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978-0-521-10902-4 - The Definition of a Peripheral Economy: Turkey 1923-1929

Caglar Keyder

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Studies in modern capitalism · Etudes sur le capitalisme moderne

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Preface and acknowledgements

This book, as will be evident to the reader, was originally a dissertation. When I first started working on Turkey, I wanted to study the etatist period of the 1930s. This period with its autarkic economic policy seemed attractive especially from the third-worldist perspectives of the 1960s. As I worked my way up from the Ottoman period to the 1930s though, I was detracted both by ideological estrangement from ‘non-capitalist’, nationalist models of development, and by the concerns of a different paradigm leading to a new set of research objectives. The 1920s seemed propitious from the point of view of these interests: it was a period of full integration into the world economy despite the constitution of an independent nation-state, and it exhibited an almost exemplary structure of a dependent economy. By establishing that political independence in itself did not imply an ‘independent’ path of economic development, my interpretation of the 1920s would constitute a revision of the dominant view on a little studied period. On the other hand, it was important to demonstrate that dependence consisted of a set of hierarchical relations within the world economy and rather than stagnation it engendered a particular kind of growth. Thus, my attention shifted to capture the structure of this growth and the nature of the mechanisms through which it was conditioned. This emphasis allowed me to illustrate some debated propositions about peripheral economic structures while describing the Turkish case.

In adopting this emphasis the economic reductionist perspective was reluctantly accepted, and a discussion of both internal and inter-state political relations was omitted. Such a position is obviously inadequate even for a conjuncture where the dominant fraction of the bourgeoisie did not face any contenders. I felt, however, that it allowed me to focus on determinations acting upon the economic structure without falling into politicist–voluntarist perspectives common to studies on the periphery. The gains, I hope, will outweigh the losses.

I am indebted to colleagues who helped in various ways: V. Brown, S. Ilkin, A. Kudat, O. Kurmus, Y. Tezel and Z. Toprak all read parts of the draft and offered their comments. F. Birtek was the ideal friend with the encouragement and the critical eye. The institutional set-up within which a dissertation is

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written may often be constricting. In my case R. Roehl and S. Cohen proved to be the liberators. B. Ward made a very valuable suggestion which led to an important revision. I am grateful to I. Wallerstein in too many ways to mention. The usual disclaimer applies: all the remaining faults are my own.