From London back to Istanbul: The Channel of Communication of the Young Ottoman Journal *Hurriyet* (1868–1870)

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Almost 300 years after Johannes Gutenberg's *Wegweiser*, the first Turkish printed works by İbrahim Mülteferrika appeared in 1719/1720. The emergence of a Turkish press was thus postponed. While the first European newspapers had appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century, products of the Turkish press were not launched before the nineteenth century. The first Turkish newspaper, titled *Taşvîn-i Veqâ‘i* (Calendar of Events) was established by Sultan Mahmut II (1808–39) in 1831. Several decades passed until in 1860, *Tercüman-i Ahval* (Interpreter of Conditions) the first newspaper financially independent of the government, appeared. Numerous further publications followed in the sixties, among them *Taşvîr-i Elkar* (Tablet of Opinion), which at its peak, is said to have reached a circulation of 24,000 copies. Although this number quoted by Roderic Davison is possibly too high, it illustrates its significance.¹

The flowering of the Turkish press was aided both by a scarcely developed system of government sanctions and little government interference. Judicial involvement first took shape with the demand for official permission for every kind of publication in 1842. Although some further steps towards official control were undertaken, such as the demand to submit all publications to the *Meclis-i Me‘arif* (Council of Education) before publishing, the absence of an official manual for sanctions meant, that the constraints on publishers remained few. It was not until 1864 that the first Publication Act *Matbu‘at Nizâmmâlesi*, appeared.²

This new press medium offered a new dimension for political participation. It is striking that as the free press was growing, numerous political activities, some in the

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shape of secret societies, sprouted up. It is an interesting question, to what extent this new press provoked heated political discussion in Istanbul.

Among the Turkish publicists were young, well-educated bureaucrats, who had begun to use the press as a medium to search for new political structures. They were dissatisfied with the results of the Tanzimat, which designates the reform period between 1839 and 1878 in the Ottoman Empire. The Tanzimat were considered to be an insufficient method to stabilize the empire. From their perspective the growing number of revolts in the European border regions of the Ottoman Empire as well as European interference were related to misgovernment by the political elite. Their criticism was specifically focused on the Grand Vezir Ali Pasha. One of its most sophisticated expressions was Dhiya Bey’s satirical poem Zafername (Letter of Victory).³

Greater restrictions on the press occurred in spring 1867 with the enactment of the Qaranname-i Ali (Sublime Decree), which repealed the former Mabūyat Nizānamesi temporarily and contained an institutional shift from the Meclis-i Meʿarif towards direct governmental control.⁴ At the same time numerous bans on publications were imposed. In addition to these limitations on the press, critical publicists, such as Ali Suavi, Namuq Kemal and Dhiya Bey, were either imprisoned or pressured to leave Istanbul. The Egyptian Prince, Mustafa Fadhl Pasha, residing in Paris after his expulsion from the Ottoman Empire in 1886, invited the aforementioned through a mediator, to flee to Paris.⁵ They accepted and left Istanbul in spring 1867, shortly followed by Nuri, Reshad, Mehemet Bey and Ağah Efendi, who were wanted because of their relationship to conspiratorial groups.⁶

Although some questions still remain open concerning their political involvement before their flight, it seems to be clear that it was first in Europe, that they came together and formed a common cause.

⁵ İkkt, Türkçevde Mabudat Fikrileri, 24–6.

While they first called themselves in the French press, under Mustafa Fadhl Pasha’s leadership, Jeune Turquie,³ they later used, under Mustafa Fadhl Pasha’s return to Istanbul, the name Yenî ‘Othmanîlar Cemîyeti, generally translated as Young Ottomans or Young Ottoman Society.⁶ Although their political positions were quite different, these seven men fostered through their different perspectives the spirit of the Young Ottomans, giving the ‘movement’ its specific heterogeneous shape.

In Paris the Young Ottomans had already aroused public interest through their publications in the French press. Dhiya Bey’s dispute with the journal Le Mémorial Diplomatique, published in La Liberté and settled before the court indicates its extent.⁸ However, with these publications they were unable to reach an Istanbul readership. Which prior considerations led to the decision to produce a Turkish language newspaper destined for the domestic Ottoman public remain speculative. At first glance, London as the place of choice for publication seems somewhat strange as the Young Ottomans lacked a command of English and were leaving an extensive network of personal contacts behind in Paris.

So, why was London chosen? Two important premises might have influenced their decision:

1. The British repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Bill in March 1855;
2. The liberal press laws towards a non-English press.

The repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Bill reflected the major parliamentary approach that the free market displaced governmental control by self-regulation.

In India Sir Charles Metcalfe had already supported vernacular newspapers in 1835 with the repeal of a rigid licensing system. A free press was perceived as a relatively safe forum for dissent. Instead of undermining British rule it was seen as a means of increasing the stability of the British empire.

However, in the 1870s this attitude became less liberal and the latitude given towards Oriental languages was strongly challenged. It culminated in the Oriental
Printing and Publishing in the Middle East

Languages Act in 1878, which resulted in severe restrictions on non-English language journalism.11

While in Great Britain restrictions on the press were repealed in the period between 1855 and 1880, in France control remained relatively severe and the abolition of stamp duty did not happen until 1881.

In 1847 one journalist of the magazine Punch formulated the difference between French and British journalism:

A French journalist has two great chances. He may either become Prime Minister or an inmate of a Government prison ... An English journalist ... has one great chance ... if he has extraordinary talent, perseverance, and industry - to remain unknown.12

Geneva and Brussels were considered as alternatives to London. According to Namçım Kemal’s somewhat egocentric version of events, the decision for London was mainly made on the basis of his demands.13

To realize the publication of the newspaper Hurriyet (Freedom) at a distance from the centre of the Ottoman Empire, but aimed at the Istanbul public, a variety of obstacles had to be overcome. Hardly any information was left by the Young Ottomans themselves concerning the technical procurement, necessary for the publication of the newspaper. There seems to have been very little common interest in this subject, which explains why there is no mention of it in Hurriyet and very little in the private correspondence of Namçım Kemal.14

Although the newspaper Muhbir (Correspondent) was a short-lived common project, the practical experiences gained therefrom, were of use in the subsequent publication of Hurriyet. In August 1867 they began to publish Muhbir, which was identical titled to the forbidden newspaper in Istanbul. Differences of a rather more personal than political nature split ‘Ali Su‘avi from the rest of the group. The Young Ottomans harshly criticized his dominant position in Muhbir and reproached him for having plotted against some of them.15 In May 1868 Dilîya Bey and Namçım Kemal explicitly declared Muhbir as a common project to be finished and decided to produce a new publication.16

 Ağah Efendi was charged with installing the printing office. For Muhbir he had already overcome the typological obstacles related to the language. The Arabic character printing blocks had already been brought to London from Ağah Efendi’s own print shop in Istanbul.17 They were then transferred from the office of Muhbir to new premises at no. 4 Rupert Street, where Hurriyet was subsequently published. From Istanbul, Melik Efendi, a printer was then engaged. Further typographical details came to light, thanks to Ebu’l-dîya Tevfîq’s chronicle of the Young Ottomans, which appeared some forty years later in the newspaper Yeşi Ýasvir-i Elkar (New Tablet of Opinion).

Su‘avi, Muhbir’in (Hammarsmith) de George Bertrand’în ma’âsında tertiib ettiriyor idi. Çıko Ağah Efendînin hürûfi o ma’ta’ada bir da’î-i mukhûsuwa vâdî” edilmis idi. Hurriyet ise, Muhbir’in belîndirî ma’âs’da çqarınma istenmemi%dî, khârîrîn orsod tâqîlmışmasa Hûmayn Kâfî olm. O cihdîhle Londra’da Saint James mahallesinde (Rupert) soqâqında sûre-tî mukhûsuwa bir kânsî kârâlanaq “Xen Türkêrîn ma’ta’s-î merkezîyi” nam île bir ma’ta’î nçîlî, o târîhîcî e nizâmî shihirî olan “Walter sistemî” bir dar ta’bî makânîsî alâhîdîhun, ma’ta’âr’ufla olmaqta beraber, Londra’dad açılmış cihdîhle Yeşi Ýasvirîn shan ve hayâtîyêleriî mulâmesîtî id.18

Su‘avi had arranged the types for printing Muhbir in George Bertrand’s printing office, located in Hammarsmith, as Ağah Efendi’s Arabic character printing blocks were deposited there in a separate office. As they desired to publish Hurriyet at a different printing office to Muhbir, this necessitated moving the type blocks to another location. A house was then rented in Rupert Street (in St. James’ for this purpose and given the name central printing office of the Young Turks. A printing machine with the Walter system, amongst the most famous of that period, was purchased. Their new venture in London, complete with their own small printing office, befitted the repute and standing of the Young Ottomans.19

The above-mentioned Walter printing machine was first used by the publishers of The Times. John Walter II had in 1814 first installed, a new kind of cylindrical printing machine, which was able to supersede manpower by the power, inherent to the cylinders. T. Walter, who continued the work of his father, gave the order to

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12 Püçû 13 (1847), 123; cited in Jones, Powers of the Press, 119.
14 Ibid., 146–7.
16 Tansel (ed.), Namçım Kemal’în Hürûfî Mektuplan I, 137.
19 Ibid., trans. by the author.

62

63
construct a new printing machine, which was intended as an improvement on the new type of rotation machine, developed by the American William Bullock in 1860. J. Calverley was the constructor, given this task. The modified rotation press was first installed for The Times in 1866, with four cylinders being arranged in a vertical manner one above the other. This facilitated the printing of both sides of the same sheet of paper. This printing machine was thus named after its sponsor, T. Walter.20

It remains rather doubtful, whether the Walter press was really purchased by the Young Ottomans. The Walter press seems to have been the most innovative of that period, realized for a huge daily readership and not for some thousand copies, to be sent far away, which meant that the speed of printing could not have been such an important premise.

Hürriyet, which first appeared on the 29th of June 1868 was explicitly cited as an organ of the Yeni 'Othmanlılar Cemiyeti, although it was mostly written by Dhiya Bey and Namuq Kemal. Namuq Kemal ended his collaboration with the 63rd edition, due to the desperate financial situation and disension about sponsoring. Nevertheless Dhiya Bey continued to publish Hürriyet until its cessation with the 100th edition in Geneva in July 1870. Due to the intervention of the Ottoman ambassador in London, Dhiya Bey had been called to court, as a result of one article published in Hürriyet against 'Ali Pasha. He ignored this call and escaped to Geneva,21 where he published the last 11 editions of Hürriyet. With only a few exceptions Hürriyet appeared weekly.

The financial backing of Müşafə Fadhl Pasha, which had at first offered them a bohemian lifestyle in Europe, gradually dried up after his reconciliation with the Sultan and subsequent return to Istanbul. Although, according to Ebu'd-dhiya Tefvıq, Müşafə Fadhl Paşa still provided the financial backing for the setting up of a print shop for Hürriyet,22 with increasing official disapproval of the newspaper, his remittance became more and more irregular until it finally ceased completely in Spring 1869.23 This put the Young Ottomans in an extremely difficult financial situation. One facet of this dilemma is reflected in one of Namuq Kemal’s letters to his father in September 1868:

From London Back to Istanbul

... daha nehrilik toshrif etendi. Yarın-obir gün gelir sanırım. Geldiği zaman, niyet dereceyeye kalmal bir ıhtiyaç olarak saklanacaktır. İsnow'di'în maslahat, evmen yetkilinin yere faaliyet derecesine gelmice. Eğer ö peresece gelirse, nezimceme münkün değiş, ac kansam kabul edersin; ... Bizden öteki buhdanın ac valet akıl başına gelecek. Hr. tüfeğini iihle etlink; bundan başka elimi ne gelir?24

The sum of money has not arrived yet. I suppose that it will arrive very soon. When it comes, we will at last, have an amozn to set aside for cases of necessity. I hope that the affair here will not cumulate into a harmful one. If it comes to such a point, for myself personally it is out of the question that I will accept a situation in which I will submit to hunger.... I don't know when the other fool will come to his senses. We have done every kind of reminding, what else can we do?25

How was Hürriyet channelled back to Istanbul?

The delivery of Hürriyet must have been a risky and uncertain undertaking. To date little information on this subject has come to light. However, we can assume that they probably made use of some of the contacts, which they had already used to channel Muhbhir. For example Namuq Kemal had addressed his desire for support to a customs official, named Rıfat Ahmed Efendi, who was asked to facilitate the import of Muhbhir over the borders of the Ottoman Empire.26

The distribution of Hürriyet and Muhbhir in Istanbul seems to have been organised differently. While Muhbhir appears to have been distributed only by one person, called Yorgi Istenfalis, who was engaged for this purpose by Müşafə Fadhl Pasha, Hürriyet probably reached its readership via more than one channel. This strategic shift might have been provoked by stronger governmental controls, the lack of Müşafə Fadhl Pasha’s financial support as well as rumours about the former distributor, who was accused by ‘Ali Şu’avi of having used deceitful methods for his personal financial gain.27

For Hürriyet Ebu’d-dhiya Tefvıq quotes a French bookseller in Beyoğlu, called Coq, who used his own spectacular method of distribution.

Çocuksu numerosı geldiği gündelerde, Beyoğlunda şimdiki gördükleri (Verdon’un) buhunu görmüş ki (Coq) inminden bir Fransız kitabecisi idi, Hürriyet'i iki nöşke olarak

22 Ibid., 4.
23 Bilboglu, Ziyad Paşa, 123.
24 Tansel (ed.), Namık Kemal’in Hıristiyan Mektupları I, 156.
25 Ibid., trans. by the author.
26 Ibid., 131.
According to this related story, the police of Beyoğlu were then sent to remove the newspapers from the window. Although Monsieur Coq was already in his sixties, he did not hesitate to use physical force to prevent the police entering his bookshop.29

We have no information relating to the number of copies per edition. But even if we assumed figures deductively, these would tell us very little about the real size of readership among the Istanbul public, as newspapers were read aloud before an audience in the coffee-houses and other public places. Although we have to consider the ban on Hurriyet, which might have limited the feasibility of this tradition in the public, it probably caused only a shift from public to more private places, without dampening its attraction. The importance of Hurriyet might also be evaluated by the Grand Vizier’s involvement. Ali Pasha tried to intervene in a reconciliatory way offering to buy 2,000 copies of Hurriyet, if the Young Ottomans were willing to change its content.30 Although it is not possible to provide any exact information concerning the resonance of Hurriyet, one can assume that it helped pave the way for the realization of the first constitution in 1876.

Far from the official grasp, the Young Ottomans were able to develop political concepts of state, propagating different positions referring to aspects of the Enlightenment and also those involving ideas of nationalism together with ideas of Ottoman Islamic tradition. Their freedom from official political restraints made Hurriyet a medium, which today offers us a unique opportunity to gain access to their world of thinking.
The Beginnings of Publishing in pre-1948 Palestine

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What happens to a printed text once it is out of the printer’s shop? How does it become public property and how is it consumed? After all, printing, an amazing device no doubt, is no more than a production implement and further processes are involved in turning written texts into consumer goods. Indeed, printing is a link in the chain of mechanisms by which ideas are transmitted from author to audience. Earlier links include the formulation of ideas as intelligible statements and rendering them as presentable manuscripts, and printing, in turn, is followed by publishing — advertising, distributing, and selling — which make the product accessible to the public. Where this last process ends another, equally complex process begins: consumption. Aside of reading in different modes, solitarily or collectively, quietly or vocally, the consumption of printed texts also entails their mental assimilation, sometimes debating their contents with others, and always a dialogue with the author, explicit or implied. The fate of a text once it is born thus forms a multi-phased and multicoloured tale.

Historians, sociologists, anthropologists and ethnographers have explored aspects of the production and consumption of written texts, mainly in Western societies. We already have a considerable corpus of scholarship on the history of printing and publishing in Europe and its cultural offshoots, on the evolution of libraries, bookstores, private book collecting and literary societies, as well as on who read what and how, the intercourse between writer and audience, and the formation of public opinion. In the Middle East, by contrast, work on such matters has barely begun. In cultural history, as in most other fields, the study of Arab societies still lags way behind that of Europe, not least when modern times are concerned, for reasons that are too well known to detain us here. In the pages below I propose to make a very

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