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The Republic Of Others: Opponents Of Kemalism In Turkey's Single Party Era, 1919-1950

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The Republic Of Others: Opponents Of Kemalism In Turkey's Single Party Era, 1919-1950

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to answer to this question: what was the nature and significance of political and cultural opposition in the Kemalist single party state? It examines the careers and output of several key members of the Turkish literary and political elite who enjoyed significant popularity throughout this period, were supportive of some form of Turkish nationalism, but ultimately found themselves at odds with the state establishment, and silenced, suppressed or exiled by the time multiparty politics opened up in Turkey at the dawn of the Cold War. Many of these figures offered alternative visions of Turkish nationalism and modernity inspired by international movements to the left of Kemalism, some of them espoused liberal economic views or a friendlier attitude towards religious conservatives, some of them offered ultranationalist visions infused with racism and inspired by Nazi Germany. By recovering these narratives through state archives, private archives, published and unpublished memoirs found in Turkey, the United States, and Europe, as well as a close reading of the political press in this period, it provides a clearer picture of how contentious the Turkish democratic project was during the single party era, and what types of political voices found themselves on the outside looking in once the first successful opposition party, the Democrat Party, came to power in 1950.

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THE REPUBLIC OF OTHERS: OPPONENTS OF KEMALISM IN TURKEY'S SINGLE
PARTY ERA, 1919-1950

James D. Ryan

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THE REPUBLIC OF OTHERS: OPPONENTS OF KEMALISM IN TURKEY'S SINGLE
PARTY ERA, 1919-1950

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For the Turkish academy and journalists in Turkey. May the day come soon when you can lift your pens again without fear of violent or legal reprisal. Your persistence and courage in the face of attack has inspired this work. Kaleminize iyi sađlık.

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ABSTRACT

THE REPUBLIC OF OTHERS: OPPONENTS OF KEMALISM IN TURKEY'S SINGLE PARTY ERA, 1919-1950

James D. Ryan

Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet

This dissertation seeks to answer to this question: what was the nature and significance of political and cultural opposition in the Kemalist single party state? It examines the careers and output of several key members of the Turkish literary and political elite who enjoyed significant popularity throughout this period, were supportive of some form of Turkish nationalism, but ultimately found themselves at odds with the state establishment, and silenced, suppressed or exiled by the time multiparty politics opened up in Turkey at the dawn of the Cold War. Many of these figures offered alternative visions of Turkish nationalism and modernity inspired by international movements to the left of Kemalism, some of them espoused liberal economic views or a friendlier attitude towards religious conservatives, some of them offered ultranationalist visions infused with racism and inspired by Nazi Germany. By recovering these narratives through state archives, private archives, published and unpublished memoirs found in Turkey, the United States, and Europe, as well as a close reading of the political press in this period, it provides a clearer picture of how contentious the Turkish democratic project was during the single party era, and what types of political voices found themselves on the outside looking in once the first successful opposition party, the Democrat Party, came to power in 1950.

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CHAPTER ONE: Modernism, Modernization, and Political Opposition in Turkey

Keskin sirke küpüne zarar verir.

Strong vinegar eats up its own dish.

Turkish proverb

The idea of opposition politics in Turkey has always been something of a cynical proposition. For the first twenty-two years of the republic only two sanctioned opposition parties existed, and both met unceremonious ends before they could mount any serious pressure in parliament or the cabinet. Following the establishment of the Democrat Party in January 1946 and their victory in parliament in 1950, the “main” opposition party has been a position consistently held by the Republican People’s Party, the party Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) established and the party who, despite their relatively stagnant performances at the polls, continues to most closely represent the ethos of the founding ideology of the republic, Kemalism. In that time, parties representing a wide swath of ideology, ranging from Islamist to ultranationalist to socialist and communist have vied for power, occasionally leading to street violence and vindictive reprisal at the hands of whichever representative faction finds themselves in power. Few are the moments in Turkish republican history when all forms of political dissent have been unequivocally tolerated by a ruling party. Yet, such dissent has remained a vital feature of Turkish politics, and has imparted on Turkish political culture a vituperative spirit that, even in moments of severe repression, has given hope to many of the possible democratic futures that lay in front of it. The following dissertation is aimed at recovering the origins of the politics of dissent in the founding years of the republic from a history that has often been myopically focused on the regime, its cadres, and, most of all, its leader.

Indeed, the figure of Atatürk looms so large over the scholarship of the Turkish republic that his own innate political savvy and pragmatic intuition have become prisms through which that vituperative political spirit is viewed. In the most rigorous studies, narratives of Atatürk's political pragmatism have largely pushed the question of ideology – both the content of Kemalism and the ideological universe in which it existed – to the side.¹ Such works emphasize Atatürk's pragmatic alliances with religious, leftist, and liberal factions to cobble together a polity that had enough force to overturn segments of the European-controlled mandate regime and unite Anatolia under the banner of an egalitarian republic, and then transition the liberal republican spirit of the political core that had ousted the authoritarian Abdülhamid II in 1908 into a modern, secular, state-driven democracy under the tutelage of its leader's well-intentioned, paternal hand. While these works are invaluable for their expert uncovering of the life of a world-changing individual, the intense focus on the figure of Atatürk obscures the wider intellectual and political trends that account for his present-day appearance as an ideological shape-shifter. Put simply, we have a difficult time finding the proper ideological category for Atatürk (and his attendant political tradition, Kemalism) not because he was himself willing to flit between political camps, as he did with verve, but because the very rigid ideological categories we hope to pin on him were themselves inchoate during the span of his career, and barely perceptible to the highest orders of Turkish intellectuals, let alone the general polity.

The work of this dissertation is an attempt to unravel the history of the formation of these ideological categories in the Turkish republic. Kemalism came into being alongside the competing ideologies and modernist subjectivities that it is so often defined against, but we

¹ This trend is perhaps as old as scholarship on the Turkish republic itself, going back to Bernard Lewis' *Emergence of Modern Turkey* (New York: Oxford, 1961) and Niyazi Berkes' *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), and has more recently manifested itself, in ever more acerbic tones, in M. Şükrü Hanioğlu's *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

consistently forget that these ideologies were developed in tandem with and in response to each other. They offered unique visions of a Turkish democratic polity informed by transnational trends and movements, but ultimately autonomous and, at bottom, committed to the higher ideals of the republic, if not the policies and regimes it begat. Figuring out how the ideological categories of our contemporary political life came into being in the Turkish republic requires an investigation into Turkish intellectual, cultural and political history that pays primary attention to the way global trends of thought worked their way into the Turkish vocabulary, and ascertaining who claimed what kind of language, and for what ends. When we ask this question, the political and intellectual history of the republic then shifts its focus more towards the political margins of the single-party period, towards figures who were principally opposed to much of the Kemalist platform. By doing so, we might be able to more clearly assess Kemalism as an ideology. Political flexibility was a trademark of all the great interwar period ideological leaders – focusing on Atatürk’s life and political maneuvers often runs the risks of proposing his flexibility as an ideology when in fact they may have more so been sideways or backwards moves made with the intent of fulfilling the ideology that underpins his thought. In this way, the following dissertation is an attempt to find the ideological limits of Kemalism, to provide an ersatz, negative definition of a term whose positive definition is still an unsettled question.

While many of the figures discussed in this dissertation were politically marginalized, they were, and have been, popular. Whether socialist or communist or fascist or conservative, the thinkers, writers, and journalists who populate the following narrative were by no means minor figures in their time, and to a greater or lesser extent have legacies and memories that have long outlasted their own lifetimes, a few of which were ended in exile or at the hands of their own government. They published newspapers that circulated in the tens of thousands, they wrote poems and novels that are widely regarded as being among the best in the modern Turkish

language, their paintings still hang in galleries across the country, and when they contested each other or the regime in public, their ideas were taken up in parliament, were often met with repression at the hands of the Interior Ministry, the Martial Law Administration, or the Presidency itself. In the simplest of terms, Kemalism was an ideology shaped in relation to its dissenters, and what is unique about Turkish leftism, conservatism, fascism, and religious politics is the way they were shaped by their relationship with Kemalism. The absence of regular electoral contestation in the single party era meant that for dissenters of the regime there was no viable way forward without negotiating with Kemalism, and likewise, no path forward for the Kemalist vision of tutelary democracy without a willing participation in that negotiation. Insofar as this dissertation represents aspects of that negotiation, it seeks to demonstrate both the promise and the peril of the oft-celebrated project of Kemalist modernization.

The following sections of this introduction will provide a reflection on the subjectivity of regime opponents, and the role of opposition in defining who intellectuals in Turkey are, and how they are represented – the theoretical framework of what I call “the republic of others.” Additionally, it provides readers with sections detailing the broader scholarship on the early Turkish republic and the interventions I sought to make in preparing this text. Lastly, I provide an overview of each of the six chapters of this dissertation, a summary of their arguments and a precis of their sources.

The Republic of Others: Representing Intellectuals in Turkish History

“Intellectuals have been the fathers and mothers of movements, and of course sons and daughters, even nephews and nieces.”

Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*²

² Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 10-11

“We were discussing the history of different political institutions and forms. One of the professors suddenly said, to everyone’s astonishment, ‘Well the father of democracy in Turkey is Adnan Menderes.’ The others looked around in bewilderment. They said, ‘Adnan Menderes, the father of Turkish democracy? What do you mean?’ ‘Well’, said this professor, ‘he screwed the mother of democracy.’”

Bernard Lewis, *Notes on a Century: Reflections of a Middle East historian*³

Often lost in the decades long squabble between Edward Said and Bernard Lewis is how the fundamental differences between their divergent worldviews were heavily characterized by both their personal history and the scholastic fields from which they entered into debate. Said’s position first as a citizen of a (post)-colonial entity and second as a public intellectual whose mission was to dissent from the wisdom received by the colonial order meant that the ongoing debate was to be played out on his territory – centered on the prismatic effect of Israeli settler colonialism on history, literature, and society, rather than Arabic philology, Ottoman and Turkish history, Lewis’ specialties. This was particularly true after the division between the two men more or less split the institutions that make up the field of Middle East Studies into two unequal halves. Said recognized this in the process of leveling a rather vicious barb against Lewis during the height of the latter’s influence over American imperial policy in the Middle East, telling the audience of a 2003 roundtable at *Al-Ahram*, “Bernard Lewis hasn’t set foot in the Middle East in 40 years. He knows something about Turkey, I’m told, but he knows nothing about the Arab world.”⁴ The recognition by Said himself of the division between the Arab and Turkish world – ostensibly extended back into the shared histories of the two under Ottoman rule – has been mirrored in scholarship on the Turkish republic for decades. Since Turkey was never colonized,

³ Bernard Lewis, *Notes on a Century: Reflections of a Middle East Historian* (New York: Viking, 2012), 99

⁴ Amina Elbendary, “Resources of Hope” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* Issue 631 <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/archive/2003/631/focus.htm> (Accessed August 7, 2017)

the conventional wisdom goes, post-colonial theory – including, but by no means limited to Said – must not apply.

While this dissertation is not concerned with a wholesale defense of the applicability of any one or set of post-colonial theories to the Turkish case, it must be pointed out, for the purposes of delineating what I describe as “The Republic of Others”, that critical constitutive parts of what would become the Turkish republic were indeed colonized, though briefly, in the five years following the Armistice of Mudros in October 1918 and the formation of the republic in the fall of 1923. There is much validity to the critique of applications of post-colonial theories, including Said’s *Orientalism*, to the Turkish case, but there is also no denying that in this period Istanbul was occupied by a European colonial regime intent on governing the former Ottoman capital in perpetuity, nor that the same regime supported a Greek invasion of Izmir and western Anatolia in May 1919, nor that the 1920 Treaty of Sevres supported the formation of an American-backed Armenian mandate in Eastern Anatolia.⁵ Though Mustafa Kemal’s success meant that the resulting state was not yoked with the weight of the post-colonial condition in the way the formerly Ottoman Arab provinces would be, his war for Turkish independence was undoubtedly an anti-colonial one. And so, one question I ask in this dissertation of the people who populate it, how did Mustafa Kemal’s paradoxical position as a westernizer opposed to western imperialism and colonialism affect their relationship with the west? For the cast of characters in this dissertation, opposing Kemalism meant hewing closely to one or the other end of the Kemalist paradox. Many of the leftist writers that appear in this dissertation adopted western culture even more radically than the Kemalist norms did, taking a stance that reforms to dress, the civil code, or Turkey’s democratic structure did not go far enough towards bringing a western democratic life to Turkey. Pan-Turkists, on the other hand, rejected western civilization

⁵ This is to say nothing of the incredible economic sway European powers, primarily Britain, held over the Ottoman Empire from the middle of the 19th century until its collapse.

altogether in order to articulate a racist Turkish supremacist politics that painted Mustafa Kemal as a race-imposter for falling in love with western culture. There were many shades in-between, but the process of ideological contestation in the single party era would serve both to set up Kemalist political and cultural norms, and single out many of Kemalism's opponents as grave threats to the regime, and the nation. The people that make up this dissertation largely believed in the project of the Turkish republic, but that belief, and in many senses their very membership in the Turkish nation, went unrecognized. This is the way in which I mean to describe these intellectuals as a "Republic of Others" – a group with wide disagreements, various intellectual backgrounds, and diverse cultural heritages who nonetheless grappled with similar problems of belonging in a state that tried to awkwardly balance nationalism and liberal society.

Here, it is critical here to bring Said's analysis back onto Lewis' territory – in a way, to ask the questions of Lewis' work that Said never bothered to ask. In order to do this, we must first necessarily consider the nature of Lewis' seminal work, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, alongside a few of his observations of the convulsions of Turkish democracy in the years leading up to that book's initial publication in 1961. Lewis' first major work appeared just a year after a military coup ousted the government led by the first successful opposition party in Turkish history – a party's whose success in the 1950 election Lewis had praised with minimal equivocation. In *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, the kind of brazen orientalism of which Lewis was accused, and often guilty, is non-existent, but in its place, is a subtler, and supple form than anyone more familiar with his later, more polemical works may expect. In his introduction, Lewis lays out three distinct "sources" of Turkish civilization: the "local", the Turkish, and the Islamic. The first of these is meant to represent an odd hybrid of culture and politics that is bounded by the territory of Anatolia and the imperial powers that held sway over what is now the

Turkish republic since ancient times.⁶ The second presents itself mainly in linguistic form, since Lewis concludes that despite the resiliency of certain nomadic cultures, “the old Turkish civilizations were too thoroughly obliterated by Islam for any real revival of ancient Turkish culture to be possible.”⁷ The last, Islam, attempts to define an Islamic culture that is distinctly Turkish – a frontier faith, greater emphasis on folk traditions, the influence of the unique Ottoman religious hierarchy, and tolerance of non-Muslims – but still a subset of a wider Oriental one.⁸

From its first edition in 1961 and for many years after, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, was considered the authoritative text on the late Ottoman and Republican period up to the election of the Democrat Party in 1950. The book covers a wide terrain of intellectual, cultural, social, and economic history, like a proper textbook should, but to study closely Lewis’ arguments, and personal history with the Turkish republic, is to come to understand the text primarily as a history of the ideas of democracy and Western civilization in Turkey. Moreover, the sections pertaining to the republican era are largely a recapitulation of official accounts, memoirs of men of state, and of journals and reminiscences of the intellectuals of the regime. The ideas of opposition intellectuals, criticism of the regime, and any deviation from the steady, forward march of pro-western democratic ideals are minimized or dismissed in Lewis’ telling. This is most obvious in Lewis’ recounting of the 1940s, where the infamous Wealth Tax, through which the regime targeted non-Muslim citizens and businesses for appropriation, is recognized for its deleterious consequences, but ultimately rationalized in comparison to the German holocaust. Lewis writes, “In a Europe dominated by Hitler’s Germany, Republican Turkey’s one essay in persecution was a mild and gentle affair.”⁹ The destruction of Tan Press in December

⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969 [1961]) 3-7

⁷ Ibid, 10

⁸ Ibid, 11-16

⁹ Ibid, 301

1945 by a nationalist mob, the subject of Chapter Five of this dissertation, along with widespread suppression of leftist parties and journalists is actually regarded as a failed attempt “to restrict the freedom of the press... in the face of the new and potent force of public opinion.”¹⁰ Ultimately, the idea of liberal democracy, in Lewis’ eyes, was the essential contribution of Kemalism to Turkish society. Despite much evidence to the contrary, Lewis holds up a westernized, democratic, Kemalist youth as the emblem of the,

...pro-Western, and therefore pro-democratic trend running much deeper than the temporary alignments of international relations. At the lowest level, it expressed itself in the prevalence of chewing-gum and leopard-skin shirts on the beaches of the Bosphorus and the streets of Istanbul; at the highest, in the study of the English language and of English and American literature and history, in the university, the school and the home, and in a self-criticism that verged at times on the morbid.

Many different factors contributed to the growth of pro-Western, pro-democratic feeling... In the Kemalist Republic a new generation had grown to maturity, for whom the main objectives of the nationalist creed had already been accomplished, and nationalism alone was no longer enough. Brought up in an age of intensive Westernization, they were deeply attracted by the Western liberal tradition, and saw in democracy not just a matter of fashion or diplomacy, but the means of achieving the final integration of Turkey, on a footing of equality and mutual respect, in the free Western world.¹¹

Knowing Lewis’ story with the Turkish Republic is also critical to understanding how he came to these conclusions, and reveals how much of his sense of Turkish politics – which was astute – and culture – which was blinkered by a commitment to modernization theory and limited experience travelling outside of Istanbul and Ankara – was informed by the prominent Turkish intellectuals with which he most often kept company. In this context, while we might stop short of calling *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* an intellectual history of the Turkish republic, it is clear from the thrust of its argument, and the history of its author, that the book is a *product* of the intellectual history of the republican era. It is well known that Lewis was employed by the British Foreign Office as an expert on Middle Eastern and Turkish affairs and as an intelligence officer

¹⁰ Ibid, 310

¹¹ Ibid, 314-315

during World War II, but less well known is that while Lewis was studying in Paris under Louis Massignon in 1936-37, he began studying Turkish under the tutorship of Adnan Adıvar – a former Ottoman statesman and husband to the famous novelist Halide Edib, who had been exiled from Turkey in 1925.¹² His first lessons in Turkish diplomatic history were in part credited to time spent with Tevfik Rüştü Aras while Aras was serving as Ambassador to the United Kingdom.¹³ These relationships with figures who had, or would come to have, a serious conflict with Kemalism, and who themselves were more liberal in orientation than Mustafa Kemal, likely influenced the ebullient optimism and admiration Lewis maintained for the seeming miracle of liberalism that was the 1950 elections.

In this sense, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* does for his favored intellectuals precisely what Edward Said thought was deficient in most accounts of intellectuals, “there has been far too much defining of the intellectual, and not enough stock taken of the image, the signature, the actual intervention and performance, all of which taken together constitute the very lifeblood of every real intellectual.”¹⁴ By setting Mustafa Kemal up as a singular figure up against the enormous task of overturning centuries of Islamic despotism in favor of liberal, western democracy, and coloring the narrative with source material drawn from nearly exclusively sympathetic source material, Lewis helped construct the image of Atatürk that was in some senses a performance. The popular image of Atatürk in the west as a uniquely benevolent dictator molding a Muslim country into a western democracy – an image that has justified many western attempts at “regime change” over the last half century, from Vietnam to Afghanistan to Iraq – is an image Lewis himself helped translate for the Anglo-American world.

¹² Lewis, *Notes on a Century*, 34-35

¹³ *Ibid*, 52

¹⁴ Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 13

As accurate the representation of the pro-regime intellectual force is in Lewis' work, one cannot help but notice that the teleology of developmentalism and modernization discourse not only presents these intellectuals and their ideas as impervious to outside critique, but presents them as hermetically sealed in their own world, totally ensconced by a powerful, autocratic regime with a singular vision for the advancement of society. For Said, the intellectual was primarily a figure of dissent; departing somewhat from the formalistic Gramscian approach to defining the intellectual, Said wrote, "It is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation, that grips me because the romance, the interest, the challenge of intellectual life is to be found in dissent against the status quo at a time when the struggle seems so unfairly weighted against them."¹⁵ It is with this observation in mind that I offer this dissertation as an intervention into the study of intellectual history of the Turkish Republic. In truth, the intellectuals and ideas of the republican regime did not exist in a hermetically sealed environment. Despite limited outlets for political opposition, and often repressive and restrictive censorship, the intellectual life of the "single party era" was a diverse ecosystem, and pro-regime intellectuals and ideas cohabited in that ecosystem with others who, for the most part, held allegiance to the sovereignty of the Turkish republic, and even to the dynamic personality that sat at its head, but dissented from many of its policies. The narratives and ideas of the people that populate Lewis' book were themselves a product of the conversations and contests in that ecosystem. This dissertation, in shifting the focus away from the men of state and the intellectuals of the regime, offers a fuller representation of that ecosystem.

Literature Review and Theory: Putting the Modern in Modernization

The historical and theoretical space occupied by this dissertation is one focused on the eddies, counter flows, and lacunae that were created as modernization theory and its adherents

¹⁵ Ibid, xvii

flattened out the history of the Turkish republic into a steady, unidirectional march of modernization and modernity. In selecting events, sources, and archives to study I have deliberately chosen examples that do not quite “fit” with the standard interpretations of Kemalist modernity and its path from authoritarianism to democracy, but which are essential to a three-dimensional view of that history. The faults of the influence of modernization theory on Turkish historiography have been laid bare many times previous, perhaps most articulately by Reşat Kasaba in his 1997 essay, “Kemalist Certainties and Modernist Ambiguities”, but there remains a mountain of work to be done to populate the ambiguous moments in Ottoman and Turkish history that make up the fabric of the modern experience.¹⁶ This dissertation means to be one contribution to the recovery of political and intellectual modernism within the very framework of Kemalist modernization as it was understood by those that lived under it, struggled against it, and ultimately pushed it forward. This mission is drawn from the work of Marshall Berman’s vision of the “maelstrom of modern life” in which “world-historical processes have nourished an amazing variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own.”¹⁷ If by the 1940s the authoritarian, strait-jacketed modernization adherents had begun to construct the guard rails that would constrict Turkey’s democratic futures, the anti-imperialist victory of Mustafa Kemal, and the radical social opening that came in its wake was the place where the thinkers and writers and politicians that populate this dissertation found their purchase in Turkish society, and made lasting contributions

¹⁶ Reşat Kasaba, “Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities” in Bozdoğan and Kasaba, eds., *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997) 15-36. See also, Nicholas L. Danforth, “Memory, Modernity, and the Remaking of Republican Turkey: 1945-1960” Ph.d. diss, Georgetown University, 2015, Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), Michael E. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988 [1982]), 16.

to the experience of modernity and modernization even as many seemed to lose their struggles against the modernizing state apparatus. In this brief overview of the scholarship pertinent to this period in Turkish history, as I have throughout the dissertation, I emphasize the ways this contestation with Kemalism was integral to bringing Kemalism into being – essentially that Kemalism was both a modernizing ideology and a modernist one.

Building a new republic out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire required its leaders to draw on many of the same thinkers that provided the intellectual fuel for the 1908 Constitutional Revolution. In contrast to that revolution, however, Mustafa Kemal's leadership engaged with mass politics in order to produce a new nationalist state, rather than preserve a multinational imperial framework.¹⁸ Intellectuals like Ziya Gökalp were given a second opportunity to see their modern formations of Turkish nationalism implemented.¹⁹ Erik J. Zürcher has described the manner in which the Turkish Republican project prior to Mustafa Kemal's final consolidation of power in 1926 was essentially a continuation of the Committee of Union and Progress' political and intellectual mission.²⁰ As M. Şükrü Hanioglu has argued in his recent biography of Atatürk, the Turkish leader was deeply influenced by rationalism and Darwinism but was an otherwise reactive and opportunistic with regards to an intellectual mission.²¹ A. Holly Shissler has convincingly argued in the context of the life of Ahmet Ağaoğlu, that the Russian revolution of 1917 and the political dismantling of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 destroyed the restraints of

¹⁸ For assessments of the intellectual climates at these two points see: Niyazi Berkes *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography*, and *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2008), Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2000), A. Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (New York: IB Tauris, 2003), Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1984).

¹⁹ This group was almost uniformly disappointed by the incomplete nature of the 1908 revolution, which was viewed as a failed opportunity to propagate social change rather than simply political and military turnover. Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 344-8.

²⁰ Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*

²¹ Hanioglu, *Atatürk*

cosmopolitanism and created the political conditions upon which these thinkers were forced to define their previous civic or ethnic conceptions of nationalism on territorial grounds.²² Through two different methodological approaches, Yeşim Bayar and Behlül Özkan have shown how the territorial ideal of Turkish nationalism was debated in parliament, defined the missions of the political organs of the state, and guided nearly every policy directive of the single-party era from education to foreign policy.²³

The above are among reasons why the question of defining Kemalism as an ideology in the single-party era has been a difficult riddle to solve. Taha Parla and Andrew Davison have provided some helpful tools of analysis in their study of Kemalist ideology as part of the corporatist “third way” tradition, particularly in regards to their strategies in elections and opposition parties.²⁴ Their study highlights the difficulty faced by many scholars of attempting to square Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s state’s varieties of state-driven economy, laicism and positivistic nationalism with the grander ideologies driving the global political situation in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in instances when ideological affinities between one or the other superpower, as with Turkish-Soviet cases before the Montreux convention or Turkish-American cases following the close of World War II, are buttressed by one or the other form of *realpolitik*. Early attempts at multi-party elections in Turkey were practically a doomed enterprise from the beginning. Holding regular elections was, as Parla and Davison point out, “among the party’s tasks” despite the view held by the political elite that “neither was the country ready for direct

²² A. Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 20-28

²³ Yeşim Bayar, *The Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and Behlül Özkan, *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan: The Making of a National Homeland in Turkey*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

²⁴ Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order?* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004)

democracy, nor was every Turk capable of serving the ‘high’ interests of the party.”²⁵ In addition, the formation of opposition parties were on the one hand essential to establishing the Kemalist state’s bona fides as a “tutelary democracy”, on the other hand, in Parla and Davison’s analysis, their solidaristic corporatist ideology rendered opposition parties redundant since the cooption of major political classes and corporations was necessary in order to create the sort of political and ideological unity required by the state’s charismatic leader.²⁶ The case for Kemalism as an ideology meant to bind a bourgeois class, first – thus comporting with the behavior of the sorts of ideological regimes described in Charles Maier’s work – and unite the whole of society behind an ontological revolution, second – hence the appealing comparisons to fascist regimes – is a strong one.²⁷ However, it has the effect of leaving the boundaries of Kemalist nationalism, and the sharp distinctions it drew through education, propaganda, rhetoric, and more coercive methods of state violence and censorship with “foreign” ideological systems, seem blurry and indistinct. This dissertation looks squarely at the points where these “foreign” political ideas came into direct conflict with the state in order to offer a negative definition of Kemalist ideology – pointing out the precise points where it disallowed contemporary political ideas ranging from women’s liberation to racist irredentism to social democracy and economic liberalism; Kemalism did not support any of these ideas in full measure, and the limits of its support for each were clearly, and often violently demarcated.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 223-4, scholars of the modernization theorist era had a more optimistic view of the aborted attempts at multiparty politics, such as Frederick W. Frey, who deemed democratization a clear preference and inevitable outcome of Kemalist modernization, even if, during his life time, instituting democratic multiparty politics was a “secondary and contingent goal” of Atatürk. Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965) 335.

²⁶ Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology*, 179-181

²⁷ Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), a similar argument, focused more closely on social policy and class formation, is made in Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (New York: Verso, 1987).

John M. VanderLippe's incisive study of the multiparty system's origins under İnönü characterizes Kemalism as an ideology focused on "outcome rather than on process" which accounts for the democratic deficiencies of the transition to multiparty politics.²⁸ One of those deficiencies, in his description, is that the options left for opposition to Kemalism amounted to campaigns for a "new hegemony, with new personnel, imposing their own agenda in the same way as their opponents."²⁹ Reform and contestation in the period of transition to multiparty politics, he then suggests, "resulted in the development of a political system separate from society," wherein the two were conceived as distinct entities who were mediated only by "experts, career politicians, and the military," and any contestation over ideology was forced into narrow constraints.³⁰ Largely, this dissertation comports with this assessment of the political system, but challenges the notion that opponents simply sought new forms of hegemony, showing how from the earliest years of the republic onward, opponents held hopes for democratization within the Kemalist system, often attempted to work within it, and indeed gained footholds in the cultural and social realms that would precipitate political parties and rival ideological movements to Kemalism that would characterize Turkish politics up to the present.

It should be noted, as well, that the story of elites and intellectuals outside of the highest Ottoman and Kemalist circles is quite different than the one covered in the works mentioned above, and from the bulk of the subjects of this dissertation as well. Michael Meeker's seminal work on elite transitions in the province of Trabzon masterfully demonstrated how structures of imperial control and power not only survived the transition, but formed critical pillars of state control throughout the twentieth century in the Anatolian provinces despite the fact that these Ottoman legacies remained barely perceptible even to the elites who inherited them. Though there

²⁸ John M. VanderLippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy: İsmet İnönü and the Formation of the Multi-Party System, 1938-1950* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 3.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

are many differences between my subjects and his, Meeker, and in a somewhat subliminal way Bernard Lewis, rightly identified the “counterrevolution within the revolution” of Kemalism – namely, that the Turkish nation remained Muslim in large part despite the secular overhaul of the state apparatus – I have plotted out, particularly in chapters four and five, some of the ways pious and conservative opponents of Kemalism engaged in a modernist critique of Turkish society which held the Kemalist, secular revolution as a precondition, and simultaneously prefigured the kinds of religious politics that would slowly erode Kemalist and secular politics over the course of the second half of the twentieth century.³¹

Hale Yılmaz has recently shown how varied and contested the application of the Kemalist revolution was in the Turkish provinces.³² Her work shows that while “revolution” is a broadly contested term in Turkish historiography, it is clear that “in the sphere of culture, rather than social structure, that the Turkish Revolution was truly revolutionary...” and that there was a clear “contemporary political and intellectual perspective that regarded this experiment as a revolution.”³³ Indeed, in the context of the negotiations surrounding the reforms in the provinces, she opts for “reform” over revolution since that is closer to how it appeared to those who were targeted by the process of nation-making itself.³⁴ However, as I show in chapter three, the

³¹ Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, xvii. Meeker here is noting the way Lewis had sensed the way that Muslim character of large segments of Turkish society had persisted through the revolution, even though he assumed, like many of his time, that the Kemalist revolution was more penetrative than it really was.

³² Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey (1923-1945)* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013)

³³ *Ibid*, 6

³⁴ I understand Yılmaz’s work here to be a fundamental criticism of previous conceptions of the Turkish revolution as an elite, legal, and rhetorical revolution, but not social, one, as Şerif Mardin argued in “Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 2 No. 3 (1971) 197-211. Mardin, making an argument that was somewhat conventional for the time, stated that the “radical élite” had legislated while giving “little thought to the ‘little’ culture...” Yılmaz’s work goes to some lengths to show how far into the “little

ideological contestations of those who saw themselves as caught up in the modernist “revolution” were not unconnected to the struggles and negotiations happening in the countryside. In moments like the 1930 municipal elections, when read through the archive of the Liberal Republican Party, we can see the forces driving opposition intellectuals and popular opposition in the same frame, at times speaking the same language, making the same demands of a state who, in their eyes, was failing to serve its public.

What this dissertation ultimately offers is a fuller picture of the modernist political landscape of Turkey’s single party era than has typically been provided in histories of this period. In doing so, I hope to highlight an antinomy that has largely been, at best, unremarked upon or, at worst, openly disregarded in much of the literature. That antinomy is best summarized thusly: as the Turkish republic developed its multiparty system, the variety of political alternatives to Kemalism in the public sphere became more constrained. Few scholars in the field would disagree that the brief periods of the Progressive Republican Party [*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, TCF] in 1925 and the Liberal Republican Party [*Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, SCF] in 1930 were followed by periods of severe repression and state consolidation. However, as I show in chapters five and six of this dissertation, the creation of the Democrat Party [*Demokrat Partisi*, DP] – which was led by Celal Bayar, Atatürk’s last Prime Minister and his personal choice for successor – was also occasioned by severe legal repression of opposing ideas. Had the DP not won a surprising victory in the 1950 elections, and followed that with a peaceful transfer of power from İnönü’s government, perhaps scholars of the period would be less forgiving of the repression that preceded it. As I detail in my chapter on the anticommunist riot that destroyed the offices of the leftist daily *Tan* mere days after the announcement of the DP’s formation, contemporary writers as diverse as the conservative Bernard Lewis, the social democrat Niyazi culture” Kemalist reforms stretched, and I argue in parts of this dissertation that opposition elites were also greatly concerned with reaching beyond their class boundaries.

Berkes, and the liberal Ahmet Emin Yalman expressed only the mildest concern over the persecution of certain regime opponents – many of them leftists – in the years running up to 1950.³⁵ For many writers, and especially the modernization theorists, the victory of a less-statist, nominally democratic, anti-communist party in Turkey expiated the myriad anti-democratic sins of the prior regime.

By bringing this antinomy back into the historiographical picture, this dissertation intervenes in some key questions of Turkey's period of "authoritarian modernization." As recognized by Atabaki and Zürcher, disagreement in the press and amongst the intelligentsia was viewed on an instrumental basis by Atatürk, "to feed the leaders with ideas... or to spread their messages. Those who were too independent-minded soon found themselves ostracized."³⁶ While it is true that the state's view of the press was often capricious, we should be mindful of the fact that the regimes of Atatürk and İsmet İnönü were not the only ones reading the press, and that intellectuals who opposed or disagreed with the regime found publics willing to accept what they had to offer – and publics who dismayed the disappearance of their preferred newspaper, novelist, or poet from the scene in times when the regime turned censorious. In spite of this capriciousness, green shoots of democratic contestation around the key cultural and political issues of the single party era are identifiable in the Turkish public sphere.

By largely de-centering the state, and the various political dramas playing out amongst its elites, this dissertation offers an alternative take on the extant scholarship on political opposition in Turkey's single party era. Works by Erik Jan Zürcher and Hakan Özoğlu offer rich narratives of political contention in the earliest years of the republic, but, at bottom, their focus is on a

³⁵ See, inter alia, Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Third ed., 309-310, Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Turkey in My Time* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 239, and Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 503

³⁶ Touraj Atabaki and Erik J. Zürcher, "Introduction" in Atabaki and Zürcher, eds., *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 10.

struggle over power rather than any broad based political or ideological contestation with Mustafa Kemal and his closest political allies.³⁷ The reason for this is largely that the politicians at the top of each of the sanctioned opposition parties of this period did not have the degree of ideological difference from the Kemalists, nor the political capital necessary to organize a popular, broad based opposition movement. As Frederick Frey eloquently stated with regards to the closing of the TCF in 1926, “There was no room at the top for opposition that tried to mobilize support from the main sources of Kemalist strength. Hostile pressure so close to the jugular could not be tolerated.”³⁸ This is true as well of the early years of the multiparty era, from 1945-1947, when İnönü’s government pursued an opening of multiparty politics that, as Cemil Koçak has pointed out, was “...interpreted as the first signs of democratic life, but in reality they were about new arrangements aimed at amending the single-party government system.”³⁹ As such, any analysis of ideological currents in the single-party era, including opposition politics, must stretch beyond the bounds of party politics to properly account for the diversity of political opinion and real contestation with the power of Kemalism.

³⁷ I accept Zürcher’s analysis that the short-lived Progressive Republican Party demonstrated a broad political transition in Turkey from extra-parliamentary structures to parliamentary ones, and that, at least in their formal structure, political parties took on democratic characteristics, but the elite nature of their political dealings, which centered on devolving power away from Mustafa Kemal and his circle of radicals, a fact which Zürcher also acknowledges and Özoğlu emphasizes to greater degree, meant that the *content* of the political opposition they represented largely favored the policies of the Republican People’s Party, while opposing what it saw as authoritarian tendencies. Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic*, (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011), Erik Jan Zürcher, *Political Opposition in the Early Turkish Republic: The Progressive Republican Party, 1924-1925* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

³⁸ Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, 335.

³⁹ Cemil Koçak, “Some Views on the Turkish Single Party Regime (1938-1945)” Gülayşe Koçak, trans., in Atabaki and Zürcher, *Men of Order*, 118. Koçak goes into far greater detail in his classic text on the İnönü period, particularly with regards to the efforts of opposition politicians and intellectuals to push for democratic reforms through the press beginning as early as 1942. The success of the DP, so often credited to İnönü, should also take into account the persistence of these figures in the face of accumulating barriers put in place by the government during and after World War II. See, Cemil Koçak, *Milli Şef Dönemi (1938-1945) Cilt II* 2nd Edition (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996 [1986]), especially 339-363.

Chapter Overview

The six body chapters of this dissertation take up six different vectors of opposition in Turkey's single party era: gender, class, race, violence, law, and memory, in that order. The chapters progress roughly along a chronological axis, identifying specific moments or longer periods when these vectors present particularly rich veins for analyzing how political and cultural opposition was expressed – and suppressed – but by no means do I suggest that any of these vectors were absent at any given point, from any given perspective in this era. Additionally, while each of these themes serve as the main lens for a single chapter, they carry on as subthemes in every other chapter. This is facilitated by the focus on a relatively circumscribed cast of characters, each of whom addressed a wide variety of disagreements with the Kemalist state, and intersected with the most centrally contested issues of Kemalist policy at critical steps along the way to the introduction of multiparty politics in the late 1940s. Here I will overview the topics addressed in each chapter.

Chapter Two, “Beyond the Patriarchal Bargain: Gender Fluidity, Women’s Rights, and Progressive Politics in the 1920s” addresses the way in which the perception of gender fluidity in the 1920s interacted with progressive politics that both spurred and criticized Kemalist policies regarding women’s roles in public, and politics. In classical literature on women’s rights and Kemalism there is a paradigm, elaborated by Binnaz Toprak, Şirin Tekeli, Yeşim Arat, Deniz Kandiyoti, and others, that describes women in Turkey as “emancipated but unliberated.”⁴⁰ In most formulations, this description depicts women as having won a limited set of rights under the Kemalist framework, but in so doing only reinforcing patriarchal norms and conservative political

⁴⁰ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case” *Feminist Studies* Vol. 13 No. 2 (1987) 317-338, “Bargaining with Patriarchy” *Gender and Society* Vol. 2, No. 3 (1988), 274-290, Yeşim Arat, *The Patriarchal Paradox: Women Politicians in Turkey* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), Binnaz Toprak, “Religion and Turkish Women” in Nermin Abadan-Unat ed., *Women in Turkish Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

and familial structures that restricted (and continue to restrict) any movement of women seeking full social independence. This chapter offers two interventions into this literature. First, by shifting the focus away from the state, state actors, and the particularities of the emancipatory regime enacted by the Kemalists and towards opposition figures we can better see the ways in which popular literature, images, and the press advocated for women's liberation above and beyond the Kemalist framework. Opposition figures channeled the air of emancipation that was fostered by a quickly liberalizing urban culture in Istanbul and proliferated throughout the country by Kemalist rhetoric and policy to advocate for a broader, more comprehensive social safety net in areas that directly affected women's lives – especially in terms of orphan and child care. The second intervention involves the way opposition figures addressed anxieties about gender fluidity – or at least what was perceived as gender fluidity at the time – in order to prepare a political ground for progressive change. The expanding imagination of possible political, social, and cultural roles for women in the 1920s simply could not be contained by the Kemalist framework, and the ways in which this imagination exceeded Kemalist thinking represented a fertile ground on which opposition and critique of Kemalist policy could grow.

Chapter three shifts focus to the formation of the Liberal Republican Party (SCF) in the summer of 1930, its participation in the municipal elections that fall, and its dissolution not long after the election's conclusion. Formed by then-Ambassador to France Ali Fethi Okyar at the behest of Mustafa Kemal, the SCF was intended to be a tightly constrained “loyal opposition” party that would offer no challenge to Mustafa Kemal's authority, nor to his policies in any field other than economic policy – wherein Okyar and his colleagues such as Ahmet Ağaoğlu, and others would offer a more liberal alternative to the étatist policies of İsmet İnönü and the CHP. What was unexpected by the Kemalists was the wide swath of social and ideological opposition the SCF would attract. In Istanbul, leftist opponents of Kemal in the press, like Zekeriya Sertel

and Arif Oruç would throw their support behind Okyar and the SCF despite their philosophical disagreements over economic matters. Across the country, as identified in the party archives, the SCF activated provincial political networks by co-opting village chief (*muhtar*) and Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocakları*) organizations to garner support from more conservative, middle and lower-class Turks who were suffering the most from the fallout of the global economic depression the year before. This chapter delves into the leftist support for the party, continuing the story of the Sertels from the previous chapter, and provides the first in-depth analysis of documents from the archives of the Istanbul and Izmir party offices of the SCF, which detail the varied ways the SCF swiftly organized support in advance of the fall elections in September and October, as well as the stiff resistance they experienced by state and CHP officials along the way.

The failure of the SCF in 1930 to build a sustained opposition party catalyzed a new articulation of Kemalist ideology that would engage more heavily in ethnic-nationalist ideology. In the opposition, this more radical, less conciliatory turn in the Kemalist state would push opponents of the regime in more radical directions as well. The ideological contestation detailed in the following four chapters ultimately had its roots in the failure of the SCF in 1930.

Chapter four, “White, Yellow, Black, and Brown: The Racing of Turkish Political Discourse 1931-1945” looks at the way this ethno-nationalist turn in Kemalism sparked ideological polarization, beginning in relatively obscure intellectual journals in the early 1930s and later in in major press outlets during World War II. Following the collapse of the SCF and the violent quelling of an anti-secular protest near Izmir known as the Menemen Incident, the Kemalist government started down a path of articulating in as clear terms as possible an official ideology – Kemalism – that would involve the promulgation of numerous journals, conferences, government and academic led efforts to justify the cultural supremacy of the Turkish ethnicity. In response to this, regime opponents would launch vociferous criticism of the Kemalist definition

of Turkishness (*Türklük*) and Turkism (*Türkçülük*). This criticism, from right wing ultra nationalist circles, conservative modernist writers, and left wing socialist and communist circles, centered on the manner in which these Kemalist definitions deployed racial categories. The principal point of contestation for both ultra-nationalists and conservative modernists was with the Kemalist contention that Turks were “white” and thus not unlike their European counterparts – indeed if one follows the Turkish Historical Thesis to its conclusion, Turks were depicted as the *originators* of western civilization. Ultranationalists rejected this, in favor of advocating a form of “yellow supremacy” often known as Turanism. Kemalists would have the most trouble drawing distinctions between this aggressive and fundamentally irredentist alternative to their Turkishness, particularly as other opponents of the regime, particularly from the left, would exploit these similarities to paint the regime as racist – a tactic that would carry further weight, and cause further polarization as the Nazi regime consolidated and threatened Turkish sovereignty during World War II. In addition to examining key aspects of the intellectual development of the Turanist and communist critiques, this chapter will also fold into this narrative the development of a strand of conservative modernism that began to embrace a narrative of Turkish identity that embraced Arab, Persian, and Ottoman Islamic history and culture as a rejection of the westernizing measures of the Kemalist regime. Centering on the work of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, this chapter posits that his embrace of the nearer Islamic past in an attempt to articulate a pious, anti-western modern politics should also be seen in the light of the debates happening around race and nationalism in this period.

Chapter Five, “The Anatomy of a Riot: Political Violence, the Birth of Multiparty Politics, and the Destruction of Tan Press, December 4, 1945” considers a moment wherein the elite discussions of the ideological lines of World War II, and the emerging Cold War paradigm, would find a violent and popular expression. Following months of heated, vitriolic exchanges

between right and left-wing factions in Turkey, on December 4, 1945 a crowd of college-aged students and bazar workers gathered in the Beyazıt Square and marched down Ankara Boulevard bearing portraits of then-president İsmet İnönü, chanting anti-communist slogans and eventually arrived at the doorstep of *Tan* Press. This printing house, an associated printing house in the Galata neighborhood, and a Russian-owned bookstore, were destroyed in the subsequent riot effectively marking the end of the journalistic careers of its owners, Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, that had stretched back to the First World War. The following year would witness the inauguration of multiparty politics in the Turkish Republic with the founding of the Democratic Party – the leaders of which were intellectually and socially related to the milieu of *Tan* – and would culminate with the Democrats’ first parliamentary majority in 1950. I argue in this chapter that the Tan Riot represented a significant, early attempt to constrain political discourse at the outset of the multiparty period, and to inoculate the newly formed DP against ideologies that might appear threatening to either of the emergent global superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union. The Tan Riot was in many ways a great tragedy of Turkish democracy, as it sent Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel into a period of disillusionment and financial distress that would result in their exile to Soviet Eastern Europe and Baku, Azerbaijan in 1950. Their story is threaded throughout the dissertation in order to demonstrate their contributions and commitment towards the project of Turkish democracy, having run several popular, progressive newspapers with editorial lines that could only be described as “social democrat” the Sertels represented an intellectual sphere and a public that could have posed a genuine, organic political response to the CHP from the left. This chapter, and the one that follows, demonstrate how demagoguery and geopolitical contingency foreclosed that possibility.

Chapter Six, “Prosecuting Ideology: The Trials of Pan-Turkists and Leftists at the Dawn of the Cold War, 1944-1947”, examines documents pertaining to the prosecution of two camps of

intellectuals in the years before and after the end of World War II. In 1944, sensing that the presence of a vociferous, irredentist political movement with ties to the Nazi regime might imperil Turkey's strategic interests as the Soviet Union turned the tide of the war, roughly two dozen major Pan-Turkist intellectuals were arrested in May 1944 and brought to trial on charges of forming a secret society with the intent to overthrow the government. These trials have held a relatively prominent place in the scholarship on this period for a long time, but the past few years have seen the publication of nearly all of the documents related to the trials, many of which are still not available through usual archival requests. An in-depth reading of these documents is, in this chapter, juxtaposed with similar documents from the trials of Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel in 1946 for the crime of insulting the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, hereafter TBMM). The Sertel trial came on the heels of the destruction of their printing house the previous December – an act for which no one would stand trial, despite the massive destruction of property involved – and would close just before the first competitive parliamentary elections in July. This chapter considers the ways in which these trials were meant to incubate Turkish foreign and domestic politics from ideological threats that were perceived as foreign. In the case of the Pan-Turkists, the government was concerned about whether their movement could be used against them by the Soviet Union in postwar negotiations that would center on a new regime over the Bosphorus Straits, and could have included negotiations over Soviet control over some of Turkey's eastern provinces. In the case of the Sertels, this political trial, in combination with the Tan Riot the year before, served to ward off leftist participation in the opposition party favored by the government – the Democrat Party (DP) – at a time when Turkey was moving closer and closer to joining the American-led anti-Soviet bloc. The articles for which the Sertels had been brought to trial directly impugned the Turkish government for not adhering to the principles of the United Nations Charter which it had signed in August 1945.

Chapter Seven, “‘A Turk Named O’Brien’: Bedtime Stories of the Turkish Republic from the Memoirs of Sevim Sertel O’Brien” examines the unpublished memoir of the daughter of Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel, which was composed in the United States in the 1960s, as a way of telling her three young children about the new country their mother had come from, and about their grandparents. Born shortly after the close of World War I, Sevim Sertel’s earliest years were spent in New York City, where her parents were students at Columbia University, and later spent much of her adolescence and young adulthood in Turkey after they returned in 1923 following the close of the Independence War. She would later become a frequent contributor to her parents’ newspaper, *Tan*, and by World War II she had married an American AP Press Attaché named Frank O’Brien. Following the war, and her parents’ eventual exile to the USSR in 1950, Sevim and Frank raised their three children in the United States, primarily in the Washington, DC suburb of Chevy Chase, MD. The chapter engages with the memoir as a document that remembers the intellectual history of the early Republic in a uniquely feminine manner, one that emphasized gender as a component to Kemalist modernity, and highlighted the limits placed on women in the public sphere. The chapter places Sevim’s memories in an intellectual context with both her own writing in *Tan*, and the political outlook of her parents as a way of asking questions about how attitudes towards Kemalism changed over the course of generations.

CHAPTER TWO: Beyond the Patriarchal Bargain: Gender Fluidity, Women's Rights, and Progressive Politics in the 1920s

In classical scholarship on women's rights and feminism in Turkey, the Kemalist revolution is often presented as a point of departure for the fate of women and feminists in Turkey vis a vis their counterparts elsewhere in the Middle East, and Muslim world more broadly. Identified by Deniz Kandiyoti as a society in which women were subjected to "classic patriarchy" that was shared broadly across the Middle East and East Asia – but differentiated from alternative forms of patriarchy in Sub-Saharan Africa – Turkey's revolutionary experience in the 1920s and 1930s pushed women in a seemingly unique direction as they achieved contested but significant personal emancipation and civic rights, were relatively unburdened by a colonial architecture that served to entrench traditional patriarchal norms, and were offered up to the rest of the world as prominent symbols of Turkey's successful modernization project.⁴¹ More recent work has uncovered the uneven manner in which this revolution in women's roles was negotiated outside of Istanbul and Ankara between lower-ranking state officials, heads of families, and women themselves.⁴² What newer trends in this historical research show is that while Turkey was not colonized by a western power in the way many other parts of the Muslim world was, Turkish women, especially in rural and impoverished areas, faced a similar sort of pressure that forced them to bargain with two distinct patriarchal forces – traditional religious mores enforced by the head of household and the modern paternalistic demands of westernization enforced by representatives of the state. Largely, Kandiyoti and others have argued that despite differentiation in women's rights movements across the Middle East, most women did not escape the

⁴¹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated?" and "Bargaining with Patriarchy"

⁴² Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, and Sevgi Adak, "Women in the Post-Ottoman Public Sphere: Anti-veiling Campaigns and the Gendered Reshaping of Urban Space in Early Republican Turkey" in Nazan Maksudyan, ed., *Women and the City, Women in the City: A Gendered Perspective on Ottoman Urban History* (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 36-70.

“patriarchal bargain” wherein, “they would rather adopt interpersonal strategies that maximize their security through manipulation of the affections of their sons and husband,” rather than open resistance.⁴³

This framework remains true for women who openly supported Kemalist reforms, and for many women who would come to support political movements that explicitly reject Kemalist modernity’s proscriptions regarding women, and as Turkish politics has become increasingly polarized around the Kemalist legacy, the advancement of women’s liberation has been subject to what Yeşim Arat calls a “patriarchal paradox.”⁴⁴ The purpose of this chapter, however, is to elucidate currents of cultural and political thought in the 1920s and early 1930s that may have provided women, and men, a vision of women’s liberation from the double-bind presented by Kemalist gender politics. I contend that the possibility for such a vision was opened up by a process of cultural change regarding women’s role in public, fashion, and attitudes towards segregation that preceded any articulation of Kemalist policies. The occupation of Istanbul by an international coalition following the Armistice of Mudros in November 1918, coupled with the arrival of a significant number of White Russian émigrés fleeing the civil war, greatly increased the presence of western women in the capital city. As a bourgeois economy developed in certain parts of the city to cater towards unveiled women who mixed openly with men – even, in some cases, on public transit, which was still segregated – Turkish women became increasingly exposed to, and willing to participate in a kind of western bourgeois society that would not gain the approval of the state until nearly a decade later.

The immediate reaction to this phenomenon in the Turkish press was a kind of shock at the speed with which women’s roles in the family and in public seemed to be changing, and a

⁴³ Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy” 280

⁴⁴ Yeşim Arat, *The Patriarchal Paradox*.

sustained expression of anxieties about the very nature of gender identity. The first part of this chapter will examine articles and cartoons that exemplify this cultural reaction, and how feminist politics of the time articulated with those anxieties. This is important to emphasize because two competing, though not totally contradictory, modes of thought entered into the cultural mainstream by the mid-1920s with the aim of assuaging or containing the reactionary impulses of male anxieties about gender roles and identity. The dominant mode was western and conservative in character, and would form the backbone of Mustafa Kemal's paternalist-liberationist policies. This view openly adopted western fashions – but constrained them by offering examples of women who were modestly dressed relative to the most current Istanbul fashions, and coupled them with policies that maintained key patriarchal structures and the image of women and women's politics as ultimately subordinate to those of men. Rejection of this conservatism was best articulated by the novelist and feminist Nezihe Muhiddin, who bemoaned the masculine character of the Kemalist's project. This understanding of Kemalist gender policy is not new, but it bears reviewing in the second part of this chapter before moving on to the second mode under consideration. I characterize this mode as a social progressivist mode, encompassing a range of writers and thinkers who aimed to explain, and legitimize, the appearance of fluid gender roles and identities in this period by asserting the primacy of sociological explanations as opposed to materialist, biological, or religious alternatives. Some of these writers, most notably Sabiha Sertel, in turn sought to bind this vision of a truly liberated Turkish woman to progressive politics that would ultimately assail the Kemalist state for its massive shortcomings in the development of social welfare programs.

In a period where direct opposition to Kemalist rule was met with the brutish realities of power politics – from coercive cooptation of opponents, to the violent suppression of rebellious Kurdish populations and the numerous death sentences and exiles associated with the

Independence Tribunal – this chapter begins to articulate a kind of opposition politics that operated away from the main arena of Kemalist consolidation, and sought to grow a democratic culture in Turkey that contested Kemalist notions of modernity without challenging the fundamental legitimacy of the ruling cadre. Some of the most innovative articulations of gender identity and politics in the press were happening in a period where censorship and repression of political speech was at a high point. As the Turkish Republic entered its second decade, however, these fissures were exacerbated. Many of the intellectuals that articulated these finely distinguished alternatives to Kemalist modernity in the 1920s would grow increasingly aggressive in their stances towards the state, and agitated by the lack of opportunities to channel these alternative visions into opposition parties. The rest of this dissertation will explore aspects of this polarization, but it is important here to show how seemingly collegial these competing ideas were at the outset of the republic.

Gender Anxiety at the Dawn of the Turkish Revolution

The impact of the demographic pressures on gender relations in Turkey in the final years of Ottoman rule had already made themselves apparent by the time the First World War reached its apex.⁴⁵ Though felt to different degrees across the Middle East, and regardless of the particularities of the postwar administrative arrangements, it is clear that, at least in major population centers in Anatolia, the Levant, Egypt, and elsewhere women's roles in public life and their leverage in the family and in the workplace had increased in part as a result of the fact that many women had been pressed into new roles as a result of military conscription, and remained so because of the catastrophic death toll of the war.⁴⁶ Istanbul, which was under a form of

⁴⁵ Yiğit Akın, "War, Women, and the State: The Politics of Sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire During the First World War" *Journal of Women's History*, 26:3, 2014, 12-35.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), Lisa Pollard, "From

colonial occupation for five years, and the rest of what would become the Turkish Republic was not much different. Well before any organized campaign to encourage westernization amongst female citizens of the Turkish republic had begun – campaigns to reform clothing began in 1925, limited suffrage was granted in 1930 – a rapid, noticeable transformation had begun amongst Turkey’s young, urban, middle and upper-class women. As mentioned above, a number of factors ranging from greater dependency on women’s labor outside of the home, to the increased presence of occupation forces from western Europe, and White Russian refugee populations, contributed to an environment in which women of means began to spend increasing amount of time socializing in bars, cafes, and cinemas, wearing more revealing clothing to match western fashion trends, and slowly disregarding public segregation at beaches and on public transit.

As in other formerly Ottoman metropolises like Damascus, Beirut, and Cairo, in the Istanbul press there was a broad expression of anxiety regarding this transformation. The reaction to Muslim women’s changing fashions and presence in public life in this instance reflected both an overtly sexist objectification of the female form and a subtler anxiety about the increased financial and labor strength of women. These two aspects are best distilled in the cartoons of the satirical magazines *Akbaba* (Vulture) and *Aydede* (Full Moon).⁴⁷ These two magazines offered acerbic weekly reflections on the changing climate of occupied Istanbul. Run by the partnership of Orhon Seyfi (Orhon) and Yusuf Ziya (Ortaç), the editorial line was modernist and nationalist –

Husbands and Housewives to Suckers and Whores: Martial-Political Anxieties in the ‘House of Egypt’, 1919-1948” *Gender and History* 21:3, November 2009, 647-669, Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Conceiving Citizens: Women and the Politics of Motherhood in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

⁴⁷ This subject has been preliminarily addressed by Francois Georgeon in, “Women’s Representations in Ottoman Cartoons and the Satirical Press on the Eve of the Kemalist Reforms (1919-1924)” in Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou eds., *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women: New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Much of this phenomenon was also prefigured in cartoons in the period following the 1908-1909 Constitutional Revolution, as detailed in Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

a line to which the two would adhere throughout their publishing efforts through the next three decades. Many of the cartoons, like Figure A below penned by Ramiz (Gökçe), expressed a kind of shock at how quickly fashions had changed. In this particular cartoon from May 1924, a mother dressed in short sleeves, without décolleté, long skirt, and unveiled addresses her daughter, who is wearing a spaghetti-strapped blouse with significant décolleté and a knee-length skirt, “My girl, in our youth we dressed openly, but not this much!” to which the young woman responds, “And what century did your youth happen to be in?!”



Fig. A, untitled cartoon, *Akbaba*, May 12, 1340 [1924], p. 3

Cartoons like this one served to objectify the female form and play on the (presumably heterosexual male) reader's eroticized fantasies about western-dressing women. Aside from highlighting the rapid pace of this transformation, more banal objectification of women's bodies through risqué drawings of ideal types was a regular feature of both papers.⁴⁸ *Akbaba* ran an occasional series of drawings, also by Ramiz, that ostensibly featured the prominent women's fashions for each season. In the "spring" drawing from March 1924 [Fig. B, below] the subtitle gives away the real meaning of the series, proclaiming "The saplings have begun to sprout!" as an unveiled woman in a revealing dress touches her breast.

⁴⁸ The theme of the shocking pace of change was a pervasive theme in literature at the time as well, as Christine Philiou examined in, "When the Clock Strikes Twelve: The Inception of an Ottoman Past in Early Republican Turkey" *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 31:1, 2011, 172-182.



Fig. B, “The Spring Months Are Coming!” *Akbaba* March 6, 1340 [1924]

With a similar frequency, however, cartoons would appear that layered anxieties about material issues – finances, property, and labor – onto this objectification of women’s bodies. This was recognized often in cartoons depicting the changing relationships between men and women. In a December 1923 cartoon in *Akbaba* [Fig. C] an older man and a younger woman discuss how they might present their apparently surreptitious relationship to others. The man proposes a solution, “If I said to a given woman in the house that I was your father, would anyone be suspicious?” The

woman scoffs, “Unbelievable!” and when the man asks why, she replies, “Because the house belongs to my mother!”



Fig. C, untitled cartoon, *Akbaba*, December [Kanuni evvel] 2, 1339 [1923]

Here the transfer of property to women becomes the twist in a joke on the man’s indecent proposal – and a comment on the fact that women’s greater presence in public, and greater power in the household, might cause unexpected problems for men in their relationships. The cost of the changing fashions was itself a source of anxiety as demonstrated in a February 1922 cartoon in *Aydede* [Fig. D] entitled “The Accountant Husband”. In this scene, a woman has just put on a

new outfit, a knee-length skirt and blouse ensemble, and is standing next to the fancy packaging in which it had just arrived. She asks her husband, “How did you find me this new costume?” to which the husband, who is himself dressed in a three-piece suit and wearing a fez, replies, “Our budget is that obvious!”



Fig. D: “The Accountant Husband” *Aydede* February 6, 1922

Often, these concerns revolved around labor, such as in a march 1922 cartoon in *Aydede* entitled “A Feminist Husband” [Fig. E]. In this cartoon depicting a traditional, older village couple, the wife admonishes her husband, “What, are you a supervisor? If you don’t start your work soon by God I will break your bones. Never again... If you are going to work, I am going to eat.”



Fig. E: “A Feminist Husband” *Aydede* March 9, 1922

Women’s labor outside of the home also featured occasionally as a topic of concern. *Aydede* published a cartoon a week after the “Feminist Husband” frame entitled “Regarding the Profligacy Taxes” [Fig. F] in which a wealthy man and a waiter are discussing his bill. After delineating the tax rates for each of the items on his bill, the patron asks, “How is it fifty *kuruş* for a cup of coffee?” and the waiter explains, “You should be thankful for that since there are no women working in our restaurant... If there were, your drink would be five hundred!”



Fig. F: “Regarding the Profligacy Taxes” *Aydede* March 13, 1922

By 1923, however, the erosion of old gender divisions had been taken up as a powerful political issue by many closely associated with the national resistance effort, and drove women’s participation in the public and political spheres. In April of 1923, prior to the announcement of elections for a General Assembly – six months before the proclamation of the republic, and five months before the Republican People’s Party was formally established – the feminist writer Nezihe Muhiddin, along with roughly two dozen of her colleagues, founded the first independent political party in Turkey, the Women’s People’s Party (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, KHF). Roughly eight months after its founding, Muhiddin, at the encouragement of Mustafa Kemal, would

disband the party and transition its efforts into the Turkish Women's Union (Türk Kadın Birliği, TKB). The TKB would become an influential sounding board for women's issues, and would publish their own journal *Türk Kadın Yolu* (*The Turkish Woman's Path*). One of the first issues on which they would come to have an effect would be the consideration of a Civil Code for the republic. While a code based on the Swiss version would eventually pass in 1925, an earlier version, which was largely a recapitulation of the 1917 Family Law (*Hukuku Aile Kararnamesi*) was introduced in late 1923. This code remained based in Islamic legal concepts, and many of the secular and progressive members of the Parliament, and the Turkish Women's Union, felt that it only entrenched women's subordinate place in the home. Opposition to this proposed legislation came to a head at the first women's meeting of the Turkish Hearth in Istanbul in mid-January 1924, at which Nezihe Muhiddin gave a stirring speech making the case of legal and political equality between the sexes.

“The Family Law,” she began her argument, “bears on the degree to which men and women are considered same, it is a general question of the country that goes beyond party and sex boundaries.”⁴⁹ Muhiddin rejected the narrow basis of discussion that led to the introduction of the bill, asserting throughout her speech that a broad consideration of societal changes in the twentieth century, and the inclusion of social science expertise should be paramount in the production of a new civil code. She demanded that, “The final decisions on the subject of the Family Law should be the product of expertise. You all should distribute the knowledge of respected members amongst the experts in the topics of science, morality, and society and undoubtedly you should not impede the result of these speedy and lofty opinions to the whole country.”⁵⁰ Muhiddin rejected the ability of sharia law to properly adapt to modern conditions,

⁴⁹ Original appears in *Süs*, January 26, 1340 [1924], transcribed in Ayşegül Baykan and Belma Ötüş-Baskett, *Nezihe Muhittin ve Türk Kadını (1931)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999), 153.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

and insisted on reforms that denied polygamy and supported companionate marriage. She recognized that “The most sacred and first responsibility of the Turkish woman in the civilizations of the twentieth century is certainly to be a mother,” and that, “the goal of marriage in the twentieth century is still undoubtedly the survival of a generation,” but, “the production of offspring is not random.” She argued that children that grew up in a non-nuclear family with multiple wives and mothers would grow up confused about modern society and disadvantaged in every respect, especially in terms of patriotism, “because without apprehending the family relations they will not be able to muster the love of the fatherland.”⁵¹ Likewise, she argued that companionate marriage was fundamental to successful modern childrearing,

One of the Turkish woman’s dearest responsibilities is that of housewife. However, as those who have – to use the idiom – fallen out of companionship with any sudden rage that comes from a man’s mouth know, during such times as a low patch or adultery, a woman cannot trust a normal heart to be tied once again to a lifelong partner with a very weak string of cotton, and her town will not adopt her and warm up to her like a sacred temple. A woman who falls into this situation of cheating cannot be an honorable mother, a lofty spouse, or a sincere housewife!⁵²

She insisted that the marriage age be raised, calling on her audience to “extend your hands to those you call your sisters who are ten or fifteen-year-old girls. Girls of that age cannot be a spouse, nor a mother, nor a housewife.”⁵³ She closed her speech again imploring the experts in the audience to take care in considering their opinions on future Civil Code legislation, and following a supportive speech by Hüseyin Vasıf Çınar, who would soon become the Minister of Education, it was decided that a commission to study the issue of a civil code and report their findings to the parliament. After some contentious debate on voting, a commission that included nine women – among them Halide Edip (Adivar), Sabiha Zekeriya (Sertel), and Nezihe Muhiddin

⁵¹ Ibid, 155.

⁵² Ibid, 155-6.

⁵³ Ibid, 156.

– and four male consultants – Ali Haydar, Refik Münir, Necmettin Sadık (Sadak), and Ahmet Emin (Yalman) – was formed.⁵⁴

The commission would have only a limited effect since political reverberations of the formation of the short lived political opposition in the PRP and the crackdown following the Şeyh Sait Revolt would drive some of the commission’s members into exile, and others into a period of quiescence, but Muhiddin would sustain her criticism of both conservative elements of society and the republic itself through the mid- and late- 1920s in *Türk Kadın Yolu* and other outlets. Across all of her political writing, Muhiddin invoked the radical tumult of Turkish and global modernity to argue for legal and social equality between the sexes. In 1923, she inveighed against the social double standard that condoned men’s patronage on the Istanbul bar scene, but frowned on women’s presence there, “We understand that if you walk towards civilization with the intent of a degree of Europeanness [*Avrupacılık*], without changing our makeshift clothing, we will remain completely naked,” and, that if women were disallowed these supposedly male privileges on religious grounds then, “this grudging admission of moral belief is evacuated of any inspiration.”⁵⁵ Later in 1925, following the Şeyh Sait revolt, in an article titled, “On the republican conception of Turkish womanhood,” she extolled the modernist position in which the republic had found itself in, writing, “We should be very thankful that having continued for ages the conservative-progressive [*muhafazakârlık-teceddütperverlik*] struggle we are on the side of the second, auspicious winning side.”⁵⁶ However, she did not see the republic as having granted significant freedoms, “in the text of the constitution, men are afforded a partial, quasi freedom; our women do not benefit even this much,” and called on the government to initiate reforms to

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 156-162.

⁵⁵ Nezihe Muhiddin, “Türk Kadını ve Barlar” (The Turkish Woman and Bars), originally printed in *İleri*, 23 Teşrin-i evvel 1339, transliterated and reprinted in Yaprak Zihnioğlu ed., *Nezihe Muhiddin Bütün Eserleri*, 4. *Cilt* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), 209.

⁵⁶ Nezihe Muhiddin, “Cumhuriyet Türk Kadınlığı üzerinde feyzi” originally in *Türk Kadın Yolu*, April 23, 1925, reprinted and transliterated in Zihnioğlu, *Bütün Eserleri*, 225.

both advance women's education and create legal and social equality, "From here on, there should be no barriers to women benefitting the same as men from the justice and duties of citizenship. According to principle, the republic knows no difference in citizenship between men and women."⁵⁷

We see here how, at the same time, the convulsions of the early republican period produced both profound anxiety about gender roles and identities, and an organized political movement on behalf of political and social equality between the sexes. These two discourses would remain in tension with one another as the Kemalist regime advanced its modernizing agenda, and the modernist cultural and political discourses surrounding gender fluidity and equality would likewise flourish in a period when much other political activism and opposition would be silenced following the passing of the Law of the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükün Kanunu*) in 1925. Following the passage of the new civil code, key members of the feminist movement continued to push back against the patriarchal elements of the new law that persisted despite its westernizing reforms, and throughout, the relationship between anxiety over gender roles and the articulation of women's individual and collective rights is clear. We will turn to the development of these discourses in this period in the next two sections.

"Are Women Becoming Men?": Sociological Explanations of Anxieties about Gender Fluidity

The idea of a "family crisis" that was driven by the changing status of women in social and cultural life was hardly new to Turkish society in the 1920s. Duben and Behar clearly identify anxieties about these kinds of shifts stretching back to the Hamidian era, and only intensifying in the second constitutional period and through the war years.⁵⁸ While, as Duben and

⁵⁷ Ibid, 226-227.

⁵⁸ Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility 1880-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Behar also delineate, reform to Turkish family life was a central tenet of Young Ottoman and Young Turk thought, many thinkers that were proponents of modernizing and westernizing the Turkish family and women's place in society expressed dread when faced with gender fluidity. Even a feminist figure like Hüseyin Rahmi [Gürpınar] would reach the height of his popularity with a 1916 play that centered on this anxiety – *Kadınlar Erkekleşince*, or *When A Woman Becomes Like a Man*.⁵⁹ The 1920s, however, witnessed an acceleration of the sorts of trends in women's roles in public life that had been a fixture of intellectual concern in the Ottoman era, and with that acceleration, some writers sought new explanations and justifications for the changes happening in Istanbul social and family life – some of which would be legitimated by Kemalist policies, some of which would not.

Echoing Gürpınar's play, the sociologist Necmettin Sadık [Sadak], published an article in February 1927, less than a year after the Turkish Civil Code was passed, that asked the question, “Are Women Becoming Men?”⁶⁰ Sadık's essay sought to push back against those who saw the changing roles of women, signified in Sadık's view by those complaining about women cutting their hair too short, as an unnatural phenomenon. Sadık, heavily informed by relatively recent currents in sociology, argued that the separation of women from men in society was a fundamentally social construction. He forcefully argued at the beginning of the essay that,

The thing that differentiates men and women that has become apparent in their personality and their relationships is not clothing, it is law. If that were so, then two centuries ago in France, where men going out into the street without a long periwig would be considered an unfortunate turn of events, they should have been approached as women!⁶¹

Sadık criticized those who argue that women's social position ought to be determined by organic (*ûzvi*) characteristics, calling them materialists (*maddiyatperestler*), and ridiculing them for

⁵⁹ Ibid, 198

⁶⁰ Necmettin Sadık, “Are Women Becoming Men?” *Hayat* February 3, 1927

⁶¹ Ibid

erroneously believing that women's brains are lighter than men's. The essay then turns to a somewhat didactic explanation of what social scientists (*içtimaiyat*) have said about the evolution of women's roles in the family and society, arguing that the strict separation and division of labor between the sexes was due to "a moral obligation of the institutions that have composed despotic societies [*iptidai cemiyetler*]." ⁶² Sadık gave examples of how women's roles have differentiated in pre-modern societies in far flung places like Australia and Madagascar to demonstrate that in every society "the division between men and women was manufactured." ⁶³

Sadık's criticism was directed not only towards materialists and religious fundamentalists, but also towards certain strains of contemporary psychological theory. He argued that one such psychologist known only as "Marion" was "much deceived" when they postulated that the progression of society would occasion a greater division of men and women. ⁶⁴ He cited Emile Durkheim to explain that most often the root of segregation was the result of a fear of blood, particularly the blood of women (including but not limited to menstrual blood). Following Durkheim, he argued that locating this fear in an organic substance, the artificial and irrational belief in women's segregation has become to be seen as not only a moral or spiritual imperative, but a natural one. In Sadık's view, it is for this reason – the tying together of religious morality and beliefs about the nature of organic substances – that gender segregation had persisted through the progression of societies, even as women had slowly won new rights. Sadık's primary argument implored his readers to see women's equality as a marker of social progress

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid, Sadık uses the word *ruhiyatçı* for psychologist as opposed to the loan word *sikolog* which was also in use at the time, possibly giving the term a more mystical, less scientific intonation. It is difficult to know for sure who the "Marion" is in this example, there is no textual citation, but one is inclined to believe it may have been Mary Anne Evans, a.k.a. George Eliot, the British novelist of the middle 19th century who often wrote under the pen name "Marian" and who held some views regarding women's progress, particularly in literature, that follow roughly with this sentiment.

that could be scientifically measured or observed, but in his criticism of the western psychologist and of the Russian doctor, he argued for the primacy of sociology as the discipline that represents the key to explaining and justifying the changes in Turkish society in his time. As his argument turns towards explaining the shifts in women's roles in the family, it is implied all along that realizing the artifice of gender segregation was what was needed to revolutionize and modernize Turkish society.

Sadık then detailed how the age-old conception of the family as “the father's kingdom” had faded over the previous century thanks to changes in economic life. In the old system, the family was “a type of religion” but also, “an economic institution that satisfied its needs on its own” (*kendi ihtiyaçlarını bizzat kendisi temin eden iktisadi bir müessese idi*), and so the father was both king and the boss of the factory floor. As social and economic conditions changed, presumably as a result of the industrial revolution, “the characteristics of the laws of the family have changed. The family is no longer a religion.” He explicitly tied these changes to the changes in women's roles more broadly. The breakdown of the old conjugal family was, in Sadık's view, a result of women's increasing presence in the workplace, and this led to increased rights. Likewise, he posits that “as this movement progresses there will cease to be any difference between men and women, and as women work, meaning that as the institutions that renounce and prevent them from work are abandoned and fading, it will be seen that women's organic and spiritual qualities have no effect on their position in social life.” By focusing the issue on institutions and away from superficial changes in women's appearance and presence in public life, Sadık made a political point that would be taken up by other writers in his cohort to challenge the Kemalist regime's inability to establish a comprehensive social safety net. Sadık welcomes the changes in women's dress and role in public that many would argue was spurred by Kemalist reforms, but the article makes no mention of the 1925 Hat Law, the 1926 Civil Code, or

anti-veiling campaign that were in full swing at the time of the article. Crediting economic changes with women's progress marks the ground on which a progressive opposition to the Mustafa Kemal's CHP could, and would be organized.

One figure who began operating on precisely these grounds was Sabiha Zekeriya (Sertel), a writer and social activist who edited, along with her husband Zekeriya (Sertel), the popular monthly magazine *Resimli Ay (Illustrated Monthly)*. Sabiha Sertel would go on to become a prominent figure in opposition politics on the left in the 1930s and 1940s, but her writing and editing work in the 1920s would closely tie together a celebration of the modern, stylized Turkish woman with a sharp progressive critique of both Kemalist policy and bourgeois politics more broadly. She, like Sadık and many other prominent figures, had trained in sociology, but unlike many others, she received her education in America, at the newly formed New York School of Social Work during a period that spanned the Independence War. Sabiha credited much of her intellectual growth in New York to two leading sociologists Franklin Henry Giddings and William Ogburn, who were incidentally not faculty at the School of Social Work.⁶⁵ Giddings was a veteran of the Columbia faculty and at the time held a chair in "The History of Civilization". Joining the faculty from Bryn Mawr College in 1894, he researched group theory, how civilizations developed through concepts of sympathy, and provided some theoretical firepower for the burgeoning progressive movement in the early twentieth century.⁶⁶ In his textbook, he stresses the necessity of dissent, disagreement, and skepticism to the evolution of society past the barriers of nation and race noting that,

⁶⁵ Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2015 [1968]), 42-3

⁶⁶ Giddings' principal works include *Principles of Sociology: An Analysis of the Phenomena of Association and Social Organization* (New York: Macmillan, 1896), *Democracy and Empire: with studies of their Psychological, Economic and Moral Foundations* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901) and *The Elements of Sociology: A Text Book for Colleges and Schools* (New York: The Macmillan Company 1899)

While civilization is established by sympathetic and formal like-mindedness, a social organization that is no longer fixed, unyielding... but is becoming ever more variable, flexible, adaptable, in a word, progressive, is a product of unlike-mindedness, discussion, and agreement, and of the resulting rational like-mindedness.⁶⁷

Giddings was also an early proponent of women's education at Columbia; he arrived there from women-only Bryn Mawr, and often agreed to speak at Barnard. He even beseeched University President Seth Low to open Columbia enrollment to women mere months after joining the faculty in 1894.⁶⁸ Sabiha's course of study at the New York School of Social Work would earn her a diploma in Case Work, most likely with a focus on Child Welfare.⁶⁹ The curricular requirements for that diploma included courses on method, dealing with children in delinquency and with handicaps, the historical development of child welfare, psychopathology, community organization and other electives that would fill out the degree program.⁷⁰ Also instrumental to the social work program was fieldwork, which Sabiha completed at the Lexington Community Center, where she became completely enamored by the stories of immigrants who had flooded Manhattan's Lower East Side in recent years. Sabiha recalled in her memoir,

[This place] would be an unbelievable subject for a novelist. How they came to America, what circles did they come from, how were they exploited, how they were clawing their way out, the stories of longing for their home country that we heard, these records were loaded with the stories of life.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Giddings, *Elements of Sociology*, 290-291

⁶⁸ Franklin Henry Giddings to Seth Low June 5, 1894, *Columbiana Archives – Central Files* Giddings, Franklin Henry Box 321 Folder 20 *CURBML*

⁶⁹ Sertel indicates that she studied "Case method (*yakia üsulu*)" in her memoir, but a review of course bulletins from those years at the school indicate the degree program would have been in Case Work, and I have inferred from the content of her later writings and training that she likely chose the subfield degree path in Child Welfare. *Roman Gibi*, 44, "New York School of Social Work Course Bulletin 1922-1923" Archive of the Columbia University School of Social Work 1898-1999, Box 2, Folder 18 Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York (*CURBML*)

⁷⁰ "New York School of Social Work Course Bulletin 1922-1923" Archive of the Columbia University School of Social Work 1898-1999, Box 2, Folder 18 *CURBML*

⁷¹ Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, 46. It should be mentioned that despite Sertel's colorful description of her work on Lexington Avenue, there is no record of a cooperative agreement between the New York School of Social Work and the Lexington Community Center, nor was the center listed in the

This experience was both a capstone to an intellectual training in sociology and an impetus to get involved with the Turkish-American community by helping establish the Turkish Welfare Association (*Türk Teaviin Cemiyeti*).⁷²

With this background, Sabiha and Zekeriya, who had studied at the Columbia School of Journalism and prior to that had studied under Emile Durkheim at the Sorbonne, set out in 1924 on a journalistic mission to “raise the level of the culture” in Turkey.⁷³ *Resimli Ay* and other Sertel publications, including *Resimli Perşembe (Thursday Illustrated)*, *Resimli Hafta (Illustrated Weekly)*, and, for a short time, the flagship daily *Cumhuriyet (The Republic)*, were organized so that they might reach the widest possible readership and extend beyond the urban elite if at all possible. As Sertel elaborated in her memoir, “At that time in our country eighty percent could not read or write, only half had been in school, intellectuals had neglected to enlighten those eighty percent, explaining democracy to them was the first goal.”⁷⁴ This goal would become an even more prominent focus after the 1928 letter reform (*Harf İnkılabı*). Mehmet Zekeriya wrote a disclaimer in the first Latin-character issue of *Resimli Perşembe*, “Each page should be able to

directory of the New York Charity Organization Society’s Directories in that period. It is altogether possible Sertel is misremembering the name of the organization since the School of Social Work did partner with a few immigrant organization, including the Travelers Aid Society. “New York School of Social Work Course Bulletin 1922-1923” *op. cit.*, Linda D. Miller, *Directory of Social Agencies of New York* 31st edition, (New York: Charity Aid Organization 1922)

⁷² The Turkish Welfare Association was in some ways the successor to the Ottoman Welfare Association, which had previously served the social needs of all Ottoman immigrants to the United States. After the defeat of the Ottomans in World War I, new associations began to crop up representing the various ethnicities and nations that were formed in the wake of the Ottoman’s collapse, see Kemal H. Karpat, “Turks in America” *Les Annales de l’autre Islam* Volume 3, 1995, 234-235

⁷³ Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, 80

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

be read in five or ten minutes. The arguments that we have advanced in past issues are finished.”⁷⁵

Beginning with its first issue in February 1924, *Resimli Ay* articulated this synthetic vision of the new Turkish woman. It did so by providing two multi-issue series’ on “The Beauties of the East” (“Şark Güzelliler”) and “Today’s Turkish Women” (“Bügünkü Türk Kadınlar”). These large photographic spreads with short descriptions were juxtaposed with articles by Sabiha Sertel and others that would directly attack bourgeois lifestyle for being inattentive to the problems the urban poor of Istanbul were facing at the time. The articulation of this synthetic experience, the framing of explosive political issues with superficially de-politicized images and profiles of women, was first instantiated in the format of *Resimli Ay* and would later become a common editorial tactic as debates over ethnicity, class, race and gender would intensify in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁷⁶

Resimli Ay set out immediately with its vision for the new Turkish woman. The series “Today’s Turkish Women” (fig. G-J) the Sertels provided images and descriptions of Turkish women on stage, screen, in the workplace, and in school. The first two women, representing women in the arts, had by that time reached a measure of fame as the co-stars of the 1923 film *Ateşten Gömlek (The Shirt of Flame)* which was based on Halide Edib’s famous account of the War of Independence and directed by Muhsin Ertuğrul (Fig. G, H). Bedia Hanım (aka Bedia Muvahhit) and Münire Hanım (aka Neyyire Neyir) were pioneers in Turkish film as the first

⁷⁵ Mehmet Zekeriya, *Resimli Perşembe* No. 184, 29 Teşrinisani 1928 (November 29, 1928)

⁷⁶ A. Holly Shissler has examined the utilization of this tactic in the pages of *Cumhuriyet (The Republic)* a daily newspaper with a wider distribution than any of the Sertels’ publications (though Zekeriya Sertel was among the founders of the paper, he left the publishing group very early on in 1924), and greater sympathy with the Kemalist regime, with regards to the social reforms of the late 1920s and early 1930s and the first Turkish beauty contests in “Beauty Is Nothing To Be Ashamed Of: Beauty Contests as Tools of Women’s Liberation in Early Republican Turkey” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* Vol. 24, No. 1 2004, 107-122

females to appear on screen. The next two images, a woman at work and a student at the Dar-ül fünün, were perhaps less recognizable, but depict women achieving a level of prominence in a number of ways.



Fig. G: “Bediye Hanım, Woman on Stage” *Resimli Ay* No. 1 February 1924 (Photo credit: Foto Film Kemal)

The accompanying text for Bedia Hanım’s photograph describes with great drama and verbosity the dangers and heroisms of the stage. The article depicts the appearance of Bedia Hanım on the stage for a recent production from the Manakyan Theater Company as one instance of the manifestation of the heroic glory of the Turkish revolution. She is also praised for preserving her Armenian dialect of Turkish (*Ermeni lehçesinin Türkçe*) that must be “protected from the hypocrite of the *şeriat*”.⁷⁷ By situating the continuing power of the revolution in its reenactment on stage, presumably through stage and later film productions of Halide Edib’s *Ateşten Gömlek*, the author holds up Bedia Hanım, and later her stage and screen counterpart Münire Hanım, as the personification of the Turkish struggle.

Münire Hanım, who was at the time married to the director of *Ateşten Gömlek*, Muhsin Ertuğrul, was the subject of the next profile in this series. The author’s obvious astonishment at the accomplishment of having women on screen does at times steep to a patronizing level, “Women in our lives have been breaking their cages, a bit similar to a chick pecking away at the shell of its egg,” but ultimately Münire’s performance in *Ateşten Gömlek*, particularly the way she withstood the pain of her character Kezban’s return to Izmir after it had been sacked by the invading Greek army, related a powerful image that had the ability to galvanize society to all sorts of social changes. To relive the still fresh experience of the Turkish War of Independence through Münire’s performance exemplified to the author how “women on screen have begun to clean and purify us as well.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ “Bügünkü Türk Kadınlar – Sahne’de Kadın” *Resimli Ay* Vol. 1 No. 1 February 1924

⁷⁸ “Bügünkü Türk Kadınlar – Sinema’da Kadın” *Resimli Ay* Vol. 1 No. 1 February 1924



Fig. H: “Münire Hanım – Women in Cinema” *Resimli Ay* No. 1 February 1924 (Photo credit: Foto Film Kemal)

The tenor of these profiles shifts considerably with the next two articles, dealing with women at work and women as university students. In the “Women at Work” column the author, and the accompanying photograph (Fig. I), address women’s roles in a more general way than in the first two profiles of actresses. The author is pained by the paucity of women in the workplace, but also sensitive to the barriers society has put in place. The author mentions the cynical perception that women might only want to work in a store or a workshop as a cover for a decadent club-lifestyle, “women coming from a humble class waiting at the front of a store or workshop may be mistaken for women going to a narrow water and *şerbet* club.”⁷⁹ The author is also sensitive to the suggestion that by encouraging women to work that it would be acceptable for women to even work amongst the “class of black-faced trash collectors’ (*yuzkarasını teşkil eden çopcular sınıfı*), but insists that no one would want that.⁸⁰ The vision of the Turkish woman at work, while being drastically redefined in this article, is still limited by bourgeois sensibilities. She can apply herself as a shopkeeper or telephone operator, or even aspire to embody the Kemalist revolution on screen, but heaven forbid she stoop to pick up garbage.

⁷⁹ “Bügünkü Türk Kadınlar – İste Kadın” *Resimli Ay* Vol. 1 No. 1 February 1924

⁸⁰ *Ibid*



Fig. I: “Woman at Work” *Reismlî Ay* No. 1 February 1924

In the final profile in the series, “Woman at School”, the issue of materialism comes to the foreground. The profile is accompanied by a photograph of Şehime Hanım, a student at the Dar ülfünün in Istanbul (Fig. J) who is dressed in a trench coat and head covering with a stylish, bulky purse. The article begins by commenting on the long distances some university students

must travel to school, and how this particular woman evidences that despite the distance the university life can be quite idyllic. Şehime's bag is described as "elegant" (*zarif*) and the students generally are considered to be heralding an "ornamental age" (*bir zinti haline getirmiştir*). Ultimately, the article concludes with a probing question for its readers, "how happy are they?"⁸¹ The author might concede the values of education, but the materialist atmosphere is clearly off-putting.



Fig. J – “Şehime Hanım, Student at Istanbul University (Dar-ül Fününde Talebesinde)” *Resimli Ay* February 1924

⁸¹ “Bügünkü Türk Kadınlar – Mektebde Kadın” *Resimli Ay* Vol. 1 No. 1 February 1924

“Today’s Turkish Woman” was juxtaposed with another photographic series, this one without the accompanying texts, which tacitly compared the images of the contemporary Turkish women with women of other eastern communities. “Beauties of the East” (“Şark Güzelliler”) ran over the first two issues and featured reprints of photographs by a Moscow art studio, Photo d’Art Moscou, and a French photography studio, Foto Fransız. Within the set, three of the idealized eastern beauties, one Turk, one Armenian, and one Greek, were implicitly compared to the first photograph of the “contemporary” (*yevmi*) beauty whose over-the-shoulder dress and stylish locket would not have been out of place in certain *gazinos* or nightclubs in Beyoğlu, or for that matter, the cover of *Resimli Ay*, but posed a striking comparison to both the images of the other eastern beauties and to “Today’s Turkish Women”.⁸²

The first photo in the series in many ways could have been a model for many of the covers of *Resimli Ay* going forward. This model is shown in an elegant gown bearing her shoulders and sporting a metal locket of some sort around her neck. She’s facing directly at the camera with a sultry half-smile. Many of the illustrations on the cover of *Resimli Ay* would reflect similar aesthetics. The description of a “contemporary beauty” (*yevmi güzeli*) connotes a sense of convention, if not ideal, for feminine beauty. Seen on its own, it would be hard to read this image as much other than an idealized image, but in juxtaposition with the rest of the images in this series, and with the aforementioned “Today’s Turkish Women” series, it becomes hard to discern what sort of value is being placed on being “contemporary” other than it is representative of a fashion trend, and a foreign one at that.

⁸² For an in-depth perspective on the fashions and happenings at one such *gazino* see G. Carole Woodall, “Sensing the City: Sound, Movement and the Night in 1920s Istanbul” Ph.D. diss. New York University Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, 2008, 120-128

The second image in the series differs drastically from both the image of the “contemporary beauty” and “Today’s Turkish Women” in that it features a woman in what could clearly be described as “traditional” dress. *Resimli Ay* frequently discussed head coverings and veils in its first two issues in a series on “head-fashions” (*başlık modaları*), but the image of this “Turkish Beauty” does not utilize any of the high-fashion styles promoted in those articles. Her nearly all-white clothing and her body position, gazing downward into her arms as if caring for a child, suggest a more traditional conception of beauty than her “contemporary” partner. However, given the same description of beauty, and that the photos came from the same Moscow art studio, one could say that the intimate compassion evoked by this image rests on a value-neutral plane with the “contemporary beauty.” It should also be remembered that despite their vast differences that these images are all equally classified as “eastern” as much as they are said to be beautiful. In this way, I believe the editors were not exactly self-orientalizing, but rather out to showcase ethnically diverse conceptions of beauty that included both the traditional, the modern, the pious and the secular.

The next two images come from the second issue of *Resimli Ay*, in March 1924. The first in this issue is the “Armenian Beauty” who is staged in profile with a knitted winter hat and scarf. This woman’s stouter figure and less-luxurious outfit stand again in contrast with both the images from the first issue. When considered in tandem with the call to preserve Bedia Hanım’s Armenian dialect, there seems to be an attempt on the part of the editors to decenter ethnicity from both their conceptions of beauty and from their conceptions of what a modern woman was meant to be. Beauty and ethnicity, in both series, are set apart as innate qualities independent from a woman’s career or their material choices. The same then goes for the second image in this issue, of a “Greek Beauty”. This woman is depicted sitting down wearing a sporty blouse and a locket-bracelet that is somewhat reminiscent of the necklace of the “contemporary beauty”. To

have these women, representative of the nations against which Turkey fought its Independence War, presented here on an equal plane with a traditionally dressed “Turkish beauty” and an ethnically ambiguous “contemporary beauty” suggests that the magazine is attempting to break down or halt rising ethno-centric nationalism. At the very least, these images, in conversation with the discussions of “Today’s Turkish Woman” demonstrate a clear diversification of what a modern woman *could* be.

There is a second level of contrast, however, that highlights the way *Resimli Ay* valued a modernist approach to feminine beauty, aesthetics, and the social role of women under a republican system. In early issues, *Resimli Ay* contrasted these images and profiles of modern women with the state of women under Ottoman rule, and especially women who were subject to enslavement in the imperial harem. The second issue of *Resimli Ay*, the same that had featured the “Contemporary Beauties” series, one of the central articles was a profile of the imperial harem that ran under the headline, “In the Palace Years, Thousands of Concubines were Hidden in an Industry of Prostitution and Disgrace.”⁸³ The article describes the decadent lifestyle of the imperial harem, including abundant food, colorful flowers, beautiful concubines, and, “eunuchs moving amongst the beauties like black dots passing out apples on silver trays, wine in gilded cups, and a thousand and one types of *meze* on golden platters.”⁸⁴ The article relates tales from former courtesans of Sultan Selim II (1524-1574), who was renowned for his orgiastic lifestyle, but insists that, “Up to Vahdettin [the final sultan] the sultans lived in the same filth (*levs*) and the same disgrace.”⁸⁵ The article was buttressed by photographic portraits of two veiled concubines, another of an imperial eunuch (described as “The palace’s most miserable and unlucky creatures [*zavallı ve badabahat mahlukları*], the eunuchs”), and a drawing of a sultan with his two advisers

⁸³ [Unsigned] “Saray senesinde binlerce cariye saklayan bir fuhuş ve rezalet sanayi idi” *Resimli Ay* No. 2, Mart 1340 (March 1924), 20-24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 21

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

overseeing a pool filled with naked women. The article does not stop at the lengthy denunciation of the Sultan's debauchery, however. In its final paragraphs the article notes that although the sultan and his immediate family have been exiled, "they have left behind a large and heavy inheritance [*miras*] to the nation: the palace and those who lived in the palace."⁸⁶ Describing the seriousness of the situation, the article notes, "Still, up to today, there are left in the nation's supervision 1,500 concubines, who have lived for no purpose other than the enjoyment and delight of the sultan. They have been living by taking money from the purses of the nation's poor."⁸⁷ The article is sympathetic to the prospects of the palace's recently unmoored denizens, and closes with critique of the current government's poor handling of the situation, "How did the republic make this comical contradiction lawful? This nation that destroyed the sultanate, and also destroyed the life of the palace, should also, like a sultanate, bring an end to this palace lifestyle."⁸⁸

In this example, we begin to see how *Resimli Ay*'s aesthetic vision and social politics were interwoven with one another. This magazine, which represented the editorial vision of the Sertels, offered a westernized, modern vision of a new Turkish woman while, at the same time, highlighting the ways in which the current regime was falling short in the work of piecing the country back together after a decade of war. It heralded the fall of the despotic Ottoman sultans, but held great sympathy for the palace workers who now found themselves stranded. It championed the hard-won Turkish independence, but was more accepting of ethnic and religious diversity than many in the regime. In an era when there was precious little room to articulate opposition or criticism of the regime's policies, Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel found a way to

⁸⁶ Ibid, 24

⁸⁷ Ibid, there is also a photograph on the previous page depicting an exterior of a brick home, and despairing women and children that is captioned, "While those who take taxes live in debauchery and disgrace, those who give taxes continue to live in this ruin."

⁸⁸ Ibid.

maximize their position and begin forming a reading public that would stick with them as they became more openly critical of Kemalist politics in the 1930s and 1940s.

Women's Liberation and Progressive Politics

Sabiha Sertel's first editorial enterprise in the *Resimli* era was an exposé on child welfare and mortality entitled "Where are we going? Are we informed of the most frightening dangers posing our society?"⁸⁹ In this article both Sabiha's sociological training and her politically progressive experience in America are evident. It is also a strong reaction to her shock upon her return to Ankara and Istanbul after nearly four years abroad, when her country was torn apart by war. Describing her return to Ankara in her memoir she writes, "Trash was piled up on each street corner... The shops were empty. The people were tired. The burden of the national war for independence was borne on every shoulder."⁹⁰ Sabiha emphasized both verbally and visually, through the use of a pie chart and bar graph, the dire situation of Turkish children in the wake of the War of Independence. Her focus on child welfare was also deeply influenced by her familiarity with the recent history of activism in the United States on behalf of children, particularly the activities of the Children's Aid Society and Mary Harris "Mother" Jones. Repeatedly and throughout the article she emphasized the need to organize a "Children's Jihad" (*Çocuk Cihadi*), a clear reference to the "Children's Crusade" march from the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia to Oyster Bay, New York organized by Mother Jones in 1903.⁹¹ It was a call not only for protest but an acerbic appeal to the upper middle class to organize on behalf of the new nation's poor children. With the upper class in her sights, her rhetoric is shaming and accusatory,

⁸⁹ Sabiha Zekeriya (Sertel), *Resimli Ay* No. 1 Şubat 1340 (February 1924) pp. 5-9

⁹⁰ Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, *Roman Gibi* p. 65

⁹¹ For one account of this march, see C.K Macfarland, "Crusade for Child Laborers: 'Mother' Jones and the March of the Mill Children" *Pennsylvania History* Vol. 38 no. 3 July 1971, pp. 283-296

There is a place in the budget for pleasing the heart, for running from theater to theater, from cinema to cinema for dresses and toiletries, but for helping children there isn't a single space in the budget... In the country, for each act of molestation, for each screaming child with tears in their eyes, there is a footmark in the heart of every mother. Those who are sitting in their comfortable chairs, can you not see these children through the smoke of your cigars?⁹²

She also sought to galvanize women to organize by appealing to their recently won social agency,

Whose job is it to establish this organization? Must we wait for the boys for this as well? Did women citizens not win the right to establish such an organization?.. The power to reduce this pain and suffering [of children] from ninety-five percent to fifty five percent is in your hands. We do not want your money, we want only your hearts and your time, in the streets (the Americans will come to our aid in saving our children) are the screaming women who are of your same sex.⁹³

This dialogue echoes the language of the late nineteenth century German thinker August Bebel, whom Sabiha Zekeriya had read during her time in New York and would go on to translate in the mid-1930s, "The moment woman acquires equal rights with man, the sense of her duties will be quickened. Called upon to cast her ballot, she will ask, What for? Whom for?"⁹⁴

Bebel's influence on Sabiha Zekeriya's conceptions of socialism and feminism were unparalleled. It was first assigned to her in one of her classes with William Ogburn, and aided her greatly in understanding the weight placed on women by men, the nation and society at large. As she says in the introduction to her translation, "I had been shown the pressures on women in my own country and I had borne the weight of their exploitation. It was in this state of mind that I read this book," and she goes on to describe reading the text as a true social awakening, "I witnessed in front of my eyes the evidence and circumstances of why and how the women of my

⁹² Sabiha Zekeriya (Sertel) "Nereye Gidiyoruz?.." *Resimli Ay* no. 1 Şubat 1340, 8

⁹³ Ibid, p. 9. One should note that I have translated the Turkish word *erkekler* as "boys" here to emphasize Sabiha Zekeriya's galvanizing tone. While at most times *erkek* is translated as "male" or "man" there is no single word in Turkish for a generic young male and the word for child, *çocuk*, is non-gendered. Sabiha Zekeriya clearly wanted to infantilize her targets as irresponsible and only concerned with their own entertainment, and for this reason I have translated in this way to emphasize that characterization.

⁹⁴ August Bebel, *Women Under Socialism* Daniel De Leon trans., (New York, Schocken Books 1971), 224

country, and the whole world, had anguished.”⁹⁵ This is clear evidence of the staying power of Sabiha’s formative experience in New York. Additionally, the choice to translate this German philosopher’s work, and mention by name the American sociologists who had assigned it to her signals Sabiha’s self-representation as a transnational, as opposed to national, champion of women’s justice.⁹⁶

By the end of the 1920s, Sabiha Sertel would emerge as the leading female critic of the Kemalist government from the left, but she would not be alone. As Kathryn Libal has shown, Sabiha’s work with the Turkish Women’s Union, and with the Children’s Protection Society (*Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti*) connected her to Turkey’s most prominent women activists, including Nezihe Muhiddin and Suat Derviş.⁹⁷ The reforms of the mid-1920s would not dampen feminist critiques of the state, and here, again, many women writers found it necessary to address the issue of male-female difference. Nezihe Muhiddin had fallen out with the Turkish Women’s Union in 1927, and by the mid-1930s retreated almost entirely into writing novels, but her 1931 book *The Turkish Woman (Türk Kadını)* was a definitive statement of her feminist principles, and more than her previous work, assailed the social needs that afflicted women across the country. Her

⁹⁵ Sabiha Zekeriya, “Bir Kaç Söz” in August Bebel, *Kadın ve Sosyalizm* translated from English to Turkish by Sabiha Zekeriya Istanbul, Nakit Gazete-Matbaa Kütüphanesi 1935, 4

⁹⁶ Despite Sabiha Sertel’s foundational importance to the development of the contemporary Turkish feminist movement, it is important to note that she never explicitly defined herself in those terms, which is typical of those influenced by positivist sociology in her time. Sabiha Sertel, like Ziya Gökalp, recognized the fundamental value of women’s equal participation in society and tied her arguments about gender to class very tightly, but rejected the utopian connotations that the term “feminism” implied at this time. See Aylin Ozman and Ayşe Bulut, “Sabiha (Zekeriya) Sertel: Kemalizm, Marxizm, ve Kadın Meselesi” *Toplum ve Bilim* Vol. 96, 2003, 184-218.

⁹⁷ Sabiha Sertel’s class politics is addressed in more depth in the next chapter, as well as in Kathryn Libal, “Transatlantic Connections in the Making of a Socialist-Feminist Framework for Social Work in Turkey: The Legacy of Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel” in *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 27:3, 328-337, “The Children’s Protection Society: Nationalizing Child Welfare in Early Republican Turkey” in *New Perspectives on Turkey* Fall 2000:23, 53-78, and “‘The Child Question’: The Politics of Child Welfare in Early Republican Turkey” in Michael Bonner, Mine Eder, and Amy Singer, eds., *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 255-272.

introduction mocked and lamented the assumption – mostly held by men – that the differences between men and women had been completely erased by the dress and civil code reforms,

Everywhere you go these days the word from the fashionable ones is, ‘what difference is there between us?’ If you get on the tramway, a man is sitting in the place allotted us by the municipality. Not wanting to get up, he says, “what difference is there between us?” and turns to the window. You might even guess that a woman has possessed the same muscular and physical power as a man!⁹⁸

For Muhiddin, the focus on sartorial reform was superficial, and had essentially lulled both women and men into a sort of complacency about women’s rights precisely because it emphasized a sort of gender fluidity that was unidirectional – meaning, women’s advancement in society and gaining of rights came with the consequence of dressing, speaking, and acting according to masculine norms. “We have begun to see the propensity of the new woman that dresses like a man, thinks like a man, and lives like a man. I view this development as harmful,” she wrote.⁹⁹ Muhiddin’s argument rested on the definition of gender difference that emphasized the distinct social needs of women, and a feminism that equally balanced equality in terms of rights and social needs. For Muhiddin the greatest social need that had yet to be addressed was proper care for mothers. In *The Turkish Woman* she recalled an interview she had published in *Türk Kadın Yolu* with a village woman, named Hanife, who told her of the high mortality rate for women during and after childbirth, and the effects of other diseases in her small village of ten homes. Hanife reported that her uncle had three daughters who died during or after childbirth, that many children had died of smallpox, but had avoided cases of consumption. When asked about what the villagers did to help those who had contracted malaria and rabies, Hanife described a malaria cure made of garlic and willow leaves and a ritual spell that supposedly cured rabies. After relaying the story, Muhiddin turned back to her audience, “This lack of knowledge

⁹⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, original, 1931, reprinted in Zihnioğlu, *Bütün Eserleri*, 305

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 306-7

and ignorance is not only in the villages, is the ratio in the cities of well-nourished women to those sickened by rusting plumbing that small?”¹⁰⁰

Muhiddin closed her introduction with a crystalline portrait of the crossroads to which the Turkish feminist movement had come, and highlighted the need to oppose the logic of many of the Kemalist efforts to “modernize” its women,

If the new woman sees no need for society, then little goal other than to work side by side in men’s professions is to be found. Because she wants to live independently like a man, to be liberated like him, to freely walk around and enjoy herself... In the period of economic crisis, when men have shown an inability to feed the birds in his nest, it is necessary that we demonstrate the capability of women to work as well.

This view of mine is a summary of the thoughts on the equilibrium in our public life. Otherwise, I am one who believes it is necessary to see women take up every profession. Women should be able to feel the wealth of enlightenment and management her own life whether it is as a doctor, lawyer, merchant, bureaucrat, teacher, artist, a deputy or even yet a minister. However, if every woman’s goal was only to be a doctor, engineer, lawyer, merchant, artist, deputy, minister, or record holder and only that, then the harmony of our creation would be gone.

A happier life in our country, and the elevation of women is one of the most important conditions of the powerful path of our great revolution. However, that does not have the meaning of women’s elevation, the likeness to men, and the removal of the difference between them... Women will be able to purify themselves of their special and unique qualities, of the old dirt of their superstition and legends, of the rust and mold when they are able to powerfully wield the human and civil rights that have passed and will pass into their hands.

“What difference is there between us?” “The difference is gone!” are superstitious words. This is the way I understand true feminism.¹⁰¹

By assailing the masculine and bourgeois character of women’s emancipation in the 1920s, writers like Muhiddin and Sertel provided a view of politics outside the “patriarchal bargain.” Their political advocacy sought to build institutions that empowered women to make their own social, political, and cultural choices, while the rest of their work – especially Sertel’s in *Resimli Ay* and Muhiddin’s novels like *Benliğim Benimdir* (*My Self is Mine*) – was suffused with visions

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 307-8

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 309-10

of a society of independent women couched in an *au courant* modernist, bourgeois aesthetic. In this way, we can see how the leading figures of Turkey's young feminist movement both harmonized with and reverberated against the basic tenets of the Kemalist revolution. Moreover, they offered women a view on modernity authored by women, standing apart from the male-led Kemalist "liberation" movement.

CHAPTER THREE: Preparation for a Devolution? The Liberal Republican Party Experiment

In the first decade of the Turkish republic there were two serious attempts at forming an opposition party to Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party (CHP). The story of the first, the conservative-leaning Terrakiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası (TCF), emerged in late 1924 after the establishment of the republic. It lasted until the early days of summer in 1925, when in the wake of a Kurdish rebellion and suspected murder plots against Mustafa Kemal, it was disbanded, and its leaders banished into exile or sent to prison following a series of Independence Tribunals. It is clear from the scholarship on this period that the seven-month-long rise and fall of the TCF represented the culmination of a power struggle within the upper echelons of the nationalist movement, and signaled Mustafa Kemal's final, radical break from the more moderate elements of the Young Turk (or "Unionist") movement that had held sway over the final years of Ottoman reign.¹⁰² The two years following 1925 would see the tightest control Mustafa Kemal imposed over the public sphere – censorship and imprisonment of opposition figures was high between 1925 and 1927 – as well as to his most aggressive social and cultural reforms.

Following the institution of the script reform in November of 1928, censorship laws loosened, and some measure of political space was opened up to previously suppressed figures. However, the 1929 stock market crash and ensuing global recession hit Turkey particularly hard. Having barely scratched its way out of a decade of near-constant warfare primarily through economic partnership with the USSR and state-driven policies, the Turkish economy suddenly seemed left in the lurch. In the eyes of Mustafa Kemal, this crisis demanded a political solution. By the summer of 1930 he arrived at the idea that in order to let off the steam building amidst politicians and the public who were weary of high taxes and a sagging economy, he should invite

¹⁰² Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, and *Political Opposition in the Early Turkish Republic*, Özöglü, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, and Hanioglu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography*

his close friend Ali Fethi Okyar, a former Prime Minister who was currently serving as ambassador to France, to form an opposition party that would adhere closely to Kemalist principles, but offer a more liberal economic alternative in parliament to the étatist policy preferences of the prime minister, İsmet İnönü. Okyar accepted the invitation, presented in early August during a state dinner at Kemal's summer home in Yalova, and proceeded to form Turkey's second officially sanctioned opposition party, the Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası (Liberal¹⁰³ Republican Party, SCF), with the help from a few prominent intellectuals, chiefly the Azeri-born architect of many Turkish nationalist policies Ahmet Ağaoğlu, and politicians, including and a young Adnan Menderes and the statesman and banker Celal Bayar, the future leaders of the Democrat Party.¹⁰⁴

The SCF in actuality would have an even shorter life than its predecessor, the TCF. After forming in August of 1930, it was shut down a less than four months later. The story of the SCF until now has mainly been told from a national perspective, focusing on the elite discourse in the press and parliamentary debates. From this perspective, it is easy to see the many mistakes made

¹⁰³ The word *serbest* is sometimes also translated as “free” in relation to this party, as Weiker did in his book, but I have translated it here as “liberal” – despite the fact that this word itself was available in the Turkish lexicon at the time as a loan word – because, as described by Özavcı, *serbest* traditionally was used to connote material freedoms such as freedom of education or of information, whereas another word, *hürriyet*, more often referred to abstract freedoms. While the two are sometimes interchangeable, the fact that this new party was only permitted to express new policy ideas in the realm of material concerns – trade and the economy – it is quite clear that a specific tradition of economic liberalism was meant to be referenced by this term. Though, curiously, Özavcı himself subscribes to the “Free Party” translation despite his otherwise expert lexical precision. See, H. Ozan Özavcı, “Liberalism in the Turkish Context and Its Historiography: Past and Present” *Anatolian Studies* vol. 62, 2012 p. 141-151. Notably, Kemal Karpat typically referred to the SCF as the “Liberal Party,” see, inter alia, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to the Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 64-5, and the earliest reference to the “Liberal Republican Party” is in Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Emrence has argued that the significance of the participation of these actors prefigured not only the rise to power of the DP, but that the strength of the rural bourgeoisie behind the SCF and DP would also catapult to power Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party (in the 1960s and 70s) and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (in the 2000s and present), *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası: 99 Günlük Muhalefet* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), 19, 191-200.

by party leaders as they tried to organize support within parliament and translate it to a popular movement. Hasty organization on the local level in preparation for the local elections in September and October meant poor coordination between local, regional, and national command centers. The leadership's resistance to opening an official press organ allowed government mouthpieces to dominate coverage, and allowed for the papers and journals that did support the SCF to vary widely in their messaging, ideology, criticism, and coverage. The momentum within the parliamentary elite never built up enough pressure to have a significant effect on policy discussion, despite its sometimes-rancorous tone. This perspective, as is described comprehensively in Walter Weiker's 1973 study of the SCF, has a great many strengths in that it provides the backbone of the political narrative of the SCF experience, and serves nicely to exemplify the connections between it and those of the Democrat Party elite less than two decades later. Its weakness, however, is in its uncritical assessment of the way in which the SCF experience helped to organize local opposition to the CHP. Weiker's narrative focuses mainly on the conflict in parliament in terms of real ideological differences. This is a crucial contribution, but the lopsided power politics at the elite level do not do enough justice to the real strength and character of the political organization on the ground, and away from the parliamentary squabbles. Such a perspective has the (perhaps unintended) effect of depicting this experiment in multiparty politics as doomed from the start.¹⁰⁵ The main purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate, through a

¹⁰⁵ Weiker's study, *Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey: The Free Party and its Aftermath* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), has some advantages over the following chapter. Weiker's account of the SCF episode at the national level is accurate, and heavily sourced from parliamentary records, the press, memoirs, and accounts relayed in interviews with SCF members who have long passed. There is not sufficient space in this chapter to provide more than a brief overview of the national story of the SCF, and I am not out to challenge Weiker's narrative exactly, but I do think that his evaluation of the SCF at the local level is colored by this bird's eye perspective. Weiker was lucky to have interviewed a few former SCF chairmen from provinces like Antalya and Izmir, but in terms of archival material of the party itself, he was only able to draw on SCF files from one province, the Black Sea town of Samsun, which was relatively anomalous in terms of party strength, and even then, only appears to have suggested scant details to fill out his larger argument.

reading of the SCF's local files, and through narratives of SCF supporters who were not themselves members of parliament (or even party members), the real democratic potential for a truly independent opposition party to emerge in this crucial moment in Turkey's history.

By largely taking a ground up view of the SCF experience, this chapter highlights the ways in which the SCF, despite its disappointing showing in the municipal elections, and ineffective opposition in parliament, was successful at bringing together local opponents of CHP policies from all levels of society, and mobilizing them through local political and cultural institutions – including village heads (*muhtar*) and Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*), the latter of which would be transformed from an independent organization into a party organ, the People's Houses (*Halkevleri*). It shows that the local party branches in many districts tapped into long simmering resentments of the CHP's performance. By looking first at these records of local party organizing in both urban and rural settings, and then incorporating it into the larger narrative of the SCF experience, we can understand that although the party was in disarray at the top following the municipal elections, it was not broken beyond repair and had made significant steps towards organizing a functional opposition party.

The second intervention into the narrative I offer is to adjust for the many ways in which Weiker's book is in near perfect accord with the political and historical scholarship of modernization theorists, in that it envisions the ninety-nine days of the SCF to have been the first significant step in creating a "tutelary democracy" in Turkey. This term, in Weiker's words, asserts that within a single party state, "it is possible to deliberately create conditions in which democracy can exist and economic growth and social change can continue."¹⁰⁶ By ascribing this term to the Turkish republic between 1930 and 1950, Weiker seeks to demonstrate that the Kemalist government, as an aggressively modernizing single-party state desiring of

¹⁰⁶ Weiker, *Political Tutelage*, 3

democratization, could indeed continue that modernization process apace while cultivating first a “loyal opposition” and later a functioning multiparty democracy. In many senses, Weiker is correct in this assessment, as he makes a convincing case that Mustafa Kemal self-consciously sought this line as the path towards democracy and certainly the eventual leaders of the Democrat party learned a great deal from the SCF experience and aftermath. In his assessment of the SCF’s failure, he asserts that the results of the experiment revealed that much of the aggressive modernization policies of the 1920s had failed to penetrate most of the Turkish voting public rendering the SCF, and by consequence any “loyal opposition” party, incapable of warding off infiltration of counter-revolutionaries and conservatives in its ranks.¹⁰⁷ In other words, the Turkish public was not “ready” to fulfill the promises – meaning, continuing the process of aggressive, western, secular modernization – of a “tutelary democracy.”

What I intend to show in this chapter and throughout this dissertation is that perhaps this thinking is backwards; perhaps it was Kemalism qua ruling ideology that was not “ready” to harbor a real opposition in 1930. The effect of the SCF’s closure was not only, as Weiker amply demonstrates, the beginning of an even more aggressive campaign of democratic “tutelage” but also a significant departure point for opponents of Kemalism who were henceforth increasingly vocal in their criticism of the state. Opponents of Kemalism became increasingly wary of a tutelary process that seemed, in their eyes, more an attempt to co-opt and coerce Kemalist modernity into a democratic mold than a genuinely inclusive democratic process.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Hale Yılmaz has done an excellent job demonstrating the extent to which the key cultural reforms of the Kemalist period did or did not penetrate the provincial masses, and points out, somewhat contra Weiker and other modernization theorists, that the encounter with these policies produced a range of reactions, including both negotiated compliance and counter-revolution, which, at least in the eyes of this author, demonstrate ample maturity for the handling of a multiparty democracy. Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*.

¹⁰⁸ Both Özavcı and Holly Shissler corroborate this breakup in Kemalist camp between liberals and hardliners after the SCF experience. See Özavcı, “Liberalism in the Turkish Context” and A.

Cem Emrence's study of the ninety-nine days of the SCF gets closer to understanding the role of the SCF in shaping opposition politics in the 1930s and 1940s by pointing out the consistency not only in political elites but also in the constituency between SCF and future opposition parties. In his account, the rural businessmen and landowners who formed the basis of SCF support throughout western Anatolia represented a consistent opposition bloc throughout the single party era and beyond, and though they were largely accepting of some of Kemalism's cultural reforms, the statist economic policies of the twenties and the Great Depression seemed to exacerbate their opposition. Emrence and other scholars rightly note that the aftermath of the SCF experience was one that resulted in a cementing of Kemalist ideology brought on by the more radical reform processes – the policies that are often seen as the “excesses” of Kemalist nationalist modernization, such as name reform, the evolution of the Turkish History and Sun Language theories and the greater emphasis on state-led economic development, harsher policies against Kurds, and irredentism in Hatay/Alexandretta, all occur after 1930.¹⁰⁹ Whereas the eventual success of the DP in 1950 was seen in the west as a grand victory for *both* liberalism *and* Kemalism by scholars like Lewis, Berkes, and Weiker, Emrence rightly points out that, “despite its historical importance, the Liberal Republican Party has occupied a limited space in the writing of modern Turkish history. The SCF experience heralded Turkey's breaking point with the nineteenth century liberal world in favor of the authoritarian, centralized, hyper-modernist 1930s.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, I posit that beginning with this experience, the characterization of the Kemalist “modernization” efforts of the 1930's as somehow “liberal” is inherently anachronistic

Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

¹⁰⁹ Turkey's first five-year plan is adopted not long after the closing of the SCF, and likewise étatism (*devletçilik*) is cemented as one of the “six arrows” of Kemalist orthodoxy. Emrence, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, 17-18.

¹¹⁰ Emrence, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, 17-18. Emrence also points out a deficiency in Weiker's “tutelary democracy” paradigm by arguing that the widespread basis of support for the SCF, from socialists to rural bourgeoisie, was “too massive to be considered elitist or peripheral.”

as it clearly sought, above all the other putatively liberal goals of the Kemalist revolution, to transform the subjectivity of the Turkish people into one that fit a specific idea of liberal modernity.¹¹¹ In short, the means with which the Kemalist sought a liberal end were anything but.¹¹²

This chapter will look at the very beginnings of the fractures between opposition figures, the SCF and the Kemalist center in three distinct contexts. First, it examines the local-level organization of the SCF in regions in which it had strong support and an active party organization – primarily in Istanbul and the regions in and around Izmir. Second, it will look at the conduct of the municipal elections to analyze some of the serious difficulties and obstructions faced by the SCF as it tried to get out the vote in October 1930 – difficulties and failures that would in many ways precipitate the closure of the party the following month. Lastly, it will move away from the party files themselves, to look briefly at the support for the SCF in the Istanbul press. As mentioned previously, the SCF had no official press organ, but in Istanbul two publications – *Son Posta* and *Yarın* – acted as the primary outlets for publishing pro-SCF editorials, and for combatting the official government narrative prevalent elsewhere. Notably, the editors of these publications were firmly rooted in the Turkish left. *Son Posta* was edited by Zekeriya Sertel, who we might characterize at this time as a progressive social democrat with a distinctly Marxist

¹¹¹ In fact, it should call into question any assumption that Kemalism qua ideology was liberal in orientation, and strongly suggests some variety of a corporatist classification, as Andrew Davison and Taha Parla have argued. Such classification has the added benefit of seeing Kemalist modernization moving in concert with the conservative, corporatist shift in France, Italy, and Germany at this time as described by Charles Maier. Andrew Davison and Taha Parla, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*, Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*.

¹¹² This point also buttresses the idea that in the Turkish case, “modernization” was an ideology in and of itself *before* it became a “theory” that scholars like Weiker, Lewis and Lerner could apply to the multiparty project in the 1950s and 1960s. For more on the relationship between modernization theory, ideology and political practice in the later period, see Nicholas Danforth, “Malleable Modernity: Rethinking the Role of Ideology in American Policy, Aid Programs, and Propaganda in Fifties’ Turkey” *Diplomatic History* 39:3 (2015), 477-503, and Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*.

outlook, and *Yarın* was largely the work of Arif Oruç, a more hardline socialist who had previously (and would subsequently) be closely involved in communist movements against Mustafa Kemal and his party. While the SCF may not have received enough credit as it deserves for establishing a functioning political party, the same cannot be said of the absolute hash it made of cementing its support amongst opposition intellectuals. If one result of the SCF experiment was the quieting of liberal elements in the Kemalist orthodoxy, another was the way liberalism fell out of favor with opposition intellectuals of all stripes, and gave way to more radical currents – namely Stalinism, *völkisch* nationalism, and pious Islamism – in the years following the SCF’s dissolution. This latter phenomenon will be addressed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

SCF Supporters and the Party’s Organization at the Local Level

One of the main justifications for the closure of the SCF was that it could not control their supporters from acting violently, and that masses of their supporters exhibited signs of reactionary political inclinations that would have run at cross purposes with the idea of a loyal opposition party.¹¹³ As such, it is worth examining whether any justification for these claims can be found in the party archive. Largely, these claims centered on public events and expressions of support occurring in urban centers throughout the country, but the archives reveal a very different story. In this section I will examine two aspects of the party’s organization that illuminate its interaction with its supporters in order to challenge the claim that these supporters were somehow illiberal subjects and that the party was incapable of corralling violent behavior. The first aspect is direct interaction with supporters evidenced by unsolicited letters of support offered by members

¹¹³ By “loyal” opposition party, I mean that the SCF was expected to be loyal to the Turkish state, constitution, and its founder. Normally, like in the British parliament, a loyal opposition is not loyal towards a party, and in the abstract neither was the SCF, though this aspect is complicated by the fact that Mustafa Kemal was still alive, and though he had promised to remain neutral in elections, remained chairman of the Republican People’s Party. Such were the terms of the experiment.

of the Turkish public. In the files examined, these are primarily evident in the Istanbul Regional Hearth and the letters mainly come from upper middle-class figures, some of whom had formerly held some sort of position within the government regime. Though this is not necessarily reflective of the broadest support base that the SCF drew on, it does show that there were ideological reasons that social elites – lawyers, doctors, dentists, literati, etc. – supported the SCF. The second aspect takes us away from elite discourse and largely away from the urban center of Istanbul to examine party organization and activities in the farther flung districts outside of Istanbul and Izmir. In these files, we can get a clear idea of the types of individuals who made up the party bureaucracy at the grassroots level, what kind of activities they organized, and how the SCF worked within existing social structures to create party solidarity in an exceptionally short period of time. While the following analysis of the SCF archival material is far from exhaustive – only two of the Regional Hearth Presidia’s files were examined – the evidence of support provides a representative cross section of the elite and functionary members of the SCF’s operation in the regions in which they were most popular. While taking into consideration that a broad base of support would surely have posed some problems to the SCF’s hierarchy going forward, the manner in which this swift organization came together suggests at the very least that the worst fears of a reactionary wave amongst the Kemalist elite were overblown, and that the potential for forming a functioning opposition party was squandered.

Letters of Support

In the archives of the SCF, we can observe the sort of institutional and personal support the SCF received from various groups and individuals across the social spectrum. There are two things we can learn from examining these documents that are crucial to understanding the totality of the SCF’s effect on Turkish politics. First, we can better understand the reasons many people supported the SCF, and thus draw a better, but in no way comprehensive, picture of the ideology

of the SCF's base, and demonstrate the kinds of coalitions it sought to build across the ideological spectrum from liberals to conservatives to social democrats. It is critical to our understanding of opposition politics in this period to know whether and how the SCF leadership sought to build a sort of umbrella opposition to the CHP without touching the third rails of secularism and the unitary nature of Turkish nationalism. Second, we can also discern to some extent the level of the SCF's organization. It is important to the "tutelary democracy" argument that the SCF somehow had lost control of its base, and that it was unable to firmly cement the bridges it sought to build. I believe that these documents suggest that the SCF's party organization was actually quite strong, and that the reasons for the failure of the SCF should fall squarely on the prejudice against it expressed by the state, and the inability of the party leadership to navigate the elitist power struggle that followed the announcement of the experiment in August 1930.

The letters of support in the SCF archive reveal a few overarching ideological motifs from party supporters and low-level functionaries. The first is a frustration with the amount of corruption within the various state-run monopolies. For example, a letter received by the Istanbul branch addressed to Fethi Okyar in the midst of the Istanbul elections from a resident of the Pangaltı district going only by the name Fűrüzan, deplored the alcohol monopoly, stating that "the insides of this monopoly are in a seriously disastrous and putrid situation."¹¹⁴ In general, this was a concern shared by critics of the CHP from the left who were uncomfortable with the way state-private partnerships tended to lead to corruption across these monopolies, although some critics on the left also worried that the SCF's proposed reforms would only hand more power to

¹¹⁴ Fűrüzan to Fethi Okyar, October 7, 1930, Archive of the Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası, Istanbul Vilayet Ocağı Merkezi (SCF Istanbul Regional Hearth Center, hereafter SCF-IVOM), in the private collection of Ali Fethi Okyar, Büyükkada, Istanbul.

business interests without greater accountability for waste.¹¹⁵ Another intermittent motif is an appeal from obviously pious supporters praising the righteousness of Fethi's mission. One such example, from a registered party member and lawyer named M. Muammer Salih praised Fethi as a divinely inspired figure and exhorted him repeatedly to "show the path which he is commanded to tread," an allusion to the story of Moses as related in the Koran (11.112).¹¹⁶

Other letters sometimes offered unsolicited advice and assistance. One letter from a resident of Beşiktaş, going by the name Ihsan, sent to Fethi Okyar in late August alerted the party leader of efforts by the CHP to illegitimately disrupt the voting process. He surmises that "twenty-five percent of the people will participate in the election but nevertheless, poll boxes will be filled with the votes of those who would never come and the majority [meaning the CHP]... will break the spiritual power of the people." He also suggests that the CHP had been working in tandem with certain press organs and preachers (*hatipler*) to propagandize on their behalf. In order to combat this in his own precinct of Beşiktaş, Ihsan suggests the party work closely with a man named Hasan Tahsin Bey, a local organizer and member of the shop owner's association (*Bakkallar Cemiyeti*) in order to get people to the polls, and to generally work in concert as much as possible with local village chiefs (*muhtar*) for the same ends.¹¹⁷ While there is not much in this sort of letter to discern a clear ideological position, the suggestion that local shop owners, preachers, and village chiefs would be amenable to the SCF's brand of politics, in concert with a generally sour view of the CHP, is at least a vague indication that some local leaders were disposed against the CHP.

¹¹⁵ Zekeriya Sertel ultimately faced a lengthy prison sentence following the SCF closure for publishing damning stories about the state sugar monopoly in the pages of *Son Posta*, alongside articles that explicitly and implicitly endorsed the SCF.

¹¹⁶ M. Muammer Salih to Fethi Okyar September 16, 1930, SCF-IVOM

¹¹⁷ Ihsan to Fethi Okyar, August 23, 1930, SCF-IVOM

Another theme amongst the letters of support is the involvement of people who until that point had no affiliation with the CHP or any other political party. One resident of Izmir, named Mehmet Ali, who had a lot of business with merchant networks in the surrounding villages, wrote to the SCF Presidium indicating that he had never had anything to do with party politics, but considered himself a “fanatical nationalist” (*müfrit milliyetperver*) and wished to organize on behalf of the party. He particularly felt that the CHP administration had been wasteful, and “set us on the road to darkness.” He complained about how he could not speak with their members about the SCF without hearing exaggerated concerns over “arabization” (*istirab içinde inleyordu*).¹¹⁸ He reported that he had spent a significant amount of time explaining the party’s program to the villagers and had even recruited a local schoolteacher to organize on behalf of the party. Included in the correspondence was a separate written statement affirming his desire to join the party by adopting the party program “in the capacity and opinion of a secular republican and a nationalist.”¹¹⁹ Another Izmir resident, a lawyer named Nuri Sıtkı, likewise expressed his desire to enter into politics through the SCF and offered himself as a candidate in the municipal elections on their list despite the fact that, “until now the reason I have not been affiliated with any party is that it is not in my nature to have anything to do with party discipline.” It would appear that Sıtkı’s name actually had appeared already on the SCF list, and that he was happy, if surprised, to have received their endorsement, and requested that he be added to the membership roll of the party as a consequence or have his name removed from the list of candidates.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Arabization (*istirab*) here likely means concerns regarding religious politics, though admittedly it is possible here the author of the letter meant to write about “painfulness” (*istirap*), since these spellings occurred before the orthographic changes to modern Turkish were set, but in this case the context suggests otherwise.

¹¹⁹ Mehmet Ali to Liberal Republican Party Presidium, September 1, 1930, SCF Izmir Vilayet Ocağı Merkezi files (hereafter, SCF-IzVOM)

¹²⁰ Nuri Sıtkı to Liberal Republican Party Izmir Regional Hearth Administrative Council Presidium, October 12, 1930 SCF IzVOM

Looking solely at intramural, privately kept letters of support inside the SCF archive it is hard to get a clear picture of what kind of ideology bound its supporters, but it is important to note the absence of the sort of overtly radical or reactionary voices to which the party would be attached in the media establishment over the course of the election campaign. If the party had any connection or control over groups who would become violently disruptive to the party's political growth, there is no real sign of it in their internal correspondence.

Party Organization – Izmir and its Environs

Beginning in September 1930, the SCF got to work quickly to solidify a party organization at the local level throughout western Anatolia in advance of the municipal elections. Since much of the party leadership were veterans of the Turkish Hearth organizations, all party branches were also named “hearths” and worked to establish ties with other social and political groups at the local level, including village heads (*muhtar*), township boards (*nahiye*), local military branches, and educated professionals. This class of documents, perhaps unsurprisingly, makes up the vast majority of the files in the SCF archive.

The SCF had great success in quickly putting together a party organization in the regions around Izmir. One of the earliest letters in the files of the SCF's Izmir Regional Hearth Presidium (*İzmir Vilayet Ocağı Riyaseti*) is a letter of support addressed to Fethi Okyar signed, with seals, by twenty-two village heads of the city of Bergama, roughly a hundred kilometers north of Izmir. The letter expresses a sincere excitement at the formation of the party, stating,

We have spent years awaiting such an organization to give birth to the fundamental ambitions and truths of the republic. When the clarion of your party filled our horizon, that great sound, that lofty feeling of duty became apparent and we rushed to serve it. We are those who have awaited your party most impatiently.¹²¹

¹²¹ Bergama Muhtarlar to Fethi Okyar, September 1, 1930, Izmir Vilayeti Ocakları Riyaseti (hereafter SCF-IzVOR)

It is clear that the village heads of Bergama, of whom six are listed as merchants or shop-owners, had felt marginalized by the CHP's activities of late. They insisted that, "a village sits on the edge of our country. Until now... humility has not been one of the true qualities of the republic."¹²²

The seemingly spontaneous organization of these village heads and the manner in which local social organization there sprang into service of the SCF shows how the party was able to tap into general political discontent amongst rural Turks, and build off of already existing political structures like the Turkish Hearths.

Membership reports from the Bergama Hearth that follow the statement of support from the village heads demonstrate that the local leadership came from a similar class of people. In an undated list of members, likely from around the time of elections in mid-October, fifteen members are listed along with their occupations. Nine of the members, including the Hearth President Hıfzı Celal, were listed as merchants and the rest were lawyers (four), a doctor, and a pharmacist.¹²³ By early November, however, there was a transition in the leadership of the Bergama Hearth following their victory in the late October municipal elections there, reflected in a series of letters from November 6, as they sought the resignation of seven unnamed members of the administrative council (*idare hey'eti*) so that they could be replaced by two local lawyers, four new merchants, one of whom was the president of the municipality, and a farmer.¹²⁴ The correspondence indicates that there was an ideological disagreement between the members of the council, as the Hearth President Hıfzı Celal wrote, "all along, the posture and thoughts of one or the other persons have been unsuitable to our hearth council... there are a few of my friends who would be more suitable and are in a position to put together a powerful organization that works in

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ While it is clear that this document is a list of party members, the date is unclear and may have been included as an attachment to the document cited in *ibid* coming from the *muhtars* SCF-IzVOR.

¹²⁴ A short, unsigned message from the Bergama Hearth to the SCF District Hearth Presidium congratulating the party on its victory dated October 23 can be found in SCF-IzVOR.

the favor of the country and the party...”¹²⁵ While it is impossible to tell from the archives what ideological details drove this shake up, the emphasis on Hıfzı’s social circle, and the addition of more lawyers to the administrative council suggests a move towards consolidating the local party’s power and driving membership from the professional classes following the elections.

A bit closer to Izmir, in the rural district of Urla which sits to Izmir’s west between near the present-day resort town of Çeşme, we can observe an even more dense network of organization. The party files provide here a fascinating portrait of just who was involved in organizing party activities on the local level. The Urla District Hearth (*Urla Kaza Ocağı*) held its first official meeting on September 11th in a four room office that was procured in central Urla for the purposes of establishing a party headquarters.¹²⁶ At the meeting, Mustafa Nuri, a local merchant, was elected President, a local dentist by the name of Hulusi Ahmet was named Secretary, and Receptoğlu Ibrahim, a farmer, was named Treasurer.¹²⁷ By this point, the party leadership had designed a seal, made plans to take part in a celebration the following day commemorating the founding of their city, and recruited party leaders for each of the eleven neighborhoods of central Urla.¹²⁸ They had even managed to acquire the signatures of ninety-two local villagers and place six party members onto the eleven member council that would oversee

¹²⁵ Hıfzı Celal to SCF Central Hearth Presidium, November 6, 1930, also Halûk to Izmir Regional Hearth Presidium, November 6, 1930, both SCF-IzVOR.

¹²⁶ Mustafa Nuri (Urla Hearth President) to the Izmir Regional Hearth Presidium, September 11, 1930, SCF-IzVOR

¹²⁷ Ibid, the professions of these members are mentioned in a separate correspondence from Mustafa Nuri to Ekrem, a lawyer for the SCF in Izmir on September 7, 1930, SCF-IzVOR

¹²⁸ Mustafa Nuri (Urla Hearth President) to the Izmir Regional Hearth Presidium, September 11, 1930, SCF-IzVOR, Nuri felt it necessary to mention in this letter that the celebrations would be “calm” and reported the following day in a telegram sent to Fethi Okyar in Istanbul that “the people are fondly and affectionately showing their support.” Mustafa Nuri to Fethi Okyar, telegram, September 12, 1930 SCF-IzVOR.

the municipal elections (*intihap encümeni*), despite noting some difficulty in reaching out to village heads.¹²⁹

Sometime between the party's founding in early September and the end of that month, there was a shake up in the Urla Hearth when Mustafa Nuri resigned as President for reasons that are unclear from the archival material and was succeeded by Hacı Hafız zade Ibrahim Hakkı, a graduate of the law faculty, a local trader and owner of a small manufacturing outfit.¹³⁰ While the reason for this change is unclear, one could surmise that Hakkı's superior education and relationship to the business community in Urla were of greater accord with the SCF's overall strategy of appealing to business owners and rural landholders. In fact, in a detailed report from the days running up to the November election, it is clear that educational and professional resumes were important identifiers of the local SCF elite – besides the aforementioned dentist and farmer in the administration, four of the party members are listed with similar but lesser credentials, including the high school educated farmer and reserve officer Balaban zade Hamdi, or Baltalı oğlu Adil, also a farmer, who had attended law school for one year before having to leave to serve in the Turkish War for Independence.¹³¹

Once the party leadership was solidified, however, membership grew considerably in the first few weeks of October. In a report from October 5, Hearth Secretary Hülüsi Ahmet reported to the Izmir Presidium that the party had begun to conduct a membership drive in the surrounding villages of Urla, and that twenty-two sworn and sealed oaths of membership were recorded in the previous week. Inside the main city of Urla, the reported numbers were even more impressive, as eighty were recorded in the same span, bringing the total party membership in the city to 1,303

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Confirmation of Nuri's resignation from the office of Fethi Okyar is found in Okyar to SCF District Hearth Presidium, September 30, 1930, SCF-IzVOR

¹³¹ Separately reported in correspondence between Urla Hearth Council to High Regional Hearth Presidium, October 27 and November 11, 1930 SCF-IzVOR

out of an estimated population of 1,450 males.¹³² According to the same report, the CHP had begun to take note of this rise and filed motions to expel certain elite members from the party, including local lawyers and a hotelier, but this did not worry Hülüsi Ahmet much as he reported that, “we have been astounded by the organization of a significant majority amongst the junk dealers, yogurt sellers, and quilt-makers.”¹³³

There is not much in the archives of this particular hearth that allow us to characterize the ideological outlook of the party members at this level, but there is at least one clue. An early document sent to a lawyer in Urla named Ekrem from the Izmir Central Hearth President, who is unnamed in the document, provides a series of instructions as to how the party must set up operations in the region and, oddly, gives the name of the SCF as the Liberal *secular* Republican Party (Serbest lâyük Cumhuriyet Fırkası).¹³⁴ Combining this with the rest of the reported activities in the Hearth archive, which suggest that the local party was not out to rock the boat too much – particularly when they participated in elections and local civic affairs – one gets the idea that at the very least the party leaders understood the ideological bounds within which they were allowed to operate. Whether or not Ekrem or any other party leader in Urla supported secularism as a

¹³² “Report Number 3” Hülüsi Ahmet to Regional Hearth Presidium, October 5, 1930 SCF-IzVOR. The figures here are all Hülüsi Ahmet’s estimations, so should be considered with a grain of salt, but even if they are off by a significant margin, it would still leave nearly half the city’s male population as members of the party.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Izmir Central Hearth President Doctor Ekrem to Ekrem the Lawyer in Urla, September 7, 1930 SCF-IzVOM. This is somewhat confusing as both the sender and recipient of this letter are named Ekrem. Little is known about the recipient, the lawyer, but the sender is Ekrem Hayri (Üstündağ) who was the president of the Izmir Regional Hearths, handpicked by Fethi to lead the party there during his Izmir trip, would later go on to be an organizer for the Democrat Party in 1946, and Minister of Health after the DP won the 1950 parliamentary elections. See Weiker, *Political Tutelage*, 119. Additionally, one must note that it is possible that there is a typographical error and the party name is meant to be read as the Liberal noble (layık, instead of lâyük) Republican party. Turkish orthography in 1930 was hardly uniform, however the inclusion of the circumflex over the “a” and the long vowel “i” suggests a variant of “laik” (secular) which is seldom used following various reforms put forth by the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu) in the 1930s and 1940s.

principle is unclear, but we might at least assume that he could be going out of his way to emphasize the secular nature of the party as a constraint imposed by Mustafa Kemal by inserting “*lâyik*” into the name of the party.

About sixty kilometers up the coast from Urla, in the small seaside village of Karaburun, another party hearth was being organized apart from the Urla hearth. The archive includes a short, but revealing correspondence in which fourteen members of the Karaburun community petitioned Fethi Okyar for one of their “brilliant youths” by the name of Fadil to represent their hearth in the party administration. The request itself is relatively ordinary – the group also effusively praised Fethi for having “brought comfort, brought happiness and breaking the bloody and shining chains of tyranny and domination” – what is interesting is that the letter was posted not to the SCF administration, but was intended to be forwarded there by the editor of the newspaper *Yeni Asır* (*New Age*), İsmail Hakkı.¹³⁵ The request was apparently carried out by the director of the paper, H. Şevket, three days after it was received.¹³⁶ This brief correspondence demonstrates that even in areas where official party outreach could not penetrate, citizens were eager to organize on their behalf. Additionally, it shows a close relationship between newspapers who supported the party, the party administration, and of course, their readership.

As the calendar rolled towards the October elections, there were some signs, particularly in Izmir, that the party’s organization was weakening. In one instance, six party members from the İsmet Paşa neighborhood of Izmir wrote to the central hearth president in Izmir, a doctor named Hayri, complaining in effusive prose about the lack of representation from their district in front of the party’s administrative council. The authors began praising the party – which they

¹³⁵ Karaburun residents to Fethi Bey care of *Yeni Asır* editor in chief İsmail Hakkı Bey, September 10, 1930, SCF-IzVOM

¹³⁶ H. Şevket to SCF administrative council member Muştak Lutfu, September 13, 1930 SCF-IzVOM.

repeatedly described as “sacred” (*kutsi* or *mukaddes*) – and Fethi Okyar for leading the country in the causes of “free thought, free spirit, and free trade,” but quickly turned to lament the fact that because most of the inhabitants of their neighborhood – whom they number, inconsistently, between four and nine thousand – were not officially members of the party, despite their undying fealty to the SCF, their needs were not being addressed by the party’s administrative council. They insist that their local hearth had vigorously opposed “every zone where a hearth is organized apart from the central regional hearth” and had accepted the whole community by opening their hearth and “taking them into our bosom with a loyalty that even an earthquake could not shake (*layetezelezel bir sadakatla aguşumuza aldık*).”

Despite this, the complainants described a serious situation in their district in which they had gone at least a week without being able to procure oil necessary to provide their community with heat or light. Furthermore, the person whom they had sent to the central hearth to advocate on their behalf had been accused of an unspecified impropriety by the council that “brings doubt upon the honor and dignity (*namus ve şeref*)” of their representative. The letter demanded that the identity of the accuser be revealed before listing a series of demands that amount to a request that the neighborhood be given greater local autonomy in its administration, particularly that whomever was to be responsible for rationing in their district be a member of their own community. It is clear that while the party and its ideology had maintained a connection with this group – the praise of the party leaders is truly effusive, Fethi is described as a man who “has a conscience, a heart, a spirit and all of the pure characteristics that we see in ourselves” – it is also clear that the party organization was running into some administrative difficulties by late September. Unfortunately, there is no other correspondence on this issue in the SCF archive, but

it does show that while things appear to have been run smoothly in farther outlying districts like Urla and Bergama, more densely populated areas might have been more difficult to administer.¹³⁷

While information on the makeup of the local party leadership is definitely uneven – not every hearth's files provide the kind of peek inside hearth administration as the files on Bergama and Urla do – we can discern even more about the strength of the party organization by looking at the files that pertain directly to the elections, as we will in the next section of this chapter.

The Municipal Elections: Propaganda, Conflict, and Voting Fraud

As the Municipal Elections moved on from September contests in the provinces to the major cities like Istanbul and Izmir in early October, concerns about vote fraud and corruption ran high within the SCF establishment. These concerns came atop the already confusing situation created by the new Municipal Law that devolved authority over local elections down to officials at the lowest levels, making the already hurried task of assembling SCF lists difficult. The voting procedure itself was changed significantly, ostensibly to guarantee impartiality at the polls, such that each voter would choose a ballot from either of the two parties, and affix their name, address, signature or seal to the ballot before dropping it in the box. As we saw in the case of the Urla SCF files above, some party branches had done an efficient job of organizing the creation of seals for voters across their district – and perhaps consequently, Urla was one of the thirty districts in which the SCF was victorious.¹³⁸ There is little evidence to suggest, however, that this level of preparation was uniform across the local hearth organizations. Ultimately, the election results would be disappointing for the SCF, winning in a mere six percent of the 502 localities

¹³⁷ Letter to Izmir Central Hearth Presidium from Korkutoğlu Ihsan, Muzaffer, Rıza, Fırıncı İsa, Ahmetoğlu Rıza Efendi, Süleymanoğlu İsmail, undated, but text of the letter suggests that it was written sometime before September 30, 1930, SCF-IzVOM. The letter, which is typewritten in Latin characters, also has idiosyncratic spelling of many words, which have been corrected in the above to their modern Turkish spellings.

¹³⁸ Weiker, *Political Tutelage* 111, 115 note 3.

competing and losing in many populous Istanbul districts by a margin greater than two to one.¹³⁹

The results reflect what appeared to be a general disarray amongst the party at the national level – Weiker attributes the weak performance to a muddled series of debates in parliament, a disorganized approach to handling the press, and a lack of attention paid to local issues.¹⁴⁰

The elections in Istanbul began in early October and internal documents from the Istanbul SCF organization suggest their efforts to organize and campaign had been significantly curtailed by the police. In one report from the Kadıköy district head, which was delivered to the Istanbul general headquarters and forwarded on to the SCF's general staff, all of the SCF's propaganda material in the district of Göztepe had been confiscated by the police, and several residents who were SCF supporters had their homes searched and were intimidated against voting for the SCF. Included in the report were mentions of similar instances of intimidation from the Hasanpaşa, İkbaliye and Osmanağa districts.¹⁴¹ A telegram sent on September 30 from the party branch in Silivri, a district on the outskirts of European Istanbul, reported that a local supporter of the SCF, Samail Efendi, was insulted and physically beaten in public by a CHP supporter, Doksatlı Hüseyin, with appeals to the local gendarmerie and public prosecutor pending.¹⁴²

The head of the party's Istanbul branch, Ismail Hakkı (Baltacıoğlu) found himself deeply concerned with making sure all SCF officials understood how to combat instances of vote fraud. In a memorandum circulated October 7, 1930, Ismail insists anyone suspicious of vote fraud should immediately file a police report and gives clear instructions on how to make appeals up the chain of command, should underlings at the police department prove sluggish or intentionally unhelpful in this regard. In particular, he repeatedly mentions the necessity of eye witness

¹³⁹ Weiker provides approximate vote totals on p. 114, note 2.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 107-116

¹⁴¹ Kadıköy Kaza Reisi to SCF Hearst, October 2, 1930, SCF-IVOM. Ismail Hakkı's handwritten comments indicate this message was forwarded onto the general staff.

¹⁴² Silivri Hearst to Fethi Okyar, Telegram, September 30, 1930, SCF-IVOM.

testimony because, “It is possible that the people working particular shifts at the police station are hardly saints themselves and mixed up in this vile corruption.”¹⁴³

In Izmir, the SCF faced similar sorts of struggles in getting out the vote. In a report from the district of İkiçeşmelik in central Izmir, the first day of the elections was met with a good deal of confusion about ordinances governing the polls, and as a result turnout was reported to be very low as only five out of the sixty-five persons who had said they would vote for the SCF showed up to the polls on that day.¹⁴⁴ In a second report from later the same day, however, the issues seemed to be resolved as it was reported that of the 73 votes cast that day in İkiçeşmelik and 115 in nearby Dolaplıkuyu, all but four went to the SCF.¹⁴⁵ While it may seem that some of the early difficulties were smoothed over, the final election report from the İkiçeşmelik Hearth confirmed widespread reports of problems at the polls across the city and determined that while the SCF won at the polls in a landslide with 162 out of 196 total votes cast, the final tally of membership in the party in the township was a staggeringly high 1,100 members.¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the archives provide no direct explanation for the discrepancy between the SCF’s high membership totals and the overall low voter turnout.

¹⁴³Ismail Hakkı (Baltacıoğlu) Memorandum, October 7, 1930, SCF-IVOM. This is a drastic change of tone from a message sent by Ismail Hakkı to the party leadership in Ankara just over two weeks earlier, when he assured them that support for their party was so intense that “... the government is afraid to intervene by insisting on high hurdles that might prevent free and fair elections.” Ismail Hakkı to Ankara Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası Merkez Ocağı Riyaseti Celilesi, September 23, 1930, SCF-IVOM.

¹⁴⁴ Hasan Kemal (Sec. SCF İkiçeşmelik Nahiye Ocağı) to Izmir Central District Council, Report 5 October 1, 1930, SCF-IzVOM

¹⁴⁵ Hasan Kemal to Izmir Central District Council Presidium, Report 6, October 1, 1930 SCF-IzVOM. Aside from the numbering of the report, we can discern that this report comes from later in the day by the fact that the earlier, handwritten report mentions that the next report would be submitted once the local hearth acquired access to a typewriter, and, as promised, Report 6 is typewritten.

¹⁴⁶ Hasan Kemal to Izmir Central District Hearth Presidium, Report 8, October 9, 1930.

While there are several reports of suspicious and violent behavior on the part of the police and People's Party representatives in the archives, there are comparatively few indications that SCF supporters had resorted to violence. One illustrative, and revealing, example of this is a letter sent to the Izmir council president Doctor Ekrem Hayri from a local businessman and customs official Agâh Kemali a week before the elections were to begin in early October. Agâh had been mounting a run as an independent candidate in the election, but was largely sympathetic to the SCF, having distributed a list of sixty-eight candidates, sixty-three of whom were either candidates or members of the SCF, to his friends to solicit their support. According to the correspondence, the remaining names were his own and four of his closest friends. On the evening of October 3 at ten o'clock a local businessman and member of the nearby hearth council, Ali Riza, rang Agâh's doorbell with three unnamed companions. After demanding to know who gave Agâh the permission to publish such a list, Agâh attempted to explain that he needed no such permission. The group then proceeded to curse him heavily, slap him in the face, and kick him three times in the groin for having included on the list of names persons who were running against the SCF. Despite this awful experience, Agâh insists that although "it is clear that they acted on the account of the SCF, I would never believe that such ignorant and base actions could be commanded by the higher ranks of the party, only... that these gentlemen were bureaucrats in the hearth administration and they accordingly admitted that the hearth council did not show them how to [properly] attack an election."¹⁴⁷ So while it may seem that the party had only a loose grip on the lower ranks of its administration, it is clear that for some supporters, like Agâh, even violence within the SCF could not disrupt their support for the party's ideals.

These examples provide some of the first details of the violence and corruption around the municipal elections that became a critical, and fatal aspect of the fall of the SCF. While

¹⁴⁷ Agâh Kemali to Doctor Ekrem Hayri, October 4, 1930 SCF-IzVOM

Weiker points primarily to the failure of political elites to agree on the acceptable nature of an opposition party, and the hasty, disorganized approach that the SCF took to party building, as the main factors in the demise of the SCF, it is clear that these instances of corruption and violence played a significant role in the party's eventual closure. In his final session of parliament before the closure of the party, Fethi Okyar introduced a motion on November 6 insisting that the Interior Minister account for these instances of "misconduct and corruption."¹⁴⁸ The debate over this motion, which would not be carried out until November 15, would immediately precipitate Fethi's decision, together with the party leadership, to close the party.¹⁴⁹

The Left and the Liberal Republican Party: The End of the Affair

Upon the announcement of the party's formation, Zekeriya Sertel offered a cautiously optimistic word of support in his *Son Posta* column. Though Sertel had spent significant parts of the 1920s in prison, being one of the few people who went before the Independence Tribunal and lived to tell the tale, he saw the arrival of the SCF as a sign that Kemal's revolution was beginning to deliver on its promises of democracy. In the editorial, he detailed that there are two "excuses" for having a single party state, the first being dominance of either a single class or a single thought in a given society. Soviet Russia and fascist Italy were given as examples for both of these. The second reason, he elaborated, is that single-party states are a natural, but hopefully temporary, outcome of revolutions. As he explained, "[r]evolutions cannot satisfy many classes and many people. Revolutions occur because some classes are offended and desire to change many institutions over the course of some years. In order to create a sustainable revolution and a working majority, single party rule is permissible"; but, he reasoned, "[a]s a revolution finishes,

¹⁴⁸ Weiker, *Political Tutelage*, 130

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131-135. According to Weiker, the debate was filled with all sorts of invective against Fethi, and lasted an extraordinary ten hours, including only two five minute recesses and concluding sometime close to midnight.

this unnaturalness cannot remain, at that time the lone party must allow for other parties to find their place.”¹⁵⁰ Here we see how Sertel’s political commitments led him to see democracy and modernization as two very different things – modernization is a revolutionary process for transforming society, democracy is a natural state. For this reason, he welcomed Fethi’s new party, “[e]specially if word comes that this party will happily move a bit to the left,” but he cautioned that, “[i]t is most crazy to think that having created a new party we will go straight on to a complete democracy.”¹⁵¹

Zekeriya’s support for the SCF in *Son Posta* would increasingly have less to do with his support of their ideology and more to do with wariness towards the direction the CHP was headed under İsmet’s leadership, particularly with regards to the Prime Minister’s étatist (*devletçi*) political preferences. In a pair of columns from late September, Zekeriya expressed concern that the CHP was abandoning the liberal tenets of the Republic by espousing étatism. In the first, he quickly dismisses criticism of the CHP as liberal and reactionary by arguing that “In truth, liberalism doesn’t exist in the twentieth century. On every side, étatism is a more progressive system relative to liberalism.”¹⁵² Then, responding to İsmet’s claim that “we are moderate étatists,” he insisted that this is a new development for the CHP since the Law of Fundamental Organization (*Teşkilâtı Esasiye Kanunu*), as constructed by the CHP, was “disposed towards liberal principles... and in securing the freedoms of thought (*sây*), assembly (*içtima*), and speech (*söz*) he agreed to defend all of the principles of the liberals.”¹⁵³ He squarely laid the responsibility for introducing étatism into the CHP (and by consequence, the nation) on İsmet’s leadership, which, he accused of “randomly” (*gelişi güzel*) and unscientifically applying the term

¹⁵⁰ M. Zekeriya (Sertel), “Hergün: Fethi Beyin Yeni Fırkası”, *Son Posta*, August 10, 1930, p. 3

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² M. Zekeriya (Sertel), “Hergün: Halk Fırkası Devletçi bir Fırka mıdır?” *Son Posta*, September 28, 1930, p. 3

¹⁵³ Ibid.

merely in order to justify the aggrandizement of state authority. Two days later, returning to the topic of the CHP and étatism, Zekeriya revealed both the specific fear he had of İsmet's engagement with étatism and his own ideological departure from the tenets of the SCF. In the column, which reiterates a demand for İsmet to further explain what he means by étatism, Zekeriya provides a typology of the different forms étatism had taken around the globe in recent years. He explains to his readers that in fascist Italy, étatism means that "the state is in service of the state. Namely, everything is subject to the state, and everything is for the state. This is a kind of autocracy... this style of étatism is prone to despotism."¹⁵⁴ He then moved to Germany, which he described as having a similarly absolutist type of system prior to WWI. At this point, he explained in a style that reveals his attachment to the Marxist dialectic, that this absolutism of Italy and Germany developed primarily in reaction to the old liberal order, but that the remnants of that order have birthed two separate forms of étatism of its own – state capitalism and state socialism. In his explanation of state capitalism, Zekeriya explained that services that are meant for public benefit like railroads and tramways must, under this system, be provided using state funds, but that the driving principle is for the state to make a profit. Zekeriya praised state socialism as "the final and truest form [of étatism]" and provides the following explanation,

In this system, all of the power to benefit the public is found in the hands of the state. It does not support the goals of individual trade. The state uses its own funds to make these goals easier for the people. However, it does so inexpensively. It does not await profits. But it does take losses into consideration. The purpose is not trade, it is the public services for the people. By providing these basic services it benefits the well-being of the entire people. If there are profits, this too generally goes to the use of the people.¹⁵⁵

He then demanded to know which of these systems of étatism the CHP preferred, and then stated that his criticism of the party as it had behaved up until then would persist until this issue was clarified. This reveals Zekeriya's clear preference for a socialist style system, putting him in

¹⁵⁴ M. Zekeriya (Sertel), "Hergün: Halk Fırkası Devletçiliği Nasıl Anlıyor?" *Son Posta* September 30, 1930, p. 3

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

definite contrast with many of the intellectuals and party leaders most closely associated with the SCF. Clearly, Zekeriya's support for the SCF was derived from his apprehensions about the direction of the CHP, and his willingness to back an opposition party for the sake of having an opposition in parliament was shared by some of his acquaintances on the left.

Zekeriya had begun to have his doubts about Fethi and the rest of the SCF by this point. Although *Son Posta* remained supportive of the SCF throughout the elections, that support came mostly in the form of trenchant criticism of İsmet and the CHP. In his memoirs, Zekeriya admitted that already by the time of Fethi's Izmir tour in early September, he had pressed Fethi personally to elaborate on the details of his platform and was given a disappointingly vague answer.¹⁵⁶ As the paper was continuing to investigate corruption within the sugar monopolies, an investigation that would ultimately find Zekeriya in front of a judge for the second time in six years, Zekeriya felt that Fethi and the leadership, "remained in the shadows, the party was slowly falling into the hands of profiteers."¹⁵⁷ In the end, the SCF experiment would put further distance between Zekeriya and the liberal wing of the Turkish intellectual elite, as his later journalistic adventures would only amplify his Marxist and social democratic leanings.

Sabiha Sertel, for her part, had even less sympathy for the SCF, which she believed was largely comprised of profiteers who did not have the needs of the people at heart. As a result, even though her husband's newspaper continued to support the experiment, she decided to run as an independent candidate in the Istanbul municipal elections. Her program was published by Resimli Ay Matbaası and reflected her strong commitment to progressive values. The nine-plank platform emphasized local ownership and control over public works and greater accountability in the bureaucracy through elections, the establishment of a bureau for complaints (*şikayet*

¹⁵⁶ M. Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım* (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977), 193

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 196

büroları), regular publication of the municipalities performance, and better inspection of weights and measures. It also focused heavily on worker's rights, particularly rights for child workers, including a call for a new law on overtime from Parliament that would establish the eight hour work day, accident insurance and compensation, one week's paid vacation, maternity leave (*hâmile kadınların çalıştırılmaması*), and the provision of working papers to children.¹⁵⁸ Included in the pamphlet with the program was an extended explanation of her candidacy and the overarching goals Sabiha hoped to affect through a successful campaign. Sabiha explained that her platform seeks to address three broad categories of needs – Social (*İçtimâî*), Health (*Sıhhi*), and Economic (*İktisâdî*) – and couched her campaign in an overall effort to improve the democratic life of the city; she opened the explanation by dramatically stating, “The first thing that should be taught to our children is that this city, this piece of earth, is ours...” and insisting that, “In the most important points in our future collisions the governmental authority must be made to agree that the deepening of democracy (*demokrasiyi derinleştirmek*), the authority and the well-being of the people are superior to it.”¹⁵⁹ While there is little mention of this campaign in her memoirs, it is clear that Sabiha saw her candidacy as part of a longer campaign for children's rights that she had been carrying on for the better part of a decade in *Resimli Ay*. She had even gone as far as to draft her pre-teen daughter Sevim into the movement in the previous year when Sevim campaigned for children's rights at her local Turkish Hearth in Tepebaşı and later in the pages of one of the final issues of *Resimli Ay* in May 1930 with her own editorial entitled “Why Do They Cheat Us?” listing a set of demands for limiting child labor.¹⁶⁰

Zekeriya Sertel and *Son Posta* would remain cautiously supportive of the new party as the campaign for the municipal elections continued, but Zekeriya Sertel himself was increasingly

¹⁵⁸ Reproduced in Cemil Koçak, *Belgelerle İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), 271-275

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 272

¹⁶⁰ Sevim Sertel, “Why Do They Cheat Us?” *Resimli Ay* May 1930, p. 37

skeptical of the close cooperation between Fethi Okyar and Mustafa Kemal, as well as the emphasis on liberal economic policies which he believed would only increase the already corrupt relationship between the state and private business. In his memoir, he relayed a version of the story of the SCF's collapse in which he played a significant hand. According Sertel, around the time of the municipal elections the SCF leadership holed themselves up in Ankara and was suspected of carrying on a series of secret meetings with Atatürk. Sertel learned through an anonymous source that Okyar and Kemal had reached an agreement that should the SCF win a parliamentary election, Kemal would not intervene so long as it was agreed he would remain president for life. Hearing this news, Sertel ran to the SCF headquarters and inquired about the deal to Okyar, as well as Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the SCF General Secretary Nuri Conker, who eventually confirmed the news and allowed him to print an official statement in *Son Posta*. The publication of this news angered Kemal, who pressed Sertel to reveal his source. After failed attempts by Okyar to get Sertel to give up the source, Kemal decided that he could not continue the experiment of the SCF so long as it appeared to be so blatantly managed from above, and promptly closed the party down.¹⁶¹

If *Son Posta* represented the social democratic column of SCF support, Arif Oruç's paper *Yarın*, would embody a harder line of leftist support – and cause even more problems for the SCF's propaganda efforts. Prior to the founding of the party, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, the SCF's chief

¹⁶¹ Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 196-199. There is some reason to doubt this story, particularly since it deals heavily in rumors. In the narrative of the SCF provided by Weiker, he makes mention that following the September 25 meeting of parliament in which İsmet İnönü was re-appointed Prime Minister, twenty-four hours after resigning, rumors began to fly around that Fethi had suggested Atatürk resolve the crisis caused by İsmet's resignation in the manner that Sertel describes. However, Weiker asserts that this rumor was proven to be false, and had been planted with the intent to discredit the SCF, and was denied vigorously by both Fethi and Atatürk, though he only provides press sources to back this up. Regardless of whether such a secret agreement was ever signed, the effect on the SCF's reputation was the same as the party's image struggled to recover and many opponents, like the Sertels, came to see less and less distinction between the SCF and the CHP. Weiker, *Political Tutelage*, 102, note 1.

intellectual, had a great amount of sympathy for Oruç's outfit, since he had become a sort of magnet for opponents of İsmet İnönü's tenure as Prime Minister. In the early days of the SCF, the paper garnered support from Fethi, as well as from Mustafa Kemal who thought *Yarın* should become the official press organ for the party. Ağaoğlu ultimately disagreed with this path, because he saw Oruç's position as too divisive, as he wrote in his memoirs, "*Yarın* supported heading down the path of demagoguery at a more violent speed, it aroused a thousand types of disagreement, right and left, amongst old notables and veterans against the new party..."¹⁶² Ağaoğlu would find the Sertel's more even handed editorial style more suitable to his own outlook on the future of Turkish democracy, but his rejection of *Yarın* caused a split between him and Fethi, as well as adding to his disagreements with Mustafa Kemal.

For his own part, Oruç seemed to coordinate only in the loosest sense with the SCF administration, and much to the deficit of the party's operations, particularly with regards to the municipal elections. According to Weiker's account, despite a conscious effort on the part of Fethi to distance himself and the party from Oruç and *Yarın*, Oruç somehow managed to make it onto the SCF's candidate list in Istanbul.¹⁶³ This is surprising for a number of reasons, chief among them being that Oruç had a good deal of experience organizing communist groups in Turkey, and had even opposed Mustafa Kemal for a time in the early twenties. He likewise used *Yarın* to lob overzealous rhetorical bombs at CHP figures, who did not align with the generally conciliatory demeanor of the party elite. By mid-October, Oruç departed completely from SCF orthodoxy in an explosive editorial that called on Mustafa Kemal to step down from his position as President so that he could become Prime Minister, and to have Marshall Fevzi (Çakmak) take his place. He argued that in the apparent failure of the SCF, the crisis at hand for the country demanded a "Great Man" (*Büyük Adam*) to lead the country out of the mess made by the current

¹⁶² Ahmet Ağaoğlu, *Serbest Fırka Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu Yayınevi, 195?), 32-3

¹⁶³ Weiker, *Political Tutelage*, 113

Prime Minister, İsmet. This argument drew a great deal of criticism from both CHP and SCF figures, as Mustafa Kemal's apparent neutrality throughout the experiment was viewed as central to the entire project.¹⁶⁴ Ultimately, having such a divisive figure on the ballot for the SCF seems to have hurt the party's performance in Istanbul significantly.

As Weiker acknowledges, one of the major missteps of the SCF was failing to open up an official press organ at the outset of the party. It was only after Oruç's outlandish proposal that Fethi began to conceive of a party-organized press outfit, finally heeding the advice Ağaoğlu had been insisting on for months, but it was indeed too little, too late to have much of an effect on the remaining electoral contests.¹⁶⁵ The lack of a party press organ made it very difficult for the SCF to present a unified message of opposition. The party clearly had aims to bring leftist intellectuals into a coalition with liberals against the CHP, but without a real editorial coordination, the associations that figures like the Sertels or Oruç had with the SCF were weak. Additionally, since the two left-oriented papers *Yarın* and *Son Posta* were the only papers in Istanbul that vocally supported the SCF, Okyar's liberal critique of the CHP was left to reporting from his speeches on the Anatolian tour and in parliament. For both the Sertels, who would be much warier of engaging liberals in the future, and Oruç, who would briefly take *Yarın* to southeast Europe in the years following 1930 before returning in the 1940s to take up organization of socialist parties, the hash that the SCF administration made of the Istanbul press, and intellectual cadres generally, would be a significant disappointment, and contributed to their general disillusionment with the liberal project in Turkey.

Closing the Party, Foreclosing Democracy

¹⁶⁴ This controversy is discussed at length in Abdülhamit Avşar, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası – Bir Partinin Kapanmasında Basının Rolü* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1998) 163-169, and this specific editorial, originally printed in *Yarın* October 12, 1930, is reprinted in Appendix VIII, 277-280

¹⁶⁵ Weiker, *Political Tutelage*, 110

In the end, the collapse of the SCF was met with some regret even by those closest to the Kemalist center. Falih Rıfki Atay, whose monumental 1961 memoir *Çankaya* functions as a court history of the period of Atatürk's rule, reflected on the experience as something of a rare and curious misstep on the part of Atatürk. At the outset of his retelling of this story he wondered aloud, "why would the reformist Atatürk, who was always so deeply resentful of reactionary forces, give his permission to found an opposition party? Nobody can give a true answer to this. Because no one can clearly read anyone else's thoughts."¹⁶⁶ To Atay, the arrival of the SCF brought along with it the recognition by everyone in the Kemalist center that "the regime had not yet normalized," that Atatürk's reforms had yet to reach into the public as deeply as was necessary in order to realize a multiparty democracy in their own vision.¹⁶⁷ Despite this, Atay and others expressed some regret over the fate of the SCF, particularly because the harsh measures against the press and more elite supporters of the SCF hindered what they believed to be critical fixtures in a democratic society, and Atay himself attributes this event as the point past which Atatürk began to tighten his political circle, and entrench himself ideologically,

In the end, a grave danger was stopped with the closing of the SCF.

I wish this danger had never arisen, that a large movement, a movement of honest criticism and introspection could have been continued...

Because press freedom and political freedom disappeared, other abusers got to work. Being that the regime was often rocky in its relationships during Atatürk's lifetime, with

¹⁶⁶ Falih Rıfki Atay, *Çankaya*, (Istanbul: Pozitif Yayınları, 2011 [1961]), 581

¹⁶⁷ This was the same conclusion, it should be mentioned, that the regime came to during the Sheikh Sait revolt in 1925 when Fethi Okyar, then Prime Minister, argued against sending the army to deal with the situation, stating "The gendarmerie is there, the police are there, the law is there, that is enough," to which İnönü responded, "And what of the revolution? What of the regime?" It is widely believed that Okyar's handling of this event led to his deposition as Prime Minister and a cushy exile to the Paris Embassy. Ibid, 580.

conspiracy theories emanating from Atatürk's increasingly tighter inner circle, the great man of the people was gradually distanced from the people.¹⁶⁸

Atay also mentioned that years later, sometime after the death of Fethi Okyar in 1943, İsmet İnönü confided to him that, "What if there were time, could we not have spent the time for the regime to naturalize against such a catastrophe? If the Liberal Party had continued, we would have already weathered this crisis."¹⁶⁹

Ultimately, it is reflections like these that give away the game that the Kemalist center was playing during the SCF experiment. What followed this experience was a significant break from the liberal tenets of the early republic, and an increasingly toxic adversarial relationship with opposition intellectuals. Zekeriya Sertel was indeed correct that there were many liberal tendencies, and liberal aims of the early Kemalist control, and the fallout of the closure of the SCF resulted in many of the staunchest supporters of those liberal ends on the outside looking in. This had an immediate, and serious effect on the direction of Kemalist policy. In early 1931, the six "arrows" of Kemalist ideology were made official – and each of them reflect a revolutionary, state-led outlook, without any reference to the liberal principles outlined in the Law of Fundamental Organization. The Turkish Hearths, which had served as breeding grounds for local political movements in Anatolia for decades and were crucial to building out the SCF's party structure, were given over to CHP controlled and transformed into "People's Houses" meant to assist in the indoctrination of the general public around this now-official ideology. It is following this episode that the ethno-nationalist focus of Kemalist policy began to intensify – including the liquidation of faculty at the Darülfünun and its resurrection as Istanbul University, the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 586. Atay also mentions that, coincidentally, that following these events "Atatürk's sickness began" most likely referring to his long, fatal battle with alcoholism and cirrhosis of the liver.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 587. It is unclear exactly which crisis İnönü is referring to here, though it is likely the general environment of WWII and the halting transition to the multiparty period that left the CHP leadership somewhat in disarray in 1950.

establishment of the Turkish Language Council (Türk Dil Kurumu), the imposition of family names, as well as the policies that are often deemed to be the “excesses” of Kemalist dogma like the advancement of the Turkish History Thesis and Sun Language Theory, and the increasingly violent suppression of Kurdish groups in the southeast. What this reflects in the nature of Kemalist ideology is how they viewed their revolution as one that had ostensibly liberal aims, but one that saw a revolutionary, wholesale change in the subjectivity of their citizens, as a necessary step towards achieving said aims. The Kemalists, such as they remained after 1930, believed thoroughly that the state needed to forcibly create liberal subjects from what they saw as an illiberal, reactionary populace in order to bring about a liberal society. This is the point where the liberal thinkers who made up the SCF elite – and even the leftist thinkers who supported the SCF – departed from the top-level Kemalist elites; politicians like Fethi Okyar and Ahmet Ağaoğlu may have been nationalists, but at bottom they would only go so far in supporting the more Jacobin-style measures of Mustafa Kemal, believing as they did that granting individual liberty was, ultimately, the path to a liberal order. Their active participation in the Kemalist project to that point could be credited with the tension between different interpretations of liberalizing strategies throughout the 1920s, but the SCF experiment ultimately resolved that tension in favor of the more revolutionary, étatist cadre.

The remainder of this dissertation will examine what this departure from a commitment to individual liberty, and entrenchment in ethno-nationalist policies meant for opponents of the regime. As I will show, as the Kemalist program radicalized over the 1930s, so too did its opponents. Leftist social democrats – like the Sertels – engaged more deeply in hardline communist politics, while more conservative figures began to articulate positions more deeply informed by political Islam. We even see in this decade the emergence of an ultranationalist, Pan-Turkist camp that offered up a racist critique of Mustafa Kemal and his party. This polarization of

the opponents to Kemalism has some of its roots in the failure of the SCF experiment, and as I will argue, contributed significantly to the handicapping of the public discourse at the outset of the multiparty period in the late 1940s. Rather than serving as a kind of “teachable” or “tutelary” moment on the way to democratization, the failure of the SCF thwarted what was possibly the best opportunity for a healthy, loyal, organic opposition to the CHP to find its way in the new Turkish society.

CHAPTER FOUR: White, Yellow, Black, and Brown: The Racing of Political Discourse in Turkey, 1931-1945

In 1928, I was reading a geography book in Istanbul's French office in between my classes, and after looking at the pictures and illustrations, I saw that it counted the Turkish race as a yellow race and of a "secondaire" or secondary order. I took one look around and I truthfully could not see how this picture and this information could be appropriate.

I showed the book to Atatürk. That one, and I had also quickly taken Professor E. Pittard's (Les Races et l'Histoire. Paris 1924) "The Races and History." I did not comply with the information in that book or the geography book.

These works had introduced the concept that Turks occupied a second-class status in the field of civilization. Because the European histories had given the sobriquet barbarian to the Turks simply because they were an invading people.

Atatürk was opposed to these two concepts.

Not only did he reply, "No, it must not be so. Let's get busy on this," but I personally saw that new books on the subject would be immediately undertaken, and so the work had begun.

- Afet İnan, 1959¹⁷⁰

This chapter addresses the deepening of ideological divides amongst intellectuals in Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s across the spectrum. In the aftermath of the Liberal Republican Party experiment in 1930, we can observe a deeper engagement with radical politics amongst intellectuals and government representatives alike. For the ruling Kemalist cadre, this meant the first articulations of "Kemalism" as an official ideology of the ruling party, the exploration of chauvinistic expressions of nationalism in ethnic and linguistic terms in the forms of the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory, increasing violence against non-Turkish minorities – including the indiscriminate bombing of Kurdish populations in Tunceli/Dersim in the late 1930s, and, during World War II, a "Wealth Tax" that amounted to the mass confiscation of the property of non-Muslims and *dönme* in Istanbul – and a widespread effort to indoctrinate the populace in this ideology through a revamping of the education system and the transformation of

¹⁷⁰ Afet İnan, *Atatürk Hakkında Hâtıralar ve Belgeler*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959), 184.

the Turkish Hearths into People's Houses [*Halkevleri*] run by party apparatchiks. Intellectuals who were disillusioned by the failure of multiparty experiments in 1925 and 1930, and actively opposed to many of these measures, began to find shelter in more hardened, and more radical forms of political discourse, and many began to work with clandestine political organizations such as the Turkish Communist Party and ultra-nationalist Pan-Turanist groups. The story of this radicalization begins in the mid-1930s with the formation of a suite of small journals that had very low-circulation but served as venues for many intellectuals to articulate at a high level Turkish interventions into European ideological trends ranging from a reinterpretation of the pious conservatism popular in France, to open critiques of fascism and capitalism inspired by the efforts to “build communism” in the USSR, and even a *völkisch* nationalist critique of the Kemalist project. Despite frequent obstruction from the state, and a worsening political and economic crisis at the outset of World War II, many of these insular radical groups began to find a purchase in the popular press. The popularization of these ideas was indirectly related to the deepening political and ideological divide in Europe, and as a result it is through these intellectuals and their writings in the 1940s that Turks began to make associations between their politicians and intellectuals and sweeping ideological trends like fascism, communism, nationalism, liberalism, and conservatism on a mass level, for the first time.

In order to demonstrate this trend, the chapter will look at the development of three oppositional ideological and intellectual spheres and chart their progress from elitist journals in the early 30s, to the popular press in the 40s. The first will be the *völkisch* nationalist movement, led by Hüseyin Nihal Atsız that began in 1931 with the appearance of his namesake journal *Atsız Mecmua* (*Nameless Journal*) which would morph into *Orhun* (roughly meaning “lofty”), inspired by ancient Central Asian terminology, and also found a popular outlet through the colorful *Gök-Börü* (*Grey Wolf*) which was run by his close associate Reha Oğuz Türkkan. Then I will turn to

the leftist and communist group to focus on the work of Nazım Hikmet. In this period, having reached popular acclaim in the early 1930s for his work in *Resimli Ay*, Nazım experienced a number of run-ins with the law, spending several months in prison, and generally feeling increasingly restricted in how he could criticize the state. By the mid-1930s, Hikmet came to use his work to advocate more directly for socialist causes and attack European fascist movements (and Turkish flirtations with fascism by extension) through longer poems like *Taranta Babu'ya Mektuplar (Letters to Taranta Babu)* and *Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedrettin Destanı (The Epic of Sheikh Bedreddin)*. The publication of the latter would ultimately lead to his decade-long imprisonment for attempting to subvert military officers, which would only end with his exile to the Soviet Union in 1950 following a hunger strike and global campaign for his release, and during which he would compose his magnum opus *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları (Human Landscapes from My Country)*. Finally, I will examine a conservative movement, centered around the figure of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, whose outlook was heavily inspired by both the outlawed Nakşibendi branch of Sufism and the work of continental philosopher Henri Bergson. Kısakürek's works first appeared in the elite literary journal *Ağaç (Tree)* in 1936, but would come to greater popularity in the mid-1940's as the spearhead behind *Büyük Doğu (The Great East)*.

This period represents a time of intense ideological conflict both domestically and internationally that would ultimately produce much of what we traditionally understand as Kemalist ideology – a set of commitments to an ethnic and territorially defined Turkish nation, a statist or corporatist approach to the economy, strict laicism, populism, and a revolutionary approach to culture embodied by language reform and historical revisionism. This process of ideological formation, and the critiques levelled by each of the abovementioned characters have been studied separately by numerous scholars, but what this chapter represents is one of the first attempts to place them in context with each other and determine some of the effects of their

interrelations. This way we can better understand the multi-sided conflict over the definition of Turkish identity and official ideology that was promulgated by the state in this period, and the cleavages along which political and intellectual camps polarized. Since a comprehensive analysis of the many ways in which ultra-nationalists, Islamist conservative modernists, and leftists diverged from each other and the state in this period would be outside the scope of a single chapter, I have chosen to view this process of polarization around the issue of racism.

By taking up race to study ideological polarization in the 1930s and 1940s, this chapter contributes to the agenda laid out by Murat Ergin for considering race as a valid analytical lens for studying Turkish modernity.¹⁷¹ As Ergin notes, although the Turkish state's intellectual tradition and organizational makeup prevented it from implementing a thoroughly racist system of exclusion, "in specific instances... the state was sufficiently powerful to institute a practice of racial discrimination," and that ability was derived from a long cultural, academic, and political discourse on race and Turkish identity stretching back at least to the eighteenth century. However, as Howard Eissenstat has argued, the turn towards race among the Kemalists in the 1930s was part of a somewhat counterintuitive attempt to construe a Turkish "nation" that was inclusive of all Muslim citizens of Turkey, but did not resort to religion as the basis for a national project.¹⁷² For the purposes of this chapter, I will consider in this section the development of a racist ideology that contrasted with the raced project of Kemalist Turkish nationalism by disavowing Kemalist claims to Turkish "whiteness" in favor of a system of racial superiority focused on "yellow" and "Asian" characteristics. A conflict then ensued between the racist-Turanians of the

¹⁷¹ Murat Ergin, "Is the Turk a White Man? Towards a Theoretical Framework for Race in the Making of Turkishness" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44:6 (November 2008) 827-850.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 830. Eissenstat rightly points out that one result of this emphasis on race was a disaggregation of the terms "Turk" and "Muslim" which had been considered synonymous in many corners until the late 1920s. Howard Eissenstat, "Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the Early Decades of the Turkish Republic" in Paul Spickard, ed., *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2005) p. 239-266.

Atsız circle, and the Kemalist center, who disavowed some of the irredentist aspects of Atsız's type and ascribed to a markedly different racial eschatology, but remained committed to "Turkism" [*Türkçülük*] as an ideological underpinning.¹⁷³ This conflict first played out through a stark criticism of the state-sponsored scholarly projects that developed the infamous Turkish Historical Thesis and Sun-Language Theory launched by Atsız in his early journals, and later, more publicly, in the climate of the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War through the prosecution of more than fifty individuals, including each of the major figures in the racist-Turanian group, on various propaganda charges between 1944-1947, which are collectively known as "The Trials of the Racist Turanians" (*Irkcılık Turancılık Davaları*).¹⁷⁴ While the conflict between the racist-Turanians and the Kemalist center has been fairly well covered in the scholarship, the manner in which this prominent fight over the racial character of the Turkish modernization project highlighted the distinctly racial terms on which ideological polarization proceeded in the 1930s and 1940s, abetted by the racial dynamics of the ideological conflict of the war, has yet to be examined.¹⁷⁵

Over the course of the rest of this chapter and the chapter that follows, I will show how opponents of the Kemalist regime employed race in different ways to forward their arguments,

¹⁷³ Eissenstat makes a helpful distinction between the "inclusive" or "assimilationist" racial discourse of the Kemalists (to the extent that one can consider *any* racist discourse "inclusive" the Kemalists certainly aspired to such an end) and the more radical "exclusive" strains of racial discourse espoused by Atsız and his contemporaries. Eissenstat, "Metaphors of Race", 252.

¹⁷⁴ The most comprehensive account of the trials is provided in Günay Göksü Özdoğan, "The Case of Racism-Turanism: Turkism in the Single-Party Period, 1931-1944" Ph.D. diss, Boğaziçi University 1990, and in the Turkish edition published as *Turan'dan Bozkurt'a: Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001).

¹⁷⁵ For recent works assessing Turkism, race, and politics in this period see also, Nazan Maksudyan, *Türklüğü Ölçmek: Bilimkurgusal Antropoloji ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Çehresi, 1925-1929* (Istanbul: Metis Kitapları, 2005), "The Turkish Review of Anthropology and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism" *Cultural Dynamics*, 17:3, 291-322 (2005), Ayhan Aktar, "Tax Me to the End of My Life: Anatomy of an Anti-Minority Tax Legislation, 1942-43" in Fortna, et. al. eds, *State Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945* (London: Routledge, 2013), 188-220.

and how this engagement with race was reflected back on the opponents by the state and its allies at the height of the ideological conflict of World War II, effectively marking racist-Turanians, leftists, and pious conservatives alike as “others” that existed outside the accepted framework of “white” Turkism. By the 1940s, we might crudely refer to racist-Turanism as a form of “yellow supremacy,” a non-white form of colorism. In the case of Nazım Hikmet, the embodiment of a black Ethiopian character in *Letters to Taranta Babu* as a rhetorical tool to critique fascist imperialism – a common communist rhetorical tactic of the 1930s – served to create a close association in the Turkish public sphere between Hikmet, and communists generally, and the cause of black Africans and other non-white peoples, presumably over and against the Kemalist project of (white) Turkish modernity. Particularly as the European conflagration reached its climax in the 1940s, leftists of all types were painted in the Turkish press as traitors to their ethnicity and race – whether as “Armenian-lovers” (*ermeniperverler*), crypto-Jews (*dönme*), or simply as “reds” – in ways that worked ultimately to exclude leading Turkish leftist intellectuals from the Kemalist conception of the ethnically Turkish body politic. The extent to which Nazım Hikmet’s racial discourse – in both the descriptions of black bodies in *Taranta Babu* and in his 1936 pamphlet *German Fascism and Racism* – worked to bring a race-oriented communist critique to the Turkish public sphere, as well as the unintended side effects of “racing” leftism as the domain of non-white peoples, or perhaps in this case black people particularly, have so far been unexamined in the scholarship on this period.

In a similar fashion, the Islamic conservatism of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek became “raced” as non-white as a consequence of his embrace of Nakşibendi Sufism and the “East” generally as an aesthetic and rhetorical device. Much like his former roommate at the Naval College – which he and Nazım Hikmet attended in 1918-1919 – had adapted Soviet-inspired communism to Turkish culture and society, Necip Fazıl’s work in the 1930s sought to construct what Nazım

İrem has called a Turkish “conservative modernism,” inspired by his former teacher Henri Bergson, blended with the teachings of the Nakşibendi Sufi figure Abdülhakim Arvası.¹⁷⁶ This chapter examines the efforts in Necip Fazıl’s first literary journal, *Ağaç* [Tree], where he, along with other Bergson-inspired writers like Mustafa Şekip Tunç and Ziyaettin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, articulated an artistic and philosophical vision of an anti-positivist, Islamic modernity that would become the bedrock of Islamist politics in Turkey for decades to come. Necip Fazıl would embrace a more strident version of this political vision in the 1940s through his most famous journal, *Büyük Doğu* [The Great East] that would propel him to the head of a movement that would blend nationalism and Islamic politics in a way that would prove particularly useful to politicians in some corners of the Kemalist Republican Peoples’ Party and later to the Democrat Party in their efforts to mobilize Turks against real and perceived threats from the Soviet Union.

The Development of *Völkisch* Nationalism in the Turkish Press

The development of a racist critique of Kemalism in the 1930s has only recently begun to find its place in the historiography of the Turkish republic. İlker Aytürk has provided an excellent overview of the thought and politics of the most prominent figure of this movement, Hüseyin Nihal Atsız.¹⁷⁷ Aytürk rightly demonstrates two particularly useful results for examining the work of Atsız and his contemporaries. First, by examining the often harshly racist critique of Kemalist policies, we can come to see the exclusion of religious and ethnic minorities from the Kemalist modernization project – particularly Kurds, Greeks, and Armenians, but eventually Jews as well – as less driven by a hardened and eschatological racist ideology and more as the evidence of

¹⁷⁶ Nazım İrem, “Undercurrents of European Modernity and the Foundations of Modern Turkish Conservatism: Bergsonism in Retrospect” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40:4 (2004) 79-112 and “Turkish Conservative Modernism: The Birth of a National Quest for Renewal” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34:1 (Feb. 2002) 87-112

¹⁷⁷ İlker Aytürk, “The Racist Critics of Atatürk and Kemalism, from the 1930s to the 1960s” *Journal of Contemporary History* 46:2 (April 2011) 308-335

crippling effect of personal prejudice within a system aspiring, but failing, to inculcate an egalitarian form of civic nationalism. As I will detail in this section, the *völkisch* assault on Kemalism took aim not merely at the particular policies of the state, but at the very ideal of a territorial, civic nation. In fact, this criticism reached its early heights *precisely* in the period when the Kemalist project, and Atatürk in particular, was engaging deeply with the woolier aspects of ethno-nationalist mythmaking in the promulgation of the infamous “Turkish History Thesis” and “Sun-Language Theory”. Second, Aytürk’s work, particularly insofar as he focuses on the production of Atsız and his circle in the 1940s and 1950s, demonstrates how the current-day hagiographers of Atsız – including an oft-violent youth wing associated with the Nationalist Action Party (*Milli Hareket Partisi*, MHP) dubbed “The Young Atsız’s” (*Genç Atsızlar*) – have elided or ignored their hero’s virulent attacks on Atatürk in order to appeal to nationalist and racist elements in the wider Turkish public.

In this section, and in the chapter overall, I will provide a closer look at the early years of *völkisch* nationalism in Turkey, particularly between 1931-1944, in order to fill out the context and framework of criticism of Kemalism provided by Aytürk and others so that we can better understand the movement in two critical respects. First, while Aytürk does an admirable job characterizing the specific challenge Atsız posed to Kemalism, we are left to guess what Atsız’s place was in the context of other opponents of Kemalism. By understanding a bit better how Atsız not only assailed Kemalism, but Kemalism’s leftist critics as well, we can better understand the broader ideological polarization that was occurring in this period. Second, this section will look closely at the *völkisch* publication of this period to elucidate the concrete terms of the racist-Turanian ideology, how its roots differed from Kemalism, and from which foreign sources it might have borrowed or inherited its thought. This is critical, as Aytürk assumes, perhaps correctly, that the genesis of Atsız’s racist ideals was very similar to those of most mainstream

Turkish nationalists of the period, but that leaves the pieces that make up the irredentist, race-based assumptions somewhat missing in the analysis.

Early Developments: Atsız Mecmua and Orhun Dergi

Hüseyin Nihal (Atsız) would begin his first publication, *Atsız Mecmua*, within a few months of graduating from the Literature Department at the Darülfünun (soon to be renamed Istanbul University) where he studied under the prominent historian and literature scholar Fuad Köprülü. The journal was published two or three times a month between May 1931 December 1932 and afterwards changed its name to *Orhun* until it shut down its operations in July 1934. While the journal was certainly in low circulation in this period, it became the venue in which Atsız would begin to clearly articulate a racist-nationalist critique of Turkish society and government that would become more popular through the publication of his novels and short stories, such as *Dalkavuklar Gecisi (The Night of the Sycophants)* and *İçimizdeki Şeytanlar (The Devils Inside Us)*.

What was novel about Atsız's contributions to the discussion of Turkish nationalism was the high level of commitment to race as the sole basis for a nationalist movement. Atsız clearly saw race as a scientific and anthropologically indisputable historical constant, and it was from this basis that he assailed the Kemalists' construction of a territorially based nationalism. In fact, so strong was Atsız's commitment to race-based thinking that in his initial writing on the subject, an article in the first issue of *Atsız Mecmua* entitled "From What Race are the Turks?", he essentially admitted that nationality was a social construct,

In order to live today as a civilized nation, there is no need to claim that your civilization was created in the ages before Jesus. Thusly, not one of today's European nations is the owner of such an old civilization. The West's civilization started to supersede the East's in the 16th century. If they [opinion editors] wanted to defend a new original thesis

supported by documents we do not know about and available evidence, undoubtedly the place for it is not in the columns of a newspaper.¹⁷⁸

It is important, however, to point out that he was not exactly doing so in the pejorative sense that some of today's scholars might (i.e. with the implication that we ought to dispatch with social constructs like nations or races as organizing principles) but rather to demonstrate that the great Turkish nation was yet to be built, and it necessarily must be done on the notion of a race-centered heritage.

In this foundational essay, Atsız argued for two important distinctions. The first, as introduced above, he argued for race as the organizing principle of the nation instead of territory. He argued that those who support a territorially based nationalism were in part arguing on the basis of emotion, and thus attempting to attribute ancestors to the Turkish people who are “unsuitable,” he even suggested that his opponents, among whom were major Turkish nationalist thinkers and the Kemalist elite, were risking making imposters out of the Turks by insisting that Turks are not “Turanian” but Aryan – in essence Atsız argued *against* the claim that Turks are white. He surmised that the impulse for his opponents' case, “has to do with long held assumptions about the Mongol's wildness and barbarism, and the Aryan's civilization,” and for this reason they have put forward arguments like the ones that argue for Turks as inheritors of the ancient Hittite tradition.¹⁷⁹ He asserted that,

One of the concepts borne of the result of counting the Turks as Aryans is that the Hittites were Turks. This is advanced by theoreticians [*nazariyetçiler*] who want to find a true inheritance and proof of antiquity for Turks in Anatolia. Undoubtedly, we all want this for emotional reasons. However, the truth of the matter is this: The monuments of the Hittites have been read, and they were not Turks, they were understood to be Aryans.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Hüseyin Nihal (Atsız), “Türkler Hangi Irktandır?” *Atsız Mecmua* Year 1 No. 1, 15 May 1931, p. 7

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 6

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

He warned that arguing that the Turks inherit Hittite culture, “is a very dangerous path for us to take,” because it gives ammunition to those who, “want to deny our anthropological characteristics [*antropolojik hususiyetlerimiz*] and say that we are the descendants of the ancient Greeks.”¹⁸¹ Effectively, he believed that territorial nationalism amounted to a figurative white washing of the history of the Turkish race, and thus would open the nation up to a line of critique from white, or “Aryan”, nations who would want to make Turkey subservient, that in “becoming Aryan” Turks would be forced to admit they were “unrelated to the wild Mongols [*vahşi Moğolları*], deny Turanism, and become members of the Gypsies.”¹⁸²

The second distinction, which follows from the first, is between Aryan and Turk. The purpose of making this distinction is to argue for a separation of races, and that indeed the entire history of the biological construction of the Turkish race was so that, “[our babies] could live between a crowded nation and a harsh climate.”¹⁸³ It is here that Atsız embraced “anthropology” and linguistics in a way that bears some similarity to Nazi ideology in that the evidence he pointed to of a primordial Altaic-Turanian-Mongol race (he uses the proper nouns somewhat interchangeably) are shared characteristics of language, “virtues of the warrior” [*askerin meziyetleri*], and distinct phenotypical features. The last aspect is the most crucial to him, as he openly connects Turks to “yellow Mongols” early in the essay and at the end offers a description of “pictures found in eastern-Turkestan and Turkish statues” that have recently been analyzed by “German scholars” in which “Turkish, Chinese, Iranian and Hindi faces are shown to be very separate from one another,” which rests Atsız’s case as, “the final and positive evidence that we are not comparable to the Aryans.”¹⁸⁴ This is the clearest statement Atsız makes confirming his commitment to race-based nationalism against territorial varieties and over claims to cultural

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 7

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 6

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 7

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 6-7

heritage that cannot be traced back to some sort of immortal and primordial essence of the “Turk”.

It is then left to consider what role culture plays in the construction of Atsız’s ultra-nationalist future in Turkey, as this is the field in which Atsız was certainly most active, contributing mainly to the production of a racist-Turanian literary canon, rather than furthering the sort of scientific racism that he held in such high regard. In an issue of *Atsız Mecmua* from July 1932, Atsız drew a picture of a café for Bulgarian students at the Darülfünün known as “Filibe Restaurant”.¹⁸⁵ In the article Atsız described how in this restaurant, you can only hear Bulgarian spoken, there are Bulgarian decorations on the walls, and the students often sing Bulgarian songs. He interpreted this to mean that the Bulgarians have created here a space in which the “Bulgarian ideal” (*bulgar mefküresi*) can be enlivened and progress.¹⁸⁶ He used this example to develop a theory of an “organic tradition” (*uzvî hâdisesi*) that is necessary to the socialization and maturity of a nation, and stresses that “like any organic tradition, socialization and maturity necessitate an environment.”¹⁸⁷ Atsız did not provide a lengthy explanation of the characteristics of this organic tradition, but they included sentiments typically associated with Ottoman and post-Ottoman nationalist ideologies such as “bravery (*mertlik*), a mission (*vazife*), and a devotion to the homeland (*vatan*)” as well as the inculcation of both Turkishness (*Türklüğü*) and revolution (*inkilap*) in the minds of the youth.¹⁸⁸ The rest of the article proceeded to lament the fact that Turks have failed to create such environments for their own youth. He makes a clear distinction between the values of this organic tradition and those of the leaders in government and

¹⁸⁵ Hüseyin Nihal (Atsız), “Filibe Lokantası” *Atsız Mecmua* Year 2 No. 15 May 1932 p. 49-50. Filibe is the Turkish name for the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv.

¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, Atsız does not capitalize the words for “bulgarian” through this piece, though other proper (Turkish) nouns are capitalized.

¹⁸⁷ Atsız, “Filibe Lokantası” p. 49

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

society, who he believes are more interested in bourgeois activities and merely mimicking the west than they are in the progress of the nation. The article closes on the attack,

Cities that spend their budgets on stadiums and beaches should be ashamed!

The dorm for students at the back of the Darülfünün that the President had signaled is now open. Those who gave speeches at the opening of Sports facilities and dance salons should be ashamed! Have these men who are opening a humble dorm for students in Istanbul done anything to save the children in the homes and coffee corners in their own provinces? Let's take inspiration from our Bulgarian guests! We should all be ashamed...¹⁸⁹

With this statement, Atsız begins to make the case for a separate space for the creation and amalgamation of a racist-nationalist culture.

Çınaraltı, Gök-Börü and the popularization of racist-Turanian thought in wartime Turkey

If the early 1930s were a period when racist-Turanian discourse developed as an intellectual and ideological tradition in opposition to the dominant ethno-nationalist race discourse of the Kemalists, the 1940s saw the popularization of this discourse and, ultimately, the formative moments in its transition from an intellectual enterprise to a political movement. Prior to the reappearance of Nihal Atsız's *Orhun* in 1943 after a hiatus of almost a decade, a cadre of racist-Turanian intellectuals, including Atsız, Reha Oğuz Türkkkan, Zeki Velidi Togan and the retired General E.H. Erkilet could be found writing frequent pieces in the journal *Çınaraltı* [Under the Plane Tree] which was founded by the veteran journalists, and creators of the satirical nationalist paper *Akbaba* [Vulture], Yusuf Ziya Ortaç and Orhan Sefyi Orhon and printed under the auspices of Cumhuriyet Press, beginning in August of 1941. Two years later in 1943, after *Çınaraltı* came under some fire from the state for spreading pro-German propaganda, Atsız would

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

once again begin publishing *Orhun* and his compatriot Reha Oğuz Türkkan would go a more colorful route with the journal *Gök-Börü* [Grey Wolf].¹⁹⁰

Before analyzing a few examples of the racist-Turanian discourse in these publications, it is important to note that the popularity of this discourse, and the prominence of its proponents, was buoyed by two factors. The first, which I will describe in further detail later in the chapter, is the close relationship many of these writers had with the German delegation, and the ideological affinity they expressed during a time when the military and political conflict between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia was dominating the news in Turkey. There is strong evidence to suggest that some of the racist-Turanian writers were, at this time, taking money from the German embassy in Ankara, were close acquaintances of the German Ambassador Franz von Papen, or were, at the very least, receiving Nazi propaganda materials.¹⁹¹ This fact proved to be

¹⁹⁰ *Gök-Börü* is a somewhat strange neologism supposedly rooted in ancient Turkic languages, but the editors of the magazine make it clear in the first issue that the term is meant to be synonymous with the more familiar term “bozkurt” or “Grey Wolf.” See “Gök-Börü (=Bozkurt) Tâbiri ve Mânâları” *Gök-Börü* vol. 1 no. 1, November 3, 1942, 1

¹⁹¹ A few scholars have written about the efforts of the German embassy to influence the Pan-Turanist and Pan-Turkist movement during the war. Onur İşçi has artfully demonstrated why von Papen and the German delegation sought, particularly in 1941, to acquire Pan-Turkist agents, particularly those with government posts, as a way of buffing anti-Soviet sentiment and Turkish solidarity with Nazi-supported Tatar movements in Crimea, and in an erstwhile attempt to goad Turkey into supporting Turkish nationalist movements in the south Caucasus with the tacit promise of a Turanian *lebensraum* in that region. Edward Weisband has written about the efforts of von Papen to bribe major Turkish newspapers, such as *Akşam* and *Cumhuriyet* by providing lavish gifts to their editors – Necmettin Sadak at the former, Nadir Nadi at the latter. US State Department records show the breadth of the Nazi propaganda effort in Turkey to have been considerable in scope, but the names one might most expect to see, those of Nihal Atsız and Reha Oğuz Türkkan, are never mentioned as being under the direction of the German Embassy. Which is not to say, necessarily, that the Embassy did not look kindly on such publications, it is at least clear from the scholarship and archival evidence that von Papen saw little need to coopt figures, such as Peyami Safa, who came by their support of Nazi Germany honestly. State Department sources also suggest that although German propaganda officers were reading racist-Turanian journals like *Orhun*, they were not translating them thoroughly and as a consequence their own propaganda outreach to these groups were out of touch with the tenor and specificity of that group’s particular aims. Onur İşçi, Onur İşçi, “Russophobic Neutrality: Turkish Diplomacy, 1936-1945” unpublished Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University 2014, 201-227, Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 81-82, note 39,

the favored line of prosecution against the racist-Turanians when the state would eventually take aim at them in 1944. The second factor, which we will explore more deeply here, is the proximity these racist-Turanians were afforded to more prominent and established intellectuals like Peyami Safa, Yahya Kemal, and Mehmet Emin Yurdakul in addition to the editors Orhon and Ortaç. Writing alongside these much more prominent philosophers and litterateurs in *Çınaraltı*, and for the same printing outfit as Turkey's most popular daily newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, allowed their ideas to reach a much wider audience, and land with much more legitimacy than it had in the earlier days of the 1930s.

From its first issue, we can begin to see in *Çınaraltı* – whose subhead read “Unity in Language, Thought, and Work” – the dynamic relationship between the idealist nationalism of figures like Orhan Seyfi and the racist-Turanians. On the cover of the first issue, Orhan Seyfi delivered a short, rousing appeal to the “ideal” of his readers. In a call and response format, he asked what the deficiencies of the Turkish people are, and in turn denied that they lack any of the essential material goods or structural necessities of modern life – from cotton to tramway service to children's education – and, yet, are in need of developing an “...ideal that can sustain a great and sacred fire. A brave, bold, feverish, dynamic ideal that increases our urge to meet the future, that multiplies our energy, that will save us from egoism [*hokâmlik*] and the love of comfort [*rahatseverlik*]!”¹⁹² The call to this kind of aggressive national modernism echoes continental fascist rhetoric, and he even went as far as to assert that as the nation grows under this ideal, “it will be our eternal springtime.”¹⁹³ The issue went on to feature an article by Kâzım İsmail Gürkan, a professor at the Haydarpaşa Medical School in Istanbul, on “The Race's Health

G.H. Damon to Amb. Edwin C. Wilson, October 25, 1945 US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16, Memorandum, September 4, 1944, Turkish Embassy Ankara Classified General Records US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 10

¹⁹² Orhan Seyfi Orhon, “İdeal” *Çınaraltı* Vol. 1, No. 1 August 9, 1941, 1

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Struggle” which espoused a blatantly eugenicist outlook on society stating that, “Civilization was born in the places that discovered population,” and quoting directly from the work of noted racist thinker Arthur de Gobineau.¹⁹⁴ Nihal Atsız also made an appearance in the first issue with a long article entitled “What must our view of Turkish history be?” which reiterates much of his prior criticism of the Turkish History Thesis forwarded in the early 1930s, rejecting the idea that ancient civilizations like the Akkadians or the Hittites were somehow Turkish, and warning that “Turkish children must not learn this chaotic history. Aside from this in this history every time a student is shown that every nation becomes ‘Turkish’ their confidence in the book leaves them and after everyone becomes a Turk, the national feeling [*milliyet duygusu*] weakens because the prerogative of ‘Turkishness’ has left.”¹⁹⁵ More so than the other articles in the first issue, this piece by Atsız directly criticized the government, particularly the involvement of President İsmet İnönü in the establishment in 1931 of the Turkish History Society [*Türk Tarih Kurumu*] and took a line on the history of Turks that was in direct opposition to the official position.

Seven months later, as the German offensive into Soviet territory was nearing its climax, *Çınaraltı* had solidified its stable of writers and attracted some relatively well known and respected writers from big daily newspapers like *Cumhuriyet* and *Tasvir-i Efkar*. An issue from early March 1942 featured four articles that neatly outlined the fundamental outlook of the racist-Turanians at a time when Turkey was closely courting an alliance with the Nazis. First, retired Ottoman-era General H.E. Erkilet – who by that time was acting as a spy for the German embassy¹⁹⁶ – penned an article, in response to some criticism he had received in a separate piece that appeared in *Cumhuriyet*, elaborating his thoughts on “The Geography of the Turkish

¹⁹⁴ Kazım İsmail Gürkan, “İrkın Sıhhat Davası” *Çınaraltı*, Vol. 1 No. 1, August 9, 1941, p. 5

¹⁹⁵ Nihal Atsız, “Türk Tarihine Bakışımız Nasıl Olmalıdır?” *Çınaraltı* Vol. 1, No. 1, August 9, 1941.

¹⁹⁶ İşçi notes that Erkilet was pushing Ambassador Von Papen in 1941, with little success, to get the Nazi regime behind the idea of a union of independent Turkish states if/when the USSR was dissolved. İşçi, “Russophobic Neutrality” 208-221.

Union.”¹⁹⁷ In the article, Erkilet argued that the divisions of “Turkistan” between Turkey and “Chinese Turkistan” were “political divisions, rather than natural or geographic ones.”¹⁹⁸ He went on to explain that the goal of the Russians in separating the various peoples of Turkistan into separate soviet republics was that they could “apply different lexicons and alphabets to the dialects of the Azerbaijanis, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazaks and Kyrgyz” and over time convince the different Turkish tribes to accept more Russian words in their vocabulary.¹⁹⁹ This possibility represents a disaster for Erkilet, who ended the article on a wistful notion,

How happy would it be for us if from Tuna to the Great Wall of China we enter into a single national body of at least seventy million people of the same language, same culture, same history and same religion that were unseparated by foreigners. As we know ourselves, losses cannot be sustained from any side for the security of our nation and our race. The only destiny of peace lies in the unity of great nations.²⁰⁰

The adventurism – bordering on irredentism – inherent in this outlook would ultimately constitute the most threatening aspect of Pan-Turanism in the eyes of the İnönü regime. The political, and ultimately military, steps necessary to accomplish the kind of reality Erkilet and the other Pan-Turanists desired were unimaginable in the current environment, and less than a year later, after Stalingrad, it would be understood that the mere suggestion of such adventurism – particularly by a figure with ties to the Turkish military like Erkilet – would be seen as destabilizing.

The issue featured two articles that dealt specifically with race. Hüseyin Namık Orkun’s entry, entitled “The Race Issue: The Aims of this Work Have Fallen on Us” echoed some of the same worries as Erkilet’s piece.²⁰¹ To start with, Orkun addressed the ways in which anthropologists had trouble agreeing on which cranial or blood characteristics defined Turks as a

¹⁹⁷ Emekli General H.E. Erkilet, “Coğrafi Türk Birliği” *Çınaraltı*, Vol. 2, No. 32, March 14, 1942, 4-5

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 4

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 4

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 5

²⁰¹ Hüseyin Namık Orkun, “İrk Meselesi: Bize bu işde düşen vazifeler” *Çınaraltı*, March 14, 1942, 10

race. Typically, racist-Turanists accepted this kind of race science as proof of their own racial and supremacist outlooks, but here, faced with some evidence that the Turkish race might not actually be a scientific fact, Orkun dismissed these methods of racial determination as “a childish posture” [*çocuk vaziyetindedir*]. This is not to say Orkun assented to the notion of race as a social construct, however. He continued to argue that the reason for this confusion is that Turks are a “people connected by roots [*soy*] and parentage [*nesil*]” and that Turks, over the centuries had intermingled and married to the point that “The Turkish root is one that has spread to the four corners of the Earth.” The threat posed by this intermingling is the loss of Turkishness [*Türklük*], and this is evidenced for Orkun by the fact that the Cuman Turks living in Hungary and the Avar Turks of Transylvania had ceased to speak Turkish. Indeed, the most pressing threat in this regard for Orkun was Russia, whose nationalities policy threatened to “Russianize” all of these Turks. Orkun proposed three missions to help prevent this sort of imposed rootlessness, the first being to make sure the youth were completely loyal to their customs and traditions, “They must not be allowed to change into the dress of civilization [*medeniyet elbise*], they must not be frankified [*alafrangalulaşmak*].” The second proposed mission was to ensure that the “root” was protected by imploring the government to consider laws banning marriages with foreigners – a phenomenon he considered “the greatest treachery” [*en büyük hiyanettir*]. The third and final mission was to promulgate further and better education about the Turkish language – making it compulsory to speak in Turkish, opening schools and running conferences to support that effort.

The second race-oriented article in this issue comes from a less well-known writer, Mustafa Hakkı Akansel, entitled “The Turkish Race State” that argued that modernity demanded the foundation of a state on the basis of the Turkish race.²⁰² The article quotes several American and European philosophers, sociologists, and historians extensively in translation. The first third

²⁰² Dr. Mustafa Hakkı Akansel, “Türk Irkının Devleti” *Çınaraltı*, March 14, 1942, 6-7

of the article is attributed mainly to the work of the American historian Harold Lamb (1892-1962) and the French travel writer Fernand Grenard (1866-1942) who wrote extensively on the history of the Mongol, Moghul, and Timurid states to argue that previous “Turkic” states had no basis for rule other than the aggregation of personal power – race, language, nationality, or social standing played no role according to Akansel’s interpretation of Lamb and Grenard. According to Akansel, “this age has been left long in the past” and the country now “is commanded to form a state on the basis of national feeling [*milliyet duygusu*] and even racial thought [*ırk fikri*].”²⁰³ Akansel then moved to quote French sociologist Ernst Renan’s work to suggest that wars fought “after the birth of national feeling” would be fought between nationalities in the way different species of animals fight each other – to the death.²⁰⁴ Akansel suggested that, given this dire situation, “there is no *idée force* [*fikir-kuvvet*] that can save us other than that of the ‘Turkish Race State.’”²⁰⁵ What follows is an extended argument over how the Ottoman elite could not sustain their “personal energy” [*şahsın enerjisi*] and deteriorated in the face of European enlightenment. The answer to this, in Akansel’s view, was to elevate Turkism [*Türklük*] and the utopian ideal of the Turkish Race State to a national level because it, more than the personal energy of the Ottoman elite, was rooted in the identity of the poor and middle classes of society – essentially imputing the idea of race onto these classes. Accomplish that and the Turkish nation “will be flushed with a renewing energy, virtue, potency that will not be blunted, on the contrary, it will be permitted to spread, to see its work, and in this way the Turkish Race State will live forever.”²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Ibid, 6. Works referenced include Harold Lamb, *Tamerlane, the Earth Shaker* (1928), Fernand Grenard, *Gengis Khan* (1935), *Baber, fondateur de l’empire des Indes 1483-1530* (1930), and *Grandeur et décadence de l’Asie, l’avènement de l’Europe* (1939).

²⁰⁴ Ibid. Akansel does not explicitly cite any specific work of Renan’s.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. Here Akansel provides both the French original *idée force* and the Turkish *fikir-kuvvet* in the text. Invoking this concept is a clear reference to the French liberal philosopher Alfred Fouillée. Akansel would elaborate in an article devoted to the idea a few issues later, Dr. Mustafa Hakkı Akansel, “Fikir-Kuvvet” *Çınaraltı* Vol. 2, No. 34, March 28, 1942, 10-12

²⁰⁶ Akansel, “Türk Irkını Devleti” 7

The third article worth examining here briefly demonstrates how the racist ideas of *Çınaraltı* became closely tied with some of the more mainstream, well-respected currents of Turkish intellectual life. Peyami Safa, a giant of Turkish philosophy and literature, wrote frequently for *Çınaraltı*, usually on the subject of nationalism. In this particular issue, he set out to write about “A Few Truths of Nationalism.”²⁰⁷ Safa, who in the 1930s was a conservative, modernist thinker who was inspired by the work of the French philosopher Henri Bergson – to whose influence we will return shortly – brought to this nationalist publication a similar approach, positing the nation as the fundamental aspect of all society. He likened the nation to the system in which an atom maintains its structure, or a body relates to its limbs, or the sun relates to the stars. He went on to state that “nationalism is neither an ideology, nor is it a theory; it is an expression of the actual circumstance of the pull of the earth, the burning of the flame, the way objects are oriented in their place.”²⁰⁸ Safa’s vein of Bergsonian Turkish modernism usually veered more secular than most of his contemporaries, and here we can see how that jived with the paganist and secular outlook of the Turanians. For Safa, “In a secular world, everything lost by religions can be won by the nation,” and, “In a place where there is no nation, there is no morality.”²⁰⁹ Safa was careful here not to explicitly assent to the more stridently racist positions of Atsız, Erkiilet, and others – there are some important distinctions to be made in his vocabulary, as he opts for “nationalism” [*milliyetçilik*] and Turkism [*Türklük*] over the “ideal” [*mefküre, ülkü*] favored by the racists, and his preoccupation with morality [*ahlak*] over anthropology or pseudoscience²¹⁰ – but it is not difficult to see the affinity of these viewpoints, since they

²⁰⁷ Peyami Safa, “Milliyetçiliğin birkaç hakikati” *Çınaraltı* March 14, 1942, 5

²⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁹ Ibid

²¹⁰ Although Safa did flirt with biological explanations of nationalism in a later article that covered the differences between biological and sociological rules that govern society, by stating that, “In all of the wealth of life, the foundation of the canton of each member is the nation.” Peyami Safa, “İlim Karşısında Milliyetçilik: 4, Biyoloji ve Milliyetçilik” *Çınaraltı*, Vol. 2 No. 38, April 13, 1942, 5

appeared in the same journal, and by understanding the shared cause he made with the racist-Turanians in supporting Nazi positions in *Çınaraltı* and elsewhere.

Along with the popularity of *Çınaraltı* and the brief revival of Atsız's own publication *Orhun* in 1943, there were signs of some hard division within the racist-Turanist camp that may have contributed to its inability to start a mass movement in the face of state suppression at the end of the war. The main division was between Atsız and his younger colleague Reha Oğuz Türkkan, who at the age of twenty-two started a journal of his own entitled *Gök-Börü* (*Gray Wolf*). According to Umut Üzer, who had the opportunity to interview Türkkan before his death in 2010, the split occurred over the issue of how racist ideology should engage religion, and a personal dispute over Türkkan's own ethnicity (Atsız accused him of being a secret Armenian).²¹¹ Türkkan had slightly moderated from Atsız's views on religion, proposing a program of the "Turkification of Islam" as opposed to Atsız's more paganist, anti-Islamic outlook, and on geopolitics, arguing for economic cooperation between independent Turkish states rather than their outright unification.²¹² According to the first issue of *Gök-Börü*, there was also a dispute with the *Çınaraltı* camp over an agreement to revive an older publication, called *Bozkurt* (*Grey Wolf*), which was ultimately revised on the insistence of Atsız.²¹³ These personal issues aside, Türkkan himself very clearly laid out the ideological differences between the *Gök-Börü* and *Çınaraltı* camps in a drawing featured in the first issue (Fig. K).

²¹¹ Umut Üzer, *An Intellectual History of Turkish Nationalism: Between Turkish Ethnicity and Islamic Identity* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), 144-147

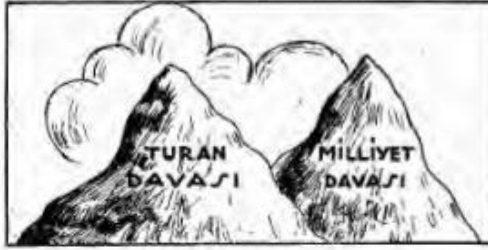
²¹² *Ibid*

²¹³ C. Savaş Fer, "Hesap Veriyoruz!" *Gök-Börü*, Vol. 1, No. 1 November 3, 1942. 4. The term "gök-börü" is said to be an ancient Turkish root for the word "bozkurt" that appears in historic legends.

Türkçülüğe Bakışlar



Bizim Tablomuz



Turancı Tablo



Anadolucu Tablo

Figure K "Views on Turkism: Our Tableau, the Turanist Tableau, the Anatolianist Tableau

Türkkan used this image to demonstrate that his particular camp of Turkism held the most comprehensive view. As explained in the accompanying article, the various “struggles” indicated by the labels on each mountain described the movement’s priorities. *Gök-Börü*’s outlook saw the struggle for pure blood (race) [*temiz kan (ırk) davası*] and the national struggle [*milliyet davası*] as the most pressing priorities, but wanted to keep in mind that after that, the movement should fight for women and the family [*aile ve kadın davası*], the youth and education [*gençlik ve maarif davası*], morality [*ahlak davası*], and yet further the struggles for the village [*köy davası*],

industrialization [*sanayileşme davası*], religion [*din*], language [*dil*], science [*ilim*], art [*fen*] and administration [*idare*] all of which would be in the service of pursuing the furthest mountain range, which was labeled “The Struggle for Greater Turkish Unity” [*Büyük Türk Birliği Davası*]. By comparison, the Anatolianist [*Anadolucu*] group had a more limited view, including only pure blood, nationalism, family, village, morality and administration, and the Turanist tableau [*Turanlı*] only contained a pair of mountains, labeled Turan and nation.²¹⁴ Ultimately, what would prove to be the critical difference was the long-term perspective, and less-adventurist position towards other Turkish states.

Gök-Börü would ultimately have a relatively short run of publication, only thirteen issues were published between November of 1942 and May of 1943, but the fact of this split with the *Çınaraltı* group is important as these differences may have affected some of the outcome of the racist-Turanian trials in 1944. Türkkan was arrested in a major sweep on September 7, 1944, and tortured to the point that he lost vision in one eye. During the course of the trial and offering his defense, subjects I revisit extensively in chapter six, he mostly held the vision he had ascribed to in *Gök-Börü*. These included the belief that Turkish political unity was a distant goal, that Atatürk himself had already begun the work of creating racial divisions by denying certain state positions to Greeks and Kurds, and that only the threat of a communist takeover of the state would justify the subversion of the government.²¹⁵ This is significant, because Türkkan’s co-defendant, Alparslan Türkeş, also ascribed to this view, and while Türkkan would leave Turkey for a long, self-imposed exile in the United States in 1947, Türkeş would go on to be one of the founders of the Nationalist Action Party (*Milli Hareket Partisi*, MHP) and a prominent political figure from the 1970s onwards. In many ways, by distancing themselves from German influence, and taking a less adventurist foreign policy stance, the *Gök-Börü* cadre of racist-Turanists would plant the

²¹⁴ Reha Oğuz Türkkan, “Türkçülüğe Bakışlar” *Gök-Börü* Vol. 1, No. 1 November 5, 1942, 5-6.

²¹⁵ Üzer, *An Intellectual History of Turkish Nationalism*, 159.

seeds of the future ultra-nationalist political movement that is still a significant force in Turkish politics.

Black Bodies, Anti-racism, and Anti-fascism in the Turkish Left

Nazım Hikmet: Black bodies and Red politics in the Turkish context

Thanks in large part to his partnership with the Sertels in *Resimli Ay* and his recording of his poems for phonographs in the early 1930s, Nazım Hikmet had become a well-known poet by the middle of the decade. In 1933, however, fortunes had begun to turn against him when in a roundup of radicals across the country, he was arrested and tried for spreading revolutionary propaganda. Though initially there were calls to sentence him to death, he managed to receive a number of reduced sentences and only spent about a year and a half imprisoned in Bursa before being released in August 1934. While in prison he began to compose a series of poems and prose pieces that would launch him to international acclaim. Published in late-1935, and translated into French the following year, *Letters to Taranta-Babu (Taranta-Babu'ya Mektublar)* amounted to an incendiary assault on fascism and Mussolini's rule in Italy, but was also a thinly-veiled critique of the Kemalist state's assault on his work and his imprisonment.²¹⁶ The work comprises thirteen poetic "letters" ostensibly written in the Oromo language by an unnamed Ethiopian exile of the Galla tribe, who had previously been arrested and sentenced to death by firing squad, to his wife, the eponymous Taranta-Babu. The letters are couched in a prose frame story that explains their origin – that they were sent to Nazım by an Italian "friend," who "got interested in Asian and

²¹⁶ Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Nazım Hikmet: Turkey's World Poet* (New York: Persea, 2013), 97-99

African languages because he could not use his own language, in his own country, the way he wanted to.”²¹⁷

The frame letter from the Italian friend is dated August 5, 1935 – two months before Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia – and the poem as a whole is dedicated to the memory of Henri Barbusse, the French communist novelist who died in Moscow on August 30th of that year. This is worth mentioning because although the precise release date is unknown, the poems certainly served as a contemporaneous comment on the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and the heightening tensions between fascism and communism across Europe and the Mediterranean that year. Like his earlier long poem, *Giaconda-and-Si-Ya-U (Jokond ile Si-Ya-U)*, the *Letters to Taranta-Babu* brought the crucible of the global ideological struggle between communist and capitalist forces into the Turkish idiom, but because it engaged with a nearer neighbor with a shared history, and because its hero was not exactly an elite, the weight of Nazım’s communism-inspired critique lands heavier throughout *Taranta-Babu*.

In both the prose frame letter and the poems, *Letters to Taranta-Babu* serves the didactic purpose of explaining what fascism meant in Mussolini’s Italy. In the frame story, fascism is explained as a cult of the state and a natural outgrowth of finance capitalism,

To understand how deep, unfathomable the Fascist vision is realized, one need not rise to the gatherings in the ballrooms of the Bertolino Splendide Hotel, under lights even brighter than the Italian sun, but only descend to those living in the Quartieri Popolare – the People’s Quarters. The residents in these districts have actually been most effectively contained by the State’s prisons, tax offices, and police stations and, indeed, have been made to understand nothing of value exists outside the State.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Nazım Hikmet, *Letters to Taranta-Babu*, Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk trans. (Providence: Copper Beech Press, 2013), 11. Original Publication: Nazım Hikmet, *Taranta-Babu’ya Mektublar* (Istanbul: Bozkurd Matbaası, 1935). The poem was translated into several languages in addition to French following its publication, but Blasing and Konuk’s is the first in English. All translations from this work, unless otherwise noted, are theirs.

²¹⁸ Nazım Hikmet, *Letters to Taranta-Babu*, 12

In the poems, the author first lamented the way Italians had been impoverished by fascist rule and how Mussolini had enriched the elite, including Pope Pius XI who was excoriated in the third of the letters:

I saw Pope Pius XI, TARANTA-BABU!

here he's

what our tribe's

medicine man is there...

Except

our witch doctor

doesn't ask for money

to drive the blue devil with three heads

over the Harar Mountains...²¹⁹

In the sixth letter, the author elaborated on a typology of fascist artists engaging in a critique not only of fascism in practice, but the bloody ends to which artists and poets he considers to be “geniuses” were put to use. According to him, there were three types of artists in Italy. The first type was comprised of the founders of the Italian Futurist movement, “like D’Annunzio... like the frenetic Marinetti; like Pirandello, who, prized by the dynamiter Nobel, questions everything but IL DUCE’s fist.”²²⁰ These men the author held in high regard for their skill as men who “talk like gods, full of impenetrable obscurities, these writers unreachably elevated, unfathomably deep. Yet they get belly-aches, the same as you. They get hungry like me.”²²¹ He humanizes these “geniuses” only to point out that the content of their genius was little more than a glorification of warfare, “that dying, your throat slit, in a yellow desert guarantees

²¹⁹ Ibid, 24

²²⁰ Ibid, 30. In fact, only two of the types are described as a note from the “Italian friend” explains, the letter, “was left unfinished. To hear how the young Ethiopian described the third type of Italian writers, I would be willing to forget Italian altogether and learn it all over again,” p. 33

²²¹ Ibid, 30

you life everlasting in the bluest sky over Italy, the eternal mirror of the waters of the Mediterranean – out of such notions, these men make literature.”²²²

While the words here are meant for the pen of a black Ethiopian writer and prefigure a conflict that the Turkish republic had little to do with, they are also meant to evoke a past and present that Turkish readers shared with both the Ethiopian anti-fascist poet and the Italian futurists. Roughly twenty-five years earlier, in 1911, the Ottoman army was locked in its own battle with an Italian army, defending Tripolitania, an Ottoman territory that roughly corresponds to today’s Libya. That conflict, along with the Balkan war that followed it the next year, is known for being the first to widely employ mechanized forms of warfare, including airplanes, tanks, machine guns, and automobiles. Relatedly, it is also known for serving as the inspiration for the futurist movement, as the movement’s founder F.T. Marinetti participated in the conflict and was inspired by the mechanical spectacle to create new forms of “kinetic poetry” that would embody the principles of speed and mechanization espoused in the Futurist Manifesto he had published in *Le Figaro* in 1909.²²³ Comparatively, the Italo-Ottoman war of 1911 is somewhat overlooked as a moment of genesis for the Turkish republic, often overshadowed by the cataclysmic events of the First World War and the War for Independence, but the resonance here would not have been lost on Nazım Hikmet’s Turkish readership. That conflict was, in fact, the first battle in which the Turkish founder and president Mustafa Kemal had participated, and tales of his heroism in that

²²² Ibid

²²³ F.T. Marinetti, “The Futurist Manifesto” R.W. Flint trans., [italianfuturists.org](http://www.italianfuturism.org), <http://www.italianfuturism.org/manifestos/foundingmanifesto/> Accessed May 6, 2016. It is worth mentioning that although Marinetti had yet to experience the sort of mechanized warfare prefigured by the manifesto, he was deeply inspired by the Arab world, having spent his childhood years in Alexandria, Egypt where his parents were legal advisers for foreign companies undertaking the modernization reforms of Khedive Ismail. The Manifesto itself references Marinetti’s North African childhood repeatedly, opening with the line, “We stayed up all night, my friends and I, under hanging mosque lamps with domes of filigreed brass, domes starred like our spirits, shining like them with the prisoned radiance of electric hearts,” and continuing to describe drinking the mud at the bottom of the ditch he found himself in after a car crash as reminiscent of “the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse.”

losing effort were already ascending to the status of hagiography by 1935. In some ways, the legacy of the Libyan conflict carried itself through to the Independence War, as Mustafa Kemal frequently campaigned across eastern Anatolia with Ahmad ibn Idris al-Sanusi, the deposed leader of the Libyan tribe on whose side the Ottomans had fought, and even offered him the position of caliph before the office was abolished.²²⁴ The sense of the loss of an African territory, the conflict against Italy, and the ascendancy of the Futurist movement and fascist ideology juxtaposed with the increasingly authoritarian turn in the Turkish state, the imprisonment of intellectuals like Nazım, and the creeping fear of a second global conflagration would have landed powerfully in Turkish audiences of *Letters to Taranta-Babu*. Activating all of these images and connecting them to the aesthetic and artistic form of futurism serves a point Nazım was struggling to make at the time about the corruptibility of art, and the necessity of working in historical, verbal, and even formal vernaculars and contexts in order to deliver his radical content. This mission would drive the next period in the development of Nazım's poetry as he engaged directly with forms, sounds, and vernaculars that were more familiar to the Turkish literary canon, culminating in the two works of his that are widely perceived as masterpieces, *The Epic of Sheikh Bedreddin*, which would ultimately land him in prison, and *Human Landscapes from My Country*, which he composed in prison and would not see initial publication until years after his release in 1950.

While the local contexts and histories here are critical to understanding the imagery Hikmet meant to evoke in his readers, there is also the somewhat more obvious global context of the racial dynamics of the Soviet anti-fascist and anti-colonial efforts in the global sphere. Nergis

²²⁴ The position of caliph was offered on the condition that the seat of the caliphate be moved from Istanbul to a location outside of the Turkish republic, because of which, the offer was declined. For the definitive account of Ahmad ibn Idris' experience in the War for Independence, see Claudia Anna Gazzini, "Jihad in Exile: Ahmad Al-Sharif Al-Sanusi 1918-1933" M.A. thesis, Princeton University, 2004.

Ertürk has argued that the presentation in *Letters to Taranta-Babu* of black bodies fighting against fascism through several screens of mediation, or in her words “spectralization in anonymity,” is not meant to obscure or “other” the struggle of those raced bodies for Turkish audiences, but rather to familiarize and universalize them through a “perpetual ‘othering’ of the self in translative language,” that gives the impression that “the republic of letters in ‘Taranta-Babu’ is nothing less than a dispersed, open collective of such anonymous ghostwriters.”²²⁵ The use of this technique, in tandem with the rhetorical move of animating a black body whose speech is obscured for the purposes of promoting a communist and egalitarian message, draws heavily on Russian Soviet attacks on the treatment of blacks both in the Americas and in fascist Europe.²²⁶ There are several examples of this in Soviet cultural history but a few are worth mentioning as specific contextual references for international readers of *Letters to Taranta Babu*. First would be a poem by one of Nazım Hikmet’s Soviet heroes, Vladimir Mayakovsky, from 1925 entitled “Black and White” which directly assails the subjugation of black workers in Cuba.²²⁷ In the poem, the protagonist, a janitor at the Henry Clay Cigar factory, openly ridicules his boss,

Too bad that
 just then
 heaved his way
 toward the King of Cigars
 Henry Clay,

²²⁵ Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey*, 177-8. [FULL CITE NEEDED]

²²⁶ Meredith L. Roman has explained how the Soviet anti-racist policy was elevated to a “hard-line” policy following the introduction of the Five-Year Plans in 1928 and 1933 that pushed the Comintern to draw harder distinctions between communist and capitalist societies, a move that embraced the increasing number of African Americans emigrating to or visiting the USSR in an effort to depict soviet society as a place where race was “absent.” Meredith L. Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism 1928-1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

²²⁷ Mayakovsky had made a trip the United States in the early 1920s and wrote extensively about racial oppression there in the years that followed. Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow*, p. 6

in pluperfect whiteness

and a big jowl wag,

his royal

sugar highness

Mr. Bragg.

Up to the fat one

runs the

‘nigger’:

“Beg yo’ pardon

Mr. Bragg,

Ain’t it funny

yo’ lily white

sugar

Black man makes and puts it in the bag.

With yo’ white color

black cigars sho’

out o’ place;

goes lots better

on the black man’s

face.

Sugar in yo’ coffee?—

Help yo’self,

help;

Be so kind, sir

make it

yo'self."²²⁸

Another contextual example would be the film *Circus (Tsirk)* released in the same year as *Letters to Taranta-Babu* which tells the story of an American circus performer who escapes to the Soviet Union after she gives birth to a biracial child. In the climax of the film, the villain, a German circus master, and an obvious stand-in for Adolf Hitler, attempts to kidnap the young black child, only to be thwarted by the crowd who spontaneously bursts into a multilingual lullaby, passing the child from one person to another until he (and some of the crowd) is sound asleep.²²⁹ As Beth Holmgren has argued, the comedy and melodrama of the film utilized, and subverted, many tropes of Hollywood film making in order to portray soviet society as a welcoming, loving family opposed to the outright racism of fascist Germany or capitalist America.²³⁰ By casting black actors in several supporting roles, including the child of Marion, the main character, *Circus*, “offered a bold corrective to [a] specifically Hollywood practice” that was amplified by the fact that Jimmy Patterson, the actor who plays Marion’s child, was himself the son of an African-American immigrant who had come to Russia to work in the film industry and address issues of race.²³¹

²²⁸ Vladimir Mayakovsky, “Black and White” trans. Isidor Schneider, in *American Quarterly on the Soviet Union* July 1940, 90-92, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/AmQSovietUnion-1940jul-00090>. The poem also served as an inspiration for a short, animated film in 1932 with the same name directed by Ivan Ivanov-Vano and Leonid Amalrik, which more directly targeted the United States by featuring scenes of agricultural slavery, whipping, and lynching. A few versions exist on YouTube, some featuring different cuts and one with an overdub of the spiritual “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.” The original full version seems to exist at this address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kG-Cx-wO3Ec>

²²⁹ Grigori Aleksandrov and Isidor Simkov, *Tsirk (Circus)*, Mosfilm Studios, 1936, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ia4DyErYhAs>.

²³⁰ Beth Holmgren, “‘The Blue Angel’ and Blackface: Redeeming Entertainment in Aleksandrov’s ‘Circus’” *The Russian Review* 66:1 (January 2007), 5-22.

²³¹ Holmgren, “The Blue Angel”, 17-18. Patterson (b. 1933) was born to an African-American father, the actor Lloyd Patterson, who had emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1932, and a Ukrainian mother, theater artist Vera Ippolitovna Aralova. Meredith Roman departs from this analysis in her work, offering up *Circus* as a sign that Soviet antiracist policies, particularly as they concerned black Americans, became a secondary priority for propaganda in the mid- and

That Nazım Hikmet would address race through these lenses is not terribly surprising, as his education was heavily influenced by the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist views on racial justice that were being formulated in the University for the Toilers of the East (KUTV) at the time he was a student, and continued as he worked more closely with the international socialist community in the 1930s.²³² It is easy to see how *Letters to Taranta-Babu* fits into the international soviet context in this way, why it struck Louis Aragon to have it translated for his journal *Commune* in 1936, and also how it neatly fits in with Hikmet’s earlier globally-oriented poems *Giaconda and Si-YA-U* (1929) and *Why did Banerjee Kill Himself (Benerci Kendini Niçin Öldürdü? 1932)*, which feature non-Turkish and non-Western main characters whose racial features are not amplified to the same degree as the Ethiopian in *Letters to Taranta Babu*. What remains to be interrogated, however, is whether this ideological tactic, or the “perpetual ‘othering’” of the republic of letters described above by Ertürk had its desired effects in the Turkish context, where race was figuring increasingly large in the construction of a national Turkish identity, and racist-Turanians like Nihal Atsız were gaining wide cultural acclaim.

late-1930s as the USSR took a softer line against the United States, Britain, and France in favor of directly attacking Nazi Germany – evidenced in *Circus* by the centering of a white female victim and a Hitleresque German villain, as opposed to the black bodies that featured more prominently in earlier propaganda pieces. *Opposing Jim Crow*, 193-206

²³² Nazım Hikmet extensively elaborated his views on race in 1936 when he published a short book entitled *Alman Faşizmi ve Irkçılığı (German Fascism and Racism)* where he offered a fairly standard Marxist critique of the history of racist ideology, assailing the manner in which Darwinist evolutionary theory was abused by capitalist ideologues in order to serve the ends of imperialism throughout the nineteenth century, and culminating in the rise of National Socialism in interwar Germany. The book explicitly states at the beginning that the work “has collected quotations from the works of Théodor Balk’s *Races Mythe et Vérité* [1935], Ernst Henry’s *Hitler Over Europe* [1934], and B.M. Bernardiner’s *Filosofia Nietzsche i Fascism* [1934]” and in offering a critique of (Neo) Darwinism specifically cites Friedrich Engels’ *Ludwig Feuerbach and Classical German Philosophy* [1886] and *Anti-Dühring* [1878]. This collection of citations suggests Nazım was able to readily access newly available works published by socialist printing houses in Europe – such as the one Balk’s work was published in – and maintained access to works in Russian like Bernardiner’s, which had yet to be translated into Turkish. Reprinted in Nazım Hikmet, *Yazılar 4* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 308-378.

Nazım Hikmet was not alone in his acceptance of Soviet discourse in the middle and late 1930s, in fact this is probably the time when such discourses were most pervasive in leftist Turkish circles and works central to the Soviet worldview were being translated into Turkish for the first time.²³³ One of the major figures in this process was Sabiha Sertel. After *Resimli Ay* ended its publication run in 1930, the printing house remained open and largely sustained itself by printing chapbooks, educational texts, and translations of classic works of literature. This work allowed Sabiha Sertel to also begin the work of translating book-length socialist texts like Karl Kautsky's *Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)*, August Bebel's *Women and Socialism*, and Vladimir Adoratsky's *Dialectic Materialism* into Turkish.²³⁴ Sabiha Sertel had also been one of the longest standing critics of Jim Crow in the Turkish press, having published editorials in *Resimli Ay* on subjects ranging from the pervasiveness of the Klu Klux Klan to the dangers of the slave trade.²³⁵ While her wartime columns in *Tan* may not have directly addressed issues of race, a manuscript of a book she was writing in the midst of the war that remained unpublished until its discovery in

²³³ What is surprising about this is that the period following the 1933 visit of Soviet officials for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the republic was a time when Turkish officials were working most closely with their Soviet counterparts and courting leftist and communist input on the economy, as evidenced by the close relationship between the leftist journal *Kadro* and certain members of the Kemalist elite and the promulgation of a five-year plan in 1934. At the same time, the clandestine Turkish Communist Party was mostly in disarray, membership in the official party was at an all-time low, and many of the most prominent members, including Nazım Hikmet, had been expelled from the party. See George S. Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Publications, 1967), 145-148, and Erden Akbulut, *Komintern Belgelerinde Nâzım Hikmet* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2002), 181-216.

²³⁴ The translations appeared as: Karl Kautsky, *Sınıf Kavgası (Erfurt Program)* Sabiha Sertel trans., (Istanbul: Vakit Gazete, Matbaa, Kütüphane, 1934), Vladimir Adoratsky, *Diyalektik Materyalizm: Marksizm, Leninizm'in Nazarî Temeli* Sabiha Sertel, trans., (Istanbul: Yenikitapçı, 1936), and August Bebel, *Kadın ve Sosyalizm* Sabiha Sertel, trans., (Istanbul: Vakit Gazete, Matbaa, Kütüphane, 1935). Each of the translations were made from their English versions, the translations of Adoratsky and Bebel each included introductions by Sabiha.

²³⁵ On the KKK, see "Dünyanın en büyük ve korkunç khafî cemiyeti" [The World's Largest and Most Frightening Secret Society], *Resimli Ay*, October 1924, 5-7, on the slave trade see, "Esir Ticareti: Kapitalist Devlet ve Milletler Geri Milletleri Nasıl Oldürüyor ve İstismar Ediyorlar?" [The Slave Trade: How are the Capitalist States and Nations Killing and Exploiting Backwards Nations?] *Resimli Ay*, March 1930, 17-19. Both articles are unsigned, but Sabiha Sertel was part of the editorial collective with her husband Zekeriya in both cases.

the 1990s suggests she accepted a very similar diagnosis of racism and fascism to that laid out in Nazım's 1936 text. Writing on the development of National Socialism she claimed,

[National socialism] smothered social reform, and whilst pacing towards a capitalist dictatorship put the problems of race and nationalism in the center. By their own account, although they lead with the national principle, they were demolishing the reality of other independent states and nations in Europe with this order, from two sides a powerful current of nationalism and racism with a powerful German nation they brought a monopoly to the fore... Without scientific explanations, they forwarded the superiority of the German nation, the Teutonic race's capacity for administration, and the inferiority of other nations, these demagogues applied nothing other than the theory of monopoly and meaningless accumulation.²³⁶

As one of the editors and opinion writers of one of the most popular daily newspapers, it is significant that we understand that during the conflagration of World War II, Sabiha Sertel, like Nazım Hikmet before her, saw the fight against racism and the fight against fascism as inextricably entwined. While she may not have invoked black bodies in the same way Nazım Hikmet did, the focus of much of her critique of fascist imperialism rested on European adventurism in Africa, particularly in Ethiopia and Sudan, just as it had for Nazım.

Bergsonism and “The Great East”: Islamic Conservative Modernism in the 1930s and 1940s

For intellectuals who hoped to articulate alternative responses to the construction of an ethno-nationalist Turkish identity in the 1930s and 1940s, perhaps no single European philosopher was more influential than the modernist Henri Bergson. Bergson's articulation of a modernity that rejected the dominant material trends of nineteenth century positivism in favor of

²³⁶ Sabiha Sertel, *II. Dünya Savaşı Tarihi* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 1999), 180. This book, along with translations of works such as Lenin's *Imperialism, the Final Phase of Capitalism* and Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*, were written mostly between 1941-1942 during a period when she was suspended by the state from writing in *Tan* but according to her memoir were left unpublished “because the conditions of those days did not allow them to be published.” The manuscripts were left with her older brother Neşet Deriş in 1950 when she left Turkey for good, and only rediscovered in 1990 amongst the belongings of Sabiha's nephew Osman Müeyyet Binzet by her daughter Yıldız Sertel and her nephew Avni Refiğ. See *II. Dünya Savaşı*, 9-10 and Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* (Istanbul: Gül Matbaası, 1978 [1969]), p. 225-6.

a personalist, dynamic articulation of “freedom” proved seductive to many critics of the turn towards a cultural revolution in the 1930s. Nazım İrem has expertly charted how Bergson’s influence was central to the creation of a “conservative republican” wing of the Kemalist intellectual milieu; primarily in the figures of İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, Peyami Safa, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Hilmi Ziya Ülken, and Mustafa Şefik Tunç.²³⁷ These figures, though largely politically aligned with Kemalism throughout the 1930s, would eventually lay the groundwork for some of the more popular expressions of a secular Turkish conservatism in the 1940s and 1950s.²³⁸ Less well discussed in the intellectual history of this period is the influence of Bergson on a figure who would come to represent the most prominent Islamist critique of Kemalism – Necip Fazıl Kısakürek.²³⁹ This actuality is surprising given the fact that among the many intellectuals who engaged with Bergson’s work across the political aisle, Necip Fazıl was the only one to directly study under Bergson as a student at the Sorbonne in the early 1920s.

Early on, Necip Fazıl’s essays and poetry in his journal *Ağaç* (Tree) were championed by conservative-modernists and Kemalists alike. In one of the first issues of *Ağaç* one of the chief Bergsonian intellectuals, Mustafa Şekip Tunç, penned an article praising the emphasis the journal had placed in its subtitle on the term “aksiyon” (action).²⁴⁰ Tunç defines the term as a conscious

²³⁷ Nazım İrem, “Undercurrents of European Modernity” and “Turkish Conservative Modernism”

²³⁸ One exception would be Baltacıoğlu, who was mentioned in the previous chapter as a prominent figure in the Liberal Republican Party, but would remain a staunch supporter of the CHP well into the 1950s.

²³⁹ Also left unaddressed by İrem is the somewhat sizable influence Bergson’s philosophy had on leftist thinkers, in particular the coterie of the Language, History and Geography Faculty at Ankara University who in the 1940s published their work in the art and philosophy journal *Yurt ve Dünya* (Home and World), including leading critical lights like Behice Boran, Pertev Naili Boratov, Adnan Cemgil, and Niyazi Berkes. See, inter alia, Niyazi Berkes, “Bergson’un Sosyal fikirleri” in *Yurt ve Dünya* No. 2, February 1941, 34-42.

²⁴⁰ The subtitle of the journal was “Art-Thought-Action” (“Sanat-Fikir-Aksiyon”), the main thrust of the article was meant to define this French loan-word in contradistinction to Turkish words like *hareket* (movement) or *istikamet* (direction) in that *aksiyon* carried with it a meaningfulness and consciousness that was tied directly to Bergson’s conception of “*durée*” and his meaning of

(*şuurlu*) movement that is the result of “the impetus towards the future while having gathered the past” (*geçmişini toplayarak geleceğe sarkması*). He uses the metaphor of a play to explain its distinction: “These movements still alight on the stage as in a ‘play’ but only until the end of the rehearsals after which they can only be organized as action by the one who is doing them [and not the director]. In these rehearsals, these past experiences and action melt into one another and are reborn into a new shape of action that is itself a true action.”²⁴¹ Extending the analogy somewhat, Tunç suggests that the Turkish revolution had yet to advance to the stage of action, or even going so far as to suggest that, “it is possible the action of nature has been silenced. Until now, the time and place of our heroic action is further deepening and walking up to this line.”²⁴² Tunç suggests that journals like *Ağaç* are “a unique means for cautiously following the weakness and strengths of our culture announcing our spiritual health, consciousness” and celebrated thinkers like Necip Fazıl who, “come to this foreign word with open arms and signals that he will meet it with a sympathy in our language.”²⁴³

What began to separate Necip Fazıl from the group identified by İrem was his particular marriage of Bergson and conservative modernism with Islamic philosophy and literary traditions. While some followers of Bergson, Peyami Safa especially, advocated for the importance of religion in shaping cultural and national character, Necip Fazıl took a more idealistic stance, offering a version of Turkish national modernity that more tightly entwined the canon of Ottoman and Islamic literature with Bergson’s emphases on mysticism and individuality.²⁴⁴ An early essay

“spontaneity” (Tunç translates this term as *lâhzalık*) as derived from Leibniz. Mustafa Şekip Tunç, “Aksiyon” *Ağaç* March 28, 1936, 2-3.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 3

²⁴² Ibid

²⁴³ Ibid, 2-3

²⁴⁴ As İrem notes, the republican-conservative approach to religion championed by characters like Safa emphasized mysticism and “folk-Islam” in order to provide a personalist, non-abstract template for following Islam in a secular society – in effect these secular thinkers sought to “open the gates of interpretation” or “*ijtihad*” for the foundational Islamic texts famously “closed” by

of Necip Fazıl's, printed in *Ağaç* demonstrates his unique synthesis of Bergsonian and Islamic worldviews.²⁴⁵ The essay, entitled "A Quick Look at Artists and Intellectuals of the Turkish Middle Ages", Necip Fazıl used a naturalistic metaphor to explain the relationship between the Turkish individual and society,

Language, syntax, templates, techniques, criticism, culture, logic, morality, the concept of the world and the beyond, temperament, precision, aesthetics, in sum a transfiguration of the wealth of all of the reflections of itself is placed on a systemic platform.

The platform of this society, and society itself is built on the faith and ideology of Islam. According to the equilibrium of that age, the faith and ideology of Islam was a sunny sky, society was a ground which took heat from that sky, artists and intellectuals also, being individuals who were rooted in that ground and were accordingly nourished by it, gave it a tree.

Neither sky, internal composition of the earth, nor the quality of the ground on which the tree was nourished, could play the role of the distributor of a structure of freedom. According to the intimate relations and the borderlines they drew amidst them, the quality of the sky was in the sky, the earth's in the earth and the tree's in the tree. However, in the case of the tree, earth and sky, THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY AND IDEOLOGY, must enter harmony and order such that life and its unending circulation is established.²⁴⁶

the philosopher al-Ghazali in the 14th century. The motivation here was to formulate a religious paradigm that articulated with Kemalism such that it acknowledged the cultural and moral coherence provided by religious faith, but eschewed the attachment to political structures and authority tied to the Ottoman era that were deemed "reactionary" by the Kemalist state. Where Necip Fazıl departs from this group is, as I show in subsequent paragraphs, in his assertion that Islam and its literary-philosophical tradition, including folk figures, Ottoman *ulema*, and classical scholars in equal measure, provides the social bedrock for modern society. İrem, "Turkish Conservative Modernism", 98-101.

²⁴⁵ In adopting Bergson in the way that he does, Fazıl makes what has been identified as a common misapprehension of Bergson's formulation of the "mystic." Fazıl's elevation of the mystic and mysticism to near lawgiver status, runs contra to Bergson's insistence on defining mysticism and the role of the mystic "in its most modest sense" – meaning, as Philippe Soulez describes, a man who "sets the moral *level* of a society or, if you prefer, the acceptable degree of openness," but is not himself a leader, and indeed is more limited in scope than Rousseau's "lawgiver" despite some obvious similarities. See Philippe Soulez, "Bergson as Philosopher of War and Theorist of the Political" trans., Melissa McMahan, in Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White, eds., *Bergson, Politics, and Religion* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012) ebook, 99-125.

²⁴⁶ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, "Manzara 2: Türk Orta Çağ Sanatkâr ve Entellektueline Kısa Bir Bakış" *Ağaç* April 11, 1936, 1-2. Emphasis in original.

Here we see Necip Fazıl asserted that Islam was the basis for the relationship between Turkish intellectuals and society – and by extension all Turkish individuals. While this does harmonize somewhat with the mysticism and “folk Islam” espoused by the conservative-modernist group identified by İrem, Necip Fazıl embraces the kinds of classical Islamic texts and Ottoman-era religious figures in ways that group sought to reject, creating a stark contrast not only between himself and other conservatives, but between himself and the Kemalists. As the essay elaborates, what Necip Fazıl saw as the unique ground from which Turkish intellectual and artistic life grew could be found in, “This society’s precise quality is in Fuzuli [poet, d. 1556], its mastery and aesthetic in Baki [poet, d. 1600], its foundational logic and intellect in Nabi [poet Yusuf Nabi, d. 1712], its eloquence and élan in Nefi [poet, d. 1635], its idiom and grace in Nedim [poet, d. 1730], its lore and subtlety in Şeyh Galip [poet, d. 1798], its religious temperament in Süleyman Çelebi [poet, d. 1422], its conception of the afterlife in all of the mystics, the form of its temple, school and palace in Sinan [architect, d. 1588], its singing voice and the spirit of its harmony in Dede Efendi [probably musician Hammamâzâde İsmâil Dede Efendi, d. 1846], the method and technique of its culture in Kâtip Çelebi [scholar, d. 1657], and all of these conditions, in any other measure or attribute, they are all there.”²⁴⁷

Seen in concert with writing from other Bergson-inspired intellectuals in *Ağaç*, it becomes clear that some members of this school, including Necip Fazıl, approached religion in such a way that, first, essentialized faiths to their respective spheres in an east-west dichotomy, and second saw clear and stable divisions between ethnicities and nations within those spheres. For Necip Fazıl, Turks were Muslims first, and insofar as they were building a nation, they were the direct descendants of the Ottoman Islamic intellectual tradition. Fazıl and his ilk saw the wholesale adoption of western culture as decadent and degrading to what was essential to Turkish

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 2

culture, though they clearly had little difficulty reaching these conclusions by wedding their study of Islam with their study of western philosophers, like Bergson.²⁴⁸ This essentialization extended even to Bergson as well, whose ethnicity and personal faith was the subject of an essay by Ziyaettin Fahri Fındıkoğlu entitled “Was Bergson a Catholic?” in June of 1936. Fındıkoğlu began the essay with a quote from a German newspaper editorial whose author had expressed delight at Bergson’s recent visit to German churches thusly, “A great philosopher has at last finally attested to Christianity, is this not proof of the truth of our honored religion.”²⁴⁹ Fındıkoğlu admitted that this appears as a banal fact, but adds quickly, “the philosopher Bergson is a Polish Jew who settled in France. Aside from this fact, he has contributed a great many concepts to Christianity with his philosophical works.”²⁵⁰ Fındıkoğlu went on to explain Bergson’s explanation of how great men, mystics, philosophers, and prophets (ostensibly including Bergson in this category) can transcend “static religion” and open up the borders erected between religions, clans and nations.²⁵¹ For Fındıkoğlu, Bergson’s acceptance of “dynamic religion” does not cancel out his

²⁴⁸ This of course is one of the age-old debates of Turkish intellectual and political society. I have written about some aspects of the Turkish view of western science and culture as decadent during the early republican era in “‘Unveiling’ the Tramway: The Intimate Public Sphere in Late Ottoman and Republican Istanbul” *Journal of Urban History* (Online First, April 2016). Recently, Alper Yalçınkaya has expertly detailed this conflict amongst Young Ottoman intellectuals in the late nineteenth century in his book *Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, and Society in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

²⁴⁹ Ziyaettin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, “Bergson Katolik mi oldu?” *Ağaç*, June 13, 1936, 3-4

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 3. Bergson’s family was indeed of Jewish lineage, though only Polish on his father’s side – his mother was of English and Irish Jewish background. Bergson himself was a practicing Catholic, though his relationship with the Church’s hierarchy was at times contentious, as Fındıkoğlu references the times when his earlier works were banned by the Vatican throughout the article. Insofar as his philosophical works are concerned, they interface far more with the Christian theological tradition than the Jewish one. For two insightful essays on this topic, see Vladimir Jankélévitch “Bergson and Judaism” Melissa McMahon trans., in Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White, eds., *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*, 217-245, and Keith Ansell-Pearson and Jim Urpeth, “Bergson and Nietzsche on Religion” *idem*, 246-264.

²⁵¹ It is interesting to note that in most cases here Fındıkoğlu uses a loan word “misitik” for the words mystic and mysticism, with the sole exception in the piece where he quotes a translation of Bergson’s *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* wherein the words “mutasavvıf” and “tasavvuf” respectively are used. We can be reasonably certain here that Fındıkoğlu is translating from the

Jewishness, as he wrote, “It remains that Bergson did not separate his own primary religion (*ana dini*), Judaism, from Christianity. In his eyes, Jesus is a personality that transformed and humanized Moses, ‘In place of a national religion came a universal religion. In place of a god that only existed to provide justice to your own people came a god that all of humanity could love.’”²⁵² At the same time, Fındıkoğlu contrasted Bergson with Albert Einstein, who “could not think of any other measurement than the blessing of the honor of Judaism,” as an example of an intellectual whose religion was static, and thus not able to transcend his nationality.²⁵³

Necip Fazıl would ultimately find greater popularity in the wartime environment through the publication of a new weekly journal, *Büyük Doğu* (*The Great East*). It is in this journal that Kısakürek more openly embraced an occidental position. The magazine first appeared in 1943, but was suspended shortly thereafter only to reappear in November of 1945, shortly after the close of the war, when it would emerge with a staunchly anti-communist, anti-Soviet line. In the first issue of 1945, Necip Fazıl laid out a nine-point manifesto under the heading “The Ideological System” that demonstrated both his inclinations towards Anti-Westernism and Bergsonism. He described the east as a giant, knotted ball of string, insisting that, “in the surroundings the endlessness is great and in the center the endlessness is singular,” and poetically describing the name he’s given the magazine as, “cracking the shell of the meaning of birth, under the increasingly rosy horizon sparking with the breath of seeds, embracing the domain of the Eastern world, heaven and cypress, palace and dome, arches and ruins, from all of the outer lines and

French original, as the footnoted citation of the quote directs the reader to the French title *Le deux sources de la morale et de la religion* and not the Turkish translation provided by Mehmet Emin in 1932, and so it remains interesting that in the translation reflects terminology that more directly associates mysticism with Islamic “sufi” movements – *sufi*, *mutasavvif*, *tasavvuf* all share the same root and connotation – rather than the European, and presumably Christian-inflected loan word.

²⁵² Ibid, 4

²⁵³ Ibid

inner embroideries.”²⁵⁴ He also differentiated this Occidentalism from the position of the racist-Turanists,

“[The Great East] Is not the highest isolation and meaningfulness, many times the most wretched personification and purposefulness a constant plague?.. BÜYÜK DOĞU’s embrace and integration of the east, does not thrive wherever a plan for one race and one geography outside the borders of the nation exists... Don’t confuse our work with that of the racial endeavor of making a physical and spiritual border, of the ambitions of tribes and appetite for land! In the name of the great and true foundation, we are ones that are one hundred percent connected to the role of the enemies of the western opposition and support those who form a front to stand against them!”²⁵⁵

Necip Fazıl’s occidental stance would, in the short term, find common cause with nationalist groups in leading pressure against leftist and communist groups, beginning with his participation in, and cheerleading for the riot that would destroy Tan Press on December 4, 1945, as we shall see in the following chapter.

Open Conflict Between Leftists and Racist-Turanists in WWII

If the 1930s represented a period where discourse around race bloomed in every corner of Turkish thought, the advent of World War II, where many of these ideologies and racial discourses would at least appear to have found patronage in one or the other of the war’s belligerents, – each of whom, at different points, would pose a serious threat to Turkish sovereignty – exerted a pressure on ideological discourse that would ultimately collapse the fine differences between these different strains of racism and anti-racism, and bring them under heightened scrutiny by the state, ginning up popular movements both for and against a politics of race in Turkey that would help polarize the public as it moved into the new Cold War world order.

²⁵⁴ Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, “İdeolocya örgüsü” *Büyük Doğu*, November 2, 1945.

²⁵⁵ Ibid

One classic aspect of race discourse that is conspicuously absent from the most prominent engagements with racial thinking in the Turkish republic of letters in the 1930s and 1940s is the assertion that race is an entirely social construction with no real basis in biology. For both the Kemalists and the Pan-Turanists the idea of race as a biological fact helped shore up the positivist bona fides of their chosen visions of Turkish modernity. For Nazım Hikmet, race was better explained by political economy than it was by sociology. For Necip Fazıl and the Bergsonian clique, race as a biological constant (if somewhat blurrier than the Kemalist and Pan-Turanian constructions) served their end of articulating an anti-western “oriental” response to secular decadence. In each instance race theory and race discourse served political ends – the Pan-Turanists sought to assert Turkish racial superiority, the Kemalists incorporated it in hopes of de-Islamicizing Turkish identity, Hikmet saw the end of racism as concomitant with the end of fascism and capitalism, and Necip Fazıl’s limited engagement with race mirrored the Kemalists by tying the Turkish race with Islam so that their specific spiritualism would reinvigorate Turkish politics with a Bergsonian spontaneity.

In order to find a critique of race and racism as a political discourse *tout court* in Turkey during this period, one has to go to the writing of a budding group of leftist sociologists and literary critics who, while positivist and nationalist in their own way, were able to articulate a vision of modern society that had no use for the idea that a biological category like race had social effects. Leftist critiques of racism would only intensify as the war broke out in Europe and racist-Turanians like Atsız felt more empowered by the advancement of Nazi ideology. The central conflict between leftists and racists grew from the increasing antagonism between Atsız and his former college roommate, the novelist Sabahattin Ali. While this particular conflict has been given a central place in the history of racism in Turkey, it is worthwhile here to explore, briefly, the work of his colleagues in the Language, History, and Geography Faculty (Dil, Tarih

ve Coğrafya Fakültesi, hereafter DTCF) at Ankara University. The members of this faculty and their intellectual colleagues made up a core of highly trained academics, including Behice Boran, Niyazi Berkes, Mediha Berkes, Pertev Naili Boratov, Adnan Cemgil and others along with Ali, worked together to advance a critical, leftist perspective on Turkish politics primarily through their bi-monthly journal *Yurt ve Dünya* (Home and World).

In the second year of *Yurt ve Dünya*'s publication in 1942, the journal began to seriously take up the issue of racism and respond directly to the worldview espoused by *Gök-Börü*, *Orhun*, and *Çınaraltı*. In December 1942, the sociologist Niyazi Berkes offered a lengthy dismantling of racist-Turanian claims to sociological and scientific legitimacy. Berkes' critique is at once a full-throated denunciation of racism and an example of the left-wing positivist-nationalist perspective on modernity. Unlike Nazım Hikmet, Berkes avoids rooting racism in the history of capitalism and fascism specifically, and instead opted for placing it as a particular outgrowth of western culture: "racism is completely foreign to our culture and nestled in entirely foreign roots... The youth who are found in western countries who make propaganda of racial enmity have seen the caution with which we have often taken the westerners' racial project. Whereby the Turkish people are democratic, whereby they are noble and do not accept the superiority of blood, it is in this case that it is necessary to stand against these uninvited racist ideas."²⁵⁶

Following from this polemical position, Berkes began by assailing the claims racist-Turanians had over the scholarship of the Young Turk era nationalist Ziya Gökalp. As Özdoğan has neatly demonstrated, having a legitimate claim on the intellectual tradition of Ziya Gökalp was a *sine qua non* of Turkish nationalist intellectual prominence.²⁵⁷ In his article, Berkes quoted extensively from Gökalp's work, including his final treatise *The Principles of Turkism* (1923), to

²⁵⁶ Niyazi Berkes, "Günün Terimleri: Irk ve Irkçılığı" (Today's Terminology: Race and Racism) *Yurt ve Dünya* Vol. 3 No. 24, December 30, 1942, p. 438

²⁵⁷ Özdoğan, "The Case of Racism-Turanism", p. 75-85

argue that even though Gökalp wrote quite a lot about race in relation to science and biology, he explicitly rejected any connection between race and social characteristics, national or otherwise.²⁵⁸ Berkes' argument then, based primarily on the positivist sociological tradition of which Gökalp was a part, proceeded to demonstrate that the appearance of race in humans was the product primarily of humans living in clans for long periods separated from each other by distance, and he further argues that the appearance of race can be better explained by sociology, "the human clans we observe as societies are not races, they are families, tribes, villages, towns, cities, nations and national communities."²⁵⁹ Berkes explained that the ideal types of each race that are centered by racist thinkers are practically non-existent amongst single individuals in each group because the types themselves merely represent statistical averages of characteristics that are indeed shared by individual who belong to many different sets of races. Berkes then moved to counter claims of racial superiority and inferiority, which he believes are "absurd" [*saçma*]. He suggested that it is only natural that "primitive" [*iptidai*] tribes believe in their own racial superiority, citing a Malaysian creation myth in which black and white races were the result of being over or under "cooked" by God, but that the racism encountered in present day Turkey could be drawn back to nineteenth-century intellectuals like Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who with a "herd of politicians at their backs" helped to construct theories of "master" and "slave" races. He described these theories as attempting to explain the relative progression and regression of different societies throughout history, which is faulty reasoning because,

a people, without changing the structure of its race, can be found in one historical age to be regressed, and in another to be advanced; the same racial structure can be found in two nations, one regressed, one much farther advanced. Racial qualities are organized as a result of humans living for a time in a certain place, and developing their own culture which sees themselves as withdrawn, separate from other societies, in an abstract life.

²⁵⁸ Berkes, "İrk ve İrkçılığı", 438-439

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 439

However, culture or civilization is, from the perspective of the exigency of geography and the exigent social perspective, the product of contact, acquaintance, encounter, and mixing.²⁶⁰

Ultimately, he concluded that since there is no biological or sociological significance to the appearance of races in humans, the motivations of these racist intellectuals must necessarily be political. Berkes characterized these politics as a politics that “truly oppressed other nations, they worked to spread these incorrect thoughts through various propaganda in order to show that those policies were legitimate and necessary,” and so that a false racial division could be sown in subject nations such that, “our social unity would fall to a broken ground but they themselves would benefit from this discord.”²⁶¹

In a previous issue, the philosopher and poet Adnan Cemgil took an even more pointed stance against the racist-Turanians, accusing them of acting directly on the behalf of foreign powers. In an article entitled “Hidden Faces” [*İçyüzleri*], Cemgil accused Atsız and the publishers of *Gök-Börü* of taking money to spread foreign (presumably Nazi) propaganda,

...those who are giving advice that exploits the excitement of the youth of our country, are showing their hidden face as they write racial propaganda that will tear our national unity apart. Since they have such foolish and ignorant thoughts that not a single person could find agreeable, and since they do their work with secret sources of funding, we are learning that they are people who are unscrupulous to the point of being incapable of love.²⁶²

These strong terms also reflect the degree to which the wartime environment raised suspicions of sedition, or at last cooperation with foreign elements, on the part of all opposition intellectuals. Here, Cemgil was in fact making a very wide accusation that extends not only to Atsız but to a wider circle of writers, including Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, Peyami Safa, Orhon Seyfi, and others who did not write from the most stridently racist-Turanian publications but nonetheless offered their

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 441

²⁶¹ Ibid, 441

²⁶² Adnan Cemgil, “Olduğu Gibi: İçyüzleri” [“Such as it is: Hidden Faces”] *Yurt ve Dünya* Vol. 2 No. 22-23, December 1942, 395

support for “Turkism” (*türkçülük*) in publications such as *Çınaraltı* [Under the Plane Tree] and tacit support for the Atsız and their ilk in private.

This line of attack from the positivist left demonstrates how the wartime environment effectively collapsed much of the space dividing ideological differences between strident racist-Turanian factions, German-sympathizing conservative nationalists like Safa and Ortaç, and, to a lesser extent, the Kemalist elite themselves. In the prior decade, the conflict between the likes of Atsız and the Kemalist center became a defining feature of the development of an “inclusive” ethno-nationalist narrative, but insofar as fear of Russian encroachment nudged İnönü towards the German camp, maintaining the difference between an inclusive Turkism and an exclusive Turanism became harder and harder. In fact, we can easily trace the emboldening of Turkist and Turanian rhetoric, and their subsequent fall along the same lines of Turkish-German relations during the war. Prior to the Soviet victory at Stalingrad in late 1942 and early 1943, Turkish foreign policy had been predicated, as Onur İşçi has argued, on the revival of a Brest-Litovsk alignment brought about by a German victory over Russia, followed by an Anglo/Allied victory over Germany. It is in this period that the Turkish government, newly elected Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu in particular, provided the open encouragement to Turanian currents in a speech delivered along with his government’s program on August 5, 1942:

We are Turkish, Turkist and shall ever remain Turkist. For us, Turkism in essence is related to blood in as much as it concerns conscience and culture. As Turkists we neither want to be diminished nor do we encourage it; on the contrary, we wish to grow larger and shall ever endeavor in that direction.²⁶³

²⁶³ Şükrü Saraçoğlu, “Speech on Foreign and Domestic Policy Delivered to Parliament on August 5, 1942” the above translation is slightly modified from that which is provided in Günay Göküsü Özdoğan, “The Case of Racism-Turanism”, 100. The original text reads, “Biz Türküz, Türkçüyüz, ve daima Türkçü kalacağız. Bizim için Türkçülük bir kan meselesi olduğu kadar ve laakal o kadar vicdan ve kültür meselesidir. Biz azalan ve azaltan Türkçü değil, çoğalan ve çoğaltan Türkçüyüz ve her vakit bu istikamette çalışacağız.”

While Atsız was not active at this particular time, Özdoğan points out that the popular “Turkist” journals of that time, including *Türk Yurdu* [Turkish Home], run by Hasan Ferit Cansever, and the aforementioned *Çınaraltı* which was operated by Ortaç and Orhan Seyfi Orhon, both of which applauded the speech and took it as a sign that their engagement and took it as a sign that the CHP was finally living up to its racial rhetoric of the previous decade.²⁶⁴

Over the next year and a half, the Soviets had turned back Nazi advances at Stalingrad, the Turkish leverage with the Allies began to wane, and Turkey’s priorities had shifted dramatically towards a desperate attempt to secure assurances against a Soviet territorial incursion, first from Britain and later from the United States. Accordingly, Turkish officials had become much more hostile to the racist-Turanian and German-leaning Turkist crowds.

Having revived his magazine *Orhun* in late 1943, Nihal Atsız penned an open letter in March 1944 to Prime Minister Saraçoğlu that specifically invoked the above passage from his 1942 speech. In the letter, first of two he would publish that year in *Orhun*, Atsız praised the former speech, saying, “As an intellectual who has grappled with Turkish history, I can say that never in the history of our race, nor in the history of our state, has such a definite statement of Turkish nationalism been uttered from an official’s mouth,” but went on to express concerns that the Prime Minister was not living up to his word, “However, in the intervening year and a half, since we can see that our situation has not progressed into the workspace of Turkism, we are born into distress.”²⁶⁵ His appeal to the Prime Minister to return to the Turkist position he held a few years prior rested on the purported need to defend the country from leftists – all of whom Atsız considered to be traitors. His first complaint in this regard refers to a recent event at the People’s

²⁶⁴ Özdoğan, “The Case of Racism-Turanism”, 100, note 6 [339].

²⁶⁵ Nihal Atsız, “Başvekil Saraçoğlu Sükrü’ye Açık Mektup” *Orhun* No. 15, March 1, 1944, 1, according to the published version of the letter, it was originally penned on February 20, it is unclear if it was sent to Saraçoğlu at that time, or concurrently with its publication in *Orhun*

House in the Eminönü neighborhood of Istanbul in which the prominent CHP intellectual Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu was giving a conference on, among other things, the history of Turkish theater. In Atsız's telling, a sizable group of leftists in attendance repeatedly interrupted the speech, either by registering vocal interruptions from the lectern, or by coughing and laughing conspicuously at moments when, again according to Atsız, they wished to register disapproval of Baltacıoğlu's adherence to Turkish nationalism. The protestors were eventually shouted down by right wingers and chided by Baltacıoğlu himself until four or five police officers escorted the leftists from the venue. Despite what seems to have been a relatively banal occurrence, Atsız was struck by one point in particular,

In a People's Party institution, whilst affronted by enemies of the nation and motherland, not a single deputy of the People's Party stirred a hair. Neither the People's House nor the Police saw the need to make an accusation or open an investigation. The same night at the Leylî Medical Students' dormitories arguments between the nationalists and the leftists broke out and in every place it is always seen that the way is closed for unbiased and conciliatory figures to enter into the fight.²⁶⁶

He went on to warn the Prime Minister that these students will one day become the doctors and leaders of the nation and that it was necessary to deal with these protestors more harshly lest they not be sufficiently instilled with the notion of Turkism – indeed he notes reports of dissention from Turkism amongst the youth,

Still in the People's Houses there are mongrels who do not stand while the Independence March [the Turkish National Anthem] is being played, in a boy's high school there is history teacher who says, 'just like a driver is not himself a car, a Turkist is not a Turk,' in a girls' middle school another history teacher says, 'Are you not a Turk? God damn

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 2. Baltacıoğlu, for his part, was the Kemalist intellectual who could most deftly carve a path down the middle of the left and right factions at such an event, owing in part to his previous alignment with the Liberal Republican Party in 1930. A few days after Atsız's letter was published, Baltacıoğlu indirectly addressed these concerns in his own publication, insisting that race was a biological reality and the nation was a social reality, and thus anyone who agrees with such positions "cannot hold that race is natural to the nation." Likewise, he deflected accusations that he was a leftist by insisting that "in science I am a determinist and in sociology, I am Durkheimian... In politics and the state regime, I am a Kemalist." İsmayil Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, "Dil Uzatlanlara" [To those who twist their tongues] *Yeni Adam* No. 480 March 9, 1944, 2.

you. I am regretting that I am not German or English' all of whom assault our national honor, and yet these microbes are allowed to continue spreading their arrogant opposition.²⁶⁷

In essence, Atsız was attempting to appeal to the anti-Soviet bias prevalent amongst government elites while maintaining his position on the superiority of the Turkish race.

This appeal fell on deaf ears, despite the fact that there were not a few people in the administration who maintained a hard anti-Soviet line. Atsız's appeal to a stridently racist, and thus Nazi-oriented outlook at a time when the tide of the war was turning against the Germans, and Turkish-German relations were themselves severely weakened, went too far. In the ensuing months, and partly as a response to this letter and subsequent attacks against the faculty at the DTCF at Ankara University – particularly Atsız's former roommate, Sabahattin Ali – Atsız and his closest collaborators would stand before a series of lawsuits and trials that would severely hamper their movement for years. On the government's part, the desire to distance themselves from Atsız, and, in a way, from Saraçoğlu's previous remarks, was strong enough to elicit a speech from President İsmet İnönü that would be the government's strongest renunciation of race-based nationalism to date. Following the conclusion of the Sabahattin Ali lawsuit on May 9th, which had witnessed some rowdy demonstrations from Turanists on behalf of Atsız, arrests of the core group of writers at *Orhun* – including Atsız, Türkkan, Zeki Velidi Togan, and Hasan Ferit Cansever – were conducted May 18th on charges of disseminating propaganda, racism and subversive ideologies. The following day, at the annual celebration of Children's Day, İnönü laid out the justification thusly,

We are Turkish nationalists; however, we are the enemy of the principles of racism in our country. Those in our country who have held political grudges under the pathetic guise of racism are still alive in our memory. In the years of 1912, those who supposedly went to every effort to hold onto Rumelia for Turkish troops, they were proved to have schemed behind the backs of the Grand National Assembly together with

²⁶⁷ Atsız, "Açık Mektup" 3

the Albanian Hasan from Pristina and Derviş Hima to spread racist politics. These men claimed, “political necessity” without the slightest difficulty, they believed their words and an even bigger disaster was visited upon us: while they shouted, “political necessity!” they would not refrain from spreading a new sinister principle.

Turanist thought has in recent times once again been shown to be harmful and sickening. From this perspective, it is necessary to understand the Republic well. In the last days of the National Liberation struggle, we were only friends with the Soviets and the hostility of our neighbors was alive in all of our minds.

The Turanists, in an example that would have been fatal to the Turkish nation and all its neighbors, were immediately found making enemies in the charming name of sovereignty. To be sure, the Republic is taking every precaution against the lies of such unconscionable and unscrupulous troublemakers so that the fatality of the nation will not be given a free reign. The troublemakers suppose that we will not dispute ideas that oppose the nation and cheat young children and pure citizens. They are cheaters and they will continue to cheat.

Now, I would like to answer two questions that are on the minds of our citizens: The racists and Turanists have attempted to make secret arrangements and organizations. Why? Are thoughts of secret sinister organizations walking amongst the kinsmen in the country? Especially, have the Secret Turanian Societies been captured from countries East and West? These are such a thing we can only begin to trample under foot by the laws of the state and its fundamental organization.

In this case, the gilded thoughts are behind the curtain, we are directly opposed to attempts against the existence of the Republic and the Grand National Assembly. The conspirators are accused of gradually and secretly cheating all of us, from our ten-year-old children all the way to ourselves.

Let me ask a second question to our citizens: Given the situation of world events, to which nation are those who claim Turkey must be racist and Turanist appropriate, to whose purposes are they benefitting? It is true that those who wish to spread ideas that will only bring scourge and disaster to the Turkish nation are not doing any favors to the Turkish nation. These actions can only benefit foreigners. Are the troublemakers in service of foreigners? Are the foreigners in a relationship of control over the troublemakers? It is impossible to prove these assertions. But, it is an indisputable truth that those who deliberately serve foreigners and who have close relationships with foreigners only bring to the fore actions which harm the Turkish nation and the Turkish motherland, only for the benefit of foreigners.

My dear citizens!

You can be sure that we will powerfully defend our motherland against these troublemakers.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ İsmet İnönü, speech at Children’s Day celebrations, May 19, 1944. Original text found in Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler, *1944-1945 Irkçılık-Turancılık Davasında Sorgular, Savunmalar* (Istanbul: Turk Edebiyatı Vakfı Yayınları, 2010), 72-3

This speech essentially represents a reset in official Turkish race discourse to the original debates around the Turkish History Thesis insofar as it rebuffs racism-Turanism on the grounds that its politics are fundamentally adventurist and irredentist. In so doing, İnönü relies most heavily on a fundamentally xenophobic rhetoric to turn the popular will against Atsız and his compatriots. This is a tactic Kemalists would ultimately resort to when the time came to ridiculing leftists in the following year, but for the time being, and until the geopolitical pressures of the new Cold War environment ratcheted up in the postwar period, the Kemalist government was focused on marginalizing the most strident pro-German voices. The result of the trials pursuant to this speech and the arrests that preceded it, for the overarching discourse of Turkish nationalism, was the persistent differentiation between irredentist, racist, exclusive, and adventurous “Pan-Turkism” and an inclusive, border-conscious, non-racist “Turkish nationalism” that as this study and others show, papered over a much more complex, and flexible set of ideologies and political allegiances both before and after the moment of the racist-Turanian trials.²⁶⁹

Reading the moment of the racist-Turanian trials in sources sympathetic to the Atsız and his ilk, this moment of intense conflict with the state reads as the origin point of a movement. As one of the chief Turanist historians, Yavuz Bülent Bakiler, notes, “May 3 [the first day of the Ali-Atsız lawsuit] was a historical turning point. Until that time, there existed only a sentimental and intellectual Turkism [*türkçülük*] that rarely exceeded the bounds of literature and science, and on the third of May 1944, it suddenly became a movement.”²⁷⁰ In many senses, he is correct since it is only after this period that Atsız’s ideas would have purchase in the Turkish political landscape – coming to a head in the 1960s and 1970s with the rise to prominence of one of Atsız’s co-

²⁶⁹ Howard Eissenstat elaborates on this point with regards to the republic’s founding years and Ottoman legacy, and particularly the early career of Zeki Velidi Togan in “The Limits of Imagination: Debating the Nation and Constructing the State in Early Turkish Nationalism” Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2007, 9, 155-170,

²⁷⁰ Bakiler, *Irkcılık-Turancılık Davasında Sorgular*, 77

defendants, Alparslan Türkeş, who helped lead the 1960 coup against Adnan Menderes' Democrat Party and eventually establish the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (*Milli Hareket Partisi*) in 1969. We will return to the trial of the Turanists and the political considerations of the state's fluctuating relationship with racism in chapter five.

Conclusion: Whither Race Discourse in the Postwar Environment?

With the announcement of the foundation of the Democrat Party late in 1945, the multiparty era of Turkish democracy would have its proper beginning. In the emerging Cold War landscape, however, the negotiation of that multiparty framework would be freighted with a different set of ideological and global contests and conjunctures as fascist powers lost their hold on Europe and American power ascended. The five years of political and cultural negotiation – both between Turkish diplomats and the Americans, and amongst Turks themselves – would prove in many ways to be just as contentious as the interwar period had been, and for a few prominent figures, it would spell the end of their careers in Turkey. These changes will be discussed at length in the ensuing chapters, but it is worth noting here that the rise to power of the Democrat Party, which represented a more culturally conservative, rural, power base – and who were much friendlier with intellectual figures like Necip Fazıl Kısakürek than they were with leftists or Kemalists – represented a departure from the racial rhetoric that sparked so much polarization in the 1930s and 1940s. Race discourse did not disappear in Turkey, but the geopolitical and ideological engine that drove it to the forefront of Turkish politics had been disassembled and reconfigured in a Cold War context. Some of the more strident ethno-nationalist policies of the Kemalist period – most prominently, the insistence on a Turkish call to prayer – would be undone in the early days of the Democrat Party rule in 1950, and the CHP would crack down on communist and leftist journals and newspapers during the run-up to the

1950 election, creating an atmosphere of repression that was harsher in many ways than the censorious environment of the Second World War.

This shifting landscape after 1945 is significant for the history of race discourse in Turkey because it witnessed the coercive marginalization of the racist-Turanist cadre, thanks in part to the geopolitical impetus for their trials during the war. It also witnessed, through the silencing, imprisonment and exiling of a wide swath of leftist writers – and the disappearance of the largest daily leftist voice in the Turkish press, *Tan* – the erasure of leftist anti-racist critiques that bound racism to capitalism and fascism. At the same time, the rise of a Democrat Party that was to some degree influenced by Necip Fazıl’s “Great East” movement, further served to entrench a kind of xenophobic, anti-westernism that would raise its ugly head during a pogrom against Istanbul’s Greek community on September 6-7, 1955.²⁷¹ Racism would continue to be a feature of the Istanbul press, and Turkish politics, as it more or less had been since the 1920s, well into the 1950s, but without the intensely race-conscious ideological conflict of the interwar period, and as both racist-Turanists and communists had become *personae non gratae* in the eyes of the state, race discourse would become somewhat disaggregated from the major ideological and intellectual currents of the multiparty era.

²⁷¹ Speros Vyronis, *The Mechanism of Catastrophe: The Turkish Pogrom of September 6-7, 1955, and the Destruction of the Greek Community of Istanbul* (New York: Greekworks, 2005), and “Arabs Through Turkish Eyes,” Nicholas Danforth and Chris Gratien, *Ottoman History Podcast*, No. 136 (26 December 2014) <http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2013/12/arabs-turkish-eyes-politics.html>

**CHAPTER FIVE: The Anatomy of a Riot: Political Violence, the Birth of Multiparty
Politics, and the Destruction of Tan Press, December 4, 1945**

Onlar ümidin düşmanıdır, sevgilim,
akar suyun,

meyve çağında ağaçın,
serpilip gelişen hayatın düşmanı.

Çünkü ölüm vurdu damgasını alınlarına :

-- çürüyen diş, dökülen et --,
bir daha geri dönmek üzere yıkılıp gidecekler.

Ve elbette ki, sevgilim, elbet

dolaşacaktır elini kolunu sallaya sallaya

dolaşacaktır en şanlı elbisesiyle : işçi tulumuyla

bu güzelim memlekette hürriyet...

They are the enemies of hope, my dear,

under the branches of the fruit tree,

the enemies of life
are sprinkled with the river's water.

Because to those who have borne the stamp of a death blow :

-- rotten teeth, decaying flesh --,
for those who went to destroy, don't ever come back.

And it surely is, my dear, surely

the roaming hand swaying in the arm

roaming with the most heroic garment : the worker's overalls

this is freedom in my beautiful country...

-- Nazım Hikmet, "6 Aralık 1945" ["6 December 1945"]

On the morning of December 4, 1945 a large group of young Turkish citizens, many of them students at Istanbul University, numbering in the thousands, paraded through the city, arriving at the publishing house responsible for the Turkish language daily *Tan (Dawn)*, which was operated by Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, then proceeded to the offices of the leftist newspapers *Yeni Dünya (The New World)*, owned by Vedat Baykurt and operated mainly by his father Cami Baykurt in partnership with the novelist Sabahattin Ali and the leftist writer Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu, and the French-language *La Turquie*, also operated by Cami Baykurt, and later at a Russian-owned bookstore.²⁷² The mob destroyed each building's insides, tossing its contents into the street and wrecking their printing equipment. The following is an attempt to provide the fullest understanding of what precisely happened that day.

In order to do so I will provide a comprehensive overview of differing narratives provided by observers and those involved. These narratives include the perspective of some of the participants in and eyewitnesses to the demonstration, the Sertels themselves, Istanbul's press and the United States Department of State through the archival records of its Istanbul Consulate and Ankara Embassy. Having related as deeply as possible the most relevant and available narratives of the events of December 4, 1945, I will show how they demonstrate the precise ways in which ideological and political lines were being drawn surrounding this event. As will be apparent from reading these narratives, different political and intellectual camps both inside and outside of Turkey read the ideological symbolism differently. What I will offer in the analytical section of this chapter is to suggest that the riot itself, its orchestration, its provocation and the response to it, was an attempt by components of the Turkish state to clearly, and violently, demarcate what the acceptable spectrum of political ideologies would be in the new multi-party system.

Furthermore, I suggest that this process of cordoning off "acceptable" and "unacceptable" marked

²⁷² *Yeni Dünya* first appeared on December 1, 1945 and only ran four issues. In the masthead, Vedat Baykurt is listed as owner, Cami Baykurt as editorial director.

a shift in what could be considered Kemalist ideology that had dominated Turkish politics for almost three decades from an ideology that could manage a vituperative, modernist public sphere, to one overly concerned about the influence certain putatively dangerous political elements might have on the newly sanctioned opposition parties.

Symbolic Violence and Multi-party politics

The place of this riot in the history of Turkey in the multi-party period is representative of a phenomenon described by philosopher Slavoj Žižek as “symbolic violence.” As Žižek explains, symbolic violence is one of two forms of objective violence, which constitutes

...violence embodied in language and its forms... this violence is not only at work in the obvious—and extensively studied—cases of incitement and of the relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms: there is a more fundamental form of violence still that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning.²⁷³

Though the Tan Riot was an event that would meet the standards of what Žižek would call “subjective violence,” it is this process of the “imposition of a certain universe of meaning” which I would like to explore in this context. To put a finer point on it, I argue that this is an instance in which the relation between the uses of subjective and objective, or symbolic, violence is made painfully apparent by the historical record. The Tan Riot, and instances of state violence against leftist political groups in the years that followed, served as a tool of state power to not only limit political discourse but to impose a particular meaning onto the transnational political language of the Cold War. Whereas in the single-party period the spectrum of acceptable intellectual and political opposition to the Kemalist center could encompass, or at least tolerate, views from the radical left and right sides of the ideological spectrum, hence the popular understanding of Kemalism as a “third way” or “corporatist” ideology, during the multi-party

²⁷³ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008) 1-2

period the language of political ideology became officially “loaded” so that the Turkish public knew, for instance, who was communist, that they presented a threat to Turkish sovereignty and were thus an enemy of the state.²⁷⁴

The era of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s leadership, in addition to being one of state-driven economic, social and cultural reform, was one in which Turkey enjoyed a substantial, friendly relationship with the Soviet Union.²⁷⁵ While this friendship had deteriorated before the start of WWII, the Turkish state still maintained at the close of 1945 many of the same principles of étatism, single-party rule, and cultural reformism that had made the original ideological connections between it and the Soviet Union more than just a marriage of geostrategic convenience.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, I argue that it was in part because of this friendship and its remnants that left- and communist- oriented public figures like the Sertels could survive in the public sphere even though they were often outspoken in their opposition to the general direction the state was headed. But, and some ways paradoxically, because the introduction of multi-party politics coincided with a drastic geopolitical realignment, in which Turkey completed its transition from the Soviet orbit to “Active Neutral” to signatory of the UN Charter, to NATO member, meant that voices which had once represented the opposition to the state could not be afforded a place in the nominally more democratic and liberal political structure.

²⁷⁴ Andrew Davison and Taha Parla, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*.

²⁷⁵ This relationship has been explored by a number of different scholars, but for the purposes of this essay I am following the lead of Samuel J. Hirst who has addressed not only the geostrategic elements of this partnership, but their ideological underpinnings in “Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet-Turkish Convergence in the 1930s” *Slavic Review* Vol. 72 No. 1 Spring 2013.

²⁷⁶ Turkey’s second, and final, five-year plan was initiated in 1939, a year after Atatürk’s death, but was nullified a year later in 1940 due to economic distress in a number of areas, but most significantly in overspending on the military. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* Second Edition (New York: Oxford, 1969), 296.

The period between the end of WWII and the electoral triumph of the Democrat Party in 1950 has been portrayed as a story of the “emergence” of a liberal democracy in Turkey. In his seminal work on modern Turkish history, Bernard Lewis, who has viewed himself as a champion of liberalism, hailed the defeat of the Republican People’s Party in 1950 as that party’s “greatest achievement—a second revolution, complementing and completing that earlier revolution out of which the Party itself had sprung.”²⁷⁷ Another self-professed champion of liberalism, Ahmet Emin Yalman, saw the election as “probably the first instance in history when an absolute power yielded, without violence, to the will of the people freely expressed by secret ballots which were honestly tallied.”²⁷⁸ Even writers more sympathetic to the plight of the Turkish left, such as one-time Sertel collaborator Niyazi Berkes, himself a frequent contributor to *Tan*, have seen the multi-party period as one that represented “laboratory check-tests of the validity... of a secular regime in a Muslim country” and that “...Turkish secularism withstood all of the strains [of obscurantism].”²⁷⁹ Each of these writers explicitly or implicitly elides the violence and suppression upon which the success of the Democrat Party was built. Yalman remembered his own dilemma following the Tan Riot as one in which he and the supporters of the Democrat Party needed “to make clear our conviction that public protest against red agitation was right, but that violent suppression was wrong.”²⁸⁰ Lewis, also reflecting on the Tan Riot, mentions that, “[t]here was very little sympathy in Turkey for the Communists and fellow-travelers... On the other hand, there were many who regretted that, in order to deal with them, recourse should have been made to such perversions of democracy as press demagoguery and mob violence.”²⁸¹ For these writers, the violence that suppressed and ultimately excised popular and public leftist visions was just that, a

²⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 303

²⁷⁸ Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Turkey in My Time* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956) p. 239

²⁷⁹ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964) p. 503

²⁸⁰ Yalman, *Turkey in My Time*, p. 226.

²⁸¹ Lewis, *Emergence*, pp. 309-310

perversion or an aberration, rather than a fundamental step towards incubating the eventual successor-party from an ideology that was geopolitically poisonous. In reasserting the different contexts and narratives of the Tan Riot as I have below, this historical narrative is disrupted, and we can come to a better understanding of the way a violent clash of ideologies helped shepherd Turkey into the American-led western, liberal orbit at the outset of the Cold War.

The Riot's Anatomy

The story of the Tan Riot, known popularly in Turkish as the *Tan Olayı*, has been told from many different perspectives, but there is no existing account that pulls all of the accessible memories and archives together.²⁸² In recounting as many narratives of the event as are available, I hope to construct a “historical anatomy” of the event. Such an approach bears a resemblance to what has been known as “microhistory.”²⁸³ In much the same way as a microhistory often does, I will provide several detailed perspectives on the event through a variety of sources, each mediated to one degree or another by the circumstances of their documentary genre. By considering these degrees of mediation in the analysis of the narrative whole, I follow Carlo Ginzburg in the quest to create a history in which “the hypotheses, the doubts, the uncertainties [become] part of the narration; the search for truth [becomes] part of the exposition of the

²⁸² *Olay* in Turkish carries with it a number of different meanings. It can generally refer to any event or occurrence as such, but often carries a connotation of an unusual or even troublesome character. For instance, when paired with the verb *çıkarmak*, it means “to make trouble” as in *olay çıkarmaz* (“don’t make trouble”). I have chosen to translate it here as “riot” both for its aesthetic qualities (“The Troublesome Event at Tan” is obviously clunky) and for the reflection of the fact that this was a mass, public event whose outcome was, at least to some extent, violent. This event is also sometimes referred to as the *Tan Baskını* or “The Tan Raid” which emphasizes the looting, but perhaps overstates the role of the police in the physical dismembering of Tan’s office.

²⁸³ For a summary of the intellectual history of the term “microhistory” see Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It” trans. by John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Autumn, 1993), 10-35.

(necessarily incomplete) truth attained.²⁸⁴ But, in the interest of emphasizing the very way each of these narratives are mediated by, among other things, memory, political realities, media, art and literature I have chosen to analogize the history of this riot in a way that bypasses any overarching narrative – that of an anatomy.²⁸⁵

Many of the memories that shed light on this event are inherently problematic, for reasons that range from ideological bias, personal aggrandizement, faulty memory and geographic and temporal distance from the events themselves. Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, two of the prime targets of the most violent aspects of the riot, have provided a narrative in their memoirs that places them in the position of victims of intense fear-mongering and violent attacks, and indeed they were very much the focus of intense anti-communist feeling. However, their memories of the precise events that took place on Ankara and İstiklal Avenues on December 4, 1945 are mediated by the simple fact that they received reports on the events over the phone, while hiding in their flat on the opposite side of the Bosphorus. Eye-witness accounts present similar problems of historical memory. Orhan Birgit's first-hand account of the events presents its own problems, since his memoir was published sixty years after the fact and after he had made personal and ideological amends with the Sertel family. Kemal Karpat and Gün Benderli, who relayed their memories of that day to me in 2015, provided vivid images of the scene of the riot,

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 24

²⁸⁵ Surely, I am not the first historian to make use of an anatomical analogy in order to comprehend, or pretend to analytical exhaustion, the history of a particular event or series of events. Perhaps the most prominent example is that of two works on the Vietnam war by the New Left historian Gabriel Kolko. In constructing studies of a decades long conflict and its outcome, Kolko might have loosely understood the history of that war to have been itself a body with its own inertia and agency in the sense that it was driven by ideology and constrained by political, military and diplomatic structures. In assessing the history of a much smaller event like the Tan Riot, while attempting something of a comprehensive history, I am interested in taking this analogy a bit more directly than merely presenting an exhaustive account and calling it an "anatomy". Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1985) and *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Peace* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

but little in the way of precise detail. More contemporary source material from the Turkish press, from the US State Department Archives, or even the minimal information from the Turkish state archives, present a variety of viewpoints with their own set of ideological biases and mediated perspectives. By understanding and presenting these narratives and sources along with analysis of their mediation we can come to a clearer understanding of what the anatomy of this riot was, even as we acknowledge the faultiness of several of its individual parts.

The Participant's Perspective: Orhan Birgit, Kemal Karpat, and Gün Benderli

I begin with one of the only published accounts available of a participant in the riot, that of Orhan Birgit, a journalist and lawyer who was a law student at Istanbul University at the time of the riot. Birgit remembers the students assembling that morning for a lecture from Professor Hüseyin Naili Kubalı when an “auburn-haired student whom we knew to be from one of the upper classes” entered the room, spoke with the Professor and began to read from a recent editorial by Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın published in *Tanin* (*Echo*) entitled “Rise Up Oh Patriots!” [Kalkın Ey Ehli Vatan!]. The student, who he later learned was named Tahsin Atakan, “added his own words to the article, saying that the Sertel’s *Tan* newspaper was communist propaganda and that we were all going to gather in Beyazıt Square.” He was then hurried along with the crowd to the nearby Beyazıt Square, no more than two or three blocks from his classroom, where a crowd was forming with large signs, placards and flags. He noted that one group had come from the nearby Covered Bazaar, and had gone first to the Nuruosmaniye Mosque outside the bazaar, indicating that they might have identified as religious. Another group in the crowd consisted of students from the military training, economics, literature, and medicine departments. As the

crowd began to process towards Cağaloğlu, where *Tan* was located, a group of artisans joined in as they passed the ancient Çemberlitaş just outside of Beyazıt.²⁸⁶

The rhetoric of the crowd, according to Birgit, was generally nationalist as many were requesting Turkish flags and onlookers had begun to intone the verses of Turkey's national anthem, "The Freedom March" ("*İstiklal Marşı*").²⁸⁷ As the crowd moved in the direction of Sirkeci, headed first for the Tan building, Birgit described his position in the crowd, both in terms of location and his own political growth, "I wasn't at the very front, nor was I among those at the back. I was counted among those rows watching from the middle of the crowd. This was my first meeting.²⁸⁸ I did not regret going. I was one of those who were not thinking about what would or would not happen."²⁸⁹ Clearly, Birgit likens his own memory of the event to that of participant-observer. Whether we can credit that to the fact that his politics had certainly changed in the sixty years since the event or to his own objectivity is hard to say, but what follows certainly colors the event as a nationalist plot with cooperation of the government.

As the crowd passed the printing houses of the brothers Hakkı Tarık and Asım Us, Birgit remembers seeing the silhouette of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, the conservative intellectual and virulent anti-communist. Birgit remembers the crowd, upon noticing Kısakürek, shouting in appreciation.²⁹⁰ Soon they would come upon the Tan building. In Birgit's telling, and this is corroborated somewhat by the Sertel and US State Department narratives, December 1945 saw the Sertels taking aggressive measures to claim the new Democrat Party for the political left. By

²⁸⁶ Orhan Birgit, *Evvvel Zaman İçinde* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2005), 31.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 32

²⁸⁸ I have chosen to translate this term as "meeting" since the Turkish term "miting" is a close cognate, though more often this term is used for very large gatherings or protests (i.e.: the May 1919 Sultanahmet Mitingleri) as opposed to the more common word for a small "meeting", "toplantı".

²⁸⁹ Birgit, 32

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

proclaiming that the founders of the new party would write for their publication *Görüşler* (*Viewpoints*), covering the early youth meetings of radical groups lead by Alaattin Tiritoglu, and taking a generally leftist line during WWII, the Sertels, according to Birgit, “were leftists, but their views often overlapped with communists and extremist elements of the party.”²⁹¹

Birgit, clearly sympathizing with the Sertels in retrospect, narrated the events of the attack on *Tan*,

Those who were provoked by the meeting broke the windows of the *Tan* building, and a short while later entered the building. People climbed the building as high as the roof and destroyed whatever they could find; reams of paper were thrown out on the street and drifted as far as the ferry port in Sirkeci [a distance of roughly four city blocks], the rotary machine was broken.²⁹²

From there, the crowd advanced over the Golden Horn towards Taksim Square. Along the way, the offices of the French-language publication *La Turquie* (which was also associated with the Sertels) were destroyed. The crowd then marched down Istiklal Avenue towards Istanbul’s commercial center in Taksim, at which point Birgit claims he remembered that he had left his coat in the lecture hall and thus retreated to Beyazit to retrieve it.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Ibid, 33. The issue of whether or not Zekeriya or Sabiha Sertel were ever members of the Turkish Communist Party or any such affiliate is hotly contested by surviving members of the Sertel family and those who knew them. The facts remain that for their opponents, they were one of the utmost symbols of the communist party in Turkey, along with their close friend, and certain party member, Nazım Hikmet. A CV from the Comintern archives translated into Turkish, and housed at the Turkish Foundation for Social History Research (TÜSTAV) claims that Sabiha Sertel had been a member of the suppressed Turkish Communist Party as early as 1934, but the document is riddled with numerous factual errors so can only be taken at face value. Following the fallout of this riot, they found themselves exiled to the USSR in Eastern Europe and, eventually, Baku, Azerbaijan. TÜSTAV “Novik Yoldaşa – İlmühaber” January 6, 1943, 495.266.23.2

²⁹² Ibid. The rotary machine mentioned here by Birgit was a special loss for the Sertels since it was a new piece of technology that Zekeriya Sertel had first learned of when he was writing for the *New York Times* in the early 1920s.

²⁹³ Ibid. One amusing note regarding this part of the riot’s history is worth relaying. Birgit says that while the crowd advanced on Taksim, many of the small shop owners selling charcuteries replaced placards describing their “Rus Salatası” (Russian Salad) with placards describing

In April 2015, I interviewed Kemal Karpaz, a renowned Turkish historian, about his memories of the event. At the time, Karpaz was a classmate of Birgit's at the Istanbul University Law School. He described himself as a supporter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's vision for Turkey, but at the time he recalled being deeply suspicious of the ruling party – noting the war had severely affected the economy, that political dissent was harshly repressed, and the secret police had permeated through many student groups. He, like Birgit, participated in the demonstration – he considered himself an opponent of communism and did not view *Tan's* editorial line favorably – but, though he remembers only few details of the riot, he remembers leaving as things turned violent at the Tan offices. He recalled vividly the rioters who had “rage in their eyes.” Karpaz credited this experience, and others like it, as pushing him towards supporting the Democrat Party – not out of any specific ideological affinity, but out of opposition to a party that might support or condone the riotous violence.²⁹⁴

Also in 2015, I met with the writer and journalist Gün Benderli in Budapest to discuss her memory of the Tan Riot and its aftermath. Benderli was only sixteen years old in 1945, but would leave Turkey a few years later for eastern Europe, eventually settling in Budapest where she would come to work alongside the Sertels and Nazım Hikmet on their communist-party sponsored radio program *Bizim Radyo (Our Radio)*.²⁹⁵ Benderli remembered that the entire period of the war was frightful, that they would often put pots on their heads during air raid drills, she

“Amerikan Salatası” (American Salad). American readers will of course identify this sort of gastro-ideological formulation from the infamous history of “Freedom Fries” in the Capitol building cafeteria, but in this instance, it would appear to this author that the original political meaning of the difference between “Russian” and “American” salad in Turkey is all but lost in the current vernacular.

²⁹⁴ According to a document in the Prime Ministry Archives, Karpaz would continue to receive some financial support from the CHP as a student at Istanbul University the following year. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi [BCA] Fon 490 1 00 [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi] “CHP'nin öğrencilere verdiği burslar hakkında tamim” 6.34.8. Interview with Kemal Karpaz, April 25, 2015, Istanbul, Turkey.

²⁹⁵ Benderli's memoirs of this later period are recorded in *Su Başında Durmuşuz* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2003)

described it as “quite a surrealist thing.” On December 4, 1945, she remembered visiting the scene of the Tan Riot after it had occurred, seeing papers and machinery strewn about, and described it as nothing short of “savagery” (*vahşet*). After that point, she described her parents as having been sympathetic to the Democrat Party, primarily because they had many close friends in Nişantaşı, where they lived, who had been hit hard by the Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*). After training briefly in the late 1940s at both the medical and law schools at Istanbul University, she would leave Turkey in 1949. What she witnessed that day would stay with her, and in her memoirs, she remembers meeting Sabiha Sertel first in Paris, who still “shuddered at the memory of that day’s horror.”²⁹⁶

The Rhetorical Spark: Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın

By 1945, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın was one of the deans of the Bab-ı Ali newspaper circuit, and his daily newspaper, *Tanin*, boasted a history that stretched back to the late Ottoman period. Throughout the war years, his near-daily wartime column was used to consistently defend any perceived threat against the sovereignty of the Turkish nation, especially from Soviet Russia. As mentioned in Birgit’s narrative, and many other narratives of the Tan Olayı, it is his editorial from December 3, 1945, entitled “Kalkın Ey Ehli Vatan!” [“Rise Up Oh Patriots!”], which provided the rhetorical spark for the protests that occurred the following day. It was this article that was read aloud in classrooms at Istanbul University, and by and large, his rhetoric crystalized much of the rhetoric that would be deployed throughout the course of the riot. In this section, I will assess the way in which Yalçın made use of this editorial, and the rarely mentioned second editorial he wrote that day, to stake out a specific, and rather nuanced, ideological ground for himself, and the İnönü government by extension.

²⁹⁶ Interview with Gün Benderli, Budapest, Hungary, April 11, 2015. Benderli, *Su Başında Durmuşuz*, 66.

In “Rise Up Oh Patriots,” Yalçın exhorted his readers to form a national front to combat “...the threat of enemy invasion, in the form of Communist propaganda that has begun oozing through our ranks,” and insisted that “...the fifth column is active and passing through our body.”²⁹⁷ The call to action, however, was one that was explicitly nonviolent in tone, since he explains that the Sertels wished to create a sort of victim complex in order to incite an uprising against the state, supposedly in the name of Soviet Russia. To combat this, he called for “anti-propaganda,” explaining that, “this battle’s weapons are only words” because that is what was necessary to “awaken our fellow citizens.”²⁹⁸

Following that opening, Yalçın dove into a line by line refutation of one of the articles from the first (and only) issue of *Görüşler*, entitled “Chained Freedom” (“*Zincirli Hürriyet*”) penned by Sabiha Sertel. First, he attacked lines of the editorial that emphasized personal sacrifice in the interest of the collective – sentiments like “the grandest slogan of a society of free people is the requirement of sacrificing personal freedom in the interest of others.”²⁹⁹ Yalçın attacked this line as “a guileless deception” that is a classic example of communist rhetoric. He insisted the only freedom Sabiha Sertel was interested in was her own, since her tactics reflected in his eyes the way communists insist on “...mak[ing] inconspicuous expressions... in the name of freedom in order to create a worker’s proletariat, only for their own personal freedom and at which point our freedoms will be shown to be chained... Just as it is in Russia: There is freedom there. But only for Communists and Communist leaders.”³⁰⁰

Yalçın only ratcheted up this line, and took the liberty of answering some of the questions Sertel posed to her readers in her article,

²⁹⁷ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, “Kalkın Ey Ehli Vatan,” *Tanin* 3 December 1945

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Quoted in Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

Lady Sertel, in a moment of curiosity; she asks:

--In what democracy does the press law foreclose the freedom of speech, thought and conscience?

Allow me to answer:

In your beloved and adulterous genuine Russian democracy.

Lady Sertel asks:

--In what democracy does the civil law foreclose the struggle to form civil society and political parties?

Let me answer:

In the genuine Russian democracy that you want to bring to our country.

Lady Sertel asks:

--In what democracy are citizens delivered to the police for their political views or creeds, pushed from the safety of their homes out into the square and have their houses given over to the police jurisdiction for search?

Let me answer:

In your dear Russian democracy.

Lady Sertel flutters:

“Building a democratic state, a workers and villagers organization, strikes and demonstrations must occur in order to defend justice...”

--Yes Lady, the reactionary and backward European democracies and the capitalists you wish to sink to the bottom of the ocean are well familiar with the backward and rightist American workers strikes and demonstrations that in reality they are in the name of true democracy but if adopted in Bolshevik Russia the penalty for strike is death!³⁰¹

The condescending and sexist tone of Yalçın’s article continued through the conclusion of the piece where he applauds the supposed lack of government response to these incitements – presumably he was excepting the stern denials from the government officials that were supposedly to write in upcoming issues of *Görüşler*. Ultimately, he rested the response to this article on the actions of the people, because the Sertels, “are far from serious, simply because the

³⁰¹ Ibid.

people and the government are incited by this obstreperousness and against this contentious publication the silence and tolerance given as an answer by the government is the kindest yet most deafening silence.”³⁰²

This quite famous editorial provides much in the way of exemplifying the level of vitriol with which many of these ideological or propagandistic debates played out in the Turkish press throughout the Second World War. Yet, it provides little more than, as he himself wrote, “anti-propaganda” and not much material with which we might understand Yalçın’s own ideological leanings and thus why he was so invested in this particular rhetorical struggle. Yet, in all of the accounts of the Tan Olayı, none mention the other editorial Yalçın published on the same day, on the same page as the infamous “Rise Up Oh Patriots!” This article, entitled “Left-Right and Progressive-Conservative” delved much farther into his own outlook on the global ideological struggle and points more specifically to where his issues with the Sertels might lie. In this article he attacked the perception of a global divide over left and right, progressive and conservative, Bolshevik and Fascist as “meaningless stack of words, if you look at the shape taken by our country, all you will be able to find is a bluster of bad propaganda.”³⁰³ As an example, he took again to the pages of *Görüşler*, according to which, the world is shifting to the left citing the July 1945 victory of Clement Attlee’s Labour Party in the United Kingdom over Churchill’s conservatives.³⁰⁴ Yet, he pointed out that the same article five lines later states that “America and England are afraid of Europe’s ninety-degree shift to the left and are rather working to support a greater equilibrium from the right...” as an example of the leftist publication contradicting itself.³⁰⁵ He emphasizes his readers the internal feuds within the global left, stating that, “anyone

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Yalçın, “Sol-Sağ ve İleri-Geri” *Tanin* December 3, 1945

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

who doesn't agree with Communism is rightist, conservative and reactionary."³⁰⁶ Clearly, he took issue throughout the article with the dogmatic approach to leftism that he sees exhibited by Marxists. He insisted that communism is not a new philosophy – that it was exhibited by ancient Greek philosophers, Jewish prophets and the first Christian societies – but that Marx and his followers are so impatient for a revolution that they will deny freedom in the process of trying to bring one about. Yalçın positioned himself against this tactic as someone who in fact sympathizes with the traditionally leftist elements of Kemalism. As he stated at the end of the editorial, “Like I said twenty-one years ago when I stood before the Independence Tribunals: I am a radical and secular Republican [*Cumhuriyetçi, radikal ve laikim*]. I'm on the side of equal rights for everyone. I believe in the Four Freedoms³⁰⁷ and I stand against Görüşler and Yeni Dünya's Communist propaganda in the name of this liberal western democracy.”³⁰⁸

Yalçın therefore threw his political and ideological weight behind the victors of World War II by making the case that the fundamental principles of Kemalism and the version of liberalism espoused by FDR were in harmony with one another. His view also neatly aligns with the geopolitical situation that Turkey found itself in during December 1945 – afraid of Russian encroachment on its territory, and desirous of assistance from the rising hegemon across the Atlantic. By coupling the more philosophical and universalist tone of “Left-Right, Progressive-Conservative” with the nationalist and xenophobic tenor of “Rise Up Oh Patriots!” we see on the same page of the newspaper, from the same intellectual, an accurate reflection of how Turkish political discourse was affected both by the general progress of Second World War and by Turkey's oscillating neutrality. To support the Turkish policy in the political press of this period

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ That would be the freedoms articulated in Franklin Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union Address: the freedom of speech, the freedom of worship, the freedom from want and the freedom from fear. Though it is hard to believe that Yalçın explicitly invoked Roosevelt when he faced the Independence Tribunals in the late 1920s.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

required showing both of these aspects, since too clear an ideological association with one foreign party or another would leave one open to claims that the national interest was not paramount, but the lack of one would suggest that Turks had nothing to say about the world-changing ideological battle being fought in Europe. Yalçın understood this perhaps better than any of the intellectuals in Istanbul at the time, and this is one example of how he walked the line in print. And yet, he might not have been the most prominent figure involved in supporting the protest once it began.

The Cases of Büyük Doğu and Tasvir

The brief opening of press restrictions in the spring of 1945 saw the eventual re-entry of several newspapers to the scene in Istanbul. *Tan* and *Tasvir* (“Description” formerly *Tasvir-i Efkâr*), whose frequent internecine conflicts over the course of WWII had caused the government to shut them down indefinitely in late summer of 1944, were re-instated in late March, 1945³⁰⁹ and in November the poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek re-booted his weekly magazine *Büyük Doğu* (*The Great East*) after it was suspended in May of the previous year.³¹⁰ Kısakürek’s new version of his magazine had a clear political aim of reorienting the populace away from the moral decay of Europe and towards the Eastern, Ottoman, and Islamic heritage of Turkey’s past. Kısakürek, as

³⁰⁹ Over the course of the war, *Tan* was suspended seven total times for a total of two and a half months, prior to its indefinite closing on 12 August 1944. *Tasvir/Tasvir-i Efkâr*, was suspended eight times in the same period, before an indefinite suspension on 30 September 1944. Newspaper suspensions were a very common practice during the war for the İnönü government, for more information see Cemil Koçak, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Türk Basını” in *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol. 35, November 1986, 29-33. All newspaper closings were conducted under the infamous Article 50 of the 1931 Press Law, and while the *Kararname* announcing suspensions were normally somewhat vague as to the precise infractions of the given newspaper, the *Kararname* announcing *Tan*’s 1944 suspension singled the paper out for “spreading dangerous seeds of discord and provoking dissent amongst the citizenry” (“...yurt içinde tehlikeli nifak tohumlar eken ve vatandaşları birbirini aleyhine eder...”) BCA Başvekalet Muamelât Umum Müdürlüğü (MUM) 080 19 01 02 106 58 15. The re-instatement for *Tan* was ordered on 22 March 1945, BCA MUM 080 18 01 02 107 106 10.

³¹⁰ While daily newspapers like *Tan*, *Vatan* and *Tasvir* resumed their usual numbers, ordering systems, etc. once their suspensions were lifted, the re-arrival of *Büyük Doğu* was in essence a re-launch of the weekly magazine, which started its issue numbering back at one on November 2, 1945.

introduced in the previous chapter, was a modernist poet, a pupil of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, and had a worldview that in many ways rejected traditional images and symbols in favor of an incorporation of modernist artistic and poetic styles into modes of Islamic thought. The cover art of *Büyük Doğu* tended to strike a chord that was at once demonizing the West and was reminiscent of European modernist artistic movements, such as Italian Futurism [Fig. L].



Figure L: “This City is Floating Away!!!” *Büyük Doğu* no. 1, 2 November 1945. The balloons are labeled “Adultery,” “Gambling,” “Drunkenness,” “Doubt,” “Theft,” and “Murder”

Following the riot, *Büyük Doğu* championed the cause of the rioters. In the first issue published after the riot, on December 7, the cover [Fig. M] of *Büyük Doğu* featured a triptych of photographs: a shot of the crowd on Ankara Avenue holding signs and pictures of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, a photograph presumably taken inside *Büyük Doğu*'s office of Kısakürek with two unidentified university students, a former parliamentarian and reporter for the official Trade Office, Kazım Nami Duru, and a columnist for *Büyük Doğu*, Nejat Muhsinoğlu, and lastly a photograph of the crowd surrounding the Monument to the Republic (*Cumhuriyet Anıtı*) in Taksim Square, with the caption “The youth came to us and brought the Communists’ documents.”³¹¹ The following week the cover featured photocopies of several such “documents” purportedly proving the Sertel’s Soviet inclinations, including a copy of a Russian newspaper with Zekeriya Sertel’s name penciled on it, a map, in Turkish, of the world where Moscow is circled and lines radiated out to other soviet-friendly nations, a copy of the French newspaper *Le Carrefour* with the headline “Le Choix du 21 Octobre: Mystique Communiste,” and an unsigned letter addressed to Zekeriya Sertel detailing a recent report from a Soviet radio station out of Moscow expressing support for Armenian separatists hoping to join the Soviet Union. The caption for this cover read, “The Documents of *Tan*’s Spirit and Work!”³¹²

The issue on December 14 proceeded to recount the events on December 4, and what Kısakürek was doing throughout the day of the riot. According to this report, Kısakürek was alerted to the events in Beyazıt Square at around eight in morning when an anonymous student called his office at *Büyük Doğu*. The student informed him that a protest was beginning in

³¹¹ *Büyük Doğu*, 7 December 1945, “Gençler bize geldi ve kömünistlerin evrakını getirdi”

³¹² *Büyük Doğu*, 14 December 1945, “Vesikalar (Tan)çıların Ruhu ve İşi” The focus here on Armenia is significant given the resonances with the USSR’s policy towards Turkey in the weeks and months following V-E Day, when Stalin made numerous demands on the İnönü government to renegotiate the Straits regime established in the Montreux conventions and repatriate the regions surrounding Kars and Ardahan. For an in-depth discussion of these negotiations, see Onur Işçi, “Russophobic Neutrality”, 265-276

Beyazit Square and that they were “proceeding against the communists.” After an undetermined period of time, Kısakürek, with Nejat Muhsinoğlu at his side, went down to the *Tan* offices to see what was happening for himself. It appears he arrived there just before the majority of the crowd made it to *Tan*. The article mentions that there was in fact a police cordon in front of the office, but that once the crowd arrived the police were either overrun or disbanded since “...within seconds all of the barriers, together with the windowpanes of *Tan*, were torn and strewn about, and *Tan* Press began to shake like a rotten tooth.”³¹³

After returning to the business office of *Büyük Doğu*, Necip Fazıl was visited by a number of unidentified youths who were involved in the protests. The first group, described as “truly right thinking” and “who were on our side and dependent on our spirit” came to the offices covered in blood, though without introducing themselves or saying much of what they had been up to. They washed in the faucets of *Büyük Doğu* and then left in a hurry. A while later, the article mentions a group of youths had assembled outside the offices of *Büyük Doğu* and began discussing moving the protest against *Akşam* (*Evening*) newspaper.³¹⁴ Necip Fazıl greeted them with a few words and the response was, as the article says, “with the strength that could have lifted the wooden building into the air.”³¹⁵

Following this intrusion, two college students, the ones who are depicted on the cover of the December 7 issue [Fig. M], burst into the *Büyük Doğu* offices “with faces like lightning” and a stack of documents and newspapers in their hands. The protestors claim to have found these documents, some of which are published in photocopy on the cover and inside the paper, at the

³¹³ Ibid, “Hadiseler” 8

³¹⁴ It is notable that *Akşam* is discussed as a target in this account because its owner, Necmettin Sadak, was a noted Nazi sympathizer. There are no details given in this source that detail why *Akşam* was not ultimately targeted, and no other sources corroborate this story. It remains that every other target was known to be leftist.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

offices of *Yeni Dünya*, owned by the Sertel colleague, Cami Baykurt.³¹⁶ After leaving the documents with Kısakürek and taking the aforementioned photograph, the youths left. The article describes the documents published on the front page, particularly the note supposedly written in Zekeriya Sertel's handwriting, as "unequivocal proof that they were one of the bases for secret communication [of Soviet Propaganda]." After briefly reviewing the documents, the article concludes, "We are immediately delivering these documents to the government, [the documents] are without a doubt proof that [the Sertels] were involved in an organized and systematic struggle, particularly on behalf the Armenians and for Armenianness. We are certainly not on the side of the idea that gives lessons in error, we are not ones who should be held accountable for questions about our loyalties to another country!"³¹⁷

³¹⁶ Ibid, Cami Baykurt was the proprietor of both *Yeni Dünya* and the French-language *La Turquie*, these were the second newspaper offices that were sacked on December 4.

³¹⁷ Ibid, the article also states that the documents were delivered to the Istanbul branch of the Press Directorate, as well as explained to the police.



Figure M: “The Youth Have Come to Us and Brought the Communists’ Documents!” Büyük Doğu 7 December 1945. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek is depicted second from right in the middle picture, the two protestors who procured the documents to his right.

While *Büyük Doğu* was self-consciously constructed as an organ of a specific political ideology, *Tasvir* was a daily newspaper, and though its editorial staff had clear anti-communist leanings its coverage of the events leading up to and after the Tan Riot provide a different gloss. Following the announcement of the Sertels' new magazine, *Görüşler*, *Tasvir* published a short response from the politicians named as contributors to the magazine on December 1. In response to questions from the *Tasvir* reporter about whether or not he had consented to write for *Görüşler* Celal Bayar made his own ideological leanings clear,

Let me speak precisely to this question: I am attached to the aims of Kemalism that seek to secure independent national sovereignty, and have been purely and innocently so from the beginning. I have absolutely no connection to any ideology other than Kemalism. As within Kemalism, as you know, in this notion of democracy there is free expression. From the first days, and increasingly so as time goes on, I have taken it as my responsibility that it is impossible for me to separate myself from our fundamental reforms. In order for political life to continue, we must put these prevailing ideas in a central place. Everyone will see this.

Up until now, I've never claimed to be an "editorialist" [*"muharrirlik" iddiasında bulunmadım*]. And I have still not found myself on that path. It is not a good bet that I will be part of such a journal as this or any other. Without exception, the substance of any publication I have made, related to the statements of our reforms in our historical age, I have found that I have been the one giving information [i.e.: he has been a newsmaker, not a news writer]. I have no other words to give on this subject.³¹⁸

The article also briefly questioned Adnan Menderes and Fuad Köprülü, who it said gave the same reply, and Tevfik Rüştü Aras, who responded by insisting that unless his byline appeared, he did not write anything and that "I have not been writing articles for other writers who are intent on taking a path that is contrary to the interests of the country."³¹⁹

The following days included reports of stern anti-communist reaction from public officials and general surprise at the advertised inclusion of Bayar, Menderes, and Köprülü in

³¹⁸ *Tasvir* December 1, 1945, "'Görüşler' isimli komünist mecmuasının münasebetsizliği"

³¹⁹ Ibid. Ultimately, an essay written by Aras did appear in *Görüşler*, though it was a reprint of an earlier essay that recalled some of his last days spent with Atatürk before his death. See below for a summary.

Görüşler. Particularly strong reactions were reported in Izmir, where a group of youths publicly tore up the copies of the magazine that they acquired, and in some instances writing, “do not read this Communist journal” underneath the banner of each issue. Such reports prompted the assessment of *Tasvir*’s editors that “This journal that wants to spread red propaganda has been met on all sides by public disgust.”³²⁰ The same article also featured a report from Eskişehir, stating that, “The *Görüşler* journal came here, but after they read it, those on the side of the people knew immediately what the principles and purposes of it were. For this reason, it is understood that the second printing of the journal that was meant to be sent here will be returned.”³²¹ On the day of the riot, *Tasvir* printed a letter written by a group of university students who were angered by the announcement of *Görüşler* addressed to former Foreign Minister Tefik Rüştü Aras, who had often been sympathetic to the Sertels. The letter attacks Aras for betraying his storied service in the War for Independence, and for corrupting the memory of Atatürk, concluding that because of this betrayal, history would remember him as Tefik Rüştü the Miserable [Zavallı Tefik Rüştü].³²²

In the days following the riot, *Tasvir* applauded the students who led the riot with headlines like “The Cheers of the Youths” and detailed reports from the riot and reactions from around the country. The paper reported that after some organization at Istanbul University the students began to gather in Beyazıt Square around ten o’clock to put together placards. A selection of the reported slogans included: “No country is as democratic as we are,” “We are neither Fascist nor Communist, we are Democrats,” “Long Live Atatürk,” “Damn the Sertels” and “Damn the Traitors.” *Tasvir* estimated the crowd at around five or six thousand students –

³²⁰ *Tasvir*, December 3, 1945 “İzmirdeki gençler Görüşler mecmuasının afişlerini yırttı”

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Tasvir*, December 4, 1945 “Zavallı Tefik Rüştü”. The nickname is a direct retort to Aras’ brief article in *Görüşler* that was titled, “Büyük Atatürk! Zavallı Atatürk” (“The Great Atatürk! The Miserable Atatürk!”).

they make no mention of workers from the nearby bazar as Birgit does in his memoir. As the crowd passed the CHP party headquarters, the paper reported that students requested party flags from the workers there, but were refused. Once the group reached Tan Press, the paper reported that windows and glass were broken, books were thrown out of the windows, and chants of “damn the communists” and “damn *Tan* and *Görüşler*” could be heard. Unlike any of the other sources, *Tasvir* reported some sort of struggle between the police and students at the barricade in front of the building’s door, mentioning that after a brief scuffle, the barricade was broken. When the crowd, which *Tasvir* reported had grown to nine or ten thousand by this point, left Tan Press to cross the Galata bridge they were met again by 150 or 200 police officers, who were no match for the demonstration at that point. As the crowd pushed up Istiklal Avenue, they were met by a greater police force, including mounted police and gendarmes, but from the point of view of the *Tasvir* article their main purpose was to help keep the demonstration on the main road up to Taksim. After briefly pausing to inflict damage on the Berrak Bookstore – which was known to sell Russian newspapers – the crowd pushed towards Taksim. According to *Tasvir*, at this point older women approached the crowd to kiss the hands of the youth. When the crowd reached Taksim, one of the youths gave a short speech beneath the Monument of the Republic,

This meeting is not the product of incitement. If there are *agents provocateurs* here, they too are among those who have for a long time served and written for other countries that have strove to break the Turkish union against Turkish martyrs and Turkish history.³²³

From this point, it becomes clear that the police were to take a more active role in corralling, if not outright suppressing, the demonstration. As the crowd headed back down Istiklal Avenue they were met by a heavy police presence near Galatasaray Lycee, at which point many of the organizers from the University Student Union began running to the next destination, which was the offices of *Yeni Dünya* and *La Turquie*, “*Tan*’s little brothers” according to *Tasvir*. Details

³²³ *Tasvir* December 5, 1945 “Solcu tahriklerden muğber olan gençliğin tezahüratı”

on the damage that took place once they got there are not provided beyond saying that these offices met much the same fate as *Tan* did. The youths then returned to Ankara Avenue to report back to various friendly periodicals, including *Akşam*, *Büyük Doğu*, and *Vatan*. Interestingly, there was apparently some confusion as to whether Ahmet Emin Yalman's paper, *Vatan*, was to be protested, since he in fact was one of the co-founders of *Tan*, but *Tasvir* reported that some of the youths in the crowd began to shout at those headed in *Vatan*'s direction, "No!.. they have separated from the communists who oppose our nation."³²⁴ Following all of this, *Tasvir* reports that the crowd scattered, with no mention of whether any groups had boarded ferries to root out the Sertels in Moda.

Of the press sources who provided extensive coverage of these events, *Büyük Doğu* and *Tasvir* were among the most vocally in support of the riot, and provided the greatest amount of detail of the events as they unfolded. The manner of the reporting is instructive, as both organs and their proprietors would become supporters of the Democrat Party over the following five years. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek had reached some acclaim as a poet and ideological figure by 1945, but positioning himself at the front of this anti-communist and nationalist demonstration surely boosted his profile, and he would likewise see increasing popularity as the Democrat Party grew in strength. Kısakürek's legacy has been as one of the main intellectual influences on pious conservatism in Turkey, finding himself at the head of a group of resurgent voices of political Islam in the 1940s and 1950s. As Duran and Aydın suggest, the space for an emergence of a political movement behind figures like Kısakürek was created in the vacuum created by the wake of Kemalist modernization in that it, "neither became a rival ideology to Islam, nor did it allow

³²⁴ Ibid.

the emergence of any ideologies that might rival Islam.”³²⁵ It is in events like the Tan Riot that Kısakürek’s brand of political Islam would hew closer to the mission and purpose of the Kemalist state than it had previously, and make a pitch to occupy ideological space not only in the “rules and values [that] shaped the daily lives of individuals and the larger society,” but in the space of acceptable political discourse in the coming multiparty era.³²⁶ That a variety of political Islam espoused by Kısakürek thrived in this environment and the social democratic leftism of the Sertels and their cohort did not is in no small part a result of the way events unfolded on December 4, 1945.

Tasvir, for its part, is exemplary of the sort of pitch being made for the Democrat Party establishment. Its proprietor, Ziyad Ebüzziya, would join the DP shortly after its founding and would serve as a member of parliament for that party from 1950-1955. Whereas Kısakürek’s support for the DP buttressed their connections to Islamist politics, Ebüzziya’s early support for the DP filled out more liberal pillars of the party. Ebüzziya and other liberals would eventually have a falling out with the DP in the course of a Justice Department raid on certain members of the party, known as the “Proof of Righteousness Affair” (*İspat Hakkı Olayı*) that would lead to the formation of the Freedom Party (Hürriyet Partisi) in 1955.³²⁷ Nonetheless, that future liberal and Islamist pillars both celebrated the rioters, cheering a violent attack on free speech in the name of inoculating the infant DP against the supposed threat of communism was an augur of future repression of ideas on the left end of the political spectrum that would become commonplace in the run up to the DP’s success in the 1950 parliamentary elections.

³²⁵ Burhanettin Duran and Cemil Aydın, “Competing Occidentalisms of Modernist Islamist Thought: Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and Nürettin Topçu on Christianity, the West and Modernity” *The Muslim World* Vol. 103 October 2013, 482.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ Ebüzziya joined parliament in 1955 as one of the thirty-two original Hürriyet Parti MPs, representing Konya. Diren Çakmak, *Hürriyet Partisi (1955-1958)* (Istanbul: Libra Yayınevi, 2016), 214.

The Sertels and the Riot

It is evident from nearly every account of the riot, including Birgit's, that the Sertels were perceived as communists who were bent on co-opting any serious opposition party for the purposes of spreading soviet-style socialism in Turkey. Examining the source material from the perspective of the Sertels, as well as from the perspective of American Consular documents, this public perception of the Sertels was, at best, a gross exaggeration, and, at worst, utterly and completely false. The question that I wish to explore in the wider history of this riot is how the Sertels came to be painted in such ideologically "red" colors despite their efforts to articulate a new vision for Turkey which was by almost any international standard, liberal and democratic.

In his memoirs, Zekeriya Sertel began the story of the riot several months prior, not long after the decision to have multi-party by-elections was made. He described a meeting he had with a close acquaintance, the long-serving foreign minister and soon to be UN representative Tevfik Rüştü Aras, regarding the potential for a new party under the leadership of Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes. During the meeting, Zekeriya remembered coming to an understanding that the new party should have four guiding political principles: "1. The party must defend the freedoms and rights of the bourgeois. 2. It will be progressive-statist. An attempt will be made to separate private companies from the state. But, they will remain under the control of the state. 3. A Turkish-Soviet friendship will be fundamental to foreign policy. 4. Turkey will remain independent and pacifist."³²⁸ In the timeline of the run up to the Democrat Party's foundation and

³²⁸ M. Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım 1905-1950* (Istanbul: Yaylacık Matbaası, 1968), 260-261. When considered against what is classically considered to be the political backbone of Kemalism, these pillars do not seem all that controversial. However, by the time this meeting took place, the proposition of Turkish-Soviet friendship would have been practically incendiary given that Turkey's realpolitik of neutrality throughout the war was largely guided away from the Soviet sphere, and towards the burgeoning American one. As Samuel Hirst has shown, the Turkish-Soviet partnership during the reign of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was built on more than coincidental ideological resonances, and the deep marks it left on culture and economy. Onur İşçi

the Tan Riot, this is one of the rare moments of insight we have from the Turkish state archives. A record sent from the police bureau tasked with surveillance of potential dissidents to the Prime Ministry recounts a meeting that lines up fairly well with Zekeriya Sertel's memory. The informant reports of a series of late-May or early-June meetings between both Sertels, Adnan Adıvar (husband of Halide Edib Adıvar), Foreign Minister Aras, and two other prominent Istanbul intellectuals, Sadrettin Celal Antel, then a professor at Istanbul University, and Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu, both known socialist intellectuals who occasionally wrote for *Tan*, the latter of which would write for *Görüşler*. According to the report, the purpose of the meetings was to discuss possible platforms for a new party, in line with Sertel's memoirs, as well as the publication of two newspapers that might be flagships for the new party's agenda – one to be called *Parti* and headed by Hikmet Bil, one of *Tan*'s editors, and the other an unnamed journal to be run by the former editor of *Yarın* [Tomorrow], Arif Oruç.³²⁹

In August, ahead of potential changes to the Press Law and Law of Associations that had been used to suppress newspapers like *Tan* throughout the war, and following Turkey's signing of the UN Charter, Zekeriya expressed tremendous optimism in a conversation with US officials Jack Evarts Horner, Harvey Hall, and Burhan Belge, one of the editorialists at the newspaper. According to a memorandum of conversation housed in the US National Archives, "Mr. Sertel believed that only Communistic and reactionary parties would be prohibited. By "reactionary" party Turks usually mean the policy of religious orthodoxy, the revival of the Caliphate, not reaction in the European sense. In fact, many of those who would be classed as reactionaries in

has recently demonstrated the weakness of this partnership in the face of the geopolitical crises of the late 1930s by detailing the diplomatic deterioration following the Montreux Convention and through the course of the war. See Samuel J. Hirst, "Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery" p. 32-53 and Onur İşçi, "Russophobic Neutrality".

³²⁹ Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, Başbakanlık Özel Kalem Müdürlüğü Evrakı [Documents of the Prime Ministry's Special Office] (Hereafter BCA ÖKM) Fon 030 1 0 0 0 Box 79 Folder 524 Series 18

Turkey may at the same time be liberals in so far as economic and political life in general are concerned.”³³⁰ A mere four days after that conversation, however, Sertel’s hopes were dampened following a bizarre incident in which he received notice that *Tan* was once again suspended by the authorities, only to receive an order revoking the first one forty-five minutes later. Horner, the Third Secretary of the Embassy, suspected that the Turkish cabinet had passed the suspension without getting clearance from President İnönü, who later revoked it. In conversation with the same parties as before, Zekeriya expressed doubt that little more would be changed besides the troublesome Article 50 of the Press Law and that the early creation of a real opposition was unlikely. Horner also related that he had heard from a close relative of Celal Bayar, who even at that time was assumed to be the primary prospect to lead an opposition movement, had his doubts about forming an opposition party because “he felt that the Turkish people were politically immature and that the idea of a parliamentary and non-violent opposition was foreign to the nature of the Turkish people,” and Sertel himself was apparently “somewhat shaken” by Bayar’s views, and expressed his own uncertainty about where he stood, particularly with regards to how he felt about his prior pro-Russian stance in the paper.³³¹

Later that year, following a press conference regarding a new land reform policy, Zekeriya recalled that Adnan Menderes came over for dinner. Following dinner, discussion of the above principles ensued, Menderes asked Zekeriya directly if he was a communist, to which he responded “this was an unwarranted question.. and if I was going to come out against the design of the Land Reform it would be necessary for it to be liberal in meaning.”³³² Clearly, Zekeriya

³³⁰ US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 13 (Memorandum of Conversation August 23, 1945)

³³¹ US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 13 (Memorandum of Conversation August 27, 1945). Horner also notes that he felt Sertel had been backing off his support for Russian policies for some time.

³³² Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 264

came out of the meeting having got his message across to Menderes, as well as an apparent understanding of the principles he had discussed earlier with Aras.³³³

It was following this meeting that Zekeriya Sertel took it upon himself to go about defending himself and his newspaper from accusations that they represented a communist fifth column in Turkey. Beginning with a column he recalled from October 11, he attempted to dissuade the Turkish public that communism was on the march, but did so by measuring Turkey's situation in ways that strike the ear as inherently Marxist. In the article entitled "An open conversation with our readers" Zekeriya tried to explain to the public that, "In order for communism to spread in a country there are objective and subjective conditions that are necessary," and that the Turkish situation, unlike even that of Germany, England, America and France, had not yet exhibited the necessary internal industrialization (*sanayi kurulmamış*), class consciousness (*sınıflar belirmemiş*) or capital accumulation (*sermaye birikimi*) to meet the objective criteria for communist revolution.³³⁴ He further stated that even subjective criteria, such as the broad organization of the working class with a political leadership or the appearance of outward class conflict were undetectable and that "the bourgeois have been deluded into thinking that the current situation in Turkey can be called nothing but communist and that there is a communist threat."³³⁵ Whether or not Zekeriya's analysis could have proved truthful, it is rather easy to see how this article might not have had the desired effect of disabusing the public of the notion that he was a communist.

³³³ Ibid, though Sertel states that there was no verbal agreement from Menderes on this point, but that "between them, we were enlightened as to our understanding." Further, Sertel states that this meeting was a way of testing whether Menderes saw him as a communist in the same way as the "reactionary and fascist press" did.

³³⁴ Ibid, 264-265

³³⁵ Ibid, 265

In Zekeriya's memoir, he suggests that it was in the interest of further diffusing these accusations of communism that he set about trying to start a new publication that would be the voice of the official opposition party. This magazine, which would be called *Görüşler*, was first discussed in October and November of 1945. It was to be under the direct editorship of Sabiha Sertel, and, initially at least, Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, and Tevfik Rüştü Aras had agreed to write for it.³³⁶ According to Sertel, the newspaper could ultimately not afford to compensate Bayar, since their budget allotted only five thousand *lira* and at the time Bayar was making more than seventy thousand from his post at the popular bank, İş Bankası.³³⁷ Bayar's position, or perceived position, here is key in the Sertels' telling, since he is considered by Sertel to have sold out their cause to İnönü's government in order to be sanctioned as the first official opposition party. Zekeriya, before retelling the precise events of December 4, 1945, relayed that Radio Moscow was making Bayar out to be an enemy of the Soviets, but that Bayar told Zekeriya directly, "However, as you know, I am Atatürk's man. On his deathbed, I promised to carry out his will as one of my most holy commitments. For that reason, I cannot be an enemy of the Soviets," but then Sertel laments, "...after the Democrat Party came to power Bayar had permanently betrayed Atatürk's will and made an enemy out of the Soviets."³³⁸

³³⁶ Of the three, only Aras would appear in the first issue of *Görüşler*, with an article he had penned earlier in October titled "Büyük Atatürk! Zavallı Atatürk!" ("The Great Atatürk! The Miserable Atatürk!" which recalled one of his final meetings with Atatürk before his death in 1938, and bemoaned the direction the country had gone in since that time. *Görüşler* December 1, 1945, 4.

³³⁷ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 266

³³⁸ Ibid, 267. Despite Bayar's claims of loyalty towards Atatürk, it is believed that at least one deathbed request of the leader given to Bayar by Atatürk's Aide-de-Camp – that İsmet İnönü be shot – was obviously not carried out. Bayar ultimately was the man that nominated İnönü to the Presidency in 1938, had the initial order been carried out, Bayar would have likely been the successor instead of İnönü. According to documents from the US Embassy in Ankara, Bayar was reluctant regarding the formation of a new party as late as June 1945 – the time of contested by-elections – because he felt "the Turkish people were too immature to understand modern democratic practices and he feared there might be bloodshed if a new party were formed." Additionally, the same document indicates that Bayar was perhaps attempting to court Tevfik

According to Zekeriya, *Görüşler* “exploded like a bomb” at its release on December 1, and he could only retain a single copy of the first issue for himself.³³⁹ The first issue had advertised future issues with perspectives from Bayar, Menderes, and Fuat Köprülü. The cover of the magazine featured a drawing by Faris Erkman, a communist party member and attributed author of the anti-fascist pamphlet *En Büyük Tehlike (The Greatest Danger)*, that depicted an arm labeled *Görüşler* pulling back a curtain to reveal three cowering male figures labeled, “Corruption” (*Suiistimal*), “Profiteering” (*İhtikar*) and “Fascism.” In its mission statement, Zekeriya Sertel claimed that *Görüşler* would be, “the first political review published in Turkey” and heralded its appearance by informing his readers that, “In western countries, particularly in England and America, political reviews have a big position and role... Penetrating into the inside story of events is necessary to explain them. This is the biggest goal of this review.”³⁴⁰ The twelve-page journal included two opinion articles from Sabiha Sertel, a review of political opinion from Zekeriya Sertel, op-eds from Cami Baykurt, Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu, Adnan Cemgil, and Behice Boran, along with a short story from Sabahattin Ali, a poem from Nail V. Çakirhan, and a short comic piece from Aziz Nesin. The final page featured a series of political cartoons.

In the articles, Zekeriya Sertel offered four brief opinion pieces – what in contemporary parlance we might call “hot takes” – including a denouncement of the Press Law, saying, “there is no Publication or Press Union law in any democratic country” and denounced the law as a “fascist law.” That take was followed by a call for new laws enshrining free elections, praise for the leftward turn of governments in Britain, France, Scandinavia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and

Rüştü Aras to help form the new party, but the confidential source indicated that such talks would ultimately be unsuccessful given Aras’ penchants for liquor and women. US NARA RG 84/UD 3288/Box 13

³³⁹ Ibid

³⁴⁰ *Görüşler*, December 1, 1945, 1

Bulgaria, and a stand against the continued experimentation with atomic weapons.³⁴¹ Cami Baykurt offered a warning about the intentions of the three major Allied powers in maintaining peace, stating that each power had starkly different motivations, and deep fears of the other that could lead to another conflagration. To Baykurt, WWII was unlike previous wars which, “were between nations that for the most part resembled each other in their social characteristics. This last war was not like this: To a degree it was a war between imperialist powers, and in the common international fronts it was a war that gave birth to a class struggle.”³⁴²

In the first of her two editorials, Sabiha Sertel seconded Baykurt’s line of argument by emphasizing the necessity that, “Every block of people uniting against fascism and reactionary thought is the only hope we have for the future.” She argued that conditions following this recent war had not yet vanquished these elements, and that they well might reorganize and prosper as they had after the previous world war.³⁴³ The centerfold of the magazine featured two articles, the first one was from Esat Adil Müstecaplioğlu detailing the contradictions of principles between the Turkish constitution’s guaranteeing of freedoms to organize, strike, of the press, of the thought and body, and other personal freedoms with the severe restriction of those freedoms in laws ranging from the civil and criminal codes to the Press Law.³⁴⁴ The second article, the one that had so incensed Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, was Sabiha Sertel’s “Chained Freedom.” The article was provocative, taking a somewhat similar argument to Müstecaplioğlu’s in that she fiercely defended her commitment to the rule of law and the constitution, writing on the freedoms mentioned by her colleague that,

³⁴¹ Zekeriya Sertel, “Haftanın Görüşleri” (“The Week’s Opinions”), *Görüşler*, December 1, 1945, 1

³⁴² Cami Baykurt, “Barış Savaşı” (“The Peace Struggle”) *Görüşler*, December 1, 1945, 3.

³⁴³ Sabiha Sertel, “Değişen Dünya” (“The Changed World”) *Görüşler*, December 1, 1945, 5.

³⁴⁴ Esat Adil Müstecaplioğlu, “Anayasa-Demokrasi-Kanunlarımız” (“The Constitution-Democracy-Our Laws”) *Görüşler*, December 1, 1945, 6-7.

The law is the greatest guarantee of these freedoms. We do not want anarchy... We do not want laws that engender the tyranny and oppression of the ruling class. We do not want a system that hands the national will and authority over to the character of totalitarianism... The Independence struggle... was a struggle to establish a new Turkey that supported freedom for all people and various human rights. The hands that wrote the constitution had as their goal bringing this to Turkey.

However, she described that revolution as incomplete, and having shifted so far in the opposite direction that, “Today, our economic system, our laws, our politics, our social and cultural mechanisms are the mechanisms of a completely fascist system.” The only difference between these laws and the laws of a fascist system, according to Sabiha Sertel, was that “these laws that have fascist content and spirit also have a democratic name.” She followed these assertions with calls to overturn the laws that had restricted the formation of new political parties and the Press Law, which she characterized as the chains on the freedoms that the constitution enumerated.³⁴⁵

Sabiha Sertel’s editorial was certainly the strongest condemnation of the current Turkish government, but it was not the only inflammatory piece in the magazine. Adnan Cemgil’s contribution was a lengthy personal attack on the intellectual, and *Tasvir* columnist, Peyami Safa, entitled, “Missionaries of Fascism, No. 1: Peyami Safa.” Cemgil likened Safa to Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi ideologue, and the article accompanied an infelicitous depiction of Safa, prostrate in front of a radio listening to the Führer himself [Fig. N].³⁴⁶ Likewise, Safa, *Cumhuriyet* editor Nadir Nadi, and Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın were depicted in mocking cartoons in the last page of the paper [Figs. O and P].

³⁴⁵ Sabiha Sertel, “Zincirli Hürriyet” *Görüşler*, December 1, 1945, 6-7

³⁴⁶ Adnan Cemgil, “Faşizm Misyonleri No. 1: Peyami Safa” *Görüşler*, December 1, 1945, 8.



Figure N: Peyami Safa bows to Hitler



*N. Nadi: Ee, dünyayı nasıl görüyorsun?
P. Safa: Mükemmel! gördüğümüz gibi*

Figure O: Nadir Nadi: Hey, how do you see the world? Peyami Safa: Perfectly! Like you see it!



H. CAHİT YALÇIN: Ya şimdi Amerikaya nasıl çalmalı?!

Figure P: H. Cahit Yalçın: Ya, how should we attack America now?! [The text reads: Cannibalist Fascists! Murderer Hitler, Damn You Fascists, Long live Churchill, Rascally Bolsheviks! Red Fascists! Damn You Bolsheviks! Long Live Bevin! America's note to Turkey: A New Status Quo in the Straights.]

The day following the publication of *Görüşler*, a group of university students gathered outside of *Tan*'s offices and fearing that they were going to provoke violence, Zekeriya telephoned the provincial governor, Vali Lütfi Kırdar, who told him "I know and I have taken the necessary precautions, don't worry."³⁴⁷ The next day, December 3rd, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın published his provocative article, "Kalkın Ey Ehli Vatan" ("Rise up Oh Patriots"), which surprised Zekeriya since he had thought he had relatively friendly relations with Yalçın. Early that morning, an unnamed university student telephoned Zekeriya saying that a group of youths were planning to riot and destroy *Tan Press*. He again phoned the governor, who said that they would surround the vicinity of the press with police.³⁴⁸ Zekeriya described the riot from his own memory much as if he had been there to witness it, even though he was certainly at home across

³⁴⁷ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 268

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 268

the Bosphorus in Moda during the entirety of the affair. Nonetheless, he described the actions of the protestors in harrowing detail, saying that they bore axes, sledgehammers and carried with them bottles of red ink. Upon busting into the Tan offices, he wrote that some of the protestors asked where the Sertels were in hopes that they could arrest them, strip them naked, and douse them in the red ink as if to say, “here are the reds” (*işte kızıklar*). He insisted, perhaps rightly, that this wild crowd destroyed the offices with the police as onlookers. Once they were done rampaging the Tan offices, and after they had moved to Beyoğlu to trash the offices of *La Turquie*, Sertel claimed that many of the protestors had boarded a ferry to Kadıköy so that they could find them in their home and attack them there. Zekeriya and Sabiha received reports of all of this over the phone, and later called the Vali a third time, incensed and afraid, to tell him, “Are you sure you took the measures that you said you would? Now the fascists are coming to my house. You let my press be destroyed, at least let us avoid the same to our lives.” The Vali then assured them that their life was not in danger as the boat the protestors had boarded was redirected toward the Marmara Islands instead of Kadıköy. When the Vali then asked if the Sertels were still in their house and recommended they stay there, Zekeriya knew this “meant that we could not stay in the house. Our lives were in danger. At this time, we heard a buzzing coming from afar. With each minute, the buzzing sound seemed louder to us. We left our house and took refuge in one of our neighbor’s homes.”³⁴⁹

Zekeriya stated that after the events of December 4, not a single one of the organizers could be found. He wrote that he had no doubt that President İnönü knew that his Prime Minister, Şükrü Saraçoğlu, gave the order to the police to organize and assist in the conduction of the riot,

³⁴⁹ Ibid, 269-270. We know from Sabiha Sertel’s memoir that the neighbor with whom the Sertels took cover was their long-time friend Vâlâ Nureddin, then a columnist for the newspaper *Akşam* (*Evening*), and his wife Müzehher. Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* (Istanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1969) 346

and that there were plainclothes police officers amongst the crowd.³⁵⁰ Sertel concluded his narrative of these events by relaying a strange instance he experienced a few months afterwards. He had purchased a book in Istanbul's old antiquarian bookshop and a piece of paper had fallen out. The scrap had a note on it addressed to Prime Minister Saraçoğlu and read simply, "My dear sir, I've fulfilled your orders, now I am waiting for my reward. Signed: Yaşar Çimen."³⁵¹ He tells us in the memoir that Çimen was a propagandist for Italian fascism, and had been seen amongst the crowds at the riot – proving to Sertel at least that he must have been one of Saraçoğlu's contacts for organizing the riot. As I will show later, Çimen was in fact one of the organizers of the riot, but his connections to Saraçoğlu and the CHP elite are somewhat obscure.

While Zekeriya Sertel's opinions often garnered suspicion from colleagues and government officials alike, it was often the more pointed and direct opinions of his wife and partner, Sabiha Sertel, that provoked a public outcry. The name of the new newspaper that sparked the ire of columnists like Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Görüşler*, was in fact the same as Sabiha's regular column in *Tan*. In the days leading up to the riot, her opinion pieces became increasingly defensive of her and her husband's newspaper, and increasingly accusatory towards the efforts of the ruling CHP to silence them. On December 1, her editorial ran with the title "The *İbret* and *Meşveret* Newspapers of this Era", and compared attacks against *Tan* and the newspaper of their one-time partner Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Vatan* to those of the notorious Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II against the leading lights of the Ottoman constitutional movement.³⁵² Her editorial of December 2, "The Fear of the Opposition", she criticized the

³⁵⁰ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 270-271, I have translated the phrase *sivil polis* here in a more colloquial term, plainclothes officers, than its direct cognate, "civil police".

³⁵¹ *Ibid*, 271

³⁵² *Tan*, 1 December 1945. *İbret* was a newspaper published in the mid- and late-1870s that prominently featured the writing of the Young Ottoman playwright and intellectual Namık Kemal, and *Meşveret* was one of the semi-official organs of the Committee of Union and

efforts of the CHP to manage the new opposition parties directly, "...our opposition is defeatist, they are regarded as traitorous... [the CHP] says that those who are not opposed to itself can still criticize the government. Only the pot can call the kettle black."³⁵³

Sabiha's memoir provides further details of how the Sertels spent the day of the riot. Initially, fearing that they would find themselves under attack at their home, they went to the house of Sabiha's seventy-eight-year-old mother. They stayed there until evening, and when all was clear they returned to their house. The following day they were visited upon by their friends and co-workers Vâlâ and Müzehher Nüreddin, from whom they learned of the Istanbul mayor's ploy to send the protestors who had boarded the Kadıköy ferry to the Marmara Islands, and with whom they spent the three days following the riot.³⁵⁴ While there, Sabiha ruminated on the extreme violence the crowd had wished upon them, "At that time I understood how awful this all was. They had wanted to ensure victory by destroying the press and murdering the owners, they could not be defeated with discussion. In what way could this be the promise of democracy? This was nothing other than fascist terror."³⁵⁵ Sabiha describes the time spent at their house following the riot to be incredibly tense. They took no visitors after returning from Nüreddin's house save one English reporter, to whom she insisted that, "during the war years, the impact of the assistance provided to fascist Germany by the men of the state against the will of the people was

Progress founded by Ahmed Rıza in 1895, both were subject to incredible scrutiny and censorship from the Hamidian regime.

³⁵³ *Tan*, December 2, 1945. I have translated the Turkish idiom *ha Ali Hoca, ha Hoca Ali* as "only the pot can call the kettle black" to get across the meaning that two things presented here as opposites (ie: the government and the supposed opposition) are in fact the same, a more literal translation might read: "Here's Ali Hoca, and here's Hoca Ali".

³⁵⁴ Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* [2015], 294-5

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 296.

disastrous. And now they are taking an attitude against the progressive newspapers, it gives the impression that democracy will not be established in Turkey for a great many years.”³⁵⁶

From the perspective of the Sertels, we can see that their own hopes for a genuinely free democratic regime in Turkey’s near future were effectively dashed by the destruction of their printing house. While they would not leave Turkey for nearly five years following this event, their presence as public intellectuals, as publishers of a major newspaper, and as confidants of opposition politicians that they had held for nearly three decades was severely damaged by these events, and would be almost completely extinguished following their trial for espionage in the following year. While the Sertels had certainly faced pressure from the state before, this sort of popular outrage against them, however much they believed it was stoked by the state, effectively ended their mission to create an opposition to the CHP that was rooted in social democratic and liberal values. Likewise, it is worthwhile to contrast the Sertels’ despondency regarding the prospects for Turkish democracy in the wake of the riot with those of Celal Bayar and the champions of the Democrat Party, many of whom had been pessimistic about the multiparty project until shortly after the riot. It is in these attitudes that questions arise about the sincerity of the transition to multiparty democracy in Turkey, because at least in the wake of this riot, it would appear that the organic and loyal opponents of the regime, those best positioned to build a popular opposition party were silenced while those opposition members closest to the Kemalist

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 297. She remembers the reporter responding that he could not tell this story now but perhaps one day he could, but, she wrote in 1969, “That day has yet to come.” To be fair to the foreign press, however, the event was reported on by the *Times of London* on a few occasions, the 5 December 1945 issue briefly described an “Anti-Communist Parade”, on 7 December the newspaper relayed denials from Ankara that the riot was anti-Russian and who insisted the riot was “spontaneously organized by students, in spite of police, with the intention of asserting the position of the Turkish youth, which is neither Nazi or Communist, but purely democratic.” *Times of London*, “Anti-Communist Parade in Istanbul” 5 December 1945, Issue 50317 p. 4 and “The Disorders in Istanbul” 7 December 1945, Issue 50319, 3.

center enjoyed protection, and, in effect, inoculation against the many accusations of treachery that were launched against any member of Turkey's left in the early days of the Cold War.

Where is the State?

The Turkish Prime Ministry Archives naturally hold a wealth of information that would reveal a great deal about the nature of this riot, who was involved, and what could be determined about its outcome. Unfortunately, only scant evidence has, at this point, been made available that provides some glimmers into the state's perspective. Following the events of December 4, the Martial Law Administration, which had control over all elements of policing in Istanbul at the time, conducted an investigation into the riot that was concluded on or around December 15. While the full archives of the police and Martial Law Administration are unavailable to researchers, because they are housed in the Interior Ministry, a four-page summary of the investigation was submitted to the Prime Ministry on 6 January 1946. The report points a finger at *Tan*, *La Turquie*, *Görüşler*, and *Yeni Dünya* for "inciting those who love their nation and motherland," while acknowledging the central role of Yalçın's editorial and *Tasvir*'s provocations in the days leading up to 4 December.³⁵⁷ The report implicates a specific group of Istanbul University students, including the aforementioned second year law student Tahsin Atakan along with his classmate Turan Tamer and a student from the Literature Faculty İhsan Göğüş as the main organizers of the riot, and they were later joined by another student Yaşar Çimen.³⁵⁸ The report appears to have determined the plan made by this group the day prior to the riot, which consisted of the following points:

I- While gathering the university youth in Beyazıt square, wire those that made the negative publications.

³⁵⁷ BCA Fon 30 10 0 0 [Başvekalet Bakanlığı] Box 85 Folder 563 Series 4

³⁵⁸ Ibid. Of the group only İhsan Göğüş went on to become a fairly prominent public figure as a long-time journalist in Istanbul.

- II – While going in front of the Halk Parti and Vilayet houses assure the allegiance of the youth to the government and the party.
- III – After arriving at Taksim square and placing a wreath on the monument, determine to disperse.³⁵⁹

According to information in the report acquired from Yaşar Çimen, once at Taksim the plan was to place the placards, banners, and wreaths on the Monument to the Republic, a display they had nicknamed “The Russian Flower Market” [*Rus Çiçek Pazarı*]. Investigators also observed a number of the placards distributed by the group once they arrived in Beyazıt Square, they included the following:

- A) These bigots want the Spanish Civil War in our territory (*İspanya kardeş boğuşmasını Yurdumuzda isteyen yobazlar*)
- B) Don’t forget that a national front is born
- C) There isn’t this kind of freedom in the most democratic countries
- D) Long Live the Turkish Democratic Country
- E) Don’t read the journals and newspapers of malicious people
- F) We are neither fascists nor Nazis, we are the lovers of Democracy
- G) If there is something wrong with our party, let’s resolve it as brothers. Find that in your writing.³⁶⁰

The report summary estimated the crowd numbered close to ten thousand people – most of which were not students – and that police presence was light compared to the size of the protest since a little more than one hundred officers were sent to Beyazıt at the start of the demonstration, only fifty were left to try and protect the Tan building, and perhaps a few more were to blockade bridges going over to Galata.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. Ironically, the monument in Taksim Square where the protesters set up this display was a gift from the Soviet Union.

The summary also provided a bit more information on the Soviet-affiliated bookstores that were destroyed following the destruction of *La Turquie*. Berrak bookstore was the most prominent store that faced violence that day, the report mentions that thousands of Soviet or Russian newspapers remained strewn about Istiklal Avenue days after the event and that at least one clerk from the nearby Soviet Consulate, Andre Slomo, was observed at the scene. The crowd also destroyed the A.B.C. Bookstore before heading back to Beyazit where they intended to destroy a Russian-owned bookstore there named Lena, but were totally dispersed by police before arriving.³⁶¹

The report concluded with three separate findings: that there were no foreign elements or *agents provocateurs* involved in the protest, that the motives of the crowd should not be judged “since the mass was composed of those whose national pride and excitement was incited by those whose motives are unknown,” and that the prosecution of crimes related to this event were in fact outside the jurisdiction of the Martial Law Administration and it was thus requested that civilian authorities apply the appropriate legal processes in this regard.³⁶² It is apparent from several points in the report that the police received relatively little cooperation from either the parties involved in orchestrating the riot or the victims, and that resistance to providing information to the investigation was part of the reason for a referral to a civilian prosecution.

From what little there is in the state archives it is hard to determine what, if any, relationship might have existed between the state, via the CHP, and the students who organized the protest. It appears from a few other documents related to Ali İhsan Göğüş and Yaşar Çimen that these students had been involved for at least a few years in promoting CHP activities on campus, though the nature of their ties with the party are not yet entirely clear. The party itself

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

was very active on university campuses across the city, and Istanbul University especially where it provided scholarships and housing stipends to hundreds of students every year. It would appear from party records that in 1946 Göğüş was among the students living in the CHP-subsidized dorm on campus, it is unclear whether he received a scholarship but it seems safe to assume that he benefitted from CHP funds in the same year that he organized the riot.³⁶³

Another glimpse into the event from the Turkish archives comes from two requests for assistance addressed to the Ministry of Finance through the Beyoğlu Notary, one each by the two owners of *La Turquie*, Cami Vedat Baykurt and his wife Afife Nermin Baykurt. While the requests for compensation were rejected by the Finance Ministry, they do detail the extent of the damages to both the offices of the newspapers owned by Cami Baykurt and the printing house owned by Afife. In physical damage to the two properties, including the destruction of various machines, fixtures and furniture, in the two buildings totaled 108,140.75 Turkish Liras and the combined losses from work stoppage and compensation totaled 60,823 Turkish Liras.³⁶⁴ These were significant sums of money, which likely accounted in part for the loss of livelihood not just for the Baykurt's but also the staff of each newspaper. No such requests exist on behalf of the Sertels or other businesses affected by the riot, but considering that Tan Press resided in a much larger building – it was a more widely distributed paper than either *La Turquie* or *Yeni Dünya* and housed more expensive printing machines – we might be able to speculate that the losses sustained by the Sertels were somewhat larger than that of the Baykurts.

These scant documents raise more questions than answers about the state's role in the Tan Riots. It is clear from the Interior Ministry's report that the Martial Law Administration and

³⁶³ BCA Fon: 490 1 0 0 [Political Parties, Republican People's Party] Box 728 Folder 495 Series 1. Kemal Karpat, referenced earlier as an eye witness to the riot, received the same subsidy.

³⁶⁴ BCA Fon: 30 10 0 0 [Prime Ministry] Box 85 Folder 563 Series 10 [Cami Baykurt] and 11 [Afife Baykurt]

the Police were, at the very least, sympathetic to the rioters. That those named as organizers of the riot ultimately faced no retribution, and that the Baykurt's request to be reimbursed was denied suggests that the legal system in place at the time held a similar sympathy. Yet, no documents in the archive point to the higher levels of the CHP administration, either President İnönü or Prime Minister Saraçoğlu, as having any direct involvement in the conduct of the riot. Absent a fuller opening of the archives at the Interior Ministry, it is unlikely we will get a fuller understanding of the role of the state in these events, at least by their own account. It is unclear whether the disposition to favor the demonstrators on the part of the Martial Law Administration was shared widely by members of the CHP or the Prime Ministry.

Aside from the government records, we do have the recorded memories of Kazım Alöç, the lead prosecutor for the Martial Law Administration, who recorded a series of memories regarding various trials of the forties and fifties – including his prosecution of the Sertels and the Pan-Türkist groups, the topic of the next chapter – in 1967, which have recently been republished. Alöç wrote that the Martial Law commander did not want to disrupt the protests earlier on because they did not want to “enter a nest of knowledge” (*ilim yuvasına girmek*), but Alöç wondered why they waited as long as they did to suppress the riot as it became violent. Alöç then mentions that Ali İhsan Göğüş and Yaşar Çimen, who he then identified as a bureaucrat at the İş Bankası's Eminönü branch, were taken into custody along with five others, whose names he could not remember.³⁶⁵ Sometime later, Alöç remembers going to the Istanbul Police Bureau to check on those who had been detained. While he was meeting with the director, Ahmet Demir, he noticed the detainees were in the next room with the CHP inspector, Alaattin Tiritioğlu, who seemed to be obliging to the protesters, even offering them cigarettes. Alöç then asked the

³⁶⁵ Later on, he says eight people were taken into custody. Kâzım Alöç, “İfşa Ediyorum: Türkiye’de Komünizm ve Irkçılık” in Rasih Nuri İleri ed., *Kırklı Yıllar – 5* (İstanbul: TUSTAV, 2006), 4-6

director whether he was concerned about the appearance of familiarity between the CHP inspector and the protestors, given the gossip he had heard which was harming the authority of the Martial Law Administration. The director responded, “You’re right... however, we’ve reached a fait accompli” (*lâkin bir emrivaki ile karşılaştık*).

The American Consular Perspective

I will now turn to a view of the situation based on documents in the US Archives from the Istanbul consulate and the Ankara Embassy. The story from these documents is vital to the story of the Tan Riot for several reasons. First, and perhaps most obvious, the United States had a vested interest in drawing Turkey into its orbit and preventing the spread of communism, and therefore its consulate took a keen interest in the internal political happenings of Turkey, especially at the dawn of the multi-party period, which could be seen as a potential opening for socialist or communist elements in the Turkish public sphere. Secondly, in tandem with the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the consulates were extraordinarily well-connected to every level of the Turkish government and society, including politicians, journalists like the Sertels, and even the Turkish secret police. As such, there are materials from interviews conducted by the US consulate available nowhere else, as well as translations of documents whose originals have either since been destroyed or exist in folios of the Turkish archives that are not yet open to the public. Lastly, it is important to understand the manner in which the United States assessed communist and anti-communist activity in Turkey because it shows us exactly how these two allies saw each other on ideological grounds, and the extent to which fighting communism in Turkey was a joint project.

There are only a few documents that had come to the US consulate through the Turkish secret police that relate to the Tan Riot, but they provide significant insight into the management

of the events by the Martial Law Administration and the government as a whole. The first is the prominent place given to Zekeriya Sertel in a memorandum translated by OSS from the Turkish secret police on Communist activities in Turkey. The memorandum, which was obtained by the Ankara Embassy on October 9, 1945 and forwarded to attaché Richard Gnade and Ambassador Edwin C. Wilson, singles out *Tan* as one of the few newspapers to have successfully survived as a proponent of the communist agenda despite the heavy restrictions of the Turkish censors. Halil Lütfü Dördüncü, a founder of the newspaper along with the Sertels, is described as “a half-ignorant man, whose ambition for earning money is boundless” and the newspaper’s policy “resembles that of the German propaganda system.”³⁶⁶ The report identifies three main tactics in *Tan*’s supposedly devious propaganda: first to cause a fall out with the government by exaggerating every small grievance and taking an analysis that “supposedly inclines towards the doctrines of Roosevelt but actually almost always towards Marx;” second, by espousing a worldview that is inherently revolutionary and consistent throughout all of the articles, even by placing supposedly Marxist terminology into the paper’s crossword puzzles so that “the definition of Socialism, mostly Marxism, [is put] in terms that even children and women can understand;” lastly by identifying prominent Marxists outside of Turkey and from history in order to teach its readers about the success of Marxism worldwide.³⁶⁷

Declassified confidential files from the Ankara Embassy reveal that the US delegation anticipated an increasing anti-Soviet feeling amongst the citizens of Istanbul, and likely saw the Tan Riot at the culmination of an anti-communist movement that was swelling as World War II came to a close. As early as May 1945, the Chargé d’Affaires in Ankara, E.L. Packer, had been in

³⁶⁶ United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Ankara Embassy General Records 1936-1963 RG 84/HMS: UD 3287/Box 92/800.b. Despite the pejorative description of Dördüncü, by all accounts the Sertels were in fact the main editorial engines behind *Tan*.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

contact with the office of the Secretary of State regarding the ideological position of Turkish informants to the US Consulate in Istanbul relative to the growing rivalry amidst the then-victorious Allied Powers. Packer explained in his report that the “average Turk regards the Russian... as a hereditary enemy” and that “although all through the war there have been a number of Turkish newspapers labeled “pro-Allied” their pro-Allied sentiments extend (with the possible exception of *Tan*) to the United States and Great Britain but not to Russia.”³⁶⁸ And so as early as May 1945, the US delegation was aware that anti-communist sentiment in the press might be directed specifically at *Tan*.

A further report relayed to the state department offices in Washington, DC expands on the perspective of the US delegation on *Tan* as an intellectual enterprise. A memorandum of conversation between John Evarts Horner, then Third Secretary of the Ankara Embassy, and Frank O’Brien, an Associated Press Correspondent and husband of Sabiha and Zekeriya’s eldest daughter Sevim, characterized *Tan* as a “leftist Pro-Allied and Anti-Nazi newspaper [that] made its chief appeal to the intellectual class.”³⁶⁹ The memorandum also characterizes Zekeriya Sertel as “the most Americanized in manner of all editors, and comes closest to expressing the reactions of a normal American,” since they had both studied at Columbia a few decades earlier and Zekeriya had visited the US as a guest of the Office of War Information in 1942.³⁷⁰

Naturally, the US diplomatic mission took a great interest in the formation of the Democrat Party, and went to great lengths to gather information on where the various potential leaders might fall in terms of ideology, and relationship with the Soviet Union. In a letter on this subject sent from Ambassador Wilson to the Secretary of State two days prior to the riot, Wilson indicated that, according to unnamed Turkish sources, Bayar’s announcement of his intentions to

³⁶⁸ NARA Classified General Records, Ankara 1936-1958 RG: 84/HMS: UD: 3288/Box 13/800

³⁶⁹ Ibid, “Memorandum of Conversation” 20 February 1945

³⁷⁰ Ibid

lead a new Democrat Party was directly precipitated by *Görüşler*'s announcement that he would write for them. Wilson also noted that according to the French language daily *Istanbul*, on the evening after the riot subsided, Bayar was summoned to İnönü's residence for a long conversation followed by dinner, which was perceived as an apparent sign of friendship given "the strong animosity the President is understood to have harbored toward the ex-Prime Minister."³⁷¹

In addition to a more specific assessment of the ideological factors at play, the consular archives give us a number of details of the day of the riot that are quite a bit more specific than what any of the memoirs are able to give. A cable sent to the Secretary of State, the recently appointed James F. Byrnes, from Ambassador Wilson on the day of the riot reported the damage done to the presses and bookstores, noting that the policies of each had been "pro-Soviet" and that the crowd had forced establishments to display Turkish flags and scrawled "down with communists" in chalk against streetcars and walls along the path of the protest.³⁷² Another cable sent at 5 p.m. tells us that the assembly at Istanbul University described by Birgit occurred at around 10 a.m., proceeding from there to *Tan*, then a Russian bookstore and finally to the offices of *La Turquie*, reporting that "all three of which seem to be completely wrecked." According to this cable, the riot was over by 12:30 p.m. and estimates the size of the crowd from 2,500 to 3,000, though some estimates were reportedly as high as 10,000.³⁷³ The critical details here relate to the suspicion on behalf of the American delegation as to what extent the sitting government or the police may have had in the riot. The cable asserted that Consul General Macatee had "the impression police displayed little energy in dispersing the crowd other than to keep it away from

³⁷¹ US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 13 (Wilson to Secretary of State December 6, 1945)

³⁷² NARA RG 84/HMS: UD 3287/Box 92/800.b

³⁷³ Ibid. The estimate of 2,500-3,000 came directly from Istanbul's Consul General Robert Macatee. A later telegram relaying the coverage of the event in the Soviet organ *Izvestia* suggested that estimates ranged on the day of the event as high as 20,000, but eventually settled, by way of the semi-official Anadolu Ajansi (Anatolian Agency), on 2,000.

the Soviet Consulate General which was protected in force. He saw no outward evidence that *agents provocateurs* were behind the action.”³⁷⁴

A separate cable, which is untitled, gives further details, although it incorrectly states the date of the riot at December 5, about the behavior of the police and the organization of the riot. The cable corroborates Zekeriya Sertel’s account to a degree, relaying that they were warned about the riot both by police officials and friends who worked at Istanbul University. It also states that police went to the offices of *Tan* and *La Turquie* prior to the arrival of the crowds to evacuate any workers on the premises, according to the report “these precautions were taken for the purpose of avoiding bloodshed. Everything was well organized and nothing was done spur of the moment. The Stambul Police, the Office of Martial Law, the political authorities, and the local section of the People’s Party were all in full accord.” It proceeds to describe the organization of the students from Istanbul University as a “TOUR of demonstrations” across the city with very specific destinations, during which they were handed pictures of Atatürk, İsmet İnönü, Turkish flags and signs, some of which read: “We will not surrender to anyone,” “Nobody will be allowed to be allowed to breathe freely through the Straits,” and “We will not permit our country to become the theater of Civil War as the case with our Brothers in Spain.” The report also noted that the crowd cheered wildly as they passed the British Embassy, and that in addition to the police presence guarding the Soviet Embassy were, “Major Raghıb³⁷⁵, and the two Assistant Directors of the Police, Tefvik and Said.” The report offers two explanations for the riot that were apparent in “local Turkish circles” including the complete quashing of any possible communist movement by the destruction of press organs sympathetic with the Soviets and to issue a warning to all new opposition parties who might threaten the hold the CHP had on political power. The

³⁷⁴ Ibid

³⁷⁵ “Major Raghıb” is likely Recep Peker, who was previously Director of the Interior Ministry, and would go on to serve as Prime Minister by August 1946.

report also suggests that part of the reason for targeting these newspapers was a new sense of hesitation towards the suspension of newspapers following Turkey's signing of the Atlantic Charter and joining the United Nations. It also suggested that Bayar's invitation to dine with İnönü was intended to smooth over any bad feelings that may have resulted from the demonstrations.³⁷⁶

This evidence suggests that the only interest the government had in managing this affair was to protect against the possibility of international incident, and bloodshed against prominent members of the leftist intelligentsia, which would likely also stoke a stronger reaction from the Soviets. The level of coordination between various authorities, and the apparent speed with which the organizers of the demonstration worked in this instance is remarkable, and suggests that there must have been at least some coordination between government authorities and those in charge of leading the riot.

The US delegation assessed further possible causes of the riot in the final cable to the Secretary of State at 9 p.m. that day. The six possible explanations included existential worries over Soviet designs on Turkey and areas of the Middle East generally, the generally "pro-Soviet" line of the newspapers being attacked – especially that of *Görüşler* in which "unauthorized use was made of names of highly respected oppositionists such as Celal Bayar" – and the generally nationalistic character of Turkish youth, which had been fanned by recent editorials by Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Ahmet Emin Yalman and others in papers such as *Tanin*, *Tasvir*, and *Vatan*. In the cable, Wilson points out the irony that the very article read aloud to students at Istanbul University, written by Yalçın, stressed non-violent tactics in defending Turkey against the

³⁷⁶ US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 13 (Secret Report December 5, 1945)

encroaching Soviet fifth column, which leads him to conclude, rightly, that “there are of course ugly possibilities in [sic] situation if Soviet Government wishes to exploit them.”³⁷⁷

Sure enough, a cable sent to the Ankara embassy from Moscow two days following the riot detailed the response to the event in *Pravda*. The Soviet press organ published a headline regarding “Fascist rowdyism in Istanbul” proclaiming that the “character of the demonstration indicated that it had been prepared in advance by authorities... destroyed quarters and presses of democratic papers... beat members of their staffs and committed other fascist hooliganisms.”³⁷⁸ This report is the only one to speak of physical violence carried out against the staff of either newspaper. It concludes with a snide reaction to the Turkish reporting on the event, asserting that officials wanted to “depict these outrages as manifestations of some sort of ‘democracy’” and that the Istanbul police chief described the event as a “patriotic demonstration.”³⁷⁹ A further report from the Moscow Embassy on December 13 reported on elevated rhetoric against the Turkish state and organizers of the riot in *Pravda*, which declared the event a “pogrom” and comparing the riot to similar events organized by Hitler, stating the “world well remembers analogous incidents in other countries also accompanied by smashing of democratic establishments and book burning.”³⁸⁰

The American archives also chronicle some of the Turkish reaction to the Tan riot, including a transcript of a press conference given by Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu the following day. While the Prime Minister’s speech began with an overview of the ongoing negotiations over the administration of the Straits, his remarks on internal affairs reflected concerns over the review of Turkey’s press laws. He referenced a prior concern of his that

³⁷⁷ NARA RG 84/HMS: UD 3287/Box 92/800.b

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

although he aimed at making Article 50 of the Press Law more flexible, “obstacles to this may come from journalists themselves,” and that he had since witnessed that “publications directed against the linguistic revolution, against the affairs aiming to purify the Turkish language, violence, anger and indignation prevail instead of moderation and logic...”³⁸¹ Saraçoğlu then proceeded to denounce a recent report in *Tan*, authored by Zekeriya Sertel, regarding a rumored investigation into secret foreign bank accounts held by cabinet ministers and other elites in the Republican People’s Party, perhaps including the future head of the Democrat Party, Celal Bayar.³⁸²

The American archives reveal a variety of viewpoints and positions on the Sertels, *Tan*, and the demonstrators, and it is obvious that the staff of the Istanbul Consulate and Ankara Embassy were trying to balance concerns about Soviet encroachment in Turkey and the attacks on freedom of the press. They also point towards similar attitudes amongst the leaders of the CHP, who seemed to be more concerned with protecting the DP against the impression that they might be communist than protecting the press. What this position amounts to is that despite knowing well that the Sertels were loyal to the regime, the CHP elite felt they got what was coming to them. While attitudes within the Embassy and Consulates varied on the Sertels, and indeed they often relied on Zekeriya and his son-in-law for information, the fact that the Sertels’

³⁸¹ NARA RG 84/HMS: UD 3287/Box 92/800.2. It should be noted that this transcript as it stands in the archives is in fact a translation from the French version of the report that was delivered by the semi-official Turkish press agency Anadolu Ajansı, as such some of the diction and translation here may be unreliable or at least obscured. An examination of the Turkish version would, for example, reveal whether Saraçoğlu was referring directly to attacks on the earlier Kemalist script reform [*harf inkilâbı* or *harf devrimi*] or more generally to language reforms of the later Kemalist period or even such reforms as İnönü’s efforts to change the Islamic call to prayer [*ezan*] into Turkish.

³⁸² Ibid

application for asylum in the wake of the riot was denied demonstrates that the American position was ultimately of accord with that of the CHP.³⁸³

A Transition to Post-Kemalism? The Tan Olayı and State Ideology

The period from 1945 to 1950 can be seen as the last, and most successful stage in a series of Kemalist experiments in electoral democracy. While Kemalism as an ideology certainly remained a potent, and often dominant, political force in Turkey for decades after the CHP's defeat in 1950, it is important to reflect on this period as a point of transition for Kemalism as an ideology, and the role that the Tan Olayı and other similar instances of mass violence played in said transition. Taha Parla and Andrew Davison have provided some helpful tools of analysis in their study of Kemalist ideology as part of the corporatist "third way" tradition, particularly in regards to their strategies in elections and towards opposition parties.³⁸⁴ Their study highlights the difficulty faced by many scholars of attempting to square Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's state's varieties of state-driven economy, laicism and positivistic nationalism with the grander ideologies driving the global political situation in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in instances when ideological affinities between one or the other superpower, as with Turkish-Soviet cases before the Montreux convention or Turkish-American cases following the close of World War II, are buttressed by one or the other form of realpolitik.

The question of why the generation of political elites that ran the country following the death of Atatürk initiated the transition to a multiparty system remains. Additionally, if we are to follow Parla and Davison's analysis, are we able to conceive of this transition within the same

³⁸³ NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 11/300.5 This folder contains documents pertaining to the Sertels' application for asylum. Korkmaz Alemdar has gone into further depth on the issue of the asylum application in "Tan Olayı ve Zekeriya Sertel'in ABD'ye İltica Girişimi" in Fusun Özbilgen, ed., *Hıfzı Topuz'a Armağan Kitabı: İletişimin Devrim Yılları* (Istanbul: Hiperlink Yayınları, 2014), 19-52

³⁸⁴ Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*

ideological framework of corporatism? There are a few different possible explanations available here. First, it is clearly evident that as World War II progressed, the İnönü regime had much less success containing or coopting its ideological opponents than had his predecessor. In truth, the ideological convictions of these cultural elites, like the Sertels or Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, had become more energized and pointed in the midst of the global conflagration, and their constant agitation exerted occasional pressure on Turkish diplomatic efforts to stave off encroachment from Russia and Germany.³⁸⁵ Whereas during the reign of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, geopolitical pressures such as those that İnönü faced were less existent and ideological opposition from leftist, liberal or fascist corners could usually be dealt with in less direct ways.³⁸⁶ From this vantage point, the onset of true multiparty politics in Turkey following the close of World War II could be seen as an attempt to let off the steam, so to speak, that had been building as ideological contention on behalf of competing ideologies throughout the war, all while ensuring that the new party itself would have a fairly limited ideological scope by violently excising elite elements that might be sympathetic with communism. In this view, Parla and Davison's articulation of Kemalist corporatism coheres, but perhaps a bit weaker, since the two parties were at least initially two sides of the same coin, much like they had been during the Liberal Republican Party experiment in 1930 – and indeed the Democrat Party had drawn from some of the same figures and power bases as had the SCF.

A second possible explanation would be that the geopolitical pressures, as perceived by İnönü, would demand that Turkey become a multiparty democracy in order to adhere to the still-

³⁸⁵ See İşçi, "Russophobic Neutrality," 203-4.

³⁸⁶ This reality accounts in part for the perception of Kemalism as a "flexible" ideology, not only did it actively incorporate elements from other modernist ideologies, but it allowed for at least some ideological opposition that hewed closer to the likes of those sponsored by the United States, the USSR, Italy, France, Britain or Germany. The story of the influence of these geopolitical relationships on what Kemalism could "tolerate" is mostly absent from Parla and Davison's work, but scholars such as Hirst and İşçi have begun to lay the groundwork of this story from the perspective of Turkey's relationship with the Soviet Union.

nascent postwar international order. This opinion, as shown above, was held by at least some members of the American diplomatic mission who were convinced that the Atlantic Charter and formation of the United Nations would force a new set of normative democratic values onto its member nations. Turkey's position within the wartime global economy was a precarious one thanks to its neutrality, and it would become increasingly obvious over the course of the late 1940s that the postwar order could provide economic benefits if formerly neutral nations allied themselves closely with one of the two prevailing superpowers. Turkey's alliance with the ascendant United States made a natural fit in light of Turkey's deteriorated relationship with the USSR and the steep economic price it paid to be a "mobilized neutral", but in terms of ideology there was much to sort out. As many American consular documents throughout the course of the war indicate, the United States saw Turkey as a potential valuable ally in a postwar fight against communism, but was cautious to come to a conclusion as to where the nation stood on ideological grounds. The benefits of announcing a new Democrat Party and attendant elections in the wake of the war were many in this regard. While the American diplomatic mission viewed the creation of this system with some skepticism, it is fairly safe to say that the process overall was seen as a sign of Turkey's intent to adhere to the orbit of the United States going forward. Whether or how this game of perceptions factored into the role the government played in the Tan Riot is hard to assess at this particular moment, but it is clear that the ties between opposition ideologies and Turkey's friends and foes abroad were, for better or worse, stronger following events that persecuted those that supported, or appeared to support, such ideas.

CHAPTER SIX: Prosecuting Ideology: The Trials of the Pan-Turkists and the Leftists, and the Dawn of the Cold War 1944-1947

A series of trials carried out between 1944 and of 1947 against groups of intellectuals belonging to ultranationalist and leftist camps would drastically alter the political and intellectual landscape in Turkey as the nation moved into the multiparty era, and faced the new challenges of the Cold War environment. Coinciding roughly with Turkey's deliberate shift towards the Allied powers after the Soviet victory at Stalingrad – Turkey would halt trade with Germany in April 1944, break off relations in August, and formally enter the war in February 1945 – and the multiparty parliamentary elections in July 1946 – in which the newly formed Democrat Party would win 64 of 465 seats – these trials greatly impacted the place of two sets of opposition voices in Turkish politics that had been growing in prominence and popularity beginning the mid-1930s, and which had only accelerated over the course of World War II. This chapter examines the archival, press, and memoir accounts of the prosecution of Pan-Turkist³⁸⁷ figures including

³⁸⁷ I use Pan-Turkist as an umbrella term that encompasses some finely distinguished nationalist ideologies amongst the defendants. This includes more racialized ideologies like racism-Turanism (*ırkçılık-Turancılık*), but also less racialized forms of ethnic irredentism. For helpful discussions of the fissures in the Pan-Turkist movement, see Jacob M. Landau, *Pan Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995 [1981]) and Umut Üzer, *An Intellectual History of Turkish Nationalism*. In those works and others, the issue of the Pan-Turkist trials has received quite a bit of scholastic attention since excerpts of the proceedings, some press materials, memoirs, and the published indictment, these works are cited throughout this article, but a more comprehensive consideration of the proceedings has only recently been made possible by the publication of much more extensive documents by followers of one of the defendants – Nihal Atsız – including the investigative reports and appeals decisions, published in Hayri Yıldırım's two volumes, *Son Türkçü Atsız* (Istanbul: Togan Yayınları, 2013) and *3 Mayıs 1944 Olayı ve İrkçılık Turancılık Davası* (Istanbul: Togan Yayınları, 2015), and the nearly complete testimony and questioning of every defendant, published in Yavuz Bülent Bakiler, *1944-1945 İrkçılık-Turancılık Davasında Sorgular, Savunmalar*, all of which are still unavailable to researchers who might inquire after them in the archives of the Justice Ministry. The persistent interest in these figures, and the recent publication of these documents, suggest the events discussed here have been formative ones in the memory and mindset of nationalist movements in the present day. Similarly, the recent republication of the Sertel memoirs and the transcript of their defense statements and charges – the first republication of the latter in seventy years – signals a renewed interest in the persecution of leftist figures in the ear of transition to multiparty politics.

Nihal Atsız, Reha Oğuz Türkkan, and Zeki Velidi Togan, which began in 1944 and carried on through their ultimate appeal in 1946 and retrial in 1947, and the 1946 trial of Halil Lütfü Dördüncü, Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel – the owner and editors of *Tan* – who would be convicted in March 1946 of defaming the republic and members of the Grand National Assembly, but would win an appeal that fall.

The issues at stake in each of these political trials demonstrate the confluence of the geopolitical shifts occurring near the end of World War II and shortly thereafter with the transition to multiparty politics in Turkey that was occurring at the same time. In the previous chapter I detailed how one violent event – the *Tan* riot of December 4, 1945 – served to set up ideological boundaries for acceptable politics in Turkey’s new multiparty environment, and to shape an image of Turkey as an anti-communist power at a time when protection against Russian demands on Turkish territory could only be provided by a friendship with the Anglo-American world. In this chapter, I demonstrate how legal apparatuses were used towards very similar ends, and with lasting effects on the ability of certain opposition figures to make legitimate political claims in the multiparty era.

I have detailed over the last two chapters some aspects of one of the two overarching rationalizations for these trials – ideological polarization and violent protests. In detailing the development of racial discourse from the 1930s and 1940s, and the toxic anti-communism that led to the *Tan* Riot on December 4, 1945, we begin to see how intellectual camps grew around these two poles in an organic exchange of ideas over how to define “Turkishness” and how the resulting polarization accelerated drastically over the course of World War II. To the extent that the environment had become too toxic for these ideological extremes to weather, it was because of a second factor – the accusation of foreign interference or treason that had become a motif of the criticism levelled at both these camps from the Kemalist and liberal centers by the end of the

War. To the extent that Nihal Atsız and his colleagues were considered dangerous by the İnönü government, it was because they were credibly charged with working for the German Embassy, and likewise, attacks against the Sertels reached their violent apex only after the insinuation that *Tan* had been coordinating their editorial line with *Pravda* and *Isvetsia*. Such accusations have become commonplace during political crises in Turkey, and certainly these were not the first individuals to suffer them, but because the defendants in each case had histories that entwined them with the founding moments of the Turkish Republic, and because their ideas developed so organically in relationship to the political tides of Kemalism, this chapter will first assess the degree to which these accusations might have been true in the wartime environment of the 1940s before moving on to the trials themselves, and their immediate aftermath.

The timing of these trials, in addition to the domestic and foreign political consequences, provides a unique opportunity to explore how legal suppression of regime opponents, on the basis of anti-communist or anti-fascist fears, during the height of World War II came to be viewed as an important aspect of Turkey's transition to multiparty democracy. It helps us locate, in this space between the emerging poles of the Cold War, the tensions and contradictions in the relationship between democratization and the fight against various sorts of radicalism.³⁸⁸ Through the publicity surrounding the trial, and the subsequent lionization of the defendants in each case, the trials served to turn each of the defendants into personifications of the ideologies they supposedly represented, as well as Turkish stand-ins for conspiracies of a German or Russian

³⁸⁸ We should also see these cases in comparison to similar trials along the border of the Soviet Union, including cases like that of József Mindszenty who was tried for collaborating with American intelligence in the People's Court in the People's Republic of Hungary in 1949. See István Rév, "The Suggestion" *Representations* 80, no. 1 [2002], 62-98. Likewise, in the Turkish context, these trials form part of the pre-history of intense clashes between leftists and pan-Turkist nationalists in the 1960s and 1970s, and, in Zekeriya Sertel, one survivor of the infamous *İstiklal Mahkemeleri* [Independence Tribunals] of the 1920s. See Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey* (Leiden, 1974), and Gregory A. Burris, "The Other from within: Pan-Turkist mythmaking and the expulsion of the Turkish left" *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 4 [2007], 611-624.

fifth column, real or imagined. Despite the ultimate victories for each of the defendants on appeals, the prosecution severely damaged the immediate political potential of the Pan-Turkists, but laid some important ideological groundwork for the revival of their movement after the 1960 coup d'état. Continued suppression of leftist activities following the Sertels' victory in appeals court, however, virtually ended the public careers of the Sertels, who found little freedom in a financially and psychically toxic environment for leftists and ultimately fled to the Eastern Bloc in 1950, ending their storied press careers in Turkey that had begun roughly four decades prior.

This chapter, in analyzing the court documents of these trials, also takes the opportunity to examine how the court and the state negotiated the ideological valences of each trial differently, and what rhetorical and political strategies were deployed by the defendants. In both these cases it is clear that the trials meet the standard of Otto Kirchheimer's fourth level of political trial – what he calls “the artificially created political offense.”³⁸⁹ Such cases normally appear as perjury or libel suits, and present a particular choice to the defendant: whether or not, or to what extent, is it necessary to accept the premises of the suit, and the legal system that underpins it.³⁹⁰ The difference in the way the two sets of defendants answered this question highlights the ways these two ideological camps related to the state in this transitional period. In a time when the government helped create a toxic environment for leftism, out of a fear of Russian encroachment on Turkish territory, the Sertels condemned the premises of the suit against them, without offering any defense or articulation of their ideological preferences. Ultimately, they won

³⁸⁹ Otto Kirchheimer, “Politics and Justice” in Frederic S. Burin and Kurt L. Shell, eds., *Politics, Law, and Social Change: Selected Essays of Otto Kirchheimer* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969 [1955]), 420.

³⁹⁰ The Sertel trial more immediately fit the nature of a libel suit, as I will show. The Pan-Turkists, though charged with forming a secret society intent on overthrowing the government and tried under the martial law administration, were nonetheless brought to trial on a case that rested on a particular characterization of their political beliefs, as the evidence from their testimony and questioning reveals. For this reason, I believe Kirchheimer's fourth level description is still apt.

on appeal in shorter order and with less pain than the Pan-Turkists, but their movement sustained continued repression throughout the 1940s, to the point that they left the country in exile in 1950.³⁹¹ The Pan-Turkist trial was far more contentious, but, as this chapter will show, this trial was fundamentally different in that it directly concerned the acceptability of Pan-Turkism and racist ideologies to the Turkish state and society. The defenses, questioning, investigation, and appeal ended in a decision that effectively declared irredentist ethno-nationalism suitable for the multiparty environment – since Nazi Germany no longer proved, in 1946 and 1947, the threat that it had at the time of their arrest in May 1944.

This chapter will first take an opportunity to explore some aspects of the relationship between foreign agencies and Turkish press figures. Many of the accusations and anxieties about the figures on trial in the war years centered on cooperation with foreign regimes, my examination shows that indeed nearly every major belligerent was involved to one extent or another with the Turkish press during the war, but that those relationships were more diverse, and different than many openly suspected. The chapter then turns to discuss the first major accusation against the Pan-Turkists – a pamphlet published by the Turkish Communist Party detailing the existence of a German fifth column in Turkey that caused a stir in Parliament, and precipitated some of the investigations that would result in the arrest of the Pan-Turkists. Before examining documents from each of the trials, the chapter also examines the press reactions to the arrests of the Pan-Turkist group in May 1944, a rare moment of universal accord across ideological camps in the press.

The Foreign Elements of Turkish Ideological Polarization

³⁹¹ On the fears of Russian encroachment in this period see Onur İşçi, “Russophobic Neutrality”.

Naturally, the backdrop for the intensifying ideological divides in the Turkish public sphere was the deterioration of the post-WWI European order and the global conflagration of the 1940s.³⁹² Turkey's neutrality in the conflict, the reasons behind it, and the manner in which it was maintained has an almost outsized place in the historiography of this period, particularly given the facts that until quite recently Turkish archival material on this subject in the Prime Ministry's Republican archive had been closed, and as of this writing the archives of the Turkish Foreign Ministry have yet to open.³⁹³ While there are serious and important disagreements over many aspects of Turkey's neutrality in the scholarship, one overarching theme of these works is that Turkey's overlapping diplomatic partnerships in this time were not driven by any ideological affinity between President İnönü's upper echelon or diplomatic corps and their counterparts in Russia, Germany, Britain, or the United States. Many of the authors working on this subject go to great lengths to stress this point in order to focus on the truly skillful diplomatic maneuvering that saved Turkey from what might have been a disastrous defensive campaign against either or both of the Axis or Allied powers.³⁹⁴ What this allergy to addressing ideology elides is that although Turkey's neutrality was not based on ideological motivations of the elite actors, Turkey's oscillation over the course of the war between the various great powers played itself out in the public sphere in distinctly ideological terms. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, this occurred because the state expressed a sincere concern that an overabundant sympathy in the

³⁹² Onur İşçi has argued convincingly that a restoration of this post-WWI order, in the form of a renewed "Brest-Litovsk" alignment brought about by a German victory over the USSR, followed closely by an Allied victory over Germany, was the desired outcome of the Turkish foreign policy establishment and provided the strategic framework for Turkey's narrowly won neutrality. See İşçi, "Russophobic Neutrality".

³⁹³ İşçi, "Russophobic Neutrality", Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy in World War II: An Active Neutrality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Frank G. Weber, *The Evasive Neutral: Germany, Britain and the Quest for a Turkish Alliance in the Second World War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979), Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, Baskın Oran, ed., *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006: Facts and Analyses with Documents* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010).

³⁹⁴ Deringil and Weber in particular, although even İşçi's more detailed work veers away from ideological questions at certain key points.

press and public sphere towards one or the other belligerent would hinder their negotiations with both camps, and thus closed, suspended, imprisoned, and censored publications that were perceived to be at cross purposes with the goal of neutrality.³⁹⁵ The second reason is that the foreign powers themselves, especially Germany and the United States, played very active roles in the Turkish press throughout the course of the war. The involvement of foreign governments in shaping the Turkish press has long been a subject of intrigue and speculation in the scholarship on Turkey in WWII, but very little of it has been backed up with hard, archival evidence.³⁹⁶

When archival evidence is brought into the picture, the relationship between the state sponsors of these polarizing ideologies and the intellectuals that were sympathetic to them, and responsible for their propagation in the Turkish public sphere, is revealed to be much more complicated than the scholarship traditionally suggests.³⁹⁷ In reading the classical scholarship on this period, one could be forgiven for assuming that many of the most prominent intellectuals of this time were totally given over to demagoguery and acting as agents of foreign governments; Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel are often portrayed as being fellow travelers who were in lockstep with the Comintern by the 1940s, major journalists like Yunus Nadi and Necmettin Sadak, the proprietors of *Cumhuriyet* and *Akşam* respectively, are frequently portrayed as Nazi sympathizers, and Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın and Ahmet Emin Yalman, then of *Tanin* and *Vatan*, are often seen as stalwart liberals and defenders of the Anglo-American alliance. These depictions, while founded in some truths about the stances each of these figures took publicly, belie two key points that complicate the suggested relationship between each figure and foreign powers. First,

³⁹⁵ The rate at which newspapers were closed in this period might only have been matched by the immediate aftermath of the Takrir-i Sükün laws in 1925 or the height of the reign of Abdülhamid II. See, Cemil Koçak, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Türk Basını” *Tarih ve Toplum*, No. 35, 1988, 29-33.

³⁹⁶ Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, Deringil, *An Active Neutrality*

³⁹⁷ Of the classical scholarship on this period, Weisband is perhaps the most nuanced in this regard, John M. VanderLippe’s more recent work is also even handed. Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, VanderLippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy*

each of these figures were products of the same late-Ottoman and early republican intellectual environment and the associated cataclysms, and so while they remained ardent proponents of one or the other transnational ideological movement, they did so in specific relation to the Turkish national context and for the most part, by virtue of having survived a truly tumultuous and contentious intellectual period, remained committed to the Turkish national project, irrespective of their disagreements over the present direction the state was taking. Second, the two-dimensional portrait of ideology in Turkey at this point obscures the ways various foreign delegations interacted with these intellectuals, which, from the perspective of the foreign delegations, was premised more on successful intelligence gathering than it was effective propagandizing. Both these aspects are revealed through archival documents, as I will now demonstrate.

To illustrate the first point, I argue that while the racist-Turanian group of intellectuals remained vociferous critics of Mustafa Kemal, and presented an ideological front that was superficially simpatico with the kind of racist ideology espoused by the Nazis, their German counterparts did not find their espousal of a “Greater Turkestan” to be compatible with the aims of Nazism. Onur İşçi and others have pointed out that the extent to which the German legation in Istanbul attempted to engage the racist-Turanians, and other Pan-Turkist figures, they did so with the relatively limited goal of igniting a rebellion amongst Crimean Tatars against the Soviet Union.³⁹⁸ Since they were opponents of a regime that the Germans wished to sway into the Axis alliance, the racist-Turanians were held at arms-length for strategic reasons as well. But, as a translation of an interview with an unnamed interpreter for the German Embassy’s Press Section reveals, the Nazi ideologues in the German legation had little regard for Turks, who they themselves viewed as subhuman, even if they mimicked their own racist language. The

³⁹⁸ İşçi, “Russophobic Neutrality” 212-219.

interpreter says that the Press Section was indeed collecting copies of Turanian journals like *Orhun*, but for the most part they were interested only in translating articles relating to internal politics, Communism, and Turanism, and explicitly disinterested in articles about culture, science or history. As the interpreter states,

The reason why they [Press Officer Seiler and resident German journalists] laughed at these cultural and scientific articles was that they were completely without knowledge of the Orient which they considered to be an 'area populated by a lower race.' For all those named above sensation was the chief desire and not one of them had a deeper consciousness of the mentality of the Oriental countries... For that reason even the Propaganda Ministry was able to do such foolish things as to send among its propaganda material for distribution here a large package of magazines which bore the title 'The Sub-Human', among the subjects of which Jenghiz Khan was included along with Stalin. Upon a hint that the mention of Jenghiz Khan in this connection in Turkey would arouse criticism, widespread distribution of this magazine was given up... At any rate the propaganda which was prepared in Berlin for Turkey was based upon a lack of knowledge of the Orient and consisted only of boasts of the high capabilities of Germany in every area. If, for example, one looked at the newspapers in the 'Tataric' language which were printed in Germany and which came here through Herr Hempel for distribution, then one must remark that except for the great victories and the unbeatable leadership of Germany, nothing much was offered.³⁹⁹

Here we can see that in addition to the fact that it would have been strategically unwise for the German legation to press the Turanian issue within Turkey too hard, there simply was not a real ideological compatibility between the two groups, and the Germans showed no interest in supporting their efforts beyond their rather limited strategic ends. It is also telling that in the course of reviewing the development of racist-Turanian ideology through their press outlets, very little direct or explicit engagement with Nazi propaganda, symbolism, or inspiration is mentioned. The movement itself was homegrown, and for its own part espoused something like a fascist outlook, but never truly acted at the behest of the major global proponents of fascism.

³⁹⁹ Memorandum, September 4, 1944, Turkish Embassy Ankara Classified General Records US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 10. According to the memorandum, the interview was conducted in the last week of August 1944, at the request of an OSS contact in Ankara, and came under strict assurances that the information would not be revealed to Turkish officials.

While the German legation certainly held the Turanians at arm's length, that does not mean that they were disinterested in running a propaganda mission in the Turkish press. The same interview with the former interpreter reveals a great deal about the lengths the German legation went to propagandize to the Turkish public. He states that he had some knowledge of the Embassy's financial situation and that the budget for the Press Section included headings for "Turkey" and "Near East" that totaled roughly 26,000 Turkish liras per quarter and that those funds were consistently overdrawn.⁴⁰⁰ He also details a list of Istanbul newspapers that were directly underwritten by the German Embassy, which included a small Turkish publication named as "Turkish Trade Gazette" which was run by an unnamed former employee of Anadolu Ajansı, the French language newspaper *Beyoglu* which was previously handled by Italian interests but was later underwritten by the Germans, and, not surprisingly, Istanbul's only German language daily, the *Türkische Post*, whose proprietor Schafer received a total of 45,000 Turkish liras before he left the paper.⁴⁰¹ The biggest catches for the German legation, however, were Yunus Nadi (and his sons Nadir and Doğan), the owner of *Cumhuriyet*, and Necmettin Sadak, the owner of *Akşam*, two of the most widely read daily newspapers in Turkey. What should be made clear, however, is that money paid out to Nadi and Sadak was largely in the form of gifts and bribes and that the operations of either paper were not *directly* underwritten by the Germans. Nadi and Sadak were frequent guests at German-sponsored cocktail parties, the interpreter states that both were close friends of Seiler and had certainly received funds through the Embassy or the Consulate General. Additionally, he states that Sadak was likely also a friend of the Ambassador, Franz Von Papen,

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

and that the embassy had gifted him Cuban cigars worth 750 Swiss francs between March and July 1944.⁴⁰²

What remains unclear from these claims, however, is the degree to which the German legation was successful in convincing these papers to print material directly produced by the Embassy or their superiors in Berlin. In the case of *Cumhuriyet*, the paper certainly took a steady pro-Axis editorial line throughout the war, and many of their writers, notably Peyami Safa and Muharrem Feyzi Togay, were honestly sympathetic to their cause, but there remains no proof of stories being directly “planted” by the embassy in *Cumhuriyet*. In the case of Sadak and *Akşam*, it is more curious as *Akşam*’s editorial line was decidedly more even handed throughout the course of the war. Weisband’s book provides a revealing story in this regard, in which Sadak was called in front of the German Ambassador Von Papen to explain why he had failed to take a pro-Axis line – indeed he was even writing mildly anti-Axis editorials at the time. Sadak answered the accusation, “Rest assured, Mon Excellence, the Turkish public does not read my editorials. I spread the German point of view personally among my friends who are influential,” which garnered this response from Von Papen, “Herr Sadak, the Reich is not interested in this kind of

⁴⁰² Ibid, this also loosely corroborates accusations in Weisband’s book that suggest Nadi was provided printing paper for *Cumhuriyet* at a discounted rate by the German Embassy, as well as other luxury items, such a Mercedes automobile and expensive furs, that were provided to Sadak. Weisband had two sources for these accusations, the first was personal interviews conducted with Ahmet Emin Yalman and Leo Hochstetter, a former field representative of the Office of War Information, in 1969, and the second was a memorandum found in the papers of the American Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt at the Library of Congress that was filed by Hochstetter to the OWI on September 6, 1944 which contained the testimony, dated September 2, 1944, of Fritz Fiala, the Chief of Transkontinent Press and a former agent of German intelligence who had defected in the previous months. Fiala’s accusations go well beyond that of the unnamed interpreter, suggesting *Cumhuriyet*, as well as *Tasvir-i Efkar* were given subsidies in the form of discounted printing paper and that Yunus and Nadir Nadi were engaged in substantial war profiteering operations. It should also be mentioned that Sadak was frequently working with the United States Embassy as an informant, though no evidence exists of him receiving funds or bribes from the Americans. Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1943-45*, 78-82, notes 28-31, 39. For evidence of relationship between Sadak and US Embassy, see G.H. Damon to Amb. Edwin C. Wilson, October 25, 1945 US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16.

corruption.”⁴⁰³ The irony of this story is that Sadak vastly underestimated his own influence in the public sphere. *Akşam* was one of the most widely read newspapers in Turkey, as anti-communism expressed in the Turkish press had the power to provoke strong reactions from the general public – most famously in the form of the riot that destroyed Tan Press on December 4, 1945, but similar types of demagoguery had helped buttress discriminatory policies against ethnic minorities, such as the infamous *Varlık Vergisi* (Wealth Tax), and would continue to do so for years to come.⁴⁰⁴

On the side of the socialists and communists, there is a somewhat different story to tell. To the extent that leftist Turks held any allegiance to the USSR and the Communist Party, their activities were largely kept underground in the late 1930s and the war years. By 1938, their most prominent intellectuals – Nazım Hikmet and Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, among others – were in prison, and their work was largely suppressed or banned, though underground circuits allowed for illicit copies of Nazım’s poems to circulate with ease. The communist intellectuals who managed to avoid prison had only a tenuous relationship with the Comintern. Though files relating to the Soviet Embassies in Turkey were not available for this study which would shed light on their relationship with Turkish intellectuals, the Soviets would intermittently advocate for imprisoned communists, and routinely spoke out against anti-communist sentiment in public.⁴⁰⁵ However,

⁴⁰³ Weisband, 81-82, note 39

⁴⁰⁴ According to a US State Department report, *Akşam*’s circulation figures in 1945 were between 15,000-20,000, roughly the same as *Tan*, and roughly five thousand copies fewer than *Cumhuriyet*. According to the same report, *Akşam*’s editorial line was considered to be “Government-center... favorably disposed toward the democracies. Fearful of Russian aims in the Balkans,” and its list of contributors included figures like Adnan and Halide Edib Adıvar, towering public intellectuals in their own right, who held no sympathy for Nazi ideology. Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, “Character and Composition of the Turkish Press (1939-1944)” January 8, 1945 US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16

⁴⁰⁵ There is a slight indication in the American archives that Soviet agents in Turkey did have some relationship with members of the Turkish press. A November 1945 correspondence between the Embassy and the Office of War Information (OWI) reports that rumors were being spread through Vedat Baykurt, owner of *La Turquie* one of the newspapers whose offices would be destroyed on December 4, that the Turkish Secret Police and British Intelligence were planning a *coup d’etat* against İnönü. The source for this report, named as Aslan Humbaracı (but

one of the war's belligerents did in fact have an ongoing relationship with major leftist figures in Turkey in this period – the United States.

The outlet for the United States legation, which included not only the embassy staff but the intelligence and propaganda arms like the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) as well, into the left and left-leaning intellectual community in Turkey was primarily through Zekeriya Sertel. On numerous occasions Sertel met with US officials – meetings that were often arranged through Sertel's son-in-law Frank O'Brien, who was the AP Press Attaché in Istanbul – to discuss internal happenings in Turkish politics and the press. Zekeriya and Sabiha were often vilified as Soviet stooges throughout the war, and ultimately those attacks would come to a head on December 4, 1945 when their newspaper operation was wrecked during an anti-communist riot. There is little evidence of any connection between the Soviet state and the Sertels, but despite being somewhat vocal about supporting the Soviet Union against Germany, Zekeriya was held in relatively high regard by the staff at the US embassy. On many occasions, and increasingly so towards the end of the war, *Tan* was described as “Pro-Ally” and “friendly” by US officials in internal correspondence of the Embassy and the Office of Strategic Services [OSS].⁴⁰⁶ In fact, the American Embassy was exceptionally well-connected across the Turkish political spectrum, having established ongoing relationships with a range of government figures, as well as liberal journalists like Ahmet Emin Yalman, and leftist ones like

in all likelihood, was Arslan Humbaracı, a noted go-between for Soviet Embassies in the Middle East), suggests that this rumor was being fed to Baykurt by the Soviet Embassy in order to “foment uncertainty among the uneducated masses.” G.H. Damon, the OWI representative is unsure whether Humbaracı was telling the truth or merely trying to discredit *La Turquie*, but concluded “either is possible, and I have no opinion on the matter.” G.H. Damon (OWI Istanbul) to John Evarts Horner (Ankara), November 6, 1945. Ankara Embassy Classified General Records, RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16. On Humbaracı's reputation see Riaz Ul Islam, “Review: *Middle East Indictment* by Arslan Humbaracı” *Pakistan Horizon* Vol. 13, No. 1, 1960, 82-85.
⁴⁰⁶ See Amb. Edwin C. Wilson to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes., “Report on Informational Activities: March and April 1945” June 21, 1945, Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, “Character and Composition of the Turkish Press (1939-1944)” January 8, 1945. Ankara Embassy Classified General Records US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16.

Burhan Belge.⁴⁰⁷ Their association with Yalman turned out to be a more poorly kept secret than their association Zekeriya Sertel, as accusations of being an “agent” of the United States surfaced about each in 1945.⁴⁰⁸

The Greatest Danger: The Gas on the Fire

Suspicion of a plot against the Turkish government emanating from Pan-Turanist and fascist circles began to rise in April 1943 with the publication of a brochure composed by members of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP) titled “The Greatest Danger: The Hidden Face of a Counter Movement Against the Turkish National Cause” (*En Büyük Tehlike: Milli Türk Davasına Aykırı Bir Cereyanın İçyüzü*) which was meant to detail the activities of clandestine, German-funded Turkist and Pan-Turanist political organizations and journals.⁴⁰⁹ According to a

⁴⁰⁷ Belge had kept the US Embassy abreast of his plans to make new publications in 1945. For their part, the Embassy staff believed Belge to be receiving a stipend from the Turkish Secret Police, and that he was generally a “poseur” without real political convictions.” See E.L. Packer (Charge d’Affaires) to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, “Recent Press developments, new newspapers to be published in Istanbul” September 3, 1945. Ankara Embassy Classified General Records US NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16

⁴⁰⁸ Yalman was accused openly of being a foreign agent in *Ulus* by Rahmi Apak, an MP from Tekirdağ verbally during a press conference in early September, and later in print on September 18 and 20, 1945, claims that Yalman vigorously denied in *Vatan* on September 11. Ambassador Wilson, for his part, stated in a report to Secretary of State Stettinius that “Members of this Mission in the past have been told by some Turks... that they believe Mr. Yalman receives a subsidy from the United States in return for his pro-American articles.” Ambassador Edwin Wilson to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, “Ahmet Emin Yalman, Editor of VATAN is accused of being a foreign agent” September 20, 1945. Ankara Embassy Classified General Records, RG 84 3288 Box 16

⁴⁰⁹ Faris Erkman and Suat Derviş, *Kırklı Yıllar – 1: En Büyük Tehlike, Niçin Sovyet Birliği Dostuyum* (Istanbul, TÜSTAV, 2002) [Originally published as *En Büyük Tehlike! Milli Türk Davasına Aykırı bir Cereyan İçyüzü...* (Istanbul, Ak-ün Matbaası, 1943)]. The brochure was published under the name Faris Erkman, a member of the TKP who would be given a three-year prison sentence for the publication of this report and who would die shortly thereafter from stomach cancer, but nearly all sources agree that Erkman was not the author of the text. While no definitive document exists naming the true authors, a report uncovered in a 1946 police raid of the home of long-time communist organizer Şefik Hüsni confirms that the brochure was published by the party but does not say who was involved in the writing, other sources have taken that to mean Hüsni was indeed the author, perhaps with some assistance from his colleague Reşat Fuat Baraner, but ultimately, no conclusive evidence exists for this claim. For a reprinting of

report by Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer), then a leader in the TKP, that was uncovered in a 1946 raid, the brochure was meant as part of a “systematic struggle against the racist fascist movement...” and that its publication would “awaken a hateful excitement amongst the University youth and it would extraordinarily increase our movement’s reputation amongst the youth.”⁴¹⁰ Following the publication, Hüsnü reports that the TKP funded several student groups that established a “Broad Front Against Fascism and Profiteering” but mentions they faced resistance from both racist propaganda outlets – most prominently *Çınaraltı* – and a generally sluggish response in parliament.

The brochure was first addressed in parliament on July 5, 1943 when the representative from Sinop, Cevdet Kerim İncedayı brought up the claims made in the brochure during a discussion on the passport law. İncedayı claimed to have read the brochure – he called it a letter (*mektup*) – and the accusations “of racist currents which wear the guise of Turkish patriotism and quasi-Turkish citizenship, and of imperialist movements against Turks outside of our borders...” but asserted that he knew “neither of this kind of movement nor this type of nationalist concept,” nor did he think they were “seriously fundamental and developed.”⁴¹¹ He followed with appeals to the unitary nature of the CHP’s program, and called on concerned deputies to explain the threats and accusations made by the brochure. In response, Foreign Minister Numan Menemencioğlu took the rostrum to lament, “[i]t is unfortunate that Turkey, who is protecting its condition of neutrality, cannot completely prevent a piece of propaganda from this or that path when it appears on the scene. The government should not hesitate to take powerful and immediate

Hüsnü’s report, see Fethi Tevetoğlu, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faâliyetler 1910-1960* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1967) 503-509, for an overview of the controversy and some tentative theories as to its authorship, see Hayri Yıldırım, *Son Türkçü Atsız* (Istanbul: Togan Yayıncılık, 2013) 348-369.

⁴¹⁰ As noted, this report is reprinted in Fethi Tevetoğlu, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faâliyetler*, 505-6

⁴¹¹ TBMM Tutanaklar 7. Dönem 4 Cilt Birleşim 44, July 5, 1943, 13-14

action against propaganda that does not comply with Turkish goals.”⁴¹² Suggesting both that the accusations of propaganda in *The Greatest Danger* as well as the publication of the brochure itself, would be investigated. This is instructive, as it demonstrates the connection between Turkey’s shifting neutrality and the management of the press. Menemencioğlu nonetheless felt compelled to articulate the difference between the “Turkishness” espoused by the CHP program and the supremacist irredentism of the groups identified in the brochure,

The program says that “The unity of the national language, culture and ideals are connected to the whole of the social and political organization of our citizenry.”

There it is friends, the motto for Turkey is right there and the honesty of Turkey’s politics is obvious to everyone. It is our Turkey’s only wish for the welfare and prosperity of the Turks that reside outside our borders. On this side, all of our politics, all of our Turkishness, are pertaining to Turks who enter this country through our borders and only them. (Bravo sounds).

You can find a description of our Turkish nation in the People’s Party program. Those who suggest with this or that intention of suggesting to us the thought of hatred of the Turkish nation or the connection with imperialism is a very unreasonable and overwrought mistake. We are Turks and we speak Turkish. However, you know well from me what I mean when we say this. For ages in this country there was a doomed situation where every type of blessing was deprived, every type of burden was increased, but living under the will of the nation from the perspective of a deep love for our Turkish economy, culture and ideal, we are called to make a most prosperous life for the Turkish nation and this is our Turkishness and our Turkism (Türklüğümüz ve Türkçülüğümüz) my friends. (Applause)⁴¹³

The dustup over *The Greatest Danger* would bring this conflict between the left and the Pan-Turkists into the spotlight by bringing it to the attention of the Assembly, and in particular to the Education Minister, Hasan Ali Yücel. Since many of the participants in this fight were employed as teachers and professors at grammar schools and universities across the country, having this debate reach the floor of the Assembly would prompt Yücel to try to reign in ideological fights within his ministry through a variety of tactics, including strongly worded memoranda, the suspension of several professors, and the prompting of the suit brought by Sabahattin Ali against

⁴¹² Ibid

⁴¹³ Ibid

Nihal Atsız that would ultimately trigger the demonstrations that preceded the mass arrests of the Pan Turkists.

The Pan-Turanist Trials 1944-1945

Arrest and Indictment

The mass trial of Pan-Turkists was precipitated by a protest against the faculty of Ankara University and Sabahattin Ali, a leftist novelist and professor, on May 3, 1944. Nihal Atsız had lost a libel suit with Ali, and organized much of the boisterous incident. Atsız and at least two dozen others were arrested on May 9 in Istanbul, which was still under Martial Law, based on a list prepared by Education Minister Hasan Ali Yücel, the precise number of arrests is unknown but the list which was published after the fact contained forty-seven names.⁴¹⁴ In September, twenty-eight people were brought to trial, largely charged with the formation of a secret society intent on overthrowing the government, but in the end, only ten of those were found guilty in a verdict delivered in February 1945. The guilty parties included Zeki Velidi Togan, Reha Oğuz Türkkan, Cihat Savaşfer, Nurullah Barıman, Necdet Sançar, Alparslan Türkeş, Dr. Fevzi Teretoğlu, Nihal Atsız, Cemal Oğuz Öcal, and Cebbar Şenel, and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from ten years (Togan) to nine months (Türkeş).

In reviewing the indictments, some of which were made public at the time, and records of the testimony that have been passed on to and published by Atsız's acolytes in the last few years we can see that the charges against this group hinged on their allegiance to a secret society intent

⁴¹⁴ Özdoğan, "The Case of Racism-Turanism" 108. The list of names and quotations from the report, supposedly compiled by the representative from the Justice Ministry in cooperation with the Interior Ministry's legal adviser and the Police Directorate is published in Hayri Yıldırım, *Son Türkçü Atsız* (İstanbul: Togan Yayınları, 2013), 408-9. Included in the list are a few names of nationalist regime opponents who are not normally associated with the racist-Turanist group, including Peyami Safa, Abdülkadir İnan, and Ziyaettin Fahri Fındıkoğlu.

on overthrowing the government. In this section, I will focus on these documents to demonstrate how the state used these trials to try to ascertain the ideological makeup of this group, and silence those who posed a political threat to CHP hegemony.

The indictments and final reports of the investigation were handed down on September 7, 1944 under the direction of the assistant prosecutor Kazım Alöç and Sâbit Noyan, a prosecutor from the Martial Law Administration. This report was published in that month's *Ayın Tarihi* (*Month's History*), a state-run publication, and totaled twenty-eight pages.⁴¹⁵ The primary charge against the group was the “attempting treacherous actions against the fatherland and the nation while forming a secret society with the aims of Racism and Turanism.”⁴¹⁶ The bulk of the evidence provided in the indictment was based on letters sent between the various members that were confiscated following their arrest.

The indictment identified a few different circles within which the prosecutors suspected treasonous activity to have occurred. The first centered around Zeki Velidi Togan, a former leader of revolutionary movements in Central Asia who had been living in Turkey since 1925 and who rose to prominence as a critic of the Turkish History Thesis. Togan was accused of rejecting Atatürk's conception of the Turkish nation, specifically the idea of a “bordered nation” (*hudutlandırılmış milliyeti*) in a confiscated letter sent to Reha Oğuz Türkkan and Cihat Savaşfer, urging them to not espouse a “quasi-Atatürkist” (*gûya Atatürkçü*) position in their journal *Bozkurt* as they positioned themselves against Nihal Atsız.⁴¹⁷ Additionally, it detailed how Togan made a trip to Germany at the outset of the Nazi campaign against the USSR in 1941 to meet with two Turkish representatives there, Nuri İman Karadağlı and Ahmet Karadağlı, with the intent to

⁴¹⁵ “İrkçılarla Turancıların Muhakemeleri hakkında İstanbul Örfi idare Komutanlığın ilk duruşmalarına ait raporu” *Ayın Tarihi*, September 1944, 28-56

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*, 28

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, 30

organize a secret society in service of a German victory over Russia, the creation of a Turkish Union, and the overthrow of the Turkish state.⁴¹⁸ When questioned about this in his interrogation, Togan admitted to forming the secret society and to meeting with Turks in Germany, but explained that the purpose of the group, apparently named the Eastern Turkish Union (*Doğu Türk Birliği*), was meant to come to the aid of Turks who hailed from the region between the North Caucasus and the Great Wall of China (*Seddiçin*), and to support the cause of Turks struggling in these regions under Russian rule, but not to overthrow the government, an answer which the prosecutors called “evasive.”⁴¹⁹ The prosecutors then provided a transcription of documents retrieved from the Taksim apartment owned by the wife of Nuri İman Karadağlı that included the two-part oath of the secret society and the four-pronged goals of the group. The oath read as follows,

1 – In order to give life to a great Turkish state that will save imprisoned Turkish countries [*esir Türk ülkeleri*] and unite them with Turkey, I pledge my blood, my soul, my honor, and my wealth

2 – If I betray this organization with this oath, I accept that the organization may kill me and that the religion of the Qur’an is final.⁴²⁰

The four aims of the group were listed as,

A – The Turkish government is afraid of Russia. For that reason, our activities are not supported. Because of that, we will work very much in secret.

B – Today’s government is poorly administered. It is missing a historic opportunity. We will immediately advocate with the government to support at German victory.

C – Our organization will always gather more components.

D – We acknowledge the request of Zeki Velidi Togan to travel to Germany to establish communications there and to organize those who are imprisoned there.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, 30-31

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, 31-32

⁴²⁰ Ibid, 32

⁴²¹ Ibid, 32-33

In summary, the indictment centers this secret society on Togan, and indicates that his leadership was corroborated by each of the arrested members of the society. These charges would largely stick, as Togan would receive the harshest penalty of the group – a ten-year prison sentence plus four years of exile.

Perspectives from the Press and American Diplomats

Reactions to the arrest of the racist-Turanists in May 1944 in the Istanbul press reflected a rare consensus in the midst of one of the most contentious periods in Turkish intellectual and press history. Writers on nearly every side of the political spectrum, from Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın to Zekeriya Sertel to Ahmet Emin Yalman and even Nadir Nadi, who was infamously close to the German legation, supported the government's charges and denounced Atsız and his group's ideology. Later that year, the education ministry would publish a bound volume collecting together a full seventy editorials that were published in May 1944 to this effect, along with all public speeches on the subject from President İsmet İnönü, Prime Minister Sükrü Saraçoğlu, Education Minister Hasan Ali Yücel, and the General Secretary of the CHP, M.Ş. Esendal.⁴²²

Yalçın, who was a supporter of the Anglo-American alliance in the war, framed his attack in a column that warned against irredentism on May 18 in his newspaper, *Tanin*. He argued that it was irredentism amongst the national minorities of the Ottoman Empire that ultimately brought the empire down, and in turn inspired a Turkish nationalist movement amongst the majority of Ottoman citizens and statesmen that was fundamentally anti-irredentist.⁴²³ The following day, he addressed the tension between Kemalist nationalism and Turanism in perhaps a clearer way than any of the Kemalist statesmen had, explaining, “[Turanism], while occupying a completely literary and emotional place, plays a role in our political life by functionally inspiring hope and

⁴²² Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları 4, *Irğçılık-Turancılık* (Ankara: Maarif Matbaası, 1944)

⁴²³ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, “Bizde Türkçülük” in *Irğçılık-Turancılık*, 66-68

strength in the hearts [of Turkish citizens]” but warning that one of the main principles of the Turkish Republic was to “make a movement for peace within its own compass while considering that the its own wealth is its most fundamental guarantee it must not follow an aim of conquest regarding its neighboring countries and must not give rise to a politics of aggression.”⁴²⁴ In a third editorial, Yalçın explicitly stated that the Turanist movement was a pawn of the Nazi government and that their “goal has followed with racism in Turkey, however it consists of destroying and deconstructing Turkey.”⁴²⁵

Zekeriya Sertel, who, along with his editorial partner and wife Sabiha, would often bear the brunt of criticism from figures like Yalçın throughout the war, took a similar line to his more liberal-nationalist counterpart. On May 8, the day before the arrest of the Turanists in Istanbul, Sertel warned the readers of his daily *Tan* about the activities of a “fifth column” in Turkey. He reminded his readers that, “We are witnesses to a few provocateurs who wish to create a dualism amongst our citizens while hiding under the mask of racism, religiosity (*dincilik*), and nationalism.”⁴²⁶ Beyond casting his aspersions on the Turanists, Sertel forwarded an argument for Turkish nationalism as a necessary precondition for democratic politics. He did not see nationalism as a philosophy that precluded left and right divisions, “In these days when our country and nation are needing the greatest unity, it will not be a harmful thing to say that we should work to divide the country into left and right. Without nationalism, one cannot imagine a Turk. However, we understand the meaning that our nationalism and this nation was determined by Atatürk’s People’s Party Program...” and that those who “arrogate a racist or imperialist understanding to Turkish nationalism” amounted to traitors who wanted only to divide the

⁴²⁴ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, “Turancılık Hareketi” originally *Tanin*, May 19, 1944, reprinted *Irçılık-Turancılık*, 69-70

⁴²⁵ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, “Türkçülük ve Irçılık Namına Yapılan Tahrikler” originally *Biz ve Dünya*, May 22, 1944, reprinted, *Irçılık-Turancılık*, 73-75

⁴²⁶ M. Zekeriya Sertel, “Beşinci Kol” originally *Tan* May 8, 1944, reprinted in *Irçılık-Turancılık*, 167-8

country. He paraphrased Falih Rıfkı Atay, a close companion of Atatürk, saying that “we are neither like those in a Trotskyist country and we do not give a place in this nation to movements who wish to create anarchy throughout the world nor are we on the side of those who have an imperialist conception of nationalism.”⁴²⁷

On May 19th, the Youth and Sports holiday and the same day as İnönü’s speech denouncing the Turanists, Sertel continued this argument in favor of Atatürk’s conception of nationalism, “Atatürk was a nationalist. However, his nationalism was not an aggressive nationalism, the nationalism of invaders running after some crude dream... he brought a new and realist nationalism that desired Turkey to live freely and privately, spreading wealth and prosperity within its own national borders.”⁴²⁸ The following day he reiterated this argument, delineating that Turkism had two primary causes in the Ottoman period’s second constitutional period: the first cause being that it emerged in order to compete with other nationalist movements within the Ottoman political world, and second cause being to confront foreign wealth holders who were “playing the Turks for suckers” (*Türkü istismar ediyorlardı*). The Ottoman rulers had tried in vain to combat these issues with Islamism and “Caliphateism” (*hilâfetçilik*), but Atatürk, “disposed with these movements that came from the Ottoman Empire and could not but do both more and less than was necessary. He brought an end to Islamism and Caliphateism... He drew borders that deviated from the Turkism of Turanism and racism, he explained that meaning, and agreed to a nationalism that was befitting of the new Turkey.”⁴²⁹

The most prominent exponent of German propaganda in the Turkish press, *Cumhuriyet*’s Nadir Nadi, tried to downplay the arrest of the Turanists and play up his Atatürkist *bona fides* in

⁴²⁷ Ibid, 168

⁴²⁸ M. Zekeriya Sertel, “Atatürk Niçin Yalnız Gençliğe Güveniyordu” originally *Tan* May 19, 1944, reprinted in *Irkıçılık-Turancılık*, 169-170

⁴²⁹ M. Zekeriya Sertel, “Atatürk Milliyetçiliği Nasıl Anlıyordu?” originally *Tan* May 20, 1944, reprinted in *Irkıçılık-Turancılık*, 171-3

May 1944. On May 10, Nadi dismissed the events in Ankara calling the protests “a thoughtless racket,” and telling his readers that “It is necessary that if you look at them, the events in Ankara do not constitute an important issue.”⁴³⁰ He brushed off the prominent position given to the Turanist protestors saying that, “It’s possible to run into three or four youths who have for a moment been dragged to incorrect thinking by radical or foreign viewpoints anywhere,” and shook off worries that they would succeed in indoctrinating the Turkish students by asserting, “there is no doubt that the Turkish youth, as a bloc not seen in any country in the modern world, are prepared to be in the powerful position of Atatürkists and patriots.”⁴³¹ Departing from his colleagues in the Istanbul press, Nadi instead indirectly argued for leniency in their case by offering a defense of free speech. He argued that despite the war, “the world that we live in is a world where nations are coming into closer and closer contact with one another... it is a truth that we are living in an age where the exchange of ideas between nations has reached the point of greatest density.”⁴³² He argued that the state, any state, was powerless to stop the forces of propaganda in the modern era, when “One hundred-ton tanks that can destroy castles are completely powerless in the face of short wave radio stations... Under these conditions we are finding that there is no doubt that it is very hard, even impossible in this situation to attempt to apply something like a ban, or a limitation, or a censor on reading or listening, with the goal of protecting against a determined order of thought.”⁴³³ While making the dubious claim that the Kemalist regime was not one of “raids or bans on the circulation of thought,” Nadi argued that Turkey’s neutrality in the global conflagration was due to its youth’s attachment to their own intellectuals while, “left and right regimes, the fashion comes and all the ideologies pass by...”⁴³⁴

⁴³⁰ Nadir Nadi, “Geçirdiğimiz İmtihanlarda Şaşırınlar” originally, *Cumhuriyet*, May 10, 1944, reprinted in *Irkcılık-Turancılık*, 205-6

⁴³¹ *Ibid*, 205

⁴³² *Ibid*, 205

⁴³³ *Ibid*, 205-6

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*, 206

In the days after İnönü's Children's Day Speech, Nadi celebrated the pragmatic relationship between realism and idealism that Atatürk propagated, using a musical metaphor, "under the flag of the People's Party the waves of the six arrows [of Kemalism] are in complete harmony... If someone wishes to make the slightest deviation from one of our principles, it harms our national harmony. It is true and necessary that for this reason the government treats this subject [ideology] with the highest degree of sensitivity, and does not show the slightest tolerance to the slippery slope of left and right."⁴³⁵

The trial was also followed closely by American agencies in Turkey, particularly because the trial coincided with Turkey's lurching move into the war on the side of the Allies. A report filed at the Ankara Embassy by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) on the trial gives us some details of the geopolitical interests at stake in the conduct of the trial. The OSS officials saw the Turanist group's agenda as "the establishment, under a fascist regime, of a Greater Turkey which would include the 17,000,000 people of Turkish stock now living in the USSR."⁴³⁶ The OSS observed that while the overarching charge against the group was that of planning a putsch, "little stress was laid upon the activities directed against the Soviet Union."⁴³⁷ Eager to gauge the feeling of the Turkish public about the trial, the report noticed that press coverage was extensive, but "public opinion in general was not hostile to the Turanists. Their campaign for 'liberation' of the Turks beyond the frontiers, directed as it was mainly against the USSR, was viewed with sympathy by a large section of the Turkish public."⁴³⁸ It is clear that despite these public sympathies, the American legation saw the Turkish government as being somewhat cautious in their prosecution to avoid angering the USSR at a period when Turkey had little leverage against

⁴³⁵ Nadir Nadi, "Bizim Realitemiz, Bizim Idealimiz!" originally *Cumhuriyet* May 19, 1944, reprinted in *Irkcılık-Turancılık*, 203-4

⁴³⁶ "Situation Report: Near East Analysis of Current Intelligence for the Use of OSS June 23, 1945" Ankara Embassy Classified General Records, NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 13

⁴³⁷ Ibid

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

their prospective demands. Indeed, the report notes that the sentences delivered to the group were considered light by Soviet officials in comparison with those handed out to communist sympathizers earlier in the course of the war, and that the Soviet embassy might press for a re-opening of the trial. However, they arrived at the conclusion that the Turkish government could “be expected to avoid any action which might endanger negotiations for a new Turco-Soviet treaty or jeopardize its relations with the Allies in general.”⁴³⁹

We can see here a somewhat jarring disconnect between the broad consensus of the Istanbul editorialists in the wake of the arrests and the report filed on public opinion by the US Embassy a year later. Considering the attitudes many in Turkey and the Turkish government took towards the Turanists earlier in the war, when the outcome of the war was shrouded in more doubt, this, perhaps, comes as less of a surprise. Many opposition journalists – Nadi especially, and perhaps Sertel to a degree – may have been trying to cover their bases in case the arrest of the Turanists signaled a renewed clampdown on the press. The Americans, in their report, did well to consider the long view, and, as we shall see, were not far off base in their assessment of the Turkish government’s attitude towards the Turanists. It remains, then, to take a deeper look at how the Turkish government and legal apparatus shifted its perception of the threat posed by the racist-Turanists from the time of their arrest in 1944 to their final acquittals in 1945 and 1947.

Defense, Investigation, Appeal

In his lengthy defense statement, Togan repeatedly accuses the prosecution of doctoring evidence. Beginning with the aforementioned letter to Türkkan and Savaşfer that warned them off of a “quasi Atatürkist” position, he claims the prosecution inserted the word “quasi” (*gûya*), that he had never said that he “established a secret society” nor that he was a member of “The Eastern

⁴³⁹ Ibid

Turkish Union secret society” (*Doğu Türk Birliği gizli cemiyetim*), that the statement that he was given “representative authority for the Turkistan National Union” (*Türkistan Milli Birliğinin temsil salahiyeti verilmişti*) was false, and that he initially came to Turkey to support Dr. Rıza Nur’s rebellion in 1925 was also inserted into his testimony.⁴⁴⁰ Beyond the charges and descriptions in the initial indictment, Togan claimed that at least a dozen sentences or statements presented as evidence in his diary and in other confiscated letters had been doctored to one extent or another in order to implicate him in a plot to overthrow the government.⁴⁴¹ After addressing the doctoring of evidence, Togan’s defense then turned to explain his statements have been taken out of context to make it appear as though he was an enemy of Atatürk. To the main charge that he advised Türkkan and Savaşfer against appearing too much like Atatürkists, he explains that he was merely to assist Türkkan in his dispute with Atsız by counseling him to avoid being seen as a “shield” (*siper*) for Atatürk specifically in his dealings with Selim Sarper, who at the time the letters in question were written was serving as the head of the Press Directorate, but had since been promoted to the position of Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Togan felt that as far as the split in the Pan-Turkist camp was being adjudicated in the Press Ministry, Atatürk should be left out of it.⁴⁴²

Togan’s defense then turned to address ideology – specifically his beliefs about Atatürk, racism, fascism and Turkism. Togan listed his Atatürkist bona fides, focusing on the courses he taught while he was on the faculty at Vienna University and Göttingen University in the mid-1930s on Turkish history, and his book on the history of Turkistan in which he compared Enver

⁴⁴⁰ Bakiler, *1944-1945 Irkçılık-Turancılık Davasında Sorgular, Savunmalar*, 348

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, 348-9

⁴⁴² Ibid, 350-352

Paşa and Atatürk favorably to the anti-crusader Sultans Kılıç Arslan and Salah al-Din Ayubbi.⁴⁴³ He noted that “never in my life have I found myself to be a sycophant to anyone. I wasn’t to Atatürk either,” noting that he opposed, on objective grounds, Atatürk’s push to elaborate the Sun Language Theory, but that the accusation that “he harbored bad thoughts about Atatürk was among the greatest injustices.”⁴⁴⁴ The charge that he believed in racism he also found impossible. Togan reiterated claims that his letters to Reha Oğuz Türkkân had been doctored to make him seem like a racist, and that the purpose of the letter was to “ward them off the biased path of Dr. Rıza Nur.” He read what was presumably the un-doctored text of the letter, which emphasized the need to “understand the racial and ethnic characteristics of the fathers of our nation, which has lived amongst various tribes for ages, [but] whose blood appears to be pure and unmixed;” but to avoid “espousing a Turkism that made enemies” out of “Bosnaks, Circassians, Arabs, and Persians like Rıza Nur did.”⁴⁴⁵ Togan elaborated that his study and understanding of race and ethnicity was focused on customs (*örf*), traditions (*âdet*) and folklore of the Turks that was not in contest with other ethnicities, and that he had consistently explained that Turks “should struggle not to digest our nationalism like the racism [*rasistlik*] of the Germans and the Grey Wolves.”⁴⁴⁶ He added that in letters to his friend Ragıp Hulusi, he had also argued that such a racist position was politically unwise, noting that “the dangers of chauvinism in Muslim countries that are neighbors of Russia are becoming clear.”⁴⁴⁷

His opposition to racism as a political philosophy was likewise set on imperial grounds.

“In truth,” he said, “I have never bothered with the race question... In my works and articles I

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 352. It is unclear from the text which of his books he is referring to, as none of his books come by the name provided – *Türkistan Tarihi* – but mostly likely it is his 1942 publication *Bügünkü Türkîli ve Yakın Tarihi* (Istanbul: Arkadaş, İbrahim Horoz ve Güven Basımevler, 1942).

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid, 352-353

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, 354

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid

have written that the racism in Europe, the absolutism of a Hindu-German civilization, the organizing principle forwarded by a Duce or Führer system, being more international than national movements, are not appropriate for the Turkish national spirit.”⁴⁴⁸ To back this up, he recited a passage from an article he had published in the second issue of *Atsız Mecmua* in 1931 in which he assessed both communism and fascism as being in a struggle with democracy, “fascism has opened up a path in the space created by the weaknesses of democracy in its struggles against communism that is dark and suspicious... although fascism has the idea of itself as a champion of nationalism, it is an international chauvinism, not a national one.”⁴⁴⁹ He also noted the awkward German propaganda that had been circulating amongst Turkish nationalists in Germany that inappropriately argued for a cognate to the “führer system” in the “chieftain” (*tekyolbaşçı*) position in some Turkish tribes, and that he had criticized this propaganda in a letter to the president of the German Academy of the Sciences.⁴⁵⁰

Over the rest of his defense, Togan focused on a review of his scholastic writings to contest the charge that he had espoused any form of racist politics, and that he had contributed to the understanding of Turkish nationalism in a way that augmented, rather than detracted from the ideals of Atatürk. Despite the depth of his defense, and the accusations of tampering with evidence, the tribunal handed down a guilty verdict to Zeki Velidi Togan for establishing a secret society intent on overturning the government of which he was the president, which carried with it a ten-year prison sentence, plus four years of probation and a lifetime ban from public service.⁴⁵¹

Of the question and answer testimony from the trial that has been published, the judge focused mainly on questions of ideology – how to define Turkism, racism, nationalism, and so

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, 355

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, 356

⁴⁵¹ Hayri Yıldırım, 3 Mayıs 1944 Olayı ve Irkçılık Turancılık Davası (İstanbul: Togan Yayıncılık, 2015), 285

on; how did each defendant fit in with the movement of racist-Turanism; what were their feelings about other ideologies like Republicanism, Communism, and liberalism. Each defendant's prepared statements go to great lengths to detail their viewpoints, ideologies, and relationship to both the racist-Turanist movement and the Turkish Republic itself, but in the questioning sections reveal more distilled versions, and clearly reveal the positionality of the state. Of the transcripts that are available, Nihal Atsız's is in-depth, and revealing.⁴⁵² The judge's first questions asked Atsız to define the "current of thought" he wanted to "awaken" in the country. Atsız replied, "Sir, the current I wanted to create, the thought I wanted to defend was Turkism (*türkçülük*)." The judge replied, "plain Turkism?" And Atsız proceeded to clarify,

Yes, plain Turkism. Only when you say Turkism there are several elements included. For example, racism is an inseparable part of Turkism. Really this phrase, it is more or less [*efradını cami ağyarını mani*] one meaning of the term, and these concepts also enter it. Nationalism [*milliyetçilik*] is a general concept. Whereas here in the previous statements it has been said that Turkism and nationalism are somewhat different things. Whereas when you say nationalism, for example France's nationalism is also nationalism. Whereas the name of our nationalism is Turkism. Meaning that Turkism is through and through Turkish nationalism.⁴⁵³

The judge then asked Atsız to explain what Turanism is,

Atsız: Turanism [*Turancılık*] and Turkism are the same. Like with Marxism and communism, one is above the other.

Judge: Are you a Turanist [*Turancı*]?

Atsız: Sir, there are three stages of ideals for nations. The first phase is independence [*istiklâl*]. The second is to establish a national unity [*milli birlik*] alongside its co-racialists [*ırkdaş*] outside the country. The third is world domination [*ciham istila*]. If up till now no single nation has been able to occupy the entire world, different nations holding these same ideals find themselves in resistance against one another. This is already a biological fact [*biyolojik bir hadisedir*]. Every vegetable and animal is also working to do this...

⁴⁵² Bakîler's book includes the defense statements (*savunmalar*) for each of the defendants, but the questioning (*sorgulanmalar*) of roughly half the defendants is missing, including that of some of the more prominent thinkers in this group like Zeki Velidi Togan, Reha Oğuz Türkkan, and Hüseyin Namık Orkun – interestingly, all members of the *Gökbörü* clique that had separated from Atsız a year or so prior.

⁴⁵³ Bakîler, *1944-1945 Irkçılık Turancılık Davasında*, 81

Judge: In that case is your thought and opinion that a state should be founded that brings together all the foreign Turks [*dış Türkler*]?

Atsız: Yes!

Judge: For what reason do you want this?

Atsız: It is our ideal, our aim. We want this because it is the realization of our aim.

Having clearly established that Atsız's philosophy is fundamentally irredentist, and thus contrary to the popular conception of Turkish nationalism, and, more immediately important, Turkish war aims, the judge turned to the subject of racism. Atsız's reply to the judge's request to elucidate his theory of racism explained how he felt foreigners weakened great empires,

Sir, the most secure nations are the homogenous [*mütecanis*] nations. The most important reason or cause of the destruction of great states is the foreign elements mixing inside them. In the history of the world up until now we have counted four great empires: the Arab, Roman, Ottoman, and English empires. Of these, the first three have been destroyed. The fourth is living. The reason for this is that in the first three there was wealth in persons not belonging to their own kind. Thusly, the English Empire has not been destroyed by the foreign races mixing inside it. The aim of my racism is not to repeat the mistake of this history. And in this country, to give to these duties this nation's own children, really to give it to Turks. This, is a necessary and indispensable job.⁴⁵⁴

Satisfied that this accurately represented his views, and the views he was accused of holding, the judge moved towards the more contested terrain of Atsız's views on the parliament and the republican regime more broadly. When asked for his opinion on parliament, Atsız insisted it was not a true parliament because the members are unelected, indeed he claimed he never voted except for one time when he was employed by the Education Ministry. He claimed that he supported the Liberal Republican Party, that his movement voted for two hundred of their members, but the votes were canceled because, as the newspapers reported, all the votes went to the People's Party. The judge contested this point, but then moved to ask what he thinks of the republican regime. Atsız rejected this line of questioning, stating that he was here to answer questions about racism and Turanism. The prosecutor intervened to state that there were writings

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 82

on this question in letters taken from Atsız's house, after which Atsız offered, "My opinion, I am a partisan of a true Republic." The judge responded, "And our present day Republican regime?" to which Atsız retorted, "that which you appreciate is not a classic republic. The one requirement of an election that is according to a community, meaning a people, is that the representatives are freely elected. Next, it is necessary that there is more than one party and that they moderate each other. Without these you cannot count today's regime as having the classic meaning of a republic."⁴⁵⁵

The judge then moved to the contents of the letter referenced by the prosecutor, which substantiated the charge of insulting the Turkish nation in the initial indictment. Atsız contested this charge by explaining that, "I know that I said the consciousness of the Turkish nation [*Türk milleti şuurunu*] had been lost. But this is not expressed as an insult the Turkish nation, but as an abiding sadness [*teessürün sevkiyledir*]." He then elaborated on two instances that had driven him to observe this loss of consciousness. First, he pointed to local screenings of the film *Michel Strogoff*—likely one of the French-produced adaptations of Jules Verne's 1876 novel, produced in either 1926 or 1935. The film, which portrays the Russian imperial response to Tatar uprisings, upset Atsız because it "portrayed the rebelling Turkish tribes as barbarous tribes [*vahşi kabileler*], and the Russians who suppressed the rebellion as the representatives of civilization [*medeniyet mümessili*]. And the people applauded this." Secondly, he recalled his experience teaching at the Bosphorus Lycée where he noticed non-Turkish students on the Eminönü-Bebek tramway hurling all manner of disgusting insults at Turkish girls. "In earlier times this would have been met with a lynching [*linç ile karşılanırdı*]," he said,

When I saw this, that in our country honorable Turkish girls could be called such disgusting names by a team of Armenian and Greek street toughs [*Ermeni ve Rum palikaryalarıyla birlikte*] who I would not value more than a dog, it was for the depth to

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, 83

which our nation has fallen that I naturally was sorely disappointed. It is on the part of these Turkish children that the national consciousness is being lost. In fact, it was in this way, with a deep sadness, that I am able to put together such a sentence. Not to insult this nation, but, if it is possible, to awaken a national consciousness inside it.⁴⁵⁶

Seemingly satisfied on this point, the judge then returned to the charge of insurrection, asking Atsız if he found himself to be part of a movement [*hareket*] to realize a Turkish union. Atsız wavered on this point, saying he was not part of an “active” [*fiilî*] movement and explaining that the extent to which he spoke of a Turkish union in his writing it was only to arouse a feeling in the heart of the nation, not to endorse any requisite form or political structure to the union. The judge pressed him on the question, asking him what kind of activities he was involved in, which Atsız dodged by saying while he mentions a Turkish union many times in his writings, it is only as a possibility in the far-off future [*istikbalde de olabileceğini*]. The judge then asked why Atsız wrote his infamous open letter to Prime Minister Saraçoğlu in *Orhun*. Atsız explained that he saw the minister and President İnönü’s speeches as broadly “calling on the individuals of the nation to cooperate with the government,” and that “I, as an intellectual citizen, considered this a sincere gesture [*bunu samimi telakki ettim*],” and intended to form a cooperative relationship with the government to open attacks against enemies of the fatherland, but, “some communists who are spread around in the shadows of important positions [*himayelere dayanarak mühim mevkilere getirilmiş bulunan komünistleri*] opened the attack [on me].” When pressed on what exactly the actions of these supposedly secret communists were, Atsız first explained that while Russia is the “mortal enemy” [*can düşmanı*] of Turkey, “Old Russia was an honorable [*mert*] enemy,” because it fought in the open, “but today, Russia succeeds as a dishonorable [*namert*] enemy. Because it seeks to destroy our people from the outside and inside, it is becoming deceitful [*kandırarak geliyor*].” After being prodded to be more specific in this accusation, Atsız insisted that the aim of the communists was to infiltrate Turkey’s education system, “They want in a short time to take

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 84

teachers in their hands and raise up the youth. They did this in France and they destroyed France in 25 years.”⁴⁵⁷

This response prompted a line of questioning regarding Atsız’s civil suit with Sabahattin Ali from earlier in the year, which reveals precisely how these ideological battles were tied up in personal grievances between this generation of writers and thinkers. Atsız provided his version of the events that resulted in a student demonstration on May 3, 1944 in Ankara, stating that during his defense, his lawyer, Hamid Şevket İnce, insisted that the suit filed by Ali against Atsız, “was not between two persons, but between two thoughts and ideals,” to which Ali retorted, “Atsız, if this suit were to become both a pedestrian liable suit [*alelade bir hakaret davası*] and a suit over ideals, I warn you that it will bring great harm to both you personally and to the country,” which in turn provoked the protest that was considered to be the catalyst for the larger legal action against the Pan-Turanists. Ali and Atsız had been roommates at Istanbul University, and even wrote together in Atsız’s first journal. Another former colleague turned *bête noir* for Atsız was the literature scholar Pertev Naili Boratov, about whom the judge asked his final questions,

Judge: Is Pertev Naili of the Turkish race?

Atsız: He is a Turk, my sir, and one of the rare Turks among the communists.

Judge: I wonder what kind of communist he might be?

Atsız: This is a strange case sir. I have followed his transformation into a communist step by step. At the beginning, Pertev was a nationalist. We published the *Atsız* journal together. Pertev, during his university years, did not have success in his love life. He had proposed marriage to a few young girls and all of them rejected him. For this reason, he ended up becoming friends with some of the university’s immoral boys and girls; he’d take outings with them. In this way, he was not taken in by the bourgeoisie and it was amongst the immoral friends he found success in love. For this reason, he remained in their influence and felt he was in a superior position from a cultural and intellectual perspective. He slid into communism and became the enemy of bourgeois society.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, 85

With that, Atsız's questioning ended, reminding us that much of the toxicity of the ideological climate in this period of Turkish history was tied up in personal relationships, many of which had gone sour over the previous decade.

Atsız's defense statement doubles as a lengthy defense of his racist ideology. Central to his claims, is his assertion that the Turkish state was founded, and had operated on racist principles from the beginning. As he had previously done in his open letters to Prime Minister Saraçoğlu, Atsız, after delineating the long history of racial separation in the imperial era, he invoked key moments in Turkish republican history that justified his cause. First, he explained that during the First World War, "The Arabs with the English, and the Armenians with the Russians shot us in the back; they cut and chopped Turks into unrecognizable savages." Later, during the War for Independence, he noted that in Western Anatolia, Circassians and Abkhazians began movements to form separate states, as well as the Kurds and Zaza's in Eastern Anatolia. He reiterated that the assassination attempt on Atatürk in 1925, which prompted the Law of Maintenance of Order and the Independence Tribunals, was prompted by a Kurdish separatist movement, and that the prosecutors in those trials were "acting on racism." He noted the first article of the criminal code, "One cannot be tried for an action that the law does not explicitly criminalize," and that since he had not led an action within the army, he was not breaking the law. "If it were a crime," he said, "the societies that have organized themselves over the ages, those that only marry within themselves, those who have separate religious traditions and separate graveyards practice an active racism, why then has the Jewish racism of the Salonican *dönmes* been criminalized...?" He also repeated Sükrü Saraçoğlu's speech in parliament that incited his

open letters, as well as a widely quoted saying from former Defense Minister Ali Rıza Artunkal, which spoke of a, “noble and pure Turkish race.”⁴⁵⁸

What the defenses and testimony of Atsız and Togan reveal as the central figures in the trials, and representative of the other defendants, is the abiding concern amongst the Pan-Turanists that they were on trial because of their ideological position. They clearly did not see themselves as revolutionaries, despite their putatively irredentist views, but feared that the state did not agree, and, at least in the initial decisions by the military court, the state did not. What transpired over the following two years, at the end of which all of the Pan-Turkists would be fully acquitted, was a contestation within the judicial framework over the appropriateness of the Pan-Turkist ideology given the current political context. Günay Göksü Özdoğan has noted the odd concurrence of the decisions, which were made public and reported in various newspapers as they were reached, with the geopolitical direction Turkey was swinging in from the beginning of the trials in 1944 – then a still-uncertain time in Turkey’s neutrality, and one in which a pro-German position would have been unhelpful – and the final acquittal in 1947 – almost two years after Turkey joined the United Nations and less than a year after the first competitive multiparty parliamentary elections in the history of the republic.⁴⁵⁹ What was unavailable to Özdoğan and other scholars until very recently include the complete testimonies described above and the report prepared in advance of the decisions by the Military Courts of Cassation, which had been in the personal archive of Nihal Atsız’s acolyte Hayri Yıldırım and were published in 2015.⁴⁶⁰ Through

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 93-96

⁴⁵⁹ Özdoğan, “The Case of Racism-Turanism”, 112-119

⁴⁶⁰ One point of contrast with the Sertel trial is that the Pan-Turanist trials appear to have all occurred behind closed doors. The indictments and verdicts were made public, and published widely in the Istanbul and Ankara press, but, unlike the Sertel’s trial, the hearings themselves, the statements in defense of the accused, or any of the motions involved passed with very little publicity. Combined with the narrowness of the verdict, and the apparent focus on the serious charge of government sabotage over anti-communist demagoguery, also shows the different nature of this political trial. The rhetorical entanglement between the Turanist group and

this report, and the final two acquittals by the Military Court we can see how the Turkish justice system reversed course on Pan-Turanism as an acceptable ideology, and ultimately made the case for its constitutionality.

The four documents published from Hayri Yıldırım's archive include the "Investigation Report of the Military Court of Cassation," two appeals decisions from the second criminal office of the Military Court of Cassation, and the "Military Court's General Assembly Decision."⁴⁶¹ The first of these, and the lengthiest document, describes significant modifications to the findings of the original investigations into each of the defendants and was completed on October 16, 1945. I will focus here on the modifications concerning Togan and Atsız, whose ideological positions most concerned the military courts.

The investigative report first reviewed the meeting held between various Turanist figures on March 7, 1944, in which Zeki Velidi Togan was purported to have formed a secret society with the intent to carry out a coup against the government.⁴⁶² The report found that the purpose of the meeting, as evidenced by testimony and by contextual letters between Togan and Reha Oğuz Türkkan, was meant to patch up differences between Türkkan and Atsız, and "in hopes of forming a tight crowd of all the Turkists around İnönü's side and bear no other effect..."⁴⁶³ The conclusion of this section of the report finds that although Togan and Türkkan appear to have

Saracoğlu in the earlier years of the war likely provided an impetus to avoid further uncomfortable accusations on the part of the plaintiffs. Some excerpts of the trial proceedings have been published previously, but Bakiler's *Sorgular Savunmalar* and Yıldırım's *3 Mayıs 1944* contain the fullest extent of archival material that is available publicly.

⁴⁶¹ "Askeri Yargıtay'ın Tetkik Raporu," "Askeri Yargıtay 2. Ceza Dairesinde Bozma Kararı," "Askeri Yargıtay 2. Ceza Dairesinde Red Kararı," and "Askeri Yargıtay Genel Kurul Kararı." Yıldırım notes that each of these were kept in his private archive until this publication, that some edits for clarity were made in the reproduction, and that on some pages words were omitted or missing because the transcription was made from a carbon copy. Yıldırım, *3 Mayıs 1944 Olayı*, 291

⁴⁶² Ibid, 343-346

⁴⁶³ Ibid, 346

unsuccessfully swayed Atsız to their side, and formed their own “Grey Wolf” group, the March 1944 letter “was not proof or a sign of the reunification of a secret alliance.”⁴⁶⁴ In their reassessment of the charges, the investigators rationalized the penalties handed down to each of the defendants explicitly in terms of the wartime climate. They cited that because Zeki Velidi Togan was a university professor at the time he was charged, the initial trial “...showed that he personally demonstrated the abuse of the security and faith of the Turkish youth in the Turkish Republican government and especially in the case of this last war [The Second World War] demonstrated with precision against our governments very strict neutrality...” through his participation in a secret society, which is outlawed in the Turkish Criminal Code’s Article 171, section 2.⁴⁶⁵ Likewise, the connection with a secret society and the improper influence over students was found justifiable relating to charges against Reha Oğuz Türkkan, Cihat Savaşfer, and Nurullah Barıman.⁴⁶⁶ However, when it came to charges that relate to the Criminal Code’s Article 142 – which makes violations of Turkey’s neutrality and attacks against its allies in wartime punishable by a minimum fifteen year prison sentence – the report granted the possibility of appeal to twelve of the defendants, including Zeki Velidi Togan, on the grounds that the propaganda by this group, “did not fulfill the elements of the various ideas of Article 142 and further proof was not procured to verify this in the suit’s dossier.”⁴⁶⁷ This early provision of the report foreshadows a focus on the question of racism and ideology throughout both the Military Court’s investigation and the requests for appeal by each of the defendants.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 406-407. This section of the report is titled “Apparent Conclusions and Provisions” (*Beliren Sonuç ve Hükmüm*), bracketed clarification in original. Article 171 Sec. 2 of the Turkish criminal code adds stiffer penalties if a secret society is found to be also violating Articles 146 and 147 of the code. These articles deem illegal public advocacy to “in whole or in part denature and alter or abrogate the Law of Fundamental Organization of the Turkish Republic... to organize to reject the Grand National Assembly or enterprise to forcibly attack its aims...” See Türk Ceza Kanunu, *Resmi Ceride*, March 13, 1926, 394-5, 398.

⁴⁶⁶ Yıldırım, *3 Mayıs 1944 Olayı*, 407-408

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, 409

While much of the appeals process for Togan, Türkkan and the other defendants was bound up in charges of forming a secret society, the charges against Nihal Atsız more directly related to ideological question of whether racism was an appropriate ideological position in the Turkish sphere. Atsız's main charges had to do with his publications and the instigation of the protest on May 3, 1944, which the Military Court believed violated Articles 159 and 161 of the Turkish Criminal Code – affronting the government and parliament, and libel “with intent to excite public opinion” respectively – and in this way, as we shall see, Atsız's journey through the legal system bore a greater resemblance to that of his ideological rivals, the Sertels.⁴⁶⁸ The investigators delineated that Atsız's racist outlook meant that he took positions that at least hypothetically ran counter to Turkey's foreign policy aims – such as “handing over the Salonica front to the enemy in the Balkan War, or accusing Circassians and Abaz of treason during the World War” – and caused him to routinely cast suspicion of members of the Grand National Assembly who he believed were not of Turkish blood.⁴⁶⁹ They went into great detail on Atsız's criticism of the “glorification of Atatürk as a national hero,” including with his novella *The Night of the Sycophants (Dalkavuklar Gecisi)* and various letters and conversations with his co-defendants defaming Atatürk's conception of the Grand National Assembly. The report also pointed evidence of Atsız's affinity for Hitler going back to sympathies expressed in *Atsız Mecmua*, as well as books and pamphlets associated with Atsız including titles such as “Hitler and National Socialism,” “A Manifestation of Hitlerism in Turkey,” and “Turkish Fascist.”⁴⁷⁰

At the same time, they noted that Atsız constructed an ideological front against “negative and communist minded professors” such as Istanbul University's Sadrettin Celal Antel, and that in the protests he instigated, he had sought to “make a positive impression on the students...

⁴⁶⁸ Türk Ceza Kanunu, 396

⁴⁶⁹ Yıldırım, *3 Mayıs 1944 Olayı*, 352-353

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 359

because he wanted them to find that in this country communism was a destructive view...⁴⁷¹

Likewise, the report mentioned Atsız's own explanation that the one of the two purposes of his journal *Orhun* was establish a front against communism and that his dispute with Sabahattin Ali was instigated by his anti-communist essay "The Devils Inside Us" (*İçimizdeki Şeytanlar*).⁴⁷² It noted that meetings preparing the protests during the trial with Sabahattin Ali were conducted between Atsız's group and students at Ankara University in order to "take precautions against leftist activities, divide tasks, [and] publish journals" and that the protests, though violent, featured no slogans or actions against the government, indeed the "Independence March" was sung, and chants of "Long Live İnönü," "Long Live The Turkish Republic," "Long Live the Turkish Nation," "Long Live Turkish Justices," "Long Live the Turkish Youth," and "Damn the Communists" were shouted.⁴⁷³

The tension between these two lines of the investigation – the wariness towards racism coupled with a general approval of broadly nationalist and anti-communist activities – sums up the quandary in front of the appeals court. It would be difficult to grant appeal without approving of both ideologies simultaneously, but the investigators sought some solutions to the riddle. Initially, in the analysis of the evidence regarding the May 3rd protests, the investigators suggest that the evidence did not satisfy Article 161 of the criminal code, the harsher of the two charges, but because of the wartime conditions and the "reckless" (*pervasız*) nature of the protests in the capital city, where there might have been many observers who were representatives of foreign governments, it would have been more appropriate for Atsız to have been charged with breaking Article 6 of the Criminal Code – which pertains to the endangerment of Turks living abroad. Such a suggestion would shift the focus of the crime to purely strategic considerations while punting on

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, 354

⁴⁷² Ibid, 366

⁴⁷³ Ibid, 369-370

the issue of racism's appropriateness in the public sphere.⁴⁷⁴ In the initial provisions and conclusions by the investigators, they recommended charges be upheld in all cases for Atsız with the exception of the charges relating to the May 3rd events, charges relating to his attacks on parliamentarians, and undue influence on students as a teacher, were not recommended for appeal.⁴⁷⁵

The second attempt to square the Pan-Turkist views with the prevailing Turkish nationalist vision in the investigative report came from the contribution of the President of the Court Martial (*Adli Amir*), who offered a summary of his case for approving the appeals request that was prepared on April 24, 1945, roughly a month after the appeals process had formally begun. Beginning with the President of the Court Martial, and the appeals judges going forward, attention shifted slightly from the Criminal Code to questions of the constitutionality of racism. Here, the trial of the Pan-Turkists posed a direct challenge Article 88 of the 1924 Turkish Constitution, which reads, "In Turkey, from the perspective of citizenship, everyone is a 'Turk' without distinguishing between race [*ırk*] or religion."⁴⁷⁶ In his summary, the Court Martial President pointed to this article, suggesting that its meaning was altered by the recent change to Article 2 removing "Islam is the State Religion of Turkey," and also to a recent discussion in parliament that came to the conclusion that "Like any new nation, it is possible to include individuals who come from the same race in the Turkish nation. However, Turkishness is a community that can accommodate those coming from any root [*uruk*]" to establish a framework for the interface of race and Turkishness, as he wrote, "we cannot specify our nationalism and racism outside of these parameters."⁴⁷⁷ Taking these points into consideration, the President of the Court Martial determined that while "racist propaganda dissents from the principle qualities of

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, 373

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid, 401-411

⁴⁷⁶ 1924 Anayasası, T. Düstür, Cilt 26, s. 170 <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa24.htm>

⁴⁷⁷ Yıldırım, *3 Mayıs 1944 Olayı*, 461

our Constitution and as a result violates the third clause of Article 142 of the Turkish Criminal Code,” it was not the case that “the actualization of this crime constitutes propaganda on behalf of a foreign regime.”⁴⁷⁸ He argued that the society formed by the racist-Turanists, and the organization of the May 3rd protests constituted a protected expression of political opposition precisely because there was no explicit proof that any of the involved parties were working on behalf of, or advocating for, a foreign regime.⁴⁷⁹ He further argued that although the protest was “not a random gathering” and that he recognized the importance of maintaining order during a global political crisis, and that Nihal Atsız had admitted to directing the message of the protest in vicious terms against various men of state, especially Education Minister Hasan Ali Yücel, there was no agreement in the evidence to meet the standards of Article 161 of the Criminal Code, and recommended his acquittal on those grounds.⁴⁸⁰ In examinations of the cases against Hüseyin Namık Orkun, Reha Oğuz Türkkkan and other associated with *Gök-Börü* he also argued that the defendants should be acquitted on the basis that their secret society did not directly assail the Turkish constitution nor advocate for a foreign government.⁴⁸¹ The Court Martial President’s recommendations then when to the Martial Law Administration, who ultimately rejected the requests for appeals, but agreed that there were inconsistencies in the charges against Atsız and Türkkkan regarding secret societies and the intent of the May 3rd protests to harm national interests, and thus forwarded a recommendation to the tribunal that the trials be re-heard on those counts.⁴⁸²

While much of the report was compiled in April of 1945, it was not submitted to the Military Court of Cassation for review until October 16th of that year. A week later, in what must

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, 462

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, 462-4

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, 464-5

⁴⁸² “Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığının 24/Nisan/1945 tarihli teyviz dilekçesinin” in Yıldırım, 3 *Mayıs Olayı*, 473-4

have been a surprise decision to the investigators and lawyers who had prepared the report, the four-judge panel handed down a full appeal to the defendants. Their decision affirmed the appropriateness of the investigation, noting that the “bad thoughts and intentions of breaking the security of the state in directed movements and especially making foreign propaganda against the security of the state and the regime” during the state of emergency, but found that the objections to the requests for appeal by the defendants to be “completely inappropriate” to the court’s purposes.⁴⁸³ While the panel delineated several dozen areas where it concurred with the appeals requests included in the previous report, their own justification of the decision came down to four principal objections. First, they referenced changes to the Criminal Code’s Article 142 made in 1936 and 1938 which lowered penalties for this transgression from a maximum of five years down to two, and removed the language regarding the criticism of Turkey’s neutrality, placing instead attacks “on behalf of a foreign regime” and against “the principal qualities of the state or that undermine national pride.” The second objection affirmed that according to Article 88 of the Constitution, it is “clearly specified that the differences between religion and race cannot be an impediment to the nation” and that the text of the article indicated that “citizenship was found to be related to this aspect,” however, in order to bring charges against a movement for violating this article, it was necessary to prove that they were “outside the borders and scope of this understanding with scientific considerations...” Third, they noted that the secret alliance the defendants were charged with had mostly scattered since its formation in 1941, and held the opinion that this did not hold up to the standards of the charge. Finally, they referenced the specifics of the law enacting Martial Law in certain areas of Turkey starting in 1940, noting that the primary activities occurred outside of the regions specified in the Martial Law’s enactment, and that the jurisdictional prerogatives of the Martial Law Administration outside of those regions

⁴⁸³ “Askeri Yargıtay 2. Ceza Dairesi’nin Bozma Kararı” [Esas No: 2090 Karar No: 5149] in Yıldırım, *3 Mayıs Olayı*, 506-7

was limited to “operationalized” (*eylemsel*), “contractual” (*sözleşmesel*) and “distributional” (*yayınsal*) activities which would have to be under the control of the group. On this last point, the tribunal found the charges to be “not acceptable to any degree...”⁴⁸⁴ On these bases, all the defendants were acquitted and ordered to be released from prison. The courtroom saga of the racist-Turanists would not finally end there, as the Court Martial President sought to have the appeal decision overturned in 1947, but in a brief decision by a two-judge panel in September of that year, rejected the request, finding that there was no “absolute legal necessity” to revisit the case.⁴⁸⁵

The *Tan* Trial

In the wake of the destruction of the *Tan* offices on December 4, 1945 the government proceeded to take several measures to suppress communist and left-leaning opposition voices in the Turkish press and in academia, in particular anyone associated with the publication of *Görüşler* who had not vocally denied their participation, as a few key figures in the newly-formed Democrat Party had. The most immediate step that the government took was to suspend seven professors at Ankara University – Sabahattin Ali, Niyazi Berkes, Pertev Naili Boratov, Mediha Berkes, Behice Boran, Adnan Cemgil and Kemal Bilbaşar – from their duties on December 18th. These professors had been contributors to *Görüşler* and *Tan* for some time, and had formed the core group of *Yurt ve Dünya*. The suspensions followed a memorandum circulated by the Minister of Education Hasan Ali Yücel which rebuked, but did not name, professors who violated the Law of Officials [*Memur Kanunu*] and the Press Law [*Matbuat Kanunu*] which prohibit government officials from making political statements and the publications of articles that oppose discipline and obedience. A report from the American Embassy mentions also that there was a

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, 515-517

⁴⁸⁵ “Askeri Yargıtay 2. Dairesinin Red Kararı [Esas No: 1800 Karar No: 2669]” in Yıldırım, 3 *Mayıs Olayı*, 519-523

deep suspicion on the part of the Turkish Secret Police that any academics trained in the United States, as Behice Boran, Niyazi and Mediha Berkes were, had been coopted by Soviet agents, because, "...Russian agents in America interest themselves more actively in foreign students. The main tactic of this endeavor is to benefit from the sense of inferiority which foreign students have in a country more civilized than their own."⁴⁸⁶ According to Niyazi Berkes, he was called into the Education Ministry for questioning along with three or four other professors, where he found that "they had prepared a room for us as if we were taking an exam. There were long rows of seats in between each of us. We were told not to whisper any secrets to each other!" They were each distributed a questionnaire – whether they were similar or different Berkes could not tell, but he remembers the questions on his to have made him laugh, and it seemed no one took the exercise seriously – and after the investigation, they were each suspended for several months, though they appealed the decision and won.⁴⁸⁷

The second, and more consequential action taken by the state was to hand down a series of indictments against the owners and editors of *Tan* alongside those of a more conservative newspaper, *Yeni Sabah*. The first indictment, levelled against Zekeriya Sertel and Halil Lütfü Dördüncü of *Tan* and Ali Rıza oğlu, A. Cemalettin Saraçoğlu and Huseyin oğlu of *Yeni Sabah* came on December 15th and accused them of violating the 27th and 30th Articles of the Press Law which prohibit false accusations of criminal activity or corruption against members of parliament and printing false news. They would be found guilty and handed down short prison sentences of three months, along with a hefty fine of a few thousand liras, but would win on an appeal issued March 18, 1946. The second indictment, which would include all of the above parties plus Sabiha

⁴⁸⁶ Ambassador Edwin Wilson to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, "Suspension of Seven Professors for Contributing Articles to Left-Wing Publications" December 18, 1945. Ankara Embassy Classified General Records, NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16. This document also includes a translation of Hasan Ali Yücel's circular mentioned above.

⁴⁸⁷ Niyazi Berkes, *Unutulan Yıllar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997), 356-7

Sertel and Cami Baykurt, would carry more severe penalties would result in a second hearing in March.⁴⁸⁸

In one point of contrast with the trial of the Pan-Turanists, one of the initial decisions of the tribunal ruling on the Sertels' two trials was that the proceedings would be open to the public, on account of the fact that the transgressions of the accused were made in a public manner, in the press, rather than in secret.⁴⁸⁹ As a result there was considerable coverage of the trial and the defenses and statements given in the press, and the Sertels were allowed to publish significant excerpts of the proceedings later that year. In the first trial, Zekeriya was prosecuted for two articles published on November 12 and December 1, 1945 that accused members of parliament of corrupt practices. In the first article, entitled "How Does a Citizen Ask for Accountability?" Zekeriya sets up a contrast between the Turkish and American government.⁴⁹⁰ He first described the manner in which former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was obliged to answer an uncomfortable question about her finances from a reader of *Ladies Home Journal*. The question asked whether she had made a profit on cotton textiles in the south, and that there was a rumor that she was only defending black people in order to make money from that industry.⁴⁹¹ Zekeriya then pointed out that "Madame Roosevelt was not bothered by this question, it was not

⁴⁸⁸ The text of both indictments, along with a reprinting of each of the offending articles, the defense statements from Sabiha, Zekeriya, and Cami Baykurt and the texts of the decisions at the First and Second Criminal Court of Istanbul [Asliye İkinci Ceza Yargıçlığı] and the Court of Cassation [Yargıtay Mahkemesi] were published by the Sertels later in 1946 as *Davamız ve Müdafamız: Makaleler, İddianameler, Müdafalar, Mahkeme kararları, Temyiz kararlar* (Istanbul: F-K Basımevi, 1946). It is noteworthy that the defense statements from their co-defendants from *Yeni Sabah* are left out of this publication, although they were covered in several press outlets, and noted by the American Embassy. See Ambassador Edwin Wilson to Secretary of State James Byrnes, "Opening of Trial of Editors of TAN and YENİ SABAH" January 5, 1946. Ankara Embassy General Records NARA RG 84 UD 3287 Box 102.

⁴⁸⁹ Ali Nur Bozcalı to John Evarts Horner, March 29, 1946. Ankara Embassy General Records NARA RG 84 UD 3287 Box 102

⁴⁹⁰ M. Zekeriya Sertel, "Vatandaş Nasıl Hesap Sorar?" in *Davamız ve Müdafamız*, p. 7-9, originally published in *Tan* November 12, 1945

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, 7

considered an affront. On the contrary, every citizen has the right to request information about the personal wealth of the President, and so she answered it.”⁴⁹² He then went on to wonder why the Turkish public is uninformed about the sources of wealth amongst its political class, “most of them are not the owners of inheritances from their fathers,” and directly compares them with the First Lady, asking, “if these people, like Eleanor Roosevelt, were left with a question from a citizen, would they be able to give as polite and conscientious a response as she did?”⁴⁹³ He followed with a call for laws to be put in place that require bureaucrats and politicians to release their financial information, and closes with a reference to the Ottoman-era poet Tevfik Fikret, “But if the time comes that the citizens can ask for accountability, we will know ‘how many come out pure and sparkling!’”⁴⁹⁴

In a second article, entitled “We Want Accountability in Front of the Nation!”, that was published on December 1, 1945, three days prior to the Tan Riot and the same day as the initial publication of *Görüşler*, Zekeriya immediately accused the CHP of surreptitiously providing 400,000 liras to a group in the Black Sea city of Sivas to publish a newspaper. The practice of the party funding a newspaper was in itself inoffensive to Zekeriya Sertel – after all, when he left the Press Bureau in 1923 he and his partners were gifted property to house the offices of *Cumhuriyet* from Atatürk himself – but the paper had, from its first days, launched into personal attacks against him, asking where he got the money to buy his house in Moda.⁴⁹⁵ Zekeriya responded to

⁴⁹² Ibid, 8

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 8-9

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid, 9. The reference is to the poem “Sis” [“Fog”] by Tevfik Fikret, the couplet reads “Out of the million corpses you harbor/how many will emerge pure and sparkling?” [*Milyonla barındırdığın ecsâd arasından/Kaç nâsiye vardır çıkacak pâkü dirahşan?*]. Thanks to Lâle Can for some assistance on this translation.

⁴⁹⁵ The newspaper goes unnamed, but, in all likelihood, it is the newspaper *Ülke*, which was published in Sivas by Halk Gazetecilik ve Basım T.A.Ş [People’s Journalism and Press, Türk Limited Company]. Their columnists, Nasuhi Baydar and Salâhaddin Küçük, repeatedly attacked the Sertels throughout November and December 1945, though the specific claim about their house in Moda was not included in the articles and issues I was able to access. See, Nasuhi

this charge by detailing his repeated openness about the finances and aims of his newspapers, “When we asked these friends where they found this 400 thousand liras, we were ready to provide an account of our own finances in front of the nation. They preferred not to give their accounts and instead stoop to demagogic trickery.” After repeating his own history of his participation in the Turkish press, Zekeriya leveled a significant accusation – he states that in 1938 and 1939 he had launched an investigation into a number of government representatives and ministers who had deposited significant sums of money into foreign banks, mainly in Switzerland. He claimed that a government commission which was charged with discovering foreign agents in Turkey compiled a list of these individuals and provided it to the government, but that the government refused to publish it. He closed the article demanding the government publish the list,

Now we have shown our accounts to those that requested them. We are asking that those that have in their hands the list of the Swiss organization and those who hold the wealth of the entire citizenry be obliged to publish a statement. We want those who yesterday were not allowed more than five *para* to be made clear and accountable in front of the nation. Let’s take a look at this accounting, **How many come out pure and sparkling.**⁴⁹⁶

As indicated by the similar closings, the articles were meant to be related to one another. The Sertels had been mounting a campaign to expose financial indiscretions by the CHP throughout the fall of 1945, and had the printing house not been destroyed, it likely would have continued.

The indictment the proceeded from these articles from Istanbul’s Assistant Prosecutor Hicabi Dinç first lays out a lengthy, if unsatisfactory, defense of the state against Zekeriya’s accusations, but ultimately rests on an argument for limits placed on free speech,

Baydar, “Hep o terane” *Ülke* November 27, 1945, “Nefretle Karşılana Dergi” *Ülke* December 4, 1945, Salâhaddin Küçük, “Şaşı Görüşler” *Ülke*, December 5, 1945, Nasuhi Baydar, “Rivayet Ederlerki...” *Ülke* December 5, 1945, “Türk Gençliğinin Dün İstanbulda Yaptığı Çoşkun ve Heyecanlı Tezahürler” *Ülke* December 5, 1945, Nasuhi Baydar, “Mugalâta Örnekleri” *Ülke* December 6, 1945. My sincere thanks to Orhun Bayraktar for helping me acquire copies of this newspaper from Milli Kütüphane.

⁴⁹⁶ Sertel and Sertel, *Davamız ve Müdafaaımız*, 10-12, emphasis in original.

The meaning of the grand medium is not for press freedom to be wielded as a weapon and to make unfounded accusations from a place of power against the government and against the state. Criticism is a precious right in democracy. However, the reality is that criticism must be proven over time to constitute an objective analysis.

Here is where we find the practicable difference between freedom of the press and unrestricted freedom of thought. In every democracy, it is this way and so it is in ours. Otherwise it will be the responsibility of the newspapers to the masses to verify the truth of every conjecture that is written and according to whether the people react negatively or positively they might find it more enriching to make propaganda to suit those moods, and as their circulation increases accordingly, as it provides benefits and they will find that it possible to publish whatever thoughts are desired. The above-mentioned editorials thus have for a long time, and systemically hid under the mask of criticism and it is impossible to say that the spreading of propaganda is a qualification of press freedom. A free press's criticism is reputable when it is distributed within reality.⁴⁹⁷

The prosecutor closed his remarks repeating the accusation that Sertel "held the freedom of the press like a weapon," and that this offended the spirit of the Press Law's Article 30, which would carry a sentence of three to six months and a minimum 100 *liras* fine.⁴⁹⁸

In his defense, Zekeriya sought to directly contest the application of Article 30 to his case. He summarized the accusations into three distinct categories that follow the wording of the original article, "1 – To attack the personal security (*mevdu vazifeler*) in a publication; 2 – To, without material evidence, create vagueness and doubt about the offended party in writing; 3 – To attack the honor and dignity of these parties." He went on to defend himself against the first instance by pointing out he did not name a single individual in his article, and that there was "not one line of personal criticism, nor affront, nor triviality," in his writing, and offers a contrasting view on freedom of speech, "A democracy establishes three types of controls that a citizen can use to exercise their right to call for accountability; the first is the Parliament; the second is the

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, 19-20

⁴⁹⁸ Article 30 of the Press Law of 1931 indicates that any breach of the honor and dignity (*şeref ve haysiyet*) of Members of Parliament, state bureaucrats, or the Executive Branch was illegal. TBMM Kanunlar ve Kararlar, Matbuat Kanunu, July 25, 1931 https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc010/kanuntbmmc010/kanuntbmmc01001881.pdf

Press; the third is opposition parties... in countries with a democratic administration the Parliament's rostrum is free; the press is free and opposition is free.”

Against the second charge, Zekeriya insisted that if asking for a list of war profiteers be published by the parliament is a crime, then he was certainly not the first to be guilty and in fact no less a person than President İsmet İnönü would be guilty of it, since he insisted in his Youth and Sports Day Speech in 1945 that “We will not by any means be involved with the dirt of war profiteers that is found in the administration and the seat of power.”⁴⁹⁹ He also pointed out that Prime Minister Saraçoğlu had also admitted in a statement given to newspapers on December 5, 1945, the day after the Tan Riot, that there had been corruption within the bureaucracy, and that “the best remedy is to feed the stomachs of the bureaucrats.” Given these statements, Zekeriya wondered why it should be any surprise to the government that rumors and gossip about war profiteers and corrupt officials had spread amongst the populace, and that a member of the press should request clarity on the issue from state officials. He again appealed to the court's sense of patriotism by insisting that in this situation “I wished to do nothing more than to cleanse the regime's internal enemies and bring about a shiny and clean situation. In any country, this is the first goal of any honorable journalist.” If the existence of rumors, fed by the regime, of war profiteers was not enough to justify the requests Zekeriya was making, he reiterated the specifics of the original reporting – that in 1939 it was discovered that Celal Bayar, who was then Prime Minister, was implicated in a corruption scandal with a business operation in Istanbul, prompting both his resignation and a fact-finding mission to Europe to produce a list of state officials who held money in foreign banks. In fact, the question of this report was, Zekeriya points out, revealed in a statement from the Prime Minister on December 7, 1945 to have been discussed in Party Group meetings, and that claimed the report *Tan* was searching for was not found and there was

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 25-26, the speech Zekeriya quotes was delivered on May 19, 1945.

no truth to these rumors. For Zekeriya, the fact that his newspaper prompted this response was simply part of doing his service, and he saw no crime in that. Lastly, he again appealed to patriotism, and Turkish nationalists' self-comparison to Europe by pointing out that although Turkey did not fight the war, it was equally a victim of war profiteering as many European nations, and that since the end of the war Holland, France, Italy, and several Balkan countries have enacted laws that demand war profiteers return their wealth to their nations. "Is it then a crime for us to invite those who made wealth at the cost of impoverishing our people to be accountable in front of the nation?" he asks. Against the final charge Zekeriya asserted that the crime of insulting the honor and dignity of an official depends on criminal intent (*kasit*), but that in his writings, "there is no criminal intent, there is defense (*müdafaa*)." He again reiterates here that his writing was equally a response to attacks, indeed subtle claims of war profiteering, made against him by the CHP-sponsored newspaper in Sivas, *Ülke*, against which he claims, "Every day, I am ready to provide my entire income account to the nation. If those who ask after my accounts are committing a crime, how is it that I am in your presence for committing the same?"⁵⁰⁰

To close his defense, Zekeriya addressed the conception of press freedom offered by the prosecutor. The suggestion by the prosecutor that bounds on speech and press freedom must be asserted by the state, and enforced through prosecutions such as this one, deeply disturbed Zekeriya Sertel. He saw this accusation as not only an attempt to silence a single critic of the regime, but as part of a wider campaign against press freedom that was being affected by the state. He asserted that "the goal of the thoughts counted as crimes in my writing is freedom" and he proceeded to provide four examples of how his present prosecution was thoroughly out of character with the democratic tradition. In the first, he notes that the American President Franklin

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, 27-30

Roosevelt had, throughout his tenure, and particularly in 1940 had sustained violent attacks from some corners of the American press, and “at one point the attacks reached the degree of personal assault (*şahsı tecavüz*), slanderous (*iftira*), and false allegations (*isnat*).” Despite the fact that these attacks even came from within his own party and suggested he was using his state authority to enrich himself, Zekeriya pointed out that, “Roosevelt did not bring a suit against these journalists who made false allegations; he did not attempt to shut the mouths of those who published this; he did not, and could not, condescend to those journalists who insult the President or call him a traitor.” Likewise, in a second example drawn from one of the articles he was being prosecuted for, the First Lady did not bring a suit against the person who wrote her a letter accusing her corruption in her industrial holdings, nor against the newspaper that published it. As a third example, Zekeriya pointed out that Neville Chamberlain was accused of “staining the honor, dignity and station of England” after signing the Munich Agreement, since he had investments in German manufacturing. Like his American counterparts, Chamberlain did not bring a suit against his critics, instead he took the rostrum of the House of Commons and said, “It is because of your freedom to speak like this that we are persevering through all of these disasters.” Lastly, and most powerfully, Zekeriya brought the court’s attention to the kicker of his two articles, “how many come out pure and sparkling,” which was drawn from the Ottoman poet Tevfik Fikret – himself a staunch critic of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Zekeriya then explains how his present situation compares unfavorably not only to the standard bearers of democracy, but to the regime which stood in complete anathema to the values of the Turkish Republic,

The question asked in my writing, “how many will come out pure and sparkling” are not my own words. This was said forty years ago by Tevfik Fikret. At the time that Fikret asked this question, Abdülhamid’s tyranny was reigning. That time did not know the freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of conscience. One could not speak of accountability in front of the nation. In a situation and a time such as this no suit was brought against Tevfik Fikret, nor was any legal proceeding, nor was his writing called into account for asking this question.

Forty years later, in an era of freedom and democracy, I asked the same question and for that I have endured legal proceedings and I am brought before your honor as a criminal. Is the Republican administration not to exceed the levels of freedom of criticism, speech and thought set by the rule of Abdülhamid's tyranny? Is this the public prosecutor's understanding of freedom? This is not the truth.

Zekeriya went on to enumerate the laws, constitutional articles, and statements of the current President that protect criticism of the state and freedom of the press. He closed his defense by stressing the importance of the judge's decision, "This suit is a historic case that will determine in front of the eyes of the nation and the world if freedom and democracy in this country can still be slaughtered or not slaughtered (*boğazlanabilip boğazlanamıyacağını*) if thought can break its chains or not... The decision that you give will not remain in the four walls of this courtroom."⁵⁰¹

In the second trial, Zekeriya was joined by his wife Sabiha and Cami Baykurt to defend articles they wrote in late August and early September 1945 assessing Turkey's role in joining the United Nations and the possibility of multiparty elections in the coming year. In the indictment, Assistant Prosecutor Hicabi Dinç once again accused Zekeriya Sertel of insulting the Grand National Assembly by insinuating that its members were incompetent and that the Assembly "responded to the base of opposition with a degree of ignorance that was far from humanity and with a tyrannical spirit."⁵⁰² Sabiha Sertel was accused of the same, and Dinç added that she had accused the majority of "using a radio interference machine [*parazit makinesi*] as a signal to silence the opposition and truly departing from political decorum to the point of whistling and stomping feet and banging on desks to silence them."⁵⁰³ Cami Baykurt was accused mainly of threatening the personal safety of members of the Assembly's majority.⁵⁰⁴ Taken together, Dinç argued that "it is understood that while cloaked in the mask of criticism the ideas put forth and the

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, 30-35

⁵⁰² Ibid, 66

⁵⁰³ Ibid

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid

general meaning of the opinions with these publications [the defendants] affronted and dishonored the lofty status of the Grand National Assembly and the Republic.”⁵⁰⁵

Even more than the previous trial, the accusations and issues at the center of this trial were purely political and ideological. None of the articles mentioned by the prosecution go as far as Zekeriya’s previous articles that insinuated corruption on the part of the CHP. Zekeriya’s supposedly incriminating article, “Can We Wait for Something from the Government and the Assembly?” published August 22, 1945, casted doubt on the prospects for truly fair elections, criticized Prime Minister Saraçoğlu’s claim that the Turkish regime’s vitality and democratic nature was proved merely by its having escaped entanglement in the war, and called for a revision of laws restricting the freedom of speech, particularly Article 50 of the Press Law.⁵⁰⁶ Sabiha’s article, published September 3rd and titled “The Cry of the Consenting”, indeed mentions radio interference as the indictment accused, but the offending sentence is clearly a metaphor – the article criticizes the Press Law and the power the governing party has to censor dissenting voices, which often occurred by disrupting speeches from opposition members on the floor of the Assembly.⁵⁰⁷ Cami Baykurt’s incriminating text took the occasion of the debate over the constitution of the United Nations to offer an abstract lesson on “The Historical Role of the Intellectual Class.”⁵⁰⁸ Accordingly, the defense statements reflected the political nature of the crimes with which they had been charged.

Zekeriya’s defense immediately set the terms of the trial on a political plane, “I am here to proclaim pride in my own name. Because this trial is not a trial over a measly insult, it is a trial

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid

⁵⁰⁶ M. Zekeriya Sertel, “Hükûmet ve Meclisten bir şey bekliyebilir miyiz?” originally *Tan* August 22, 1945, reprinted in *Davamız ve Müdafamız*, 49-51.

⁵⁰⁷ Sabiha Sertel, “Muvafakatin Feryadı” originally *Tan* September 3, 1945, reprinted in *Davamız ve Müdafamız*, 52-3.

⁵⁰⁸ Cami Baykurt, “Münevver Sınıfın Tarihi Rolü” originally in *Tan* September 5, 1945, reprinted in *Davamız ve Müdafamız*, 54-57

for the freedom and democracy of the country.” Zekeriya argued that the prosecutor “while choosing articles in which I have written in defense of freedom and democracy, had continuously worked to surely incriminate me, and whether he wanted to or not, brought me into the place of hero in this trial,” and that the chance to defend these values in court represented “the most honorable and pleasurable stage of my life.”⁵⁰⁹ He asserted that his editorial, which followed İsmet İnönü’s August 19 speech on Turkey’s signing of the United Nations charter that had called for the reform of laws that may be acting as a barrier to democratization, had “taken inspiration from these signals from the President, and I was searching for what type of changes to the law would be necessary for the progression of democracy in the country.”⁵¹⁰ He went on to point out that the 159th Article of the Criminal Code, under which he was being charged, pertained only to personal insults against members of parliament or the Republican government, and that he made no such personal remark in his writings only criticism of the political situation generally. He pointed out that the indictment offered a new interpretation of the term “insult” (*hakaret*), meaning an “affront (*tahkir*), contempt (*hor görme*), dishonor (*tezyif*), belittling (*küçültme*), [or] humiliation (*aşağılama*)” and argued that, “if we understood an insult this way, it will become necessary to deny the opposition. Why? Because in a democracy the role of the opposition is to use contempt, belittlement, and humiliation while criticizing and mocking [*tehzip ederek*] the majority by any means in any situation.”⁵¹¹ Like in his previous defense, Zekeriya compared his present situation to that of the opposition press in western democracies like the United States and Great Britain, but, acknowledging that “these are countries that have been living and maturing democracy for ages. You can say that they are not examples for us...” he also compared Turkey’s progress to Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania, countries that had more recently become independent and shared an Ottoman past to one extent or another, and in which, he argued, one could criticize

⁵⁰⁹ *Davamız ve Müdafamız*, 68

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid*, 69-70.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid*, 71-2

the government to a greater degree despite the fact that each country was under a form of military occupation at the present moment.⁵¹²

Beyond the issue of freedom of speech and democratization, Zekeriya also made the case that the targeting of *Tan* writers was blatantly ideological. To prove this, he read a few excerpts of articles published by noted liberal journalist Ahmet Emin Yalman in his newspaper *Vatan* in July and August 1945. The articles had assailed the single party system and the selection of candidates for the parliamentary elections, saying that because the party approved all of the candidates on the ballot in advance, “in truth, it is not an election, it is an appointment” and another, penned the same day as the one Zekeriya had been arrested for, suggested that the entire parliament should be retired with a pension.⁵¹³ Zekeriya argued that “the prosecution did not find that the degree of belittlement of the Grand National Assembly in the opinion of the people to have passed the position of an insult. Because according to the measurements he uses it was not possible to find a criminal component.”⁵¹⁴ He then quoted a lengthy piece of legislation arguing that individual words and sentences cannot be taken out of their original context and given legal force.⁵¹⁵ Following these lines of argument, he came to the conclusion that the prosecutor could not find “the reason for the actions against Tan to take lawful or judicial paths, so it became necessary to search for political justifications. To put it another way, this trial is not a judicial trial, it can only be a political trial.”⁵¹⁶ As to what the political crime the Sertels had committed was, Zekeriya had a clear answer:

The atmosphere of freedom was spreading and as criticism was increasing the People’s Party and their government became uncomfortable, they began to be frustrated. Because

⁵¹² Ibid, 72-5

⁵¹³ Ibid, 76-77

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, 77

⁵¹⁵ Ibid, 78

⁵¹⁶ Ibid, 79

as the press began to use their freedom and right to criticism, the totalitarian character of the government's mistakes, laws and administration came into the square.

However, the government did not close newspapers using the rights that were afforded to it by Article 50 of the Press Law. Because in a democratic country, it is a beastly thing to close a newspaper as understood by the Americans, who were assured that the government would no longer close a newspaper without cause. At the same time, we found out that an international commitment had been made that we would observe human rights and basic freedoms as condition of entering the United Nations' society.⁵¹⁷

Zekeriya proceeded to argue that the destruction of *Tan* press on December 4, 1945 was instigated by agents of the People's Party as a method for dealing with the perceived problem of a critical press without skirting the newly evolving democratic norms of the postwar environment. He noted that the Party Group, Prime Minister, and Justice Minister had all mentioned the possibility of a trial against the Sertels in the wake of the riot, and argued that the reason they were being brought to trial under these seemingly flimsy accusations of insulting Parliament was because no proof could be found tying them to the Soviet Union.⁵¹⁸ In his closing paragraphs, Zekeriya plead with the judge, imploring him to recognize that the courts were the last line of defense against despotism in his country, "*Tan* has been closed, the *Tan*-ists have been imprisoned, the newspapers are silenced and the opposition has been frightened. Our only consolation and our only hope is that the preservation of the court's honor and dignity will be scrupulously and sensitively found."⁵¹⁹

Zekeriya's impassioned argument against the impartiality of the prosecution's case, and defense of a democratic society was intensified by Sabiha's defense, which veered at times into a stinging mockery of the prosecution's charges. Before reviewing her article and the charges against her, Sabiha admonished the police for "taking me from my house in the middle of the night like a thief, like a murderer," for writing an article that was meant to come to the defense of

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, 82

⁵¹⁸ Ibid, 82-3

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 85

opposition parliamentarians, namely Fuat Köprülü and a few of his friends, who had their speeches drowned out by a jeering crowd in parliament when they had attempted to address potential reforms in light of the United Nations accords.⁵²⁰ Then addressing the charges against her directly, Sabiha sarcastically admonished the prosecution's mendacious understanding of her writing,

I am an admirer of the prosecutor's talent, breadth of intellectual strengths, powerful imagination, and interpretive capabilities in this accusation. However, I have happened upon a few grammatical errors. Because the counsel for the prosecution's work has been careless, subject, predicate, the object of the simile that is being made have been confused. The subject that is being criticized in this writing is not the racket made by the representatives, it is the majority representative's silencing of the opposition representatives. In this respect, the racket is not fundamental, power is. The representatives' pounding of their feet to make a racket is thereby similar to radio interference. Radio interference is being compared to the racket. In the manner of an anecdote, the comparisons written in this writing are a literary comparison. The Assembly neither resembles a radio machine nor an interference with the radio.⁵²¹

After this rebuke, Sabiha elevated her argument to a defense of a critical press in a multiparty democracy. She repeated similar examples of press criticism in the United Kingdom and France, and warned of the dangers of criminalizing dissent on the eve of the first proper multiparty parliamentary elections in the history of the Turkish Republic, "If the People's Party counts criticism directed towards it as a crime, that means that tomorrow, criticisms of the activities and program of the Democrat Party, the National Development Party, or others will also be a crime."⁵²² She recalled a moment in an earlier hearing where she had asked the prosecution whether the charges were politically motivated, the prosecutor denied that accusation, stating that he was acting in the "public interest" (*amme menfaati*). Sabiha wondered aloud, "if the prosecutor

⁵²⁰ Ibid, 86-7

⁵²¹ Ibid, 88

⁵²² Ibid, 92

is acting in the public interest, why did he not see it necessary to bring prosecution against those who destroyed Tan Press?”⁵²³

Sabiha defended her own writing as having made explicit arguments for broader democratic reform, “In this writing and in many of my other writings I have defended the transition to a true democracy in Turkey, bringing an end to the single party system, choosing national representatives with a free election, raising the level of welfare for the people, the prevention of graft and profiteering, and likewise any of the people’s worries as being in the public interest and the people’s interest.”⁵²⁴ It is clear from her line of argument that she saw her statement as a final chance to defend her reputation and career in front of the Turkish people, but more importantly, to highlight the precarious point at which democracy in Turkey had arrived. Unlike Zekeriya’s more clinical dissection of the charges against them, Sabiha’s defense centered on the argument for a free and open multiparty democracy, and the fundamental role that critics such as herself played in the health of that democracy. She defended her criticism of the regime as productive, “Criticism and debate of the economic, social, and political mistakes of the People’s Party and the government are not destructive, their true connotation is constructive,” and that she desired changes to laws to make the country “based on more free and democratic principles, on the principles of a society that guarantees human rights...”⁵²⁵ She forwarded, in broad terms, an argument for the power of criticism and dialecticism in a democratic society, “Criticism is not a mask, nor is it a suit of armor that girds and shelters its ideas and intentions...” While defending a given thesis, the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis come out from this criticism and debate, from the collision of ideas. The motor of progress is criticism.”⁵²⁶ Sabiha directly compared the criminalization of her criticism to the draconian censorship laws under fascist Italy,

⁵²³ Ibid, 93

⁵²⁴ Ibid, 94

⁵²⁵ Ibid, 95

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 96

Germany and Hungary, and the shielding of those who had wrecked their printing house the previous December from criminal charges to the protection afforded fascist protestors by Jean Chiappe, the right-wing Prefect of Police in Paris during the 1930s.⁵²⁷

Sabiha emphasized the backwards step that their indictment represented, citing President İnönü's May 19, 1944 speech – the same that denounced the racist-Turanists two weeks after their arrests – as a “harbinger of the transition to a wider democracy” and noting that this commitment had, in her opinion, been partially substantiated by a second speech, at the opening of the Grand National Assembly in September 1945 that mentioned the need to amend Article 50 of the Press Law and other anti-democratic laws, as well as the signing of the United Nations accords. In light of this, “For us to be brought into court for a crime such as this after the signing of the United Nations Constitution represents an antinomy.”⁵²⁸ She saw her prosecution as a distinct departure from the meaning of Turkey's signature to the UN accords, which she understood, according to a statement she quoted from the American Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, as protecting “individual human rights irrespective of differences in race, religion, or sex...”⁵²⁹ In her closing, she emphasized to the judge what was at stake in his decision,

In this historic courtroom, the decision that the high court will give will not only concern the relevance of [Turkey's] international reputation, it will be historic for justice, it will be an important decision for the independence of the court. I have mounted a defense of a Turkey that is free and democratic as an honorable mission that gives accountability to the country. I await a decision from the high court that will realize such an honorable mission with the vigorous tranquility of a citizen.⁵³⁰

Taken together, Sabiha and Zekeriya's defenses characterized the trial's political nature, but also brought the full tension of Turkey's precarious transitional status to bear on the court's decision.

⁵²⁷ Ibid, 97-8. Sabiha specifically cites fascist raids of newspapers and bookstores that occurred on May 16, 1936. I have not yet been able to find a reference to this

⁵²⁸ Ibid, 99-100.

⁵²⁹ Ibid, 100

⁵³⁰ Ibid, 102

The initial decision found all three parties guilty, but not before completing a similar set of linguistic acrobatics to those used to convict the Pan-Turanists. The judge began with what seems like an assent to the defense, claiming that in Zekeriya's article, "even if the words directed at the government (*hükümet*) are severe, they do not convey the meaning of the words dishonor (*tezyif*) and affront (*tahkir*)" and that Sabiha's article, "does not have the character of dishonoring or affronting the spiritual personality of the government (*hükümetin manevi şahsiyetini*), not in a word and sentence and aggregate meaning."⁵³¹ Yet, the judge almost immediately turned to parse the meaning of the Criminal Code's Article 159 in a less favorable light, "Nevertheless, according to the Turkish Criminal Code's 159th article, the crimes of dishonoring and affronting the Grand National Assembly and the spiritual personality of the government are separate from one another, each are individual crimes."⁵³²

The judge decided that while some of Zekeriya's language was ambiguous, one could utilize the unsigned caricatures that appeared alongside his columns, and the comparison he made in his defense statement between his situation and the situation in Mussolini's Italy to say that given the context, "In this heavy meaning and expression, to say that 'the base (*tabanlar*) [of the party] should respond' to the Assembly is an affront to the Assembly."⁵³³ In Sabiha's case, the judge denied her argument that she was criticizing the party, not the parliament on the grounds that, "On the date this writing was published, there was essentially no other party in the Assembly than the Republican People's Party."⁵³⁴ Additionally, he argued Sabiha contradicted herself by stating that making noise in an parliament was a fairly ordinary event, but then in imputing that the noisemaking had become itself, a tactic of the CHP, she dishonored the Assembly. The judge also took time in his decision to address the complaints the Sertels had made regarding the lack of

⁵³¹ Ibid, 110

⁵³² Ibid

⁵³³ Ibid, 111

⁵³⁴ Ibid

arrests or prosecution stemming from the destruction of their printing house the previous December. The judge noted that following changes made to Article 160 of the Criminal Code in 1938, the powers to bring charges under Article 159 were transferred from the individual prosecutors of the republic to the Justice Minister. Because no request for charges was filed in relation to that event, the judge was in no place to comment on whether or why charges were not brought, out of respect for the formality of the law.⁵³⁵ Ultimately, he found all of the defendants guilty, handing down a one year prison sentence each to Zekeriya and Sabiha, and a reduced sentence to Baykurt, since he was older than sixty-five, of ten months. The Sertels were also assessed with a fine of 2,200 kuruş to cover court fees.⁵³⁶

The second trial concluded in March 1946, but the Sertels, Baykurt, and Dördüncü would successfully win an appeals decision two months later, on May 14, 1946, just two months before the general election. The appeals court unequivocally demolished the reasoning behind the initial decision, providing dissections of the reasoning behind each conviction. In acknowledging that Zekeriya Sertel's article's main purpose was to call for, "the transition to a true democracy in a broader sense in the country" after the signing of the United Nations Constitution, the appeals court saw that, "the court had decided that these sentences were included in [the meaning] of dishonor and affront, but a justification [*mucip sebebi*] was not shown."⁵³⁷ In Sabiha's case, the court clearly noted that although it was not mentioned in the article, it had appeared shortly after Fuat Köprülü had attempted to convey suggestions for changes to the Press Law and Criminal Code that had been articulated by Adnan Menderes, only to be shouted down in the Assembly in precisely the manner described by Sabiha Sertel. Additionally, as the court had argued for an equation between insulting the Assembly and insulting the Republican People's Party, the appeals

⁵³⁵ Ibid, 114

⁵³⁶ Ibid, 115-16

⁵³⁷ Ibid, 125

court found that, “While it is true that at the date of the publication there could not be representatives of any party in the Assembly other than the Republican People’s Party, it is possible to discover that a minority existed that had separated from the party.”⁵³⁸ Ultimately, the appeals court granted the defendants’ release from prison and the return of 500 kuruş in inappropriate fines.⁵³⁹

The trials were followed closely by officials representing the United States and the Soviet Union. Despite having maintained a close relationship with the Sertels throughout the years, and the generally sympathetic tone taken throughout their internal correspondence on the trial, the American’s internal view of the initial verdict in the case privileged the draconian Press Law over the obvious political nature of the trial. Writing to John Evarts Horner, the Second Secretary of the Ankara Embassy, Ali Nur Bozcalı – an employee of the Istanbul Consulate and the most trusted interpreter of events in Istanbul in the employ of the American legation – concluded his summary of the trial by writing, “Hardly any doubt can prevail on the point that, in view of the existing legislation, the decision of the court was a just one... The defense of the Sertels attracted considerable attention here, but in view of the political leanings ascribed to them, did not arouse much sympathy.”⁵⁴⁰ This attitude reflects the instrumental approach the Americans took towards their partners in the Turkish intelligentsia, and clearly demonstrates that a vague measure of the sympathies of the Turkish public took primacy over their own concrete, detailed, and much more realistic assessments of the people on which they depended for quality intelligence. For the Sertels, this cold and calculated relationship might partly explain why when it came time to leave Turkey in 1950 they chose the Soviet Union over the United States, despite their long relationship with American culture and society and the fact that their daughter and only grandchildren were

⁵³⁸ Ibid, 127

⁵³⁹ Ibid, 128

⁵⁴⁰ Ali Nur Bozcalı to John Evarts Horner, March 29, 1946. Ankara Embassy General Records RG 84 UD 3287 Box 102

living there with their American son-in-law. While Soviet documents were not reviewed for this dissertation, the American Embassy also kept track of Soviet publications such as TASS, *Iszvestia*, and *Pravda*. The Deputy Chief of the Moscow Embassy George Kennan circulated a telegram with TASS' reaction to the Sertel verdict on March 25th which commented on Sabiha's defense as having, "...subjected prosecutors activities to withering criticism [sic] demonstrated groundlessness of charges and declared that the trial itself was political trial and indicated democracy does not exist in Turkey."⁵⁴¹ Little reaction to this news is recorded in the American archives, but it is possible that it might have affected any American decision to intervene, as they had done on behalf of the Ankara university professors who were suspended in the wake of the December 4, 1945 riot that destroyed the Sertels' printing press.

The two trials and appeals cases of the Sertels occupied a transitional space between the announcement of the Democrat Party's formation in late November 1945, and the run up to parliamentary elections on July 21, 1946. As such, we can observe some important political changes that were occurring in this time of transition that might help explain both the Sertels' acquittal and the troubles they would face as they sought to reclaim their place in Turkey's public sphere. On the domestic front, there are signs that the initial prosecution of the Sertels may have been subject to the outlook of Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu, who was widely considered to have propelled closer relations with Nazi Germany earlier in the war. In an OWI report filed at the American Embassy on December 26, OWI staffer G.H. Damon reported on a one and a half hour conversation he had five days earlier aboard a train with Ahmet Emin Yalman, who had previously been engaged in what appears to have been a long, contentious conversation with

⁵⁴¹ Telegram, George F. Kennan to Ambassador Edwin Wilson, Sent March 23, 1946, Received March 25, 1946. Ankara Embassy General Records RG 84 UD 3287 Box 102

Saraçoğlu.⁵⁴² Yalman reports that Saraçoğlu was particularly suspicious of Yalman, stating that “his type were more dangerous than out-and-out Communists like Sertel and Baykurt because Yalman disguises his real nature.”⁵⁴³ Presumably, the “type” referred to here were center-oriented liberals who supported the DP, but also defended the Sertels in the wake of the Tan Olayı. The accusation of a “disguise” here carries added weight since Yalman, like Sabiha Sertel, came from a Sabbatean, or *dönme*, community in Salonica. However, by the time Zekeriya and Sabiha were brought in front of a judge in January 1946, rumors had already begun to swirl that Saraçoğlu was likely to be pushed out of office due to his previous affinity for Germany, in favor of a more Anglo-American friendly alternative like Education Minister Hasan Ali Yücel or Foreign Minister Hasan Saka.⁵⁴⁴ Ultimately, Saraçoğlu would hang on until after the elections in July, stepping down on August 7th in favor of the long time parliamentarian and former Minister of the Interior, Recep Peker. Additionally, there were signs some amends were being extended for the damage done during the Tan Olayı, as Berrak Bookstore, one of the Russian-owned establishments wrecked in the course of the riot, had reopened in January after repairs were furnished by an unnamed patron.⁵⁴⁵

Conclusion: The Birth of the Cold War Conflict in Turkey

The fortunes of both the leftist and Pan-Turkist camp following these trials demonstrates the changing ideological grounds on which Turkish politics would operate in the Cold War era.

⁵⁴² G.H. Damon and Ahmet Emin Yalman, “OWI Report of Conversation” December 26, 1945. Ankara Embassy Classified General Records NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 16

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Robert B. Macatee [Istanbul Consul General] to Ambassador Edwin Wilson, January 28, 1946. Ankara Embassy Classified General Records NARA RG 84 UD 3288 Box 19. Saka would eventually succeed Recep Peker as Prime Minister in September 1947, Yücel would leave parliament after Peker’s succession in August 1946 to return to his former career as a journalist.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, Macatee’s report mentions rumors that the Turkish government paid damages as high as 250,000 liras to the owners of Berrak, but sources considered more trustworthy by the American Embassy believed the repairs were financed by the Russian government “which had always supplied the firm with a larger part of the merchandise for sale.”

As Jacob Landau characterized the events, even though the period between 1944 and 1947 witnessed severe repression of Pan Turkist ideas, “the campaign against the movement in general served the Pan-Turkist cause admirably, giving Pan-Turkism the extensive free publicity which it had long desired,” and that with the final acquittal in 1947, “Pan-Turkism had been vindicated by the Courts as neither subversive nor illegal.”⁵⁴⁶ For aggressive nationalist movements in Turkey, these trials would serve as their origin story, the initial instantiation of their grievance with opponents amongst the left and with the Kemalists, and, particularly considering the accusations of torture, a political narrative of victimhood that can often serve as a seductive element. For the Kemalists, as Turkey moved closer and closer to the anti-communist orbit, would learn to first legally forgive, then politically tolerate the Pan Turkists as their attention turned towards combatting real and perceived Soviet designs on Turkish territory.⁵⁴⁷ One cannot point to similar sorts of redemption in the eyes of the state for the careers of leftists targeted in the *Tan* trial, and other incidents of repression, such as the sacking of leftist professors at Ankara University in 1947 – many of whom were antagonists of the Turanists, who, perhaps not coincidentally, had just been finally acquitted of their charges.

In his recent biography of Niyazi Berkes, Şakir Dinçşahin characterizes the shifts in ideological contestation during and after World War II as one in which, “the ideological conflict between ultranationalists and progressives was replaced with an ideological antagonism between

⁵⁴⁶ Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995), 117-118

⁵⁴⁷ Umut Üzer argues that this period represented “the breaking point between certain nationalists and the Kemalists” but this is somewhat at odds with the overall trajectory of the political movement that claims these thinkers as their spiritual and political forebears. While some figures, like Türkkan, would live most of the rest of their lives after prison in exile, Nihal Atsız would continue to write after being released from prison, and enjoy a cult following up to the present day, Alparslan Türkeş would go on to found the Nationalist Action Party, which is one of the longest lived and consistently represented opposition parties in parliament. See Üzer, *An Intellectual History of Turkish Nationalism*, 161.

the left and the right.”⁵⁴⁸ What I have shown in this chapter, and in the previous chapter, is one example in which a violent spectacle – the Tan Riot – and the legal persecution of regime opponents helped bring about this shift. Dinçşahin argues that the contested elections of 1946, and what was perceived as a surprising success for the Democrat Party (they won 61 seats in the Assembly to the CHP’s 395), prompted an acceleration of repressive measures against freedom of the press and academic freedom.⁵⁴⁹ It is true that the tactics of repression demonstrated in these two chapters would be reprised over the remainder of the 1940s – Pan-Turkists would loudly accuse the government of torture during the imprisonment of their comrades, anti-communist demonstrations against leftist professors at Ankara University would result in criminal charges and dismissals for Berkes and other members of his *Yürt ve Dünya* cohort, and marginally leftist publications like *Yön (Direction)*, *Gün (Day)*, and *Marko Paşa* would be routinely shuttered or forced into illicit, underground publication networks. However, one should be careful not to draw too sharp a distinction between the conflicts during and after the war in terms of their intellectual content, and the state’s preferred strategies of tamping them down. After all, the ideological content of the Pan Turkists and the leftists/progressives did not undergo a significant shift that one could credit to the end of the war, and neither did the anti-Russian anxieties that drove Turkish foreign and domestic policy during the war dissipate as Turkey worked to ensconce itself in the Western alliance.

What did change was the language in which this conflict was expressed. In one way, the primary tension of ideological contestation in the single-party era was one between the struggle to define a nation, and the struggle to build a democracy. For Kemalists, the goal was to obliterate this tension – constructing the nation meant grooming national citizens that would serve as a

⁵⁴⁸ Şakir Dinçşahin, *State and Intellectuals in Turkey: The Life and Times of Niyazi Berkes, 1908-1988* (New York: Lexington Books, 2015), xvii

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 77-96

vehicle for political modernization and the transition to democracy. What I have elucidated in this dissertation is that opposition to the Kemalist regime largely expressed itself in terms of a preference for one or the other project – nation building or democratization. The dawn of the Cold War, and the self-conscious transition fostered by the İnönü regime towards greater focus on building a democracy, meant that the internal dynamics of ideological contestation – fundamentally an internal struggle over what ideas ought to shape Turkish society – were reshaped to suit the global context of a struggle between Soviet communism and western democracy. While this shift superficially favored increased democratization, the result was an intensified focus on the “enemy within” that painted intellectuals and political figures on the left who were loyal to the Turkish republican project as fifth columnists and enemies of the state. Even as Turkey would slowly open up its electoral democracy to a new, multiparty contest, the legal and public dimensions of democracy would constrict expression, and demolish the careers of some of the most prominent thinkers and cultural producers of the Kemalist era.

CHAPTER SEVEN: “A Turk Named O’Brien”: Bedtime Stories of the Early Turkish Republic from the Memoirs of Sevim Sertel O’Brien

Sevim Sertel O’Brien, the eldest daughter of Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel, was born shortly after the close of World War I in Istanbul. She would follow her parents as an infant to America in 1919 and back to Turkey in 1923 following the close of the War for Independence. Her experiences growing up in that period of rapid change, her college education in Missouri, courtship and marriage to an American journalist named Frank O’Brien, and her adventures as a 1950s housewife in Chevy Chase, Maryland are recorded in an unpublished memoir entitled “A Turk Named O’Brien.” This collection of more than fifty stories was set down sometime in the mid to late 1960s and culled from the stories she would tell her three children, Deniz, Sevim, and Atiye (Tia) before bedtime over the course of the late 1940s and into the 1950s. These reminiscences, all recorded in O’Brien’s slightly idiosyncratic English, represent a fascinating and rare retelling of the history of the single party period and its aftermath through the eyes of a child and young adult. The compilation of the memoir in this manner also is in some way an echo of Sabiha’s own memoirs, first published in 1969, entitled “Roman Gibi” (“Like a Novel”) and dedicated to Deniz, to whom Sabiha wrote, “Now I hear you are performing in a Shakespeare play at your theater club. I am not at the stage, I have played such a small role in your life. I will tell this story to you and my readers once more, like a fairy tale, like a novel.”⁵⁵⁰

The stories are divided roughly in three sections. The stories begin with her return to Istanbul in 1923 and the first section covers her experiences with the social and cultural revolutions of Mustafa Kemal as well as her parents’ travails as intellectuals that often found them at odds with the state. The second section chronicles her return to America for finishing

⁵⁵⁰ Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1978), 8. It’s hard to know whether this was self-conscious, as both texts were being recorded about the same time and correspondence between Sevim and Sabiha has yet to reveal any coordination.

school and her collegiate years at the University of Missouri School of Journalism where she meets her eventual husband Frank O'Brien. Following school, the two of them began work as journalists first in America and then in Turkey and other parts of Europe and the Middle East throughout World War II. The final section describes her experiences after she and her husband return to the United States following the war, two children Denis and Sevim in tow, to raise their family, and a third child Atiye, largely in the Washington, DC suburb of Chevy Chase, Maryland.

What is so fascinating about reading these memoirs in the context of the Sertels' family history, is the rosy perspective that they shed on this period. If one were to read these memoirs in a vacuum, unaware of the history of Sevim Sertel O'Brien's parents, they might read as a Kemalist fairy tale of sorts. In particular, the earliest periods where she expresses profound relief upon hearing about headscarf reform, or later with the alphabet reform, one gets the sense that her own values lined up closely with the Kemalist revolutions. Even her experiences visiting her father while he was imprisoned in Sinop are rather bucolic in their description. However, when one considers the fact that she deliberately chose to raise her children in America, that her own parents were living in exile in Baku while she set down these memoirs, and that she was a regular writer for her parents' opposition newspaper, *Tan*, throughout the war years, the relationship between O'Brien's own nostalgic remembrances of single-party era Turkey and Kemalist politics becomes more complicated. That the memoirs lack the fiery zeal of her parents' writing is perhaps not surprising, but if a reader knew the Sertels only from their newspaper writing in the 1940s, this nostalgia for Kemalist reform, as well as the close cooperation with Americans, might come as a bit of a shock.

This chapter seeks to pick apart the feeling of nostalgia weaved throughout O'Brien's memoirs in an effort to better understand the way this leftist family related to the government whose sovereignty they vigorously supported, but which had disowned them by the dawn of the

multiparty period. I will follow closely from the work of Esra Özyürek, who first articulated the concept of “nostalgia for modernity” in the Turkish context, to try and describe the conditions that produced a memoir like this and to better understand the style of O’Brien’s writing as a kind of “structure of feeling,” to borrow Raymond Williams’ term, rather than as a clean cut product of political ideology.⁵⁵¹ In some ways, Sevim Sertel O’Brien is precisely the sort of character that Özyürek was interested in, loyal to the Turkish republican vision, a supporter of many of the basic tenets and articulations of Kemalist nationalism, but the fact of her oft-dislocated childhood, and her separation from her “homeland” as an adult make it difficult to characterize her articulation of Turkishness as purely typical of nationalist Turks of her era. In many ways, the nostalgic elements of O’Brien’s story represent what Svetlana Boym has called a “reflective nostalgia” that “allows us to distinguish between national memory that is based on a single plot of national identity, and social memory, which consists of collective frameworks that mark but do not define the individual memory.”⁵⁵²

Another critical context for this chapter is the interesting way it fits in with the genre of autobiography and memoir writing in the history of the Turkish republic.⁵⁵³ As detailed in a recent article by Doğan Gürpınar, memoirs of political and cultural figures in Turkey have come largely in two waves. The first following the Democrat Party’s victory in 1950 featured many so-called “Unionists” and tacit supporters of the Ottoman *ancien regime* who found themselves just on the outside of the Kemalist center, albeit comfortably so, after the regime consolidated in the

⁵⁵¹ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), and Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) 128-135.

⁵⁵² Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xviii

⁵⁵³ For an analysis of late Ottoman-era autobiographies, particularly in the context of childhood, see Phillip Wirtz, “Presenting Ottoman Childhoods in Post-Ottoman Autobiographies” in Benjamin C. Fortna, ed., *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After* (Open Access: Brill, 2016).

mid-1920s.⁵⁵⁴ The second wave occurred in the 1990s, and, according to Gürpınar's characterization, focused on cementing an intimate, nostalgic, middle class version of the past by focusing on memoirs of cosmopolitan Ottomans of Izmir or Beyoğlu, and by reviving the softer side of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.⁵⁵⁵ This second wave trained its focus on selling to secular, middle class women. Sevim Sertel O'Brien was a child to parents of the previous generation, but her work here fits very well into the second category insofar as it evokes a personal and intimate connection with the early years of Turkish nationalism.

While Gürpınar trained his sights mainly on former male politicians and officials, Hülya Adak has separately investigated some of the recurrent themes of female autobiographers in the early republican period.⁵⁵⁶ Adak's incisive analysis demonstrated how many female memoirists of the 1920s and 1930s, such as Halide Edib, Sabiha Gökçen or Afet İnan, "excessively promote the public self at the expense of narrating the private," to the point that their own histories are often silenced within their own self-narratives in favor of servicing the paternalistic Kemalist heroic mythos.⁵⁵⁷ Even in the case of the most prominent Turkish feminist and suffragette, Halide Edib, Adak observes that she "self-infantilizes" her private life – in particular her marriage to her

⁵⁵⁴ Doğan Gürpınar, "The Politics of Memoirs and Memoir-Publishing in Twentieth Century Turkey" *Turkish Studies* 13/3, September 2012, 537-557. Hülya Adak has also posited that most memoirs that would fall in this category, as well as memoirs of outright opponents of Mustafa Kemal exist in an explicit intertextual relationship with Mustafa Kemal's famous six-day speech, *Nutuk*. In this sense, we might also examine Sevim Sertel O'Brien's memoir as yet another attempt to provide a parallel interpretation of Turkish modernity to Atatürk's vision. See Hülya Adak, "Who is Afraid of Dr. Rıza Nur's Autobiography" in Olcay Akyıldız, et. al., ed. *Autobiographical Themes in Turkish Literature: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives* (Würzburg: Egon Verlag Würzburg, 2007), 125-141.

⁵⁵⁵ Yet a third wave might yet be identified in the early 21st century: that of religious conservatives who opposed some of Atatürk's secularization policies and who have enjoyed some time in the spotlight under the regime of the Justice and Development Party. For an analysis of one example, see Alexander E. Balistreri, "Turkey's Forgotten Political Opposition: The Demise of Kadırbeyoğlu Zeki Bey, 1919-1927" *Die Welt Des Islams* 55, 2015, 141-185.

⁵⁵⁶ Hülya Adak, "Suffragettes of the empire, daughters of the Republic: Women auto/biographers narrate national history (1918-1935)" *New Perspectives on Turkey* no. 36 (2007), 27-51.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 27-8

second husband, Adnan Adıvar – and even alienates herself from her largest contribution to the cause of the Independence war by idiosyncratically narrating her famous speeches in Sultanahmet square in May and June 1919 in the third person.⁵⁵⁸ Adak then places Sabiha Sertel’s memoir, *Roman Gibi*, in contradistinction to this trend as a woman who aggressively asserted her own vision of the Republic that clashed with the official narrative to the point that it often landed her in front of a judge or behind bars.⁵⁵⁹ Sevim Sertel O’Brien’s memoirs in many ways contrasts from both examples in that the concern of the manuscript is almost entirely her own private life – we hear almost nothing of her public life in Turkey, and very little of it in America – and the ways in which it was affected by the changing political and social climate around her, but also in that it provides a much less critical view on the Kemalist reforms, and is completely silent about Turkish politics after his death in 1938. For this reason, it is necessary to dig into other Sertel family documents, memoirs and materials, as well as Sevim’s own journalistic work, to investigate what might lie behind these silences and how they might illuminate the memoiristic work of some of her more vocal and prominent countrywomen.

As much as it is difficult to parse ideology out of O’Brien’s narrative, dealing with the history implanted in it, and indeed the history of the text itself, is even trickier. Surely O’Brien’s life in between the time she returned with her family to her native country in 1923 and her time spent learning how to get on as an American housewife in the 1950s was more turbulent than her often-amusing prose suggests. O’Brien’s experiences shuttling back and forth between schools in New York, Istanbul, New Jersey and Missouri in the 1920s and 1930s, and running around Europe – two small children in tow – with an American reporter for a husband during World War

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, 30-31, 35-6

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 49-50. There are different kinds of silences in Sabiha Sertel’s work as well, as acknowledged by Adak, her personal journals were lost in the raid of Tan Matbaası on December 4, 1945 and have yet to surface. Similar embargoes on the personal diaries of prominent women of this period, like Atatürk’s wife Latife Hanım, only serve to highlight the depth and variety of political and social experiences these women had of which we still do not know the exact character.

It is represented in the narrative with an appealing attitude of adventure. However, one gets little sense of how much more turbulence and distress were swirling around the Sertel family during these years from these stories. In fact, Sevim Randall, the eldest surviving child of Sevim O'Brien, admitted to me in an interview that she had no idea her grandparents were some sort of famous intellectuals, or even that they were journalists, until her younger sister Tia started digging into the family history a little over a decade ago.⁵⁶⁰

The issue of reception of this text then becomes an important lens through which to analyze its production. According to Atiye [Tia] O'Brien, once the text was completed in the 1960s there was discussion between Sevim and her husband Frank regarding whether they should publish it. The manuscript was eventually offered to Alfred A. Knopf, but was rejected for reasons that are somewhat unclear.⁵⁶¹ Since then, the text has circulated amongst the extended Sertel family by Tia O'Brien, and a copy was given to Sevim Sertel's sister Yıldız, though whether she circulated amongst her circles in Europe and Turkey is unknown.⁵⁶² With this in mind, it is clear that the text has, until now, served mainly as a sort of family heirloom, though we can be reasonably sure that the idea of publishing the manuscript as a sort of history of the period meant for American audiences crossed Sevim's mind while she composed the text. It is possible, given the very political trends in Turkish memoir writing in the 1950s and 1960s, that the apparent lack of political immediacy in Sevim's text, and its nostalgia for a period in Turkish history that had only very recently passed, made the narrative an awkward fit in the publishing

⁵⁶⁰ Phone interview with Sevim Randall, May 31, 2015

⁵⁶¹ Skype interview with Atiye O'Brien, May 24, 2015. According to Atiye, Frank O'Brien had argued against correcting Sevim's spelling, since he thought it represented a more authentic voice. This may have been one of the reasons it was rejected.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

landscape. The picture it paints of Turkey's social and political history is finer, and without a clear reference to a particular ideological project.⁵⁶³

“There is no Statue of Liberty in the Istanbul harbor”

“A Turk Named O'Brien” begins as the Sertels arrive on a ship in the Istanbul harbor in late 1923. Sevim is by her father's side and expresses a great deal of curiosity about this new place, and immediately we are introduced to the figure of Mustafa Kemal,

“Baba,” I asked, “Where is the Statue of Liberty?”

“There is no Statue of Liberty in the Istanbul harbor, *kızım*.”

“Do we not have liberty then?”

“Of course, we do, Sevim,” Baba said with great enthusiasm.

“They have just finished fighting a War of Independence. That is why we are coming back to our country, now.”

“Do they have George Washington?”

“Yes, his name is Mustafa Kemal Pasha.”

“George Washington is Mustafa Kemal Pasha?”

“No no. Kemal Pasha is our hero. He just rescued our country from the enemies that had taken it, like George Washington did for America. Tell me, isn't Istanbul a beautiful city?” my father asked enthusiastically.

“It does not look like New York City,” I said

“It is prettier, isn't it?”

“I guess so. Where is Chrysler Building?”⁵⁶⁴

In a few ways, this opening passage sets up the entire memoir's relationship to Kemalism and Turkey more broadly. Throughout the memoir, Turkey and America are set in comparison to one

⁵⁶³ Many memoirs by Sevim's contemporaries more easily fit into the category of “longing” for an open-ended political project, whereas this text is more representative of a private, but still somewhat political nostalgia. On the distinction between longing and nostalgia, see Charles S. Maier, “The End of Longing? (Notes toward a History of Postwar German National Longing)” in Brady, et al eds., *The Postwar Transformation of Germany: Democracy, Prosperity, and Nationhood* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 271-285.

⁵⁶⁴ “A Turk Named O'Brien” Chapter 1

another, often in distinct relief rather than in similarity. Here, we can see the simple lesson communicated by Zekeriya to Sevim (or perhaps more accurately, from Sevim to her children via the voice of her father) that Mustafa Kemal is a heroic, democratic figure on par with George Washington, but that Istanbul is hardly a city in the same way as New York. There is a tenuous amount of hope placed onto the exchange – according to Zekeriya, Turkey has won liberty, but there is no statue to it in the Istanbul harbor, liberty is at once present but incomplete.

The explanation of the character of Mustafa Kemal is not left entirely to the figure of Zekeriya. In the subsequent chapter, Sevim is awoken early in the morning by the *ezan* and comes upon an unknown elderly woman in the kitchen of her Aunt Fatma's home. The woman, named Salihah, first explains the Muslim prayers to the curious Sevim. Sevim inquires as to what Salihah is praying for, "same as everyone else I guess; to thank Allah for being alive and free again," she replies. Sevim initially finds this to be a novel thing to ask for, since she merely prayed for material possessions in America. Then Salihah tells the story of her involvement in the War of Independence, where she was tasked with covertly transporting ammunition to Turkish soldiers at the front while driving an oxcart full of watermelons. Salihah also gives a standard Turkish nationalist explanation of why the Ottoman Empire was occupied by foreign powers – and "Greece particularly" – which drove Mustafa Kemal to raise an army in Anatolia and drive the Greeks "right into the sea in Smyrna where they had first landed." While there is very little to suggest that Sevim's family encouraged her to be religious – after all Sabiha's family was of a *dönme*, or Sabbatean Jewish, background – the syncopation here of Mustafa Kemal's heroic victory and thanks given to Allah demonstrates the manner in which Kemalist secularization incorporated religious identity and practice.⁵⁶⁵ Sevim neatly sums this relationship up in her

⁵⁶⁵ This formulation of Turkish nationalism and religion in early republican Turkey is a succinct example of the sort of *laïcité* described by Hamit Bozarslan in, "La Laïcité en Turquie" *Matériaux pour la histoire de notre temps*, 78 (2005) p. 42-49

conclusion to this part of the story by exclaiming, “Allah and Mustafa Kemal Pasha! These two names seemed to mean a great deal in Saliha’s life. I was soon to discover that they did in every Turk’s life, including mine.”⁵⁶⁶

It is in these early chapters that we see a clear distinction from other memoirs of women from this period. Whereas many women personalize their relationship with Mustafa Kemal, and insist on including a standard recitation of the national struggle and reforms as part of that relationship, Sevim’s depiction forgoes a complete narrative in favor of putting her own personal experience in the foreground, allowing the politics to happen off-stage and travel through the voices of people she knew intimately.

Playing House in Sinop

In early 1926, shortly after the Sheikh Said rebellion and the institution of the Law of Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sukun Kanunu*), Zekeriya Sertel was apprehended for publishing propagandistic articles that displeased the Kemalist establishment. He was sentenced to internal exile to the Black Sea town of Sinop. During this period, certainly a trying one for the Sertel family, the editorial duties of Zekeriya were handed over to Sabiha and the name of their largest publication, *Resimli Ay*, was temporarily changed to *Sevimli Ay* – a nod to their daughter who spent most of that summer visiting her exiled father.

In the memoir, the moment of crisis around Zekeriya’s imprisonment in Sinop is dealt with swiftly. Sevim comes downstairs on a Sunday to discover many of the female members of her family crowded around Sabiha, who was trying to make sense of the announcement that her husband was to be “fortress-bound at Sinop.” As the family stresses over what the meaning of this term might be, Sevim consults her younger sister Yıldız as to what all the commotion is

⁵⁶⁶ “A Turk Named O’Brien” Chapter 2

about. The precocious youngster replies, “They are going to put Baba in a fortress, just like the princess in the stories. Isn’t that wonderful?” and proceeds to skip blithely away.⁵⁶⁷ When she inquires amongst the adults about the matter, it is revealed that an article published by a talented cartoonist, Jevat,⁵⁶⁸ had angered Ankara and that Zekeriya would be sent to Sinop as punishment. As they are explaining this distressing situation, and Sevim is comforted by her grandmother, the story is again comically punctuated by the on-the-loose toddler, Yıldız, who manages to pull down a clothing rack, causing a commotion.

Eventually, Zekeriya’s internal exile in Sinop is presented as serendipitous since it provided an opportunity for the young Sevim to spend the summer in a different part of the country. The primary theme of Sevim’s time in Sinop is the ways the people of the Black Sea behaved differently than the Istanbulites she had become used to – particularly their speech patterns. In essence, she uses it as a moment to describe some typically Anatolian folkways that have been essentialized as emblematic of Turkish identity and culture since the Kemalist period. On the rowboat coming ashore to Sinop, Sevim misses the captain’s order to sit down, and is knocked unconscious to the floor by an oncoming wave – she missed the order because she didn’t

⁵⁶⁷ “A Turk Named O’Brien” Chapter 15. The word they are struggling over in this story is almost certainly “kalebentlik” which is a kind of neologism, forging the Turkish “kale” (“castle” or “fortress”) with the English “bound”. What it reveals is how unfamiliar the Sertel family was with the typical construction of Black Sea fortress-towns, many of which were confined within rather old city walls.

⁵⁶⁸ “Jevat” in this story is Cevat Şakir, more popularly known as Halikarnas Balıkcısı (The Fisherman of Halicarnassus), who was imprisoned with Zekeriya after publishing an article in *Resimli Ay* entitled “Asker kaçakları nasıl asılır” (“How will the military whistleblowers hang?”), which was purportedly about a previous stint in prison where he recounted secrets fed to him by soldiers he was imprisoned with. The eventual sentence, handed down by the extraordinary Independence Tribunals by the infamous “Kel” Ali, was for three years, of which Zekeriya served one and a half. Zekeriya, for his part, describes his arrest and trial in rather harrowing terms, but recalls “strolling out of the courtroom with our arms swaying” after escaping what he thought was a sure death sentence. M. Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 143-157. Sabiha and Yıldız also retell the story of Zekeriya’s arrest and sentencing in their respective memoirs, but Sevim’s is the only one to detail the fortress-bound life in Sinop. Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* (Can Yayınları edition), 98-99, Yıldız Sertel, *Annem: Sabiha Sertel Kimdi Neler Yazdı* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993) 127-132.

understand the dialect. She would quickly befriend two teenaged boys – Aziz and Lutfu – who would show her around their prison/summer home. She is introduced first to Lutfu’s mother, who she finds “sitting by the window and in front of something. It was not a piano. It was as big as a piano but nothing like it.”⁵⁶⁹ Lutfu’s mother is obviously sitting at a loom weaving a rug in the style traditional to many Anatolian villages. Sevim then explains how Lutfu, his mother, and his sister Hayriye typify the Anatolian family – the family made their living selling handicrafts and by tending a small tobacco plot. During playtime, Sevim notices that they play “house” differently in Sinop than in Istanbul – none of them pretend families had fathers, since they had all died in the War for Independence.

Sevim clearly formed a close connection with the people she met as a child in Sinop, and it is the only chapter in the memoir meant to explain Turkish life outside of Istanbul or Ankara. Sinop is thus a stand-in for the typically romanticized version of Turkish life, the source of the ethnic heritage she wished to pass on to her own children. But the other explicit example of this chapter, and one that is perhaps the most dominant theme of the memoir, is Sevim’s adaptability to her environment. Throughout the chapter, Sevim is chastised by Aysha Abla for having dirty hands – from assisting Hayriye’s family with the tobacco harvest – dirty feet – from running around without shoes, like the village kids – and a dirty tongue – since she had managed to pick up the Sinop dialect that had confused her at the beginning of her trip. Though her older “sister” worries that she will be scorned on her return to Istanbul as a “villager,” Zekeriya is more abiding of Sevim’s knack for mimicry, “You will see,” he tells them both, “when Sevim is back in Istanbul, it won’t take her long to speak like her friends there. Then she will be imitating them. Meanwhile, let us just let her have fun.”⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ “A Turk Named O’Brien” Chapter 15.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

War years

At the outset of her young adulthood, Sevim Sertel O'Brien meant to follow in the path of her parents and become a journalist. Having graduated from journalism school at the University of Missouri, she began sending dispatches and short columns back to her parents which were published occasionally in a second or third page column entitled "Gözüme Çarpanlar" ("What Caught My Eye"). Very little of her work as a columnist is recorded in "A Turk Named O'Brien" but the few instances where it does appear are instructive in understanding Sevim's self-understanding as both an insider and an outsider, both in America and in Turkey.

The story behind one of Sevim's first self-appointed assignments, while she was on summer vacation, is told in a humorous set piece on the Orient Express when she was returning to Istanbul for a visit in the mid-1930s. While the train was travelling through Yugoslavia, Sevim realized that she is sharing the train with the Galatasaray football club. A few of the players, who figure she is an American based on her clothing and her Brownie camera, ask her to take their picture and an interview ensues. Comically, Sevim notes in the story how she pretended not to hear the young boy's off-color comments – and subsequent pleas for civility in the presence of a cute American journalist. When she inquires as to how well the team did on their string of games in Yugoslavia, the boys debate in Turkish about whether they should lie and say they won, but ultimately admit they were defeated in their three matches. A curious Sevim wonders how this could be, since Galatasaray was supposed to be one of the best Turkish clubs, just as one of the players falls out of the luggage rack, where he had been sleeping, who exclaims in Turkish, "Damn the club management! Putting us eight to a compartment just like pigs, in third class yet. My bones ache!" When she inquired about the situation, the boys simply say the player, whose

name is Hafiz, is quite athletic and likes to sleep in odd places. “Just as I thought, typically Turkish, they were not going to share their troubles or embarrassment with a stranger.”⁵⁷¹

Another of the players quickly changes the subject by showing Sevim a picture of his girlfriend, asking her opinion of her looks. It turns out the girl was someone Sevim was already familiar with, though the name is left out of the narrative. She responds, “She is pretty. Are many Turkish girls pretty? I understand that they do not wear veils anymore. Is that true?” To which Hafiz responds in Turkish, “Thank Allah for that. To flirt with a girl in a veil must be a heck of a job!” which is then translated to Sevim as, “We are proud to say that none of our friends wear veils. Many of them look and dress just like you do.” After disembarking at Sirkeci, where she was met by her parents and *Tan*’s sports reporter Omar Besim, word got around about around the team’s encounter with a young American journalist. By the time the family returned to their apartment in Moda, the secret was uncovered and the players began phoning the Sertels to apologize for their foul language, begging her not to write anything.⁵⁷²

In this set piece, we see how Sevim’s conception of Kemalist reforms is again portrayed on the surface in a positive light, as a practical improvement to male-female relations. Such an encounter would never have occurred before 1924, the year when train cars and tramways were desegregated, and even then, likely not until after Mustafa Kemal’s anti-veiling campaign swung into full force a few years later. The set piece also portrays the aspirational aspects of this attitude – the Turkish boys clearly have one set of rules when talking amongst themselves, and another when talking with foreigners, a form of code switching. The Turkish boys are eager to point out

⁵⁷¹ “A Turk Named O’Brien” Chapter 40

⁵⁷² Ibid.

that Turkish girls are similar to American girls in their beauty and clothing.⁵⁷³ Sevim, for her own part, clearly enjoys putting on a type of cultural veil in order to get an honest interview with the Galatasaray players – a reverse-echo of the old orientalist trope of European men cross dressing as women in order to report on life in the harem. In the end, the story emphasizes not how modern Turks had become, but how “typically Turkish” the boys behaved.

“American Housewife”

After a number of turbulent years during and after WWII, which saw the Sertel-O’Briens and their young family posted up in Cairo and Bucharest during the last years of the war – a daughter, Sevim, was born during Easter 1945, mere months after Romania had switched allegiances to the Allies following King Michael’s Coup – and following the close of the war, a brief spell back in Istanbul, when the family spent two more years in Rome as Frank headed up the AP bureau there. Sevim and Frank’s eventual, and permanent, decampment to America came at a time when most parts of the Sertel clan saw themselves leaving Turkey for friendlier pastures. Sevim, for her part, explains the decision to leave for America in vague terms, “Originally, we had planned to live in Turkey. I had told Frank that I simply could not part from my beloved city of Istanbul and my people. But, now with the children, things were different. For various reasons the answer was America.”⁵⁷⁴

Those “various reasons” had to do with the increasingly tight political and financial situation the Sertels were finding themselves in by the late 1940s. After the destruction of *Tan* in December 1945, life for leftists in Turkey, particularly those who were accused of “communist” activities, became increasingly difficult. To the extent that certain intellectuals like Sabahattin Ali

⁵⁷³ This effort is pretty clearly connected to the campaigns for Turkish beauty queens that had kicked off in earnest less than a decade before this exchange occurred. A. Holly Shissler, “Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of”

⁵⁷⁴ “A Turk Named O’Brien” Chapter XX “I Learn about St. Patrick’s Day and To Cook”

and Aziz Nesin tried to keep the torch alive with small-run weeklies like *Marko Paşa*, they would find their work censored, or worse, police knocking on their door to drag them to prison for printing so-called communist propaganda. Sabiha and Zekeriya managed to escape serious prison time, barely, but were left without much income since they had no newspaper to run, and their printing house was functionally on its last legs. By 1950, the Sabiha and Zekeriya would leave Turkey altogether for the Eastern Bloc, and eventually Baku.

The final section of Sevim's memoirs, entitled "American Housewife" covers her adjustment to living in 1950s suburban America, first in Kansas City and Philadelphia, then settling outside of Washington, DC in Chevy Chase, MD. The stories in this section may have been less often told as bedtime stories, since they largely cover periods when Sevim's own children were growing up. Nonetheless, they do offer a fascinating window into the ways in which Sevim tried to pass on a Turkish identity to her kids, and how she would exhibit her Turkish identity to her new friends, all while attempting to loosely conform to the social expectations of being a housewife in a time and place where the idea of the housebound wife and mother was becoming a critical building block of American social imagination and cultural politics.⁵⁷⁵ It's important then to look directly at the symbols Sevim Sertel portrays in this section that are supposed to be representative of Turkish national culture – and ask why these particular images are chosen.

One of the early chapters in this final part involves Sevim and her young children coming across a parade sponsored by the local Shriner's organization in Kansas City, where they were staying with Frank's parents after leaving Turkey for good. As she described it, "this parade consisted of grown up men all dressed in baggy trousers, colorful vests and red [sic] fezes black

⁵⁷⁵ While the memoir does not address any of the most familiar hallmarks of this process, such as June Cleaver or Betty Friedan, Sevim's tacit engagement with the social norms represented and contested by women all over the country at this time is palpable throughout the text.

tassel and all. They reminded me of the Egyptian palace guards... Could the Egyptian King be in town?"⁵⁷⁶ When she relays this information to her son Denis, he declares, "When I grow up, I will be a palace guard and play the drums." The confusion is clarified later by Frank's father, who surely had a good laugh, but it is worth pointing out how the typical costume of the Shriners specifically reminded Sevim of an Egyptian outfit that would otherwise not have been out of place in Istanbul, prior to the establishment of the republic.

In a later chapter, Sevim details her experience as a volunteer project manager for the Experiment in International Living wherein she led a group of Turkish students around Washington, DC for a day meeting congressmen and, eventually, President John F. Kennedy. In this passage, we see Sevim as the conduit through which a group of flustered Turkish teenagers learn about American politics, and in turn, the students become the exemplars of typical Turkish behavior. As the students arrive late from their overnight bus coming in from New England, Sevim is introduced to them in English as "Mrs. O'Brien." The grouchy teens begin complaining in Turkish about their restless time on the overnight bus when they are shocked that "Mrs. O'Brien" is able to turn to them and say in their own language, "I know how you feel. It is your first time in a big American city and the Experiment is rushing you, in their desire to provide you with the most during the least of time."⁵⁷⁷ After that, the students completely froze. As the students were informed that Mrs. O'Brien in fact spoke Turkish, Sevim explains to her own children that they were embarrassed to have been caught complaining to their host, "this is a Turkish characteristic. You simply keep your troubles to yourself. A stranger must not know."⁵⁷⁸

The chapter unfolds as a lesson in American civics through the experience of Turkish students being shuttled about Washington, D.C. on field trips in August 1962 and 1963. In the

⁵⁷⁶ "A Turk Named O'Brien" Chapter XX "Kansas City and the Egyptians"

⁵⁷⁷ "A Turk Named O'Brien" Chapter XX "John Fitzgerald Kennedy"

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid

first trip, the students are introduced to congresswoman Frances Bolton (R-OH), then the longest serving woman in Congress, and are treated to a brief audience with President Kennedy in the Rose Garden of the White House. Congresswoman Bolton's visit in the memoir works to encourage the female Turkish students, and Sevim's two daughters, to be involved in politics and to demonstrate the relationship between the Congress and the White House – Bolton admitted that “when Mr. O'Brien calls me up and tries to influence me, I resent it.”⁵⁷⁹ This passage of course results in a bit of humorous confusion as the students assume “Mr. O'Brien” is Sevim's husband Frank, and not Larry O'Brien, the President's congressional liaison (and future commissioner of the National Basketball Association). Upon meeting President Kennedy, Sevim was clearly enraptured, “but what a face!” she wrote, “This was enough for me for a life time. It was the kind of face just like Ataturk's. They did not look alike at all. The President looked just like his pictures. But the two men seemed to have the same quality – strength of purpose – in their faces.”⁵⁸⁰ Here Sevim is imparting a lesson about the transformative effect of Kennedy and Atatürk as leaders, emphasizing both men's strength and the intimacy with which she related to each of them.

The following year, the students had conducted home stays in Indiana and accordingly in Washington met with a Congressman from that state, who goes unnamed and is depicted as a bit more clueless than the veteran Frances Bolton – at the end of their visit, the representative “conveyed his best wishes to Mr. Nehru,” and was duly corrected by one of the students. After a meeting with the Undersecretary of Commerce Franklin Roosevelt Jr., the students were shuttled over to the Lincoln memorial, which was being prepared for the March for Jobs and Freedom that was to take place the following day.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid

The juxtaposition of these stories of 1950s and early 1960s America with those of 1920s Turkey invite many comparisons. While the explicit emphasis of the stories is on the contrasts between Turkey and the United States, there is also an implicit similarity of the transformations occurring in society at large, and in Sevim's own life. As in 1920s Turkey, gender norms were swiftly changing in 1950s America. Sevim's adoption of the "housewife" motif in this chapter is emblematic of what it meant to be "modern" in that time and space in much the same way being a western-oriented child celebrating Atatürk's reforms was in the 1920s.

Modern Love Stories Across Three Generations

Naturally, no set of bedtime stories is complete without a couple tales of romance and Sevim Sertel O'Brien's are no exception. In retelling both the courtship of her parents and her own courtship with Frank O'Brien, Sevim Sertel neatly lays out the ways each of their relationships were shaped by their time, and also by the expectations set by the previous generation. Zekeriya and Sabiha's courtship is portrayed as one that truly upset the traditional social order of Sabiha's family. In telling the story, Sevim first hears from her grandmother about her Aunt Fatma's betrothal at the age of five and when she asks whether her then-deceased grandfather had chosen Zekeriya for Sabiha, she is told that "No... she was nothing like any other girl of her age." Sabiha is depicted as a voracious reader, and is said to have struck up a series of corresponding letters with the editor of the local paper – who happened to be Zekeriya. After her submission to an essay contest – which she signed under her real name, an unusual practice for women writers of the time, and then won – Zekeriya was convinced he'd found the woman he wanted to marry. The story of Zekeriya's visit with Sabiha's four, clearly enraged brothers and her rather bemused mother and sister then follows as Zekeriya explains how he came to the conclusion that no other woman would do for him. Aunt Fatma then interjects in the story, "that was when I couldn't believe my ears. He wanted Sabiha, who knew nothing about housekeeping

at all, as his wife” to which the grandmother responds, “That is just it Fatma... He was not looking for a housekeeper. He wanted a girl who was talented, who could defy tradition in order to make a place for herself in the world as she well deserved... It was obvious... that I was dealing with an unusual man.”⁵⁸¹

Since companionate marriage was to become one of the foundational aspects of the remaking of gender roles in society during the coming decades – and not just in Turkey – it is in this way that Sabiha and Zekeriya are pitched as revolutionaries in their own right.⁵⁸² Throughout the stories, we get almost no idea as to what Sabiha and Zekeriya’s politics were – even stories from Zekeriya’s imprisonment are vague about the reasons he’s there – but what we do get is the personalization of the revolutionary time period and the very explicit lesson passed down from Sabiha’s generation to her grandchildren’s that not only should one love who they please, but that one should not be afraid of retribution from one’s own family for doing so. This lesson is driven home by the matriarch of the family, Sabiha’s mother, who is accepting of Zekeriya, and in turn, very accepting of Sevim’s husband, Frank. In the same chapter, Sevim recounts how she informed her own family of her engagement to Frank amidst a series of letters (Sabiha and Zekeriya were still residing in Turkey). Since Sabiha was ill at the time, it fell to Sabiha’s brothers to inform their mother of Sevim and Frank’s decision. It proceeds:

“There is bad news!” he told her.

“Is there a death in the family?” she wanted to know.

“No.” he assured her.

“Sabiha’s illness has not taken a turn for the worse?”

“No, Sabiha is alright.”

“Is somebody besides Sabiha ill?”

⁵⁸¹ Sevim Sertel O’Brien “A Turk Named O’Brien” Chapter 3 “Marriage, Turkish Style”

⁵⁸² Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*

“No.”

“A big fight, disagreement among you children?”

“No, no.”

So she asked them.

“What then could this bad news be?”

“Sevim,” they told her, “is planning to marry a Christian.”

“Well, well,” said Anneanneh with a sigh of relief. “Is that what is bothering you? Is this bad news? Christian or Moslem, Allah created us all. The only thing I ask is that he is a good man, and will make our daughter happy.”⁵⁸³

These values seem to be crucial to what Sevim sought to impart to her children, and while they are modernist values that in many ways are emblematic of the Kemalist vision for women in society, Sevim takes care to root them in something a bit deeper in the past and more fundamental to being Turkish. In a speech delivered at the wedding of her daughter Atiye to (yet another) journalist, David Diamond, Sevim sought to connect her daughter’s affectionate partnership to the same tradition of modernist, companionate love laid out in these bedtime stories. She begins the short speech with an old Turkish proverb, “the pot rolled over and found its cover” (*tencere yuvarlanmış kapağını bulmuş*) to emphasize the random chance involved in finding a “perfect match.” Her words of wisdom offered to her daughter and son-in-law invoke both the memory of Sevim’s grandmother and her father, and their ability to maintain their happiness despite their struggles. Her grandmother remained upbeat throughout battles with various illnesses, her father’s problems with the government sent him to prison and left him penniless when he died, but he always told her to remember that, “each night is followed by a day.”⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Five drafts of this speech exist in Tia O’Brien’s private archive, both in Turkish and in English. A note included with the drafts suggests the speech was delivered in both languages, the likely final English version describes Zekeriya as “an outspoken newspaper man, they jailed him, they burned down his printing house, they left him penniless. But he too was not crushed. He continued to enjoy life.” The likely final Turkish version ties the two together more closely,

Turkishness as an off-modern costume

Combined together, the blending of American and Turkish sensibilities, identities and citizenships in this memoir is a unique one in the Turkish case. It is helpful to view Sevim O'Brien's memoirs in light of other experiences of émigré feminism, a term developed by Alena Heitlinger and others that addresses the work of feminist writers, scholars, and activists whose work is largely conducted in the course of a diasporic experience.⁵⁸⁵ While the term "feminist" is always a tricky one to lay at the feet of women from this generation, it is critical to look at this text as one that focuses one woman's experiences in two different national contexts, where the contours of feminism, identity and citizenship differed tremendously. Sevim Sertel O'Brien's memoirs force the experiences of women living through the Kemalist revolution and through the conservative, constraining period of America prior to the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s to speak to one another in a way that other memoirs of Turkish women with diasporic experiences do not. While Halide Edib's and Selma Ekrem's memoirs chronicle women's experiences in Turkey and in the United States, this text is unique in its focus on the private role of women in both contexts, and its more concretely hybrid nature.⁵⁸⁶

By the end of the three volumes of Sevim Sertel's bedtime stories there are two dominant threads that have emerged. The first we might call the Turkish thread, which is meant to knit together an image of her Turkish home suitable for her children. It conforms roughly with standard versions of modern Turkish experience, since it encompasses the revolutionary character of Mustafa Kemal's rule, the distillation of an "Anatolian" Turkishness, and the connection to

"matbasını yıkılır. O da anneannem gibi hayatın dadını çıkarım akta devam etti." (they destroyed his printing house. But he, like my grandmother, continued to derive great interest from life.) The line "each night is followed by a day" (her gecenin bir gündüzü vardır) is found in all drafts. Private Archive, Tia O'Brien, Kentfield, California.

⁵⁸⁵ See the introduction and essays in Alena Heitlinger, ed., *Émigré Feminism: Transnational Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999)

⁵⁸⁶ In particular, Halide Edib's *Memoirs of Halide Edib* and Selma Ekrem's *Turkey Old and New*

religious and folk traditions as a hallmark of identity. The second thread is the American one, introduced directly at the beginning through the Statue of Liberty, and made more colorful in the final third. American history and society is always the foil to the Turkish one. The costume of the American housewife is one Sevim accepts as her own, but is worn in an intentionally ill-fitting manner. Sevim's Turkishness, which for many Turks who remained in Anatolia would constitute the sum total of a modern identity, serves as a way to denote her "off-modern" position in the United States, to borrow Svetlana Boym's term. Her children, who would grow up with these stories, understood how their mother did not quite "fit" in American society – for her own namesake, her daughter Sevim, this Turkish legacy was a source of anxiety as she tried to fit in with the Bobbies and Janes of her idyllic suburban community, for Tia, it has been the impetus for a quest to better understand the richer tapestry of her mother's Turkish background as she's worked to uncover and revive the work and life of her grandparents, Sabiha and Zekeriya. In some ways, the construction of Turkish life in Sevim's memoir is meant to demonstrate to her children, who would more easily conform to American life than she, that she herself did have a place where she would conform, where she belonged. It could be a way of showing her children that their mother was less alien than she seemed, but in reading these stories, particularly those set in America, they seem to send a message to her children that they should question the conventional logic, be adventurous and to be willing to adapt to new circumstances.

It is that message of resourcefulness – the adaptation to the hard times she referenced in her speech at Tia's wedding – that is tied most tightly to the Turkish thread of the narrative, Sevim's ability to adapt, whether by mimicking the Sinop accent or by setting up a bazar in their Chevy Chase living room, is rooted in her off-modern sensibility. The comical nature of so many of these stories lightly covers over the hardships her family faced throughout the 1920s, 30s and 40s. The curious joviality of her summer in Sinop obscures the fact that her father was technically

imprisoned there, exiled from his wife and work in Istanbul. Their constant travelling in the forties does the same for the turbulent and dangerous life of a journalist during a global conflagration, and their arrival in America glosses over the tragic reasons she had to leave the home she had wanted for herself. The key to coping with this kind of disruption is usually left to her own parents and grandparents – particularly Atiye, Sevim’s grandmother, who exemplifies the resilience of a traditional lifestyle to modern adaptations more than any other character.

One gets the sense that by leaving out the more complex political history of her family, Sevim O’Brien wanted to craft a more relatable or usable past for her children to help explain some of the ways they might have stood out amongst their classmates and friends in their early school years. The comic frustration with which the Sevim in these stories deals with her utterly revolutionary experience as a school aged child throughout each of the major Kemalist reforms – including but not limited to the alphabet and headgear reforms – could have easily been a way for her to relate to her daughters’ experiences as the only “Sevim” or “Atiye” in their Chevy Chase elementary schools. This is one way in which we might understand these stories not as simple representations of the past, but as memories highly conditioned by the times in which they were recorded.⁵⁸⁷ Sevim consistently emphasizes her own innate abilities to adapt to her changing environments without losing sight of where and with whom her personal history was rooted. This seems to have been a long running issue in the upbringing of the O’Brien children, and the younger Sevim in particular who grew up relatively shy and mortified of the attention her name drew her in school.⁵⁸⁸ At bottom the moral of Sevim Sertel O’Brien’s memoir for her children

⁵⁸⁷ As Andreas Huyssen has pointed out, this is primary nature of the relationship between the past and memory, “The past is not simply there in memory, but must be articulated to become memory... The temporal status of any act of memory is always the present and not...the past itself, even though all memory in some ineradicable sense is dependent on some past event or experience.” *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995) p. 3

⁵⁸⁸ Skype interview with Sevim Randall, May 31, 2015.

was to demonstrate precisely how to handle a turbulent upbringing, adapt to changing circumstances and make the best of difficult situations without losing your own history.

CONCLUSION: 1950 and its Aftermath

...I am not a communist, nor am I an enemy of communism. I am a liberal-minded, neutral journalist. I will try to capture events like a photographic machine. I will deal with things neither like a faithful communist sees everything as pink, nor like the anti-Soviets who place dark glasses on my eyes and see everything as black. Maybe these writings will displease both sides. In reality, every time is painful. But to close our own eyes to reality has no result other than to cheat ourselves.⁵⁸⁹

With those words, Zekeriya Sertel opened his reflections on the time he spent in the Soviet Union between 1950-1970. Sertel had been treated harshly by demagogues in Turkey and had been painted as a communist ideologue throughout the 1940s, despite the fact that he never visited the USSR prior to 1950, had an American son-in-law, and had been educated at Columbia University in New York. His progressive and socialist inclinations developed over time, but his reflections on the culture shock he felt in the Soviet Union, even in Turkish-speaking Azerbaijan, reflect how tied he was to his home country and the profession he had held, indeed the profession which he had helped build there. Likewise reflecting from Baku, and struggling in a battle with cancer that would end her life in 1968, Sabiha Sertel closed her memoirs on a note of optimism and hope for the country that had banished her,

Today, the freedoms of speech, thought, and assembly are guaranteed under the constitution. Workers can form unions; they've become familiar with the right to strike. Those who struggle alongside the workers can take them by the hand, becoming socially conscious, and form their own parties. The youth can stand on the front lines of the struggle for democracy in the country. Intellectuals and progressives can struggle against the compradors who ally with the American bourgeoisie, against the government that represents the bourgeoisie, and against American imperialism. Socialist movements are developing. Watching from afar, all this gives this aching heart a great relief.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Zekeriya Sertel, *Olduğu Gibi: Rus Biçimi Sosyalizm* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1993), p. 15. This volume was transliterated by Yıldız Sertel from unpublished Ottoman-script notebooks written in Paris in the 1970s.

⁵⁹⁰ Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* (2015), 355-356.

The compassion for and commitment to the project of Turkish democracy that the Sertels exhibited from exile is also a reflection of the tragedy of the constraints placed on political discourse during the run-up to the 1950 elections. This tragedy was, in effect, that in the moment when so many intellectuals who genuinely believed in the project of the Turkish Republic, that had grown up in it, that had indeed built foundational elements of its political culture, could have had the greatest impact – the free formation of new political parties – they found themselves ostracized, marginalized, and exiled from the country. The effect being that for the most part, many of these mammoth contributions – whether it be the Sertels’ journalism, Nazım Hikmet’s poetry, or even Nihal Atsız’s novellas – remained as spectral presences in political movements that had to build themselves back up from scratch in the multiparty era. This result is perhaps no better exemplified than by the legacy of Nazım Hikmet, who is widely regarded as the greatest poet in the contemporary Turkish language despite the fact that the Turkish Communist Party of which he was a part is exceedingly marginal.

In many respects, while this dissertation covers the history of Turkey’s single party era, it is meant as a pre-history of the opening of multiparty politics and the formation of the Democrat party in 1945, its ultimate electoral success in 1950 and its bloody demise in 1960. The coalition of support from secular, elite, urban liberals on the one hand, and rural, conservative voters on the other depended in large part on the urban elite’s well-justified fear of oppression by CHP party apparatus and the general failure of CHP economic policies to improve conditions in the countryside. Yet, as I argue in my chapter on the short-lived Liberal Republican Party, this political coalition had its roots even before the Turkish economy went from bad to worse, and before crackdowns on intellectuals became rampant, during WWII. What the SCF had that the DP did not was the support not only of the liberal-minded urban intellectuals, but the more leftwards

opponents of the regime. These figures had a tremendous reach in the public sphere and were an important part of loyal but critical left-wing opposition to the Kemalist regime. In many respects, the support from these figures kept the SCF, and the Kemalist center before and after, honest. This wing of the opposition found themselves the victims of redirected fear of Russian invasion during the second world war and as enemies of the state the further the Turkish Republic drifted into the orbit of the new American superpower. Many of the intellectuals around which make up the Republic of Others found themselves in prison, driven to exile or underground during the period of 1945-1950. Following the DP victory in 1950, the effect of this essentially meant that a new generation of Turkish oppositionists essentially were left with only a fraction of the audience their forebears had commanded.

Truly assessing the ramifications of the persecution of these figures necessitates understanding what role the DP played for the Turkish state. What the DP has always been congratulated for – beginning with the ethnographic investigations of the town of Balgat in Daniel Lerner’s classic work, *The Passing of Traditional Society* – is the incorporation of the countryside into the modernizing society and economy of the Turkish state. In more ways than one, it is easy to see how the success of the DP represented the success of the Kemalist project – it not only proved that the system of “tutelary democracy” could successfully produce competitive elections, but it also proved that the DP could be even more successful in the Kemalist project than the CHP. That the DP was successful whereas the SCF was not might bring one to ask whether the DP was meant to be a proper opposition party at all. To follow the line of logic that views the Kemalist project as a sort of auto-colonialism, the DP performed the necessary function of an incorporative buffer between the populace and the state. Bernard Lewis realized and articulated this almost too well in his remarks at Chatham House in the months following the DP’s victory,

Atatürk had written *étatisme* into the Turkish constitution. This was not because he was a Socialist – far from it. But he did understand and apply one important principle that is of some relevance in Asia today: that in a backward oriental country, where foreign capital is politically suspect, and where local capitalist enterprise lacks both capital and enterprise, only the State can bring to bear the initiative, the resources, the organization, and the planning capacity that are needed to raise the standard of living of the country, develop her potentialities, and modernize her economy generally. The revolt against *étatisme* in Turkey today is a measure of its success.⁵⁹¹

Having made the move against *étatisme* by electing a more market-friendly leader in Adnan Menderes, Lewis also noted that now was the time to loosen the reigns on political freedoms,

Perhaps the most urgent change necessary here is an increase in freedom of discussion of social and economic conditions and problems. In her exposed position, and with her vulnerable economy, it might well be dangerous for Turkey to tolerate a Communist party and press. But a closer definition is desirable of the word Communist, which at present is defined so widely as to inhibit any serious discussion of social conditions.⁵⁹²

We see here how even in a period of political efflorescence, the desire to limit political discussion, to mark certain ideas out of bounds, remained a central concern of the modernization project.

What I have striven to demonstrate in this dissertation is not only the tragedy this sort of thinking begat to Turkish political culture, but also how the view of modernization theory imposed a narrowness on the politics of the Kemalist period that was more suitable to the theory than to reality. In the 1920s, a politics of social justice and women's liberation that would not have been out of place in Paris or New York emerged in opposition to the nature and focus of the Kemalist reforms, and the shortcomings of their social policies. While the SCF was in many ways a hapless and awkward political experiment, the institutional and political frameworks for a true opposition party were perceptible both in the Istanbul press, and in the offices of the SCF across the country. The Kemalist foray into race discourse in the 1930s has left a treacherous legacy, but

⁵⁹¹ Bernard Lewis, "Recent Developments in Turkey" *International Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 3, July 1951, p. 324

⁵⁹² *Ibid*, 330

it also spurred on intense creativity and imagination amongst critics of the regime from all corners who expanded the limits of political discourse despite having no clear political outlet for it. The final three chapters of the dissertation show, in a sense, the opportunities the regime missed to cement the liberal and modernist ideals embedded in the Kemalist project. Nationalist feeling was understandably intense – and the sniping across the aisles in parliament and the press was vitriolic – by the close of World War II. The fact of the Tan Riot was, in many ways, an event that could have easily happened in an otherwise democratic society, but in democratic societies with liberal aspirations, the rioting demagogues are usually the ones brought in front of a judge, not the owners of the businesses that are wrecked. The trial of the Pan-Turkists ultimately forced the state to face the contradictions inherent in a putatively liberal legal framework that has enshrined ethnic and racial nationalism in its legal code and constitution – these contradictions have arguably not been resolved even to this day. And yet, despite all of that, Sevim Sertel, and the rest of the Sertel family, have shown that however false the promise of the DP's 1950 victory may have been, the repressiveness that marked the single party era could not extinguish the struggle to advance democracy, nor the commitment to the radical project Mustafa Kemal's movement had birthed from the maelstrom of the early twentieth century.

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