Sultan to fly into a rage, but when he calmed down he admitted: 'Yes, I understand this. . . The army remains in the hands of

<sup>1</sup> Ata, vol. 1, p. 158; A. Adnan-Adivar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim* (Istanbul, 1943), pp. 161–2.

<sup>2</sup> Mehmed Esad, *Mir'at-ı Mühendishane* (Istanbul, 1896), pp. 46–7 and ff.; Çağatay Uluçay and Enver Kartekin, *Yüksek Mühendis Okulu* (Istanbul, 1958), pp. 27–9, 75–6 and ff.; Levy, pp. 617–23.

<sup>3</sup> Rıza Tahsin Gencer, *Mir'at-ı Mekteb-i Tıbbiye* (2 vols., Istanbul, 1328–1330/1910–1912), vol. 1, p. 4 and ff.; Osman Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi* (5 vols., Istanbul, 1939–1943), vol. II, pp. 280–5 and ff.; Levy pp. 623–32.

<sup>4</sup> Cevad, book IV, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

ignorant men. The marshal was right.<sup>1</sup> Namık then proceeded to suggest the establishment of an officers' school. The Sultan refrained from making any commitment, however, since he had to consult his military chief, Husrev Paşa. Always jealous of his personal position within the army, the old *Ser Asker* objected to the idea, ostensibly on grounds of economy. With the money necessary to support such a school, he claimed, at least two regular regiments could be maintained.

The Sultan was determined to carry out the project, however, but proceeded with characteristic caution. He held another confidential conversation with Namık Paşa, in which the latter insisted that the school could be established at very little cost; an existing small barracks at Maçka could easily be converted for the need of the new institution, while the students would be young men already enrolled in the regular army. Namık's plan could seemingly be implemented with no expenditure at all, since both the necessary physical facilities and the cost of maintaining students were already included in the military budget.

With this trump card up his sleeve, the Sultan waited for the right moment to announce the new project. The occasion came when a newly arrived Persian ambassador presented his credentials, a ceremony which according to Ottoman protocol required the presence of all the highest state functionaries. When the ceremony was over and the ambassador had departed, Mahmud summoned Namık Paşa to present his plan to the assembled dignitaries. In this open confrontation under the Sultan's watchful eye, the project was unanimously agreed upon. Mahmud entrusted Namık Paşa with the care of the new school and issued a verbal warning to all present not to interfere with his work.<sup>2</sup>

By the summer of 1834 the School for Military Sciences (*Mekteb-i Ulûm-u Harbiye*) was in existence. To avoid interference by the uncooperative *Ser Asker*, the fiction was maintained that the institution formed a battalion attached to Namık Paşa's brigade of Guards, and it was therefore placed under the general supervision of the *Hâssa* headquarters.<sup>3</sup>

Despite its official opening, however, the school had to overcome many difficulties before it could make any real progress. It suffered from a total lack of books, qualified teachers, and assorted educational equipment. In addition, the Maçka barracks turned out not to be suitable after all; it required extensive repairs and some additional construction, which was completed only in the fall of 1835. In the meantime, the school's personnel was stationed partly at the unfinished barracks and partly at the barracks of the Guards at Üsküdar.<sup>4</sup>

While the school was still in the process of formation there was a sudden change of administration: Azmi Bey, a lieutenant-colonel in the Guards who was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 43-4.

<sup>3</sup> Lutfi, vol. iv, pp. 168-9; AG, MR 1619, p. 52 *op. cit.*; Marmont, pp. 78-9.

<sup>4</sup> BVA, *Cevdet-Askeri*, 182 (*Şevvâl, Zilkade*, 1251). The total expenses of repair and construction amounted to 790,650 *kuruş*. The Sultan laid out 250,000 *kuruş* from his Privy Purse and the remainder was paid by the Army Treasury. Cf. BVA, *Cevdet-Askeri*, 54466 (22 *Cemâziyelevvel* 1251).

a protégé of Namık Paşa and the school's first superintendent (*Nâzır*), was relieved of his duties, with the result that throughout most of 1836 the institution existed mainly on paper. The second superintendent, Selim Sâti Paşa, confided to a French military attaché that the school 'ought to be taken seriously only from October 1837'.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, at the end of 1836 practical steps were taken to start regular classes. Regiments stationed in the capital were combed for bright young men, and a number of students were transferred from the Land Engineering School. The latter institution was also raided for books and badly needed equipment.<sup>2</sup>

Early in 1837 the school's 100 students were divided into four classes and a regular faculty established. All the teachers but one were non-military personnel. In order to attract suitable young men, the students were assigned high salaries: a cadet in the first (highest) class was paid 250 *kuruş* per month, while the salary of a captain in the regular army was only 180 *kuruş*. In addition to faculty, students and administrators, the school also had three regular infantry companies attached to it for guard duties and military drill, so that its total strength averaged about 400 men.<sup>3</sup> Although this figure remained stable, the proportion of cadets gradually increased. In the fall of 1839 there were more than 200 of them,<sup>4</sup> as compared to 150 in the summer of 1838.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the elaborate study programs occasionally published in the official press, the school's curriculum was limited during Mahmud's reign to the basic subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, Arabic and military tactics.<sup>6</sup> The French military attaché, Captain Anselme, who visited the institution in the summer of 1838, made the following comments on it:

There is no truth in the information published in the *Moniteur Ottoman* of 15 August 1835 that students are taught trigonometry, algebra, geometry, and foreign languages. None of these subjects is studied and they do not have a professor for French. The military instructor is an Italian who knows everything necessary for making soldiers [but not officers] and who held only secondary posts in his native country.

... Prayers occupy... a great part of the day's program and the sessions at the mosque are a nuisance as far as studying is concerned, and incompatible with scientific work.<sup>7</sup>

These comments were fully corroborated by a report written by the British ambassador almost a year later, shortly before Mahmud's death:

... The Turkish Military School has a system of its own, and... with the exception of tactics, drilling and a little drawing, the sole pursuit at present is the acquisition of Arabic, in which branch there is to be a general examination in about a month hence. This will be the second examination: the former was when the Scholars had got

<sup>1</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 69, report by Captain Anselme of 12 June 1838.

<sup>2</sup> BVA, *Mal. Müd.* 9002, p. 145 (21 *Şaban* 1252), 150 (beginning *Zilkade* 1252).

<sup>3</sup> BVA, *Mal. Müd.* 9002, pp. 155-7 (27 *Zilkade* 1252); *Cevdet-Askeri*, 15455 (1252), 885 (20 *Muharrem* 1253), 378 (12 *Safer* 1253).

<sup>4</sup> BVA, *Kepeci*, 6962 (end *Şaban* 1255).

<sup>5</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 69, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Cevad, book IV, pp. 44-5.

<sup>7</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 69, *op. cit.*

TABLE I Faculty, Staff and Students of the Military School in 1837<sup>1</sup>

		Monthly Salary per person ( <i>kuruş</i> )
<b>Professors (<i>Hocagan-i Mekteb-i Harbiye</i>)</b>		
First Professor ( <i>Hoca-yi Evvel</i> )	Ali Bey	1,200
Second Professor ( <i>Hoca-yi Sâni</i> )	Tahir Efendi	900
Third Professor ( <i>Hoca-yi Sâlis</i> )	Abdülhalim Efendi	900
Fourth Professor ( <i>Hoca-yi Râbi</i> )	Abdürrahim Efendi	900
<b>Assistants (<i>Hulefâ</i>)</b>		
First Assistant ( <i>Halife-yi Evvel</i> )	Haci Ümer Efendi	750
Second Assistant ( <i>Halife-yi Sâni</i> )	Ismail Efendi	600
Third Assistant ( <i>Halife-yi Sâlis</i> )	Mehmed Efendi	600
Fourth Assistant ( <i>Halife-yi Râbi</i> )	Mehmed Efendi	600
<b>Other Personnel</b>		
Examiner of Texts and Translator ( <i>Mümeyyiz-i İbârât ve Mütercim</i> )	Mehmed Râşid Efendi	2,000
Translator ( <i>Mütercim</i> )	Nurüddin Bey	1,500
Translator ( <i>Mütercim</i> )	Ruhüddin Efendi	1,500
Translator ( <i>Mütercim</i> )	Izzet Efendi	300
Clerk ( <i>Kâtib</i> )	Naci Efendi	300
Librarian ( <i>Hâfiz-i Kutub</i> )	Fethi Efendi	300
Professor of Arabic ( <i>Arabî Hocası</i> )	Seyyid Hüseyin Efendi	300
Writing Master ( <i>Meşk Hocası</i> )	Râşid Efendi	300
Scribe ( <i>Muharrir</i> )	Mahmud Efendi	150
Gate Keeper ( <i>Bevâb</i> )	Mehmed Tefvik Efendi	100
Servant ( <i>Ferrâş</i> )	Ismail	100
<b>Students</b>	<b>No. of men</b>	
<b>First (highest) class</b>		
Lieutenants ( <i>Mülâzims</i> )	3	250
Cadets ( <i>Şakırdan</i> )	7	250
<b>Second class</b>		
Lieutenants ( <i>Mülâzims</i> )	3	200
Cadets ( <i>Şakırdan</i> )	27	200
<b>Third class</b>		
Lieutenants ( <i>Mülâzims</i> )	3	150
Cadets ( <i>Şakırdan</i> )	27	150
<b>Fourth (beginners) class</b>		
Lieutenants ( <i>Mülâzims</i> )	3	100
Cadets ( <i>Şakırdan</i> )	27	100
<b>Total students</b>	<b>100</b>	

<sup>1</sup> BVA, *Mal. Müd.* 9002, pp. 155-7 (27 *Zilkade* 1252)

through their *Sarf* (the first book of the Arabic grammar). When they shall have completed their *Nahv* (the second book of Arabic grammar) the other examination will be held; and then they are all in a body to begin with French, which is intended to assist them in acquiring proficiency in Mathematics, regarding which branch only a few elementary works have hitherto been translated into Turkish. In about two years more it is expected that all the School will be advanced sufficiently to be launched out into the world, when another set will be introduced and go through the same routine in four more years. . . .<sup>1</sup>

During Sultan Mahmud's lifetime, the new army gained little benefit from its military school. Whatever promise this institution held was for the future:

The military school, as much as it is insignificant at the present, must be considered as a great step in the regeneration of the empire and the achievement of something of value. The young men learn, at least to read and write, a little geography, history and arithmetic.

. . . But religious fanaticism is still too strong to hope for a modification of conditions in a long time to come.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Factionalism in the officer corps*

The very composition of the Ottoman officer corps, the fact that its higher echelons were filled with courtiers and protégés of the most powerful personages in the empire, made it an arena for court politics and intrigues. The officer corps could be described as a series of rival groupings, each of which owed allegiance to a particular benefactor. Because of this structure, struggles for power at the highest political levels were always reflected in the officer corps. Since norms of professionalism and a clearly defined gradation of authority and responsibility had not yet been established, conflicts between rival parties tended to immobilize military action completely even in time of war.

In the spring of 1828, after the war with Russia had erupted, Ağa Hüseyin Paşa was put in command of the Imperial Army on the European front. The choice of Hüseyin for this important position seemed rather curious: just a year earlier he had been dismissed from the post of *Ser Asker* because of his alleged ignorance of military affairs. Moreover, the main Ottoman army, known as the Imperial Army, was traditionally led by the Grand Vezir in person. The reason for Hüseyin's appointment, however, was that the incumbent Grand Vezir, Selim Mehmed Paşa, was locked in a behind-the-scenes power struggle with the new *Ser Asker*, Husrev Mehmed Paşa.<sup>3</sup> Neither the Grand Vezir nor his logical stand-in, the *Ser Asker*, was prepared to leave the capital for fear of losing ground to his opponent. The command of the Imperial Army thus fell to Hüseyin, who still enjoyed a great reputation as the destroyer of the Janissaries.

Hüseyin was showered with many honors and was given the title of Independent Commander-in-Chief (*Mustakill Ser Asker*), but the two rival intriguers

<sup>1</sup> FO 78/356, Ponsonby to Palmerston, no. 129 of 27 May 1839. Another report is included in an earlier dispatch: FO 78/354, Ponsonby to Palmerston, no. 29 of 12 February 1839.

<sup>2</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 69, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Lutfi, vol. II, pp. 29-30.

made certain that this authority was seriously restricted.<sup>1</sup> In the first place, Husrev's protégé Halil Paşa was put in charge of the *Mansûre* troops at Hüseyin's camp with the title of Deputy Commander-in-Chief (*Ordu Ser Askeri Kâimmakâmı*) and he regularly reported direct to Husrev.<sup>2</sup> Second, an old rival of Hüseyin, the ambitious Saib Efendi, was appointed Superintendent of the Imperial Army (*Ordu Nâzırı*), and in that capacity corresponded independently with the Grand Vezir. Hüseyin's every move was critically dissected in dispatches to Istanbul by both these men. In his reports, Saib Efendi expressed the view that neither one of the military leaders was capable of exercising command. Hüseyin Paşa, he said, was too ignorant to be Chief of Staff, and Halil too effeminate to be a soldier.<sup>3</sup>

This kind of factionalism continued to immobilize the Ottoman Army in its later conflict with Muhammed Ali. In evaluating the military events of 1831–2 the French ambassador declared that a major reason for the Ottoman debacle was 'the singular rivalry between [the Commandant of the Guards] Ahmed Paşa and [the *Ser Asker*] Husrev Paşa', who continuously countermanded each other. 'Not only did they dispute each other's instructions, but each of them discredited the other's efforts before the Sultan.'<sup>4</sup>

In 1838–9 the situation was much the same. Hafız Mehmed Paşa, governor of Sivas and Diyarbakir and Commander-in-Chief of the troops in Anatolia, constantly wrote misleading reports describing the weakness of the Egyptian army and the imminence of a general uprising in Syria, and urged immediate war. He was supported by Grand Admiral Ahmed Fevzi Paşa and a number of courtiers, among them Said Mehmed Paşa, who now held the post of *Ser Asker*. Against them were pitted the combined forces of the influential Husrev Paşa, now head of the Privy Council, Grand Vezir Rauf Paşa, and Foreign Minister Nuri Paşa. The Sultan, although himself inclined toward war, was under constant conflicting pressures, and with his health failing was unable to reach a clear-cut decision. As a result, from August 1838 until the battle of Nizib (24 June 1839) conflicting orders were sent to Hafız Paşa's army.<sup>5</sup>

The Ottoman high command in the field reflected the disunity of the political élite at the capital. In April 1832 Ağa Hüseyin Paşa, conqueror of the Janissaries and long-time rival of the *Ser Asker* Husrev Paşa, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Anatolia assembled against Ibrahim. The jealous *Ser Asker*, however, had his protégé Mehmed Paşa appointed to Hüseyin's staff as second in command. Hüseyin and Mehmed could hardly agree on anything, and since

<sup>1</sup> Lutfi, vol. I, pp. 291–2, 299.    <sup>2</sup> Lutfi, vol. II, p. 65; Rifat Paşa, p. 11; İlyas, p. 432.

<sup>3</sup> Lutfi, vol. II, pp. 34, 36–7.

<sup>4</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 54, Roussin to de Rigny of 28 July 1834.

<sup>5</sup> *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*, Paris (hereafter *AMAE*), *Correspondance Politique, Turquie* (hereafter *Cor. Pol., Turkey*), 275, Roussin to Molé of 28 Mar. 1838; 277 Roussin to Molé, nos. 4 of 24 Jan.; 6 of 4 Feb.; 10 of 16 Feb; and 17 of 15 Mar. 1839; Roussin to Lapierre of 17 Mar. 1839; FO 78/357, enclosure by General Chrzanovski of 18 July 1839, in Ponsonby to Palmerston, no. 183 of 20 July 1839.

most of the senior officers on Hüseyin's staff were also protégés of the *Ser Asker*, the Commander-in-Chief received little cooperation from his subordinates.<sup>1</sup> These disputes among members of the high command led to the early return of Calosso and several European officers who had at first been attached to Hüseyin's headquarters as advisers. They also created chaos in the commissary system, which in turn caused widespread disaffection among the troops. Worst of all, however, was the lack of any coordination between the commanders of the different army corps in the field. In effect the Ottoman forces both in 1832 and 1839 consisted of several independent bodies whose movements were totally unrelated to each other.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising that contemporary observers were unanimous in ascribing the Turkish defeat in the conflict with Muhammed Ali primarily to the inadequacies of the Ottoman military leadership.<sup>3</sup>

#### *The officer corps as a social factor*

Whatever its military shortcomings, the new Ottoman officer corps quickly grew to be the state's most favored class. It became customary to shower senior officers with high honors, decorations, gifts and lucrative governorships.<sup>4</sup> The prestige of the new officer caste also found expression in the many 'social benefits' which they acquired. Senior officers were more likely to enter retirement than their men, who either died in service or were simply discharged, and retired officers usually enjoyed comfortable pensions. A lieutenant-general (*Ferîk*) could retire with a handsome monthly pension of 2,500 *kuruş*, a colonel (*Miralay*) with 500 *kuruş* and a major (*Binbaşı*) with 350 *kuruş*. In the unlikely event that a man from the lower ranks retired, his pension was naturally far lower—hardly enough to subsist on.<sup>5</sup>

In October 1836 it was decreed that the families of deceased officers holding the rank of major or above would also be entitled to pensions. Each one of the surviving members of the family was to receive a separate allowance. Boys could receive their pensions until they reached the age of fifteen, when they became eligible for military service; whether they actually enlisted or not, their allowances then were withdrawn. Wives and daughters could collect pensions so long as they remained unmarried.<sup>6</sup> The pension rolls of the *Hâssa*

<sup>1</sup> *Tak. Vak.* no. 14 (3 Ramazan 1247); J. M. Bastelberger, *Die Militärischen Reformen unter Mahmud II* (Gotha, 1874), pp. 192-4.

<sup>2</sup> AG, MR 1619, p. 54, *op. cit.*; Slade, vol. II, pp. 3-5.

<sup>3</sup> AMAE, *Cor. Pol. Turkey* 277, Vidal (from Mosul) to Roussin of 26 Mar. 1839; FO 78/373 Campbell (from Cairo) to Palmerston, no. 18 of 1 Apr. 1839; Moltke, *Briefe*, p. 382.

<sup>4</sup> BVA, *Cevdet-Askeri*, 480 (*Safer* 1250); *Mon. Ott.* nos. 18 (17 Mar. 1832); 21 (7 Apr. 1832); 74 (7 Dec. 1833).

<sup>5</sup> BVA, *Kepeci*, 6824 (15 *Safer* 1254 and subsequent dates); 4706 (21 *Safer* 1255); *Cevdet-Askeri*, 16424 (4 *Receb* 1255); *Tak. Vak.* no. 9 (26 *Receb* 1247); *Mon Ott.* No. 98 (18 July 1835); Cevad, book IV, pp. 49-52.

<sup>6</sup> BVA, KAD, pp. vol. II, 39b-40a (9 *Receb* 1252); *Mal. Müd.* 9002, pp. 142-3. (11 *Receb* 1252).

for 1839 listed monthly allowances of 25 *kuruş* each for Şerife Kâmile Hanım, the wife, and Fatma Hanım, the daughter, of the late *Binbaşı* Hacı Bey. Other women were also listed as recipients of such payments.<sup>1</sup>

When senior officers were away from Istanbul on duty, their families could receive part of their pay by special arrangement. In the spring of 1837 a tempest in a teapot was created around this question when officers' families who came to collect their pay apparently 'had to humble themselves to the clerks' at the *Bâb-i Ser Asker*. Soon afterward, a special office was opened outside the compound of the *Ser Asker* where the patrician wives and children of senior officers were assured of more deferential treatment.<sup>2</sup>

The favored position of the officer corps attracted to its ranks many ambitious people from all circles of the ruling élite. In 1831, for example, Izzet Bey, an *Âlim* holding the high rank of *Müderriş*, enrolled in the new army as a private.<sup>3</sup> In 1832 Husrev Bey, a high civilian functionary who was superintendent of the iron mines at Samakov, enlisted with a number of his protégés.<sup>4</sup>

From a social point of view, the new military leadership was fully integrated with the older ruling class. It was this integration that had assured the acceptance of Mahmud's reforms in the first place, for they had not been accompanied by any social upheavals. This was an achievement of mixed significance. The absorption of the old ruling élite into the new system was a source of weakness in Mahmud's own time, for the transformation of a traditional leadership into a modern one is a slower process than the creation of a new élite. In the long run, however, the preservation of the old élite became a source of strength: when it later was transformed into a westernized élite the Ottoman military leadership remained an indigenous element deeply rooted in the culture of the society which it was to lead. In the decades to come the officer corps naturally became the most important modernizing force in Ottoman society and this, undoubtedly, was Mahmud's most enduring contribution.

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<sup>1</sup> BVA, *Kepeci*, 6805 (16 *Şevvâl* 1255).

<sup>2</sup> BVA, *Mal. Müd.* 9002, 158-9 (19 *Safer* 1253), *Kepeci*, 6962 (*Cemâzielâhır* 1255).

<sup>3</sup> *Tak. Vak.* no. 1 (25 *Cemâzielâhır* 1247).

<sup>4</sup> *Tak. Vak.* no. 26 (17 *Zilhicce* 1247), see also: Karal, 'Zarif Paşa', pp. 443-4.