

## 9 · The Struggle for Independence

### **The armistice of Moudros**

The armistice concluded on 31 October 1918 at Moudros between Admiral Calthorpe, commander of the British Black Sea squadron, and an Ottoman delegation under Hüseyin Rauf Bey, the Navy Minister, really amounted to an Ottoman capitulation. The 25 articles contained provisions such as the military occupation of the Straits, control by the Entente of all railway and telegraph lines, demobilization and disarmament of the Ottoman troops, except for small contingents needed to keep law and order, surrender by all Ottoman troops in the Arab provinces and the freeing of all Entente prisoners of war in Ottoman hands (but not the other way round). All German and Austrian military personnel had to leave the country within two months. The most dangerous clause from the Ottoman point of view was article seven, which stipulated that the Entente had the right to occupy any place in the Ottoman Empire itself if it considered its security to be under threat. Article 24 gave the Entente the right to intervene militarily in the 'Armenian' provinces if law and order should break down there. These articles could (and did) allow the Entente to use force more or less as it pleased. Harsh though they were, the conditions were accepted – sometimes even greeted with relief – by the Ottomans. When a resistance movement developed in the years after the war, its leaders did not protest against the armistice agreement as such, but against the way the Entente abused its conditions.<sup>1</sup>

The armistice went into effect the next day and on the whole was effective. The only major problem arose over Mosul, the main town in northern Iraq. On the day of the armistice, the British forces were still some 60 kilometres to the south of Mosul, but the British command insisted on the occupation of the town under article seven of the armistice. The local Ottoman commander refused and referred the matter to Istanbul, which told him to comply, and between 8 and 15 November the Ottoman troops evacuated the town. The fact that Mosul was occupied after the armistice caused controversy over the possession of the province in later years. The same situation applied in the *sancak*

(district) of Alexandrette (İskenderun) on the Syrian coast. Who held exactly what in the inland desert of Syria was also completely unclear. This would lead to conflicting claims in years to come.

### **The postwar situation: an overview**

The wartime leaders of the CUP, who had already handed over power to a new cabinet under Ahmet İzzet Pasha on 14 October, left the country as soon as the armistice was concluded. On the night of 1 November, Cemal, Enver, Talât, Bahaettin Şakir, Dr Nazım and three others left aboard a German warship for Odessa, for fear that they would be held to account for their treatment of the Armenians. As far back as 1915 the Entente had announced that it intended to do so and there is no doubt that it would indeed have brought them to trial. In the event, these Unionists never appeared in court but Armenian assassins killed them all, apart from Enver, in 1920–21.

After the war the former leaders spent most of their time in Berlin, where they engaged in complex political schemes and intrigues, which took them to places as far apart as Rome, Moscow and Afghanistan. Only one of them, however, Enver Pasha, played a significant role in postwar Turkish politics.

The flight of the main Unionist leaders left a power vacuum in Istanbul. The parties who were in a position to compete for power were:

- The palace: Sultan Mehmet V had died in July 1918 and been succeeded by his brother Vahdettin Efendi, who ascended the throne under the name of Mehmet VI. Intelligent and headstrong, the new sultan fully intended to use the opportunity to escape from the role of puppet he had had to play under the Unionists.
- The Liberals: the Liberal opposition, united in the *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası* which had been silenced in 1913, now reorganized around a number of its pre-1913 leaders, notably *Damat* ('son-in-law' because he was married to a member of the royal family) Ferit Pasha.
- The Entente: representatives of the Entente soon arrived in the capital amid great pomp. A fleet of allied warships anchored off the imperial palace on the Bosphorus. The main concern of the Entente representatives was supervision of the execution of the armistice terms, but they also tried to influence Ottoman politics. However, soon after the armistice the first differences of opinion between the French, the British and the Italians started to appear.
- The Unionists: even though their leaders had left, the Unionists still controlled parliament, the army, the police force, the post and telegraph services and many other organizations. The new regime

started purges in 1919, but neither it nor the Entente had enough manpower to replace the majority of Unionist officials.

While these were the main players in the political game in the capital, increasingly from late 1918 onwards and completely after the British occupied Istanbul in March 1920, the real political struggle was fought in Anatolia. The wartime CUP leadership had prepared the ground before it left the country. It based its plans on those for establishing a national resistance movement in Asia Minor, drawn up when everyone, including the CUP leaders, expected the British and French navies to break through the Dardanelles in March 1915. Had that come to pass, the Ottoman government would have left Istanbul for Konya.<sup>2</sup>

Though several leaders played a role in 1918, Enver seems to have been the driving force. He was convinced that only the first phase of the war had been lost and that, as in the Balkan War in 1913, the opportunity would come for a second round in which the Ottomans could return to the offensive. By the end of the war, pan-Islamist and, especially, pan-Turkist ideas had taken hold of Enver and he expected the Turkic areas of Central Asia, especially recently liberated Azerbaijan, to play a vital role in the continued struggle. That was why he ordered the Ottoman divisions that had returned from Europe in 1918 to the Caucasus. He himself had intended to go to Baku from Odessa in November 1918, but illness had prevented him from doing so. At the same time, both he and Talât had ordered the *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa* to store guns and ammunition in secret depots in a number of places in Anatolia. The *Teşkilât* – reconstituted in October 1918 as the *Umum Alem-i İslam İhtilâl Teşkilâti* (General Revolutionary Organization of the Islamic World) – sent out emissaries with instructions to start guerrilla bands in the interior. This was not a particularly hard thing to do since many such bands were already in existence and had played a gruesome part in the maltreatment of Armenians and Greeks. They lived in fear of retribution should they give up their arms and disband.

The most important step taken by the Unionist leadership before the end of the war was the creation of *Karakol* (the Guard). Again, the initiative was taken by Talât and Enver the week before they left. The actual founders were Colonel *Kara* (Black) Vasif (an important member of the inner circle of Unionist officers) and *Kara* Kemal, the Unionist party boss in Istanbul. The name of the organization was a pun on their surnames, and its purpose was to protect Unionists in the postwar situation and shield them from the revenge of the Entente, the Liberals and the Christian communities. It also aimed to strengthen the

resistance in Anatolia and the Caucasus by sending able people, money, arms and supplies there from the capital.<sup>3</sup>

While it prepared an armed resistance movement from Anatolia, the CUP also prepared for a public defence of the rights of the Turkish Muslim parts of the population in areas perceived to be in danger of occupation by the Greeks, Armenians, French, Italians or British. This initiative took the shape of the formation of regional 'societies for the defence of the national rights', which were to play a vital role in the establishment of the national resistance movement in Anatolia (and Thrace) after the war. The first such society was founded as early as November 1918.<sup>4</sup>

When the national resistance movement in Anatolia developed, its main adversary turned out to be not Britain or France but Greece. With strong support from Britain, Greece was granted the right to occupy the area around İzmir in May 1919. In the following years, the Greek invasion of Asia Minor would take on massive proportions. The reason for this can be found in the way the Entente powers conducted the peace negotiations after the war. Negotiations were conducted not with the defeated countries – the victors dictated the peace terms – but between the Entente powers, who faced a number of partly conflicting agreements and promises made during the war that had to be sorted out. This took time. So much time, in fact, that when the Entente finally imposed its extremely harsh peace terms on the Ottoman Empire in August 1920, the continuous demobilization of its troops since the war had left it without the means to enforce them. The Greeks, led by their Prime Minister Eleutherios Venizelos, exploited this situation; they offered to act as the strong arm of the Entente and to force the Turkish resistance movement in Anatolia to accept the peace terms. The result was a bloody war that ended with a complete Greek defeat in 1922.

### **Istanbul, November 1918–March 1920**

#### *The palace*

Throughout this whole period Sultan Mehmet VI Vahdettin, who was destined to be the last Ottoman Sultan, pursued policies aimed at appeasing the Entente, and especially Britain, in order to get a more favourable peace treaty. As with other advocates of this line, he lost all credibility when, despite his efforts, the peace treaty turned out to be extremely harsh in the summer of 1920.

The sultan, like his predecessors, thought along dynastic and religious lines. What mattered for him was the preservation of the dynasty, of Istanbul as the seat of the caliphate and of his own authority over the

Muslim population of the Middle East, for which he felt a strong responsibility. He was not a nationalist (indeed, he saw nationalism and the Unionists who had succumbed to that ideology as responsible for the disaster that had befallen the empire) and he cared little for the complete independence of Anatolia or any other region.

In contrast to his direct predecessor, who had been a puppet in the hands of the Unionists, Sultan Vahdettin actively intervened in politics to promote the anti-Unionist, anti-nationalist, pro-British line. His main weapon was of course the appointment of grand viziers (and cabinet ministers) of his choice. In this respect, the period up to April 1920 can be divided into three sub-periods.

### *The cabinets*

The first period was one of transition. When the wartime leaders had handed over power in October, the sultan had wanted to install a non-partisan cabinet under the old diplomat Ahmet Tevfik Pasha (Okday), but the Unionists had insisted on a moderate CUP cabinet led by the former chief of staff Field Marshall Ahmet İzzet Pasha (Furğaç), not a Unionist but nevertheless trusted by the Committee. With the wartime leaders out of the way and the armistice concluded, the sultan replaced İzzet Pasha with Tevfik Pasha, who headed two cabinets, of an increasingly anti-Unionist character, from 11 November 1918 to 3 March 1919.

On 4 March his cabinet was replaced with the first headed by *Damat* Ferit Pasha, a key figure in Ottoman politics after the war who headed no less than five cabinets. He was close to the palace, being the sultan's brother-in-law and about the only person whom the monarch really trusted. But he was also a leading member of the revived *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası*. The three Ferit Pasha cabinets of March–September 1919 constitute a second sub-period. They were confronted with increasing activity from the nationalist resistance, both in the capital and in Asia Minor, especially after the Entente had granted Greece permission to occupy İzmir and surrounding areas in May. They reacted with increasingly determined efforts to suppress the resistance and punish the Unionists.

By late September the pressure of the resistance movement forced Ferit Pasha to step down. Unlike Ferit Pasha's governments, the two cabinets that succeeded him under Ali Rıza Pasha (until 3 March 1920) and Salih Hulusi Pasha (until 2 April) tried to cooperate with the nationalist resistance and to heal the increasing rift with Anatolia.

### *The parties*

Although the revived Party of Freedom and Understanding was the

dominant force in official politics for most of this period, the Unionists' activities were not limited to underground resistance. For a while Unionist parties continued to function. At its last congress at the beginning of November, the CUP dissolved itself and founded the *Teceddüt Fırkası* (Renovation Party). A group of dissident Unionists under Fethi (Okyar) founded the *Osmanlı Hürriyetperver Avam Fırkası* (Ottoman Liberal People's Party). Apart from these, a plethora of smaller parties led an ephemeral existence in the postwar period.

After the dissolution of parliament in December, pressure on the Unionists began to rise. Increasing numbers of prominent committee members were arrested (more than 100 had been arrested by the beginning of April), partly on the initiative of the Liberal government and partly at the request of the British, who intended to try 'war criminals' for their assumed role in the persecution of Armenians, for maltreating British prisoners of war, or for undermining the terms of the armistice. A special Ottoman tribunal dealt with a number of cases, but the British later deported many of those arrested to Malta, where most of them stayed until late 1921.

Political activity, which the dissolution of parliament had anyway impeded, was further curtailed when the Renovation Party was closed down in May 1919. The government resisted the pressure for new elections because it did not consider the situation stable enough, but in the end it yielded to demands from the Anatolian resistance. Elections were held in the autumn of 1919, but by then the Unionist-led resistance movement was in control of most of Anatolia and the chamber, when it met in January 1920, bore a decidedly Unionist and nationalist stamp and acted as a mouthpiece for the resistance. The nationalist majority in the chamber organized itself as the *Felâh-i Vatan Grubu* (Salvation of the Fatherland Group).

On 28 January 1920 it adopted a manifesto called the National Pact (*Misak-i Milli*), which was the resistance movement's official statement of aims and this remained so throughout the independence war that followed. The text, which was based on the earlier resolutions of the congresses organized by the nationalists in Erzurum and Sivas (see pp. 149–50), consisted of six articles.

1. The territories inhabited by an Ottoman Muslim majority (united in religion, race and aim)<sup>5</sup> formed an indivisible whole, but the fate of the territories inhabited by an Arab majority that were under foreign occupation should be determined by plebiscite.
2. A plebiscite could determine the fate of the 'three *vilayets*' of Batum, Kars and Ardahan, which were Russian from 1878 to 1918.

3. The same should hold true for the fate of western Thrace.
4. The security of the capital, Istanbul, and of the Sea of Marmara must be assured. The opening of the Straits to commercial shipping would be a subject for discussion with other interested countries.
5. The rights of minorities would be established in conformity with the treaties concluded between the Entente and European states.
6. The economic, financial and judicial independence of the empire should be assured and free from restrictions (in other words, a return of the capitulations would be unacceptable).

This was the fundamental statement of the nationalist programme. It is significant that it advocated not Turkish national sovereignty but that of all Muslim Ottomans. In practice this meant Turks and Kurds, as well as smaller groups like Laz and Çerkez.

There was an attempt to bridge the party differences and to present a unified front to give the Turks a voice at the peace conference in Paris by establishing a 'National Congress' uniting 63 different groups and parties. The congress was active intermittently between November 1918 and November 1919, but although it published a number of brochures and even sent a delegation to Paris, it received no hearing.

Open political activity ended with the British occupation of Istanbul on 16 March 1920, which was intended both to stop collaboration with the nationalists from within the Ottoman government institutions and to put pressure on the nationalists. The nationalist leaders in parliament were aware that action on the part of the British was impending, but they decided to stay in session rather than go underground and leave for Anatolia because they wanted to show up clearly that British policy was suppressing the national rights of the country. And, indeed, British security officers arrested both Hüseyin Rauf and *Kara* Vasıf, the most prominent leaders of the Felâh group in the parliament building. The last Ottoman parliament thereupon prorogued itself in protest on 2 April.

#### *Efforts to arouse public opinion*

Whereas the different parties and political groups – both Unionist and anti-Unionist – failed to make a significant impact either on public opinion or on politicians in Europe, a number of social and cultural organizations that had been closely linked to the CUP during the war but that were not openly political, made an important contribution to winning over Muslim opinion to the nationalist cause. In the first months after the armistice the atmosphere among the Muslim population in general was one of despair and resignation, but the Greek occupation of İzmir in May 1919 was a turning point. Immediately after

the occupation, mass demonstrations, led by students and professors from the University of Istanbul, took place in protest.

### *The Entente*

The conditions of the armistice and the presence of over 50,000 Entente troops (30,000 of them British) always meant that the representatives of the Entente would be the dominant political influence in the capital, even before the official occupation of Istanbul in March 1920. Even during the periods when a compliant Ottoman government was in power, Entente control was complicated by several factors.

The fact that the empire was still formally independent gave Ottoman officials sympathetic to the nationalists all kinds of opportunities to aid the Anatolian movement by sending information, supplies, arms and people. The Entente had no means of checking what went on in every government department. Its information on what went on in the Turkish Muslim part of Ottoman society was limited by having to rely (certainly in the case of the British) almost exclusively on members of the Greek and Armenian minorities, which led them to underestimate both the numerical strength and the abilities of the underground resistance.

The administrative structure the Entente introduced was extremely complicated. The British Black Sea army, commanded first by General Milne and later by General Harington, was responsible for the occupation of the Straits zone, while it had been agreed that European Turkey, as part of the Balkans, would be under the control of the French commander of the *Armée de l'Orient*, which had originally been based on Salonica and had defeated Bulgaria in 1918, General Franchet d'Esperey. In Istanbul, which was both on the Bosphorus and in Europe, this of course made for continuous friction. The military authorities were not, however, in complete control. The Entente states also had their diplomatic representatives, called high commissioners and not ambassadors while a state of war continued to exist formally between the Entente and the empire. Officially, the military commanders were subject to their authority. In reality, they often acted independently. After the military occupation of the capital in March 1920, the role of the military commanders naturally increased even further.

The high commissioners not only represented their governments diplomatically, but also shouldered a large and increasing part of the actual administration of the capital through the 'Allied Commissions of Control and Organization', which dealt with things like food supplies, medical facilities, refugee problems and financial affairs. The Ottoman government lacked the means to pay its servants or to feed the population, so the Entente was more or less forced to step in and it did so

quite efficiently. Even so, life was difficult enough in Istanbul in the postwar years. The cost of living, which had already gone up by a staggering 1800 per cent during the war (1400 per cent of which was between 1917 and 1918), peaked in February 1919. The capital experienced a severe shortage of coal and wheat, which was eventually solved by imports from Britain and the USA respectively, primarily by relief agencies. Prices dropped by about 35 per cent and then stabilized.<sup>6</sup>

The large number of refugees in the city aggravated the situation. Apart from the mass of displaced persons one would expect in the capital of a defeated country after a war, there were the Russian fugitives. Some had come early in 1920 and in November of that year the French navy evacuated some 150,000 anti-Bolshevik White Russians under General Wrangel from the Crimea and settled them in the Straits area. About half of the refugees lived in the Istanbul area, adding to a housing problem that was compounded by the Entente's requisitioning of buildings.<sup>7</sup> The complicated administrative structure could have been made to work if trust and goodwill had characterized relations between the Entente powers, but this emphatically was not the case. While British policy towards the Ottomans remained hawkish and Britain's conduct in its zone of occupation was harsh and even vindictive, the Italians from 1920 and the French from 1921 began to court the nationalist resistance – a cause for frequent clashes between the high commissioners.

#### *The Unionist underground*

The Unionist underground in Istanbul exploited this disunity. Between November 1918 and March 1920, *Karakol* managed to smuggle a considerable number of Unionist officers – many of them wanted men – to Anatolia. In addition, it supplied the emerging resistance movement in Anatolia with large quantities of arms, supplies and ammunition stolen from Ottoman stores under Entente control. Some 56,000 gun locks, 320 machine guns, 1500 rifles, 2000 boxes of ammunition and 10,000 uniforms are reported to have been smuggled to Anatolia in this way.<sup>8</sup> Apart from former *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* agents, the bearer and boatmen's guilds – still under the control of *Kara Kemal* – and the Unionist officials in the War Ministry and in the telegraph service played a vital role in these operations. Finally, *Karakol* provided the resistance with information gained from its espionage network in government offices. The realization of the extent of collaboration with the Anatolian nationalists from within the Ottoman bureaucracy was the prime reason for the formal occupation of Istanbul by the British in 1920.

When more and more officers left for Anatolia in 1919 and a resistance movement started to emerge, the need was felt for someone

with authority and an untainted reputation to head the movement. First, the underground seems to have approached Ahmet İzzet Pasha (Furğaç), the former Chief of General Staff and grand vizier – not a Unionist but trusted by the Unionists as an ardent patriot. When they could not get his agreement, leading *Karakol* members approached Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk).<sup>9</sup>

Mustafa Kemal Pasha had been an early member of the CUP.<sup>10</sup> He had been one of the inner circle of activist officers who took part in the revolution of 1908, and in the ‘Action Army’ of 1909, and he had served in Libya in 1911. Within the CUP he seems to have belonged to Cemal Pasha’s faction. Within that, he was particularly close to Ali Fethi (Okyar), an influential Unionist officer and a rival to Enver. During 1912–13, personal relations between Enver on the one hand and Fethi and Mustafa Kemal on the other had become very strained. As a result, Mustafa Kemal was left outside the centre of power once Enver had emerged as the foremost military leader after the Bab-ı Ali coup of January 1913. This meant that in 1919 he was not associated with the wartime policies of Enver and Talât. During the First World War, Mustafa Kemal had made a name for himself as commander of the Anafarta front during the Dardanelles campaign and afterwards he had fought with distinction on the eastern Anatolian and Palestinian fronts, ending the war as a brigadier in charge of all the troops on the Syrian front. In the army he had a reputation as an extremely able but proud and quarrelsome officer. After the armistice, he moved to Istanbul and for a time tried to gain a position in politics, associating himself with the Ottoman Liberal People’s Party of his friend Ali Fethi. By the spring of 1919 it was clear that this led nowhere and he considered leaving for Anatolia, as increasing numbers of his colleagues were doing.

Mustafa Kemal’s combination of high standing within the army and, politically speaking, clean hands made him an ideal candidate for the leadership of the resistance. Once he had agreed, an opportunity to launch him was soon found. The *Damat* Ferit government was alarmed at the amount of inter-communal violence in eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea region (which could provoke Entente intervention under article 24 of the armistice agreement) and it wanted to appoint a military inspector to pacify and disarm the region. The interior minister, Mehmet Ali Bey, was related to Ali Fuat Pasha (Cebesoy), one of Mustafa Kemal’s closest officer friends, who had already left for Anatolia. A meeting with him, and then with the grand vizier was arranged, and Mustafa Kemal was appointed inspector of the Third Army in the east. Friends at the War Ministry then drew up his brief, giving him very wide powers, including the right to communicate

directly with all military and civil authorities in the region of his inspectorate, which encompassed all of eastern Anatolia. Armed with these wide-ranging powers and accompanied by a staff of 18, he then left Istanbul, arriving in the Black Sea port of Samsun on 19 May 1919. His activities once he had arrived there are best treated within the context of the developments in Anatolia.

### **The peace negotiations**

Even during the war, the Entente powers had concluded a number of agreements concerning the division of the Ottoman Empire, once it was defeated. Basically, they fall into two categories. In the first are agreements between the powers that aimed at a division of the spoils without upsetting the balance of power between them. The diplomatic activity concerned with these agreements can be considered the final act in the drama of the 'Eastern Question'. In the second are the promises made to inhabitants or would-be inhabitants of the region under a more modern type of arrangement in which self-determination, albeit under tutelage, played a role.

The first treaty was the so-called Constantinople agreement of March 1915, in which France and Britain recognized a number of Russian demands. After the victory Russia would be allowed to occupy parts of eastern Anatolia, Istanbul and the Straits. This of course constituted a major gain for the Russians and subsequently France and Britain started negotiations on their claims for compensation for this disturbance of the balance of power. In the meantime, the Entente promised southwestern Asia Minor to Italy, as part of its price for joining the Entente, under the Treaty of London of April 1915.

The Franco-British negotiations about compensation eventually led to an agreement between their representatives on 16 May 1916. This so-called Sykes-Picot agreement was the result of negotiations between Mark Sykes of the Arab Bureau (Cairo) and French diplomat François Georges Picot, which took place at the French embassy in London, where the agreement was concluded on 3 January 1916. It gave France the coastal areas of Syria (including Lebanon) and an exclusive zone of influence in inland Syria up to and including the oil-rich Ottoman province of Mosul. Britain gained the provinces of Baghdad and Basra, with an adjacent zone of influence to the west and Mediterranean outlets at Acre and Jaffa. Palestine was to be internationalized except for these two ports, but the way it was to be administered was left vague. The inland areas were to be handed over to an Arab kingdom (or kingdoms), which would coincide partly with the zones of influence of France and Britain. The agreement was approved by the British and

French cabinets in February 1916 and laid down in an exchange of letters between the British foreign minister and the French ambassador on 16 May. Later the Russian government also adhered to it. It remained secret until the Bolshevik government published it after the Russian revolution.

The August 1917 agreement of St Jean de Maurienne redefined Italy's claims on southern Asia Minor, including İzmir and its hinterland in the Italian zone, but the revolution in Russia prevented its ratification. France and Britain later used this fact to oppose Italy's claims.

These were all agreements between the powers, but in the meantime promises had been made to others too. Contacts between the British high commissioner in Egypt and the Sharif of Mecca, which would eventually lead to the Arabian rebellion, had first been laid in the spring of 1915. They developed into a long-drawn-out exchange of letters (between July 1915 and March 1916) in which, in exchange for an Arab revolt, the British promised the sharif support for the establishment of an Arab kingdom stretching to the 37th parallel in the north, with the exception of the Syrian coast and the holy places in Palestine. The promise was only valid insofar as it did not conflict with existing agreements.

In November 1917, the British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, in an effort to gain the support of influential Jewish circles at home and – especially – in Germany and Austria, promised the leader of the Zionist movement in Britain, Lord Rothschild, that Britain would support the establishment of a Jewish 'national home' in Palestine. Finally, in January 1918, President Wilson clarified the American war aims with his 'Fourteen Points'. These recognized the right to self-determination of nations – something that made them intensely unpopular with the French and British governments.

The situation was further complicated for the statesmen of the Entente when, immediately after the Bolshevik revolution, the new Russian government denounced all 'imperialist' treaties and – worse – made them public. The Ottoman government seized this propaganda opportunity to distribute the Sykes–Picot agreement, which clearly contradicted the promises made to Sharif Husayn in Syria. The sharif protested to the British high commissioner but received a non-committal reply. Only in June 1918 did the British government clarify its position on the matter. It made a distinction between two groups of territories. Areas that had been independently Arab before the war and those liberated by Arabs would gain independence, while the areas liberated by the Entente or still in Turkish possession would be brought into the sphere of influence of one of the Entente powers.

This was the situation with regard to treaties, agreements and promises when Ottoman resistance collapsed in October 1918. Now the

peace conference that gathered in Paris was faced with the task of reconciling them. Basically the work of this conference consisted of negotiations among the major Entente powers and between them and their client states such as Greece and Serbia. Russia of course was no longer an Entente power and the United States withdrew from the conference for domestic reasons in 1919. There was never any question of serious negotiations between the victors and the defeated states. The latter were simply presented with a final text that they could either sign or – theoretically – refuse.

The decision-making on the Near East was delayed because a settlement of the German and Austrian questions had priority. It was also made more difficult by the fact that the representatives of the powers were literally beleaguered by delegations representing the different ethnic groups in the Near East: Greeks, Armenians, Turks, Kurds, Arabs and Jews, all pressing their conflicting claims.

The main conflict between Britain and France concerned Syria. Britain had made commitments to the Arab rebels and was ready to modify the Sykes–Picot treaty in favour of the independent Arab kingdom proclaimed in Damascus by Faysal, son of Sharif Husayn. This state had been recognized by Britain, but not by France, which demanded full execution of the Sykes–Picot agreement. When the negotiations had reached deadlock, the Americans took the initiative to send a commission (the so-called King–Crane Commission) to Syria in June 1919 to find out the views of the population. The Arabs pinned their hopes on this commission, but France and Britain never took it seriously and ditched it after the American withdrawal from the peace conference. Faced with a choice between France and the Arabs, Britain finally opted for France in September 1919. France would acquire the Syrian coast outright and a mandate over the hinterland, which Faysal would govern. In return, France agreed to a British mandate for Palestine and handed over the oil-rich province of Mosul to British-dominated Iraq. This arrangement, which was confirmed at the session of the peace conference in San Remo in the winter of 1919–20, led to an Arab revolt in Syria. It was brutally suppressed by French troops, and France occupied all of Syria in July 1920.

The three main problems with respect to a settlement in Anatolia were: the Armenian question; the conflicting claims of Greece and Italy in the West; and the position of Istanbul and the Straits. As regards Armenia, the conference eventually decided to establish an independent Armenian state in eastern Anatolia, which went a long way to fulfilling the Armenian nationalists' expansionist demands. The agreement was, however, a dead letter because of Turkish opposition. The geographical

location of the area meant that enforcing the decision in the face of Turkish armed opposition would have necessitated a large-scale military invasion, for which the Entente by now had neither the means nor the stomach.

The second problem revolved around the fact that both Italy and Greece (which had joined the Entente towards the end of the war) claimed the same area in southwestern Asia Minor. Italy had the older claims, but its simultaneous pursuance of territorial claims on the eastern shores of the Adriatic weakened its position at the conference, while Greece received ever-stronger backing from Britain. This was due partly to the remarkable psychological ascendancy of the Greek prime minister, Venizelos, over his British colleague, Lloyd-George,<sup>11</sup> but partly also to cool political reasoning: Britain saw in Greece a valuable counterweight to France and Italy in the eastern Mediterranean. The result was that Greece received permission to occupy İzmir and its environs in May 1919.

The Entente was faced with a dilemma over Istanbul and the Straits. The strategic and political importance of these areas in the eyes of the British government meant that if they were to be left inside the Ottoman Empire, the whole empire would have to be under some sort of foreign control, possibly in the shape of a mandate. If, on the other hand, the areas were to be severed from the Ottoman Empire, the latter would be so insignificant that it could be left to its own devices. The British took up a hard-line position, but the French were much more conciliatory to the Turks, wanting them to remain in possession of Istanbul. In December 1919 the French – in exchange for getting their way on Syria – accepted the British demands, but strangely enough the British cabinet itself then changed its mind under pressure from the India Office, which feared a violent reaction among British Indian Muslims and of the War Office, which saw a future defence of Istanbul against the Turks as impracticable.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, in answer to the request that the United States establish a mandate in Armenia, the Harbord Commission, a fact-finding mission comparable to the King-Crane Commission, toured Anatolia in September 1919. It recommended an American mandate in all Anatolia, with a large degree of autonomy for the Turks. The idea of an American mandate appealed to many Ottoman Turks, who pinned their hopes on the twelfth of President Wilson's fourteen points, which assured the Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire a 'secure sovereignty'. A number of Turkish intellectuals even founded a Wilsonian League, but the idea was never seriously taken up by the Entente, or indeed by the nationalist leadership in Anatolia.

All the major decisions concerning the peace settlement had been made by the beginning of spring 1920 and the terms were submitted to the Ottoman delegation on 11 May. Istanbul remained in Ottoman hands, but, that apart, the terms were extremely severe. So severe in fact that the Ottoman delegation refused to accept them and the treaty was only signed after Istanbul had sent a new and more compliant delegation.

The Treaty of Sèvres, signed on 10 August 1920, left the Ottoman Empire only a rump state in northern Asia Minor with Istanbul as its capital. Eastern Thrace and the area around İzmir were given to Greece, while the Straits were internationalized. An independent Armenian republic was created in eastern Anatolia. France established mandates in Syria and Lebanon and a sphere of influence in southern Anatolia. Britain established mandates in Palestine, southern Syria (now called Transjordan) and Mesopotamia (Iraq), including the oil-rich province of Mosul. Italy received the southwestern part of Asia Minor as a sphere of influence. Kurdistan to the north of the province of Mosul was left with the Ottoman Empire, but was to receive autonomy and the right to appeal for independence to the League of Nations within a year.

By the time the treaty was signed, it was clear that the signature of the sultan's government in Istanbul counted for little and that the terms would have to be imposed on a country that was already mostly in the hands of a militant national movement. As we have seen, the Entente, anticipating resistance to the terms of the treaty, had occupied Istanbul in March, but it could and would not consider a full-scale military occupation of the interior. Instead, and under strong British pressure, it accepted the Greek offer to enforce the treaty by military means. The result was a full-scale Turkish–Greek war, which lasted from 1920 to 1922.

### **Anatolia, November 1918–spring 1921**

Apart from their underground activities, the Unionists took the initiative in activating public opinion in the provinces. The twelfth of President Wilson's 'points' promised the Turkish areas of the empire secure sovereignty, so the first task of those who wanted to prevent Turkish areas from being separated from the empire was to show that areas in danger of being cut away at the peace conference were indeed overwhelmingly Turkish-Muslim and that they wanted to stay united with the motherland. To this end CUP branches in provincial capitals, often in conjunction with representatives of their province in the capital, founded societies for the 'defence of national rights' (*müdafaa-i hukuk-u milliye* – the phrase most often used at the time).

This type of political agitation was of course most urgent in those

regions that were in obvious danger of being handed over to the Greeks or the Armenians. In Thrace a 'Society for the Defence of Rights' was founded in November 1918 at Edirne, and a separate one for western Thrace began around the same time. İzmir followed with its own regional organization in December. In the east, the first organization was that founded in Kars (in November 1918), followed by Trabzon and Erzurum (both in February 1919 after earlier preparations). In the south, one was founded in Urfa in December.

There were many smaller organizations and they all acted similarly: the Unionists behind the organization usually tried to get local notables and religious dignitaries (often *müftüs*) to act as titular heads of the society in order to emphasize its 'national' character and to attract wide support. Then they set about organizing a congress to prove its representative character. In fact these congresses were generally packed with officials of the provincial CUP organization, who were invited not elected. The congresses, 28 of which were held between December 1918 and October 1920, would then pronounce on the Turkish and Muslim character of the area and its determination to stay united with the motherland. In the towns of Anatolia, the Muslim landowners and traders generally supported the 'Defence of Rights' organizations. Many of them had become wealthy through government contracts and by taking over the land, property and businesses of the deported or emigrant Greeks and Armenians for next to nothing; they thus had a very strong incentive to resist the Greek and Armenian claims. Leaders of the public 'Defence of Rights' groups were often also involved in the underground resistance.

This pattern can be discerned all over Anatolia and Thrace between November 1918 and June 1919; while initially the organizers had problems motivating a war-weary and decimated population, they received an enormous boost with the Greek occupation of İzmir in May 1919. Greece had joined the Entente near the end of the war and had never defeated any Ottoman troops, so the fact that the Entente rewarded it in this way was perceived as a great injustice. Furthermore, the Greeks did not stop after the occupation of İzmir and Ayvalık (as had been agreed beforehand) but moved on. The Entente recognized the Greek occupation of a much larger area in October by the drawing of the 'Milne Line', a demarcation line between the Ottoman and the Greek sectors.

In the course of 1919, it became ever more evident that the Turks would have to fight for the possession of the disputed provinces in the east and the west and their ability to do so depended on the military.

Defeats, epidemics and desertion had depleted the Ottoman army, but it still functioned as one entity. Its command structure was still intact and its leading officers – the Young Turk officers who had made their

careers in the past ten years – almost uniformly supported the resistance. They sabotaged the disarming and demobilization of their troops and secretly supplied the regional resistance organizations with arms and ammunition. Even so, the army's strength in most of Anatolia was unimpressive. Thrace, the Straits area and all of western Anatolia had about 35,000 troops, spread along a 500-mile coastline, and many were in Entente-controlled areas. The regular army units were so weak that until 1921 the nationalists had to rely on bands of Turkish and Circassian irregulars for resistance to the Greek invaders. While they could, and did, harass the Greek army a great deal, they could not possibly be a deciding factor.

In the south the military situation was a little better, with about 18,000 troops (the remnants of the Ottoman Syrian armies) in Cilicia and the north of the Syrian desert and 8000 further east in Kurdistan. The atmosphere in Cilicia – with the capital Adana – and in the towns of Urfa, Maraş and Antep was very tense from the beginning. Not only were these predominantly Muslim areas occupied by the French, but also there were strong suspicions that Armenian claims on the area would be honoured when the French recruited and armed local Armenians. Fighting started here in January 1920.

The only place where sizeable Ottoman forces were concentrated was in the east. The troops that had been ordered back from Azerbaijan after the armistice were now also garrisoned here and their total strength (when mobilized) was about 30,000. These troops, now called the XVth Army Corps, were also much better equipped than those in the west and they operated in an inaccessible area. Militarily speaking, their commander, Kâzım Pasha (Karabekir), was the key figure in Anatolia, followed by Ali Fuat Pasha (Cebesoy),<sup>13</sup> the commander of the XXth Army Corps in Ankara who moved back from Cilicia to central Anatolia at the end of 1918.

This was the situation when Mustafa Kemal Pasha landed in Samsun on 19 May 1919 (four days after the Greek landing at İzmir). He immediately contacted the major commanders and started attempts to draw together the different regional organizations into one national one. On 21 June he, together with Rauf (Orbay), Ali Fuat and Refet (Bele) – the highest-ranking member of his own staff – met in Amasya and drew up a circular, which, after telegraphic consultation with Kâzım Pasha who was in Erzurum, was sent to all civil and military authorities in Anatolia. It stated that the country was in danger, that the government in Istanbul was unable to protect it and that only the will of the nation could save it.

It was announced that a national congress would be held in Sivas (considered the safest place in Anatolia) and that each province should

immediately send three delegates who 'possessed the confidence of the nation'. Mustafa Kemal had wanted to hold this congress straightaway,<sup>14</sup> but in the east a regional congress was already being organized by the *Şarkî Anadolu Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti* (Society for the Defence of the National Rights of Eastern Anatolia), a union of regional and local societies. It was well known that the Armenians claimed the six eastern Anatolian provinces and that their demands found a sympathetic reception in Paris. Political agitation was therefore fiercest in the east.

The congress met in Erzurum on 23 July, the eleventh anniversary of the constitutional revolution. It agreed on a ten-point declaration, reaffirming the determination of the six eastern provinces to stay within the empire but also demanding the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of all lands within the armistice lines as well as of other regions in which Muslims formed a majority. It stated that the national forces must be put in charge to preserve the national independence and to protect the sultanate and caliphate and announced that it would resist any attempt to separate parts of Ottoman territory from the empire, even if, under foreign pressure, the government in Istanbul were forced to abandon them. The congress, before dispersing, elected a 'representative committee' (*heyet-i temsiliye*) with Mustafa Kemal Pasha as its president.

By the time of the congress, Mustafa Kemal was once again, as he had been three months before, an unemployed officer on half-pay. The government in Istanbul as well as the Entente representatives had become increasingly alarmed by his activities. It had recalled him on 5 July and three days later, when he refused to return, dismissed him. Warned beforehand, Mustafa Kemal resigned his position just before he was sacked. This was potentially a very dangerous development, since it could have ended Mustafa Kemal's hold over the army. But his position was saved when the military strongman of the east Kâzım Pasha (Karabekir), who had been ordered to arrest him and send him to the capital and had been offered his job as inspector, refused to obey and made it clear that he still regarded Mustafa Kemal as his superior. The great majority of the army followed his example.

The national congress in Sivas took place from 4 to 11 September. Only 31 provincial representatives had managed to reach Sivas, but a number of military and civil authorities not officially designated as representatives also attended the meetings. All in all 38 people attended.<sup>15</sup> The congress, presented as the *Anadolu Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Milliye Cemiyeti* (Society for the Defence of the National Rights of [all] Anatolia and Thrace), discussed a number of options, including an American mandate, but in the end reaffirmed the resolutions adopted at Erzurum. Again a representative committee was elected and again

Mustafa Kemal was made its president. This committee from now on functioned as the national executive of the resistance movement.

The *Damat Ferit* government in Istanbul made a crude and unsuccessful attempt to get the governor of Malatya, Ali Galip Bey, to suppress the congress with the help of Kurdish irregulars. The initiative now clearly lay with the resistance. Ferit Pasha, whom the Entente had treated very rudely when he visited Paris in the summer and who had nothing to show for his policy of appeasing the Entente, had to resign. The government of his successor, Ali Rıza Pasha, immediately adopted a much more pro-nationalist line and attempted to reach an accord with the resistance. Indeed, negotiations in Amasya in October between Mustafa Kemal and the navy minister, Salih Pasha, resulted in an agreement by which the government adopted the nationalist programme as formulated in Erzurum and Sivas, while the nationalists recognized the government as the highest authority. Neither party, however, proved able to execute the agreement under diverging pressures.

In December the Representative Committee moved to Ankara, chosen for its central location and because it was at the head of a railway line directly linked to Istanbul. In the final months of 1919, the last general elections of the Ottoman Empire took place. The new members of the Ottoman parliament were elected throughout Anatolia under the complete control of the Defence of Rights Society (at Amasya, the government had agreed that only candidates approved by the society could stand); the Anatolian representatives conferred with Mustafa Kemal in Ankara before travelling to Istanbul for the opening of parliament.

For the next few months the parliament, which decided to publish the 'National Pact' (see above) on 17 February as a statement of official aims, acted as the mouthpiece of the resistance movement. The nationalist leaders in the chamber were constantly in touch with Ankara, though they did not always follow directions from Ankara, especially in tactical matters. When it became clear that the British occupation of Istanbul was imminent, Mustafa Kemal agreed that parliament should remain in session, but he urgently asked the leaders, especially Hüseyin Rauf Bey, to come back to Ankara. They decided to stay on, however, and 14 leading members of parliament were among the 150 prominent Turks arrested on and immediately after 16 March. As soon as the news of the occupation reached Ankara, Mustafa Kemal invited the parliamentarians to come to Ankara to take up their seats in a 'national assembly'. Some 92 members managed to do so over the next few weeks and, together with 232 representatives elected by the local branches of the Defence of Rights movement, they formed the *Büyük Millet Meclisi* (Great National Assembly), which met for the first time on 23 April 1920.

With the convening of the national assembly, the resistance movement had turned a corner. While it formally continued to recognize the authority of the sultan-caliph, the headquarters of the nationalist movement in Ankara now took on the character of a complete government (all legislation by the Istanbul government after 16 March was officially declared void).<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it was clear that a confrontation was now imminent, as the nationalists would never accept the peace terms on which the Entente had now agreed.

### **The Independence War, 1921–22**

With Ferit Pasha's return to office in Istanbul in April 1920, the rift between Istanbul and Anatolia widened fast. The *şeyhülislam*, the chief *müftü* of the empire, at the request of the government, issued a *fetva* (legal opinion) in which he declared the nationalists rebels, whom every true believer should endeavour to kill. Shortly afterwards, Mustafa Kemal and a number of other prominent nationalists were officially condemned to death in absentia. The nationalists countered with a *fetva* by the *müftü* of Ankara, declaring the government traitors. The nationalists emphasized that they were fighting for the preservation of the sultanate and caliphate and put the blame on the cabinet and the Entente. They also stressed the Islamic character of their struggle. Mustafa Kemal Pasha took great care to get the public support both of the orthodox Sunni religious dignitaries of Anatolia and of the leaders of the Alevi (Shi'ite) community and the related Bektâşi order of dervishes.

The Istanbul government also tried to organize armed resistance to the nationalists, with support from the somewhat sceptical British. They used exactly the same kind of bands of irregulars as the nationalists did. Circassian Ahmet Anzavur led the most important of these in the region of Balıkesir, but they were suppressed, though with some difficulty, by *Çerkez* (Circassian) Ethem's bands on behalf of the nationalists.

The Istanbul government also tried to bring into the field a regular army called the *Kuva-yi İnzibatiye* (Disciplinary Forces). This force of two regiments (about 2000 men strong) was deployed in the area of İzmit in May, but its morale was low and the leadership incompetent and it never developed into an effective fighting force.

There were a number of other local or regional rebellions against the nationalists in different areas of Anatolia in 1920, but all were suppressed, sometimes with difficulty. Among the nationalists' counter-measures were the adoption of the High Treason Law (*Hiyanet-i Vataniye Kanunu*)<sup>17</sup> and the institution of revolutionary courts, the so-called 'Independence Tribunals' (*İstiklâl Mahkemeleri*), which dealt very severely with Ankara's opponents, as well as deserters.

In the summer of 1920, the Greek army extended its zone of occupation over all of western and northwestern Asia Minor and over Thrace, where only intense Entente pressure prevented them from occupying Istanbul itself. The Turkish nationalist army was still very weak in the west and had to resort to guerrilla warfare by bands of irregulars under leaders like Ethem in the northwest and *Demirci* (Blacksmith) Mehmet in the southwest. In the east, the army had for some time been ready to go on the offensive to recapture the provinces of Kars, Ardahan and Batum (which had been evacuated at the end of 1918 and was ceded to the Armenian republic in the Treaty of Sèvres), but it had been told to wait while the leadership in Ankara tried to reach an agreement with Soviet Russia.

Negotiations with the Bolsheviks about military and financial aid to Turkey and about the opening of a direct route between the two countries (through independent Georgia and Armenia) had been going on since July. Soviet support was absolutely vital for the nationalist movement, so the Turkish emissary, Bekir Sami Bey (Kunduh), pushed hard for a treaty, but the Bolsheviks temporized and demanded the cession of the areas of Van and Bitlis to Armenia. This was unacceptable for the Turks. The negotiations broke down and on 28 September Kâzım Karabekir's army advanced on Sarıkamış taking the town two days later. Fighting was then halted for a month, while the Turkish army redeployed. It resumed on 27 October, and by the end of November Armenia was decisively beaten. The peace concluded at Alexandropol (Gümrü) on 2 December 1920 was a Turkish dictate.

Soon after the signing of the treaty the Bolsheviks toppled the nationalist and social democrat *Dashnakzoutiun* government in Armenia and by the beginning of 1921 negotiations between the Turkish nationalists and the Bolsheviks were resumed. They led to a treaty of friendship (16 March 1921), the first diplomatic treaty concluded by the nationalists. In this the Turks agreed to cede Nachicevan and Batum and to give the Bolsheviks a say in the future status of the Straits.<sup>18</sup> The gold and military supplies they hoped to receive in exchange were somewhat slow in coming. It was really only after the nationalist victory on the Sakarya (September 1921, see below) that they started to flow in, but then they played a crucial role in rearming the nationalist forces. The peace agreement with Armenia and the treaty with Soviet Russia also enabled the nationalists to transfer troops from the eastern to the western front, where the situation was still very threatening.

A first attempt by the Greek army to push eastward from Bursa to Eskişehir was thwarted when Turkish troops under Colonel İsmet (İnönü) managed to beat them back at İnönü on 10 January 1921. This

was the regular army's first success in the west. As a result of the victories over Armenia and at İnönü, the nationalists' diplomatic position was considerably strengthened. The two most ardent supporters of the Entente, Venizelos in Athens and Ferit Pasha in Istanbul, had both by now fallen from power. Venizelos had lost the Greek elections of December 1920 to the royalists and Ferit Pasha's position had become untenable because of the nationalists' successes and the severity of the peace terms of the Entente. The French, and even the British, now began to see that a revision of the Treaty of Sèvres was inevitable. The Greek and Ottoman governments were invited to have talks in London starting on 21 February on a possible revision of the treaty. It was left to the Ottoman government to reach an understanding with the nationalists – a procedure that was unacceptable to the latter since they regarded themselves as the only legitimate representatives of the 'national will'. In the end a formal invitation was extended to a nationalist delegation through the Italian government. At the conference, the grand vizier, Ferit Pasha's successor Ahmet Tevfik Pasha, made a short opening speech, after which, in a gesture of national solidarity, he gave the floor to Bekir Sami (Kunduh), Ankara's commissar of foreign affairs.

The two sides first took up extreme positions: the National Pact bound the Turks and the Greeks demanded that the terms of the peace treaty be made even harsher as a punishment for Turkish resistance. The powers tried to find a solution on the basis of an investigation by an international commission of neutral experts in the disputed areas, but the Greek side turned this down. Proposals for the establishment of an autonomous province around İzmir with a Christian governor broke down over the Turks' refusal to accept even a token Greek force in the area.

During the conference it became clear that the French and the Italians had begun to have strong reservations about the Greek expansion, which they now saw as a British attempt to establish a vassal state in the eastern Mediterranean to counter French and Italian influence there, and were quite eager to reach separate understandings with the Turkish nationalists. On 11 March the French foreign minister, Briand, reached an agreement with Bekir Sami, based on a French withdrawal from Cilicia in exchange for economic concessions. Italy's Count Sforza reached a similar agreement with the Turks two days later. With the British, only an agreement about the exchange of prisoners of war was reached. They still strongly supported the Greeks and coordinated their activities with them behind the scenes. When the Greeks asked for an assurance that they were free to resume the attack in spite of the conference being held, Lloyd-George, who was informed that the Greek army was ready to strike, insisted that this assurance be given.

When Bekir Sami returned to Ankara with what he thought were quite encouraging results, he found that the majority in the national assembly thought he had deviated too far from the National Pact. Even his separate agreements with the French and the Italians were thrown out and he himself had to resign. The Greek army now returned to the offensive. They were halted once again at İnönü (7 April 1921), but during the summer they broke through and occupied Afyon-Karahisar, Kütahya and the important railroad junction of Eskişehir. The fall of this last-named town caused considerable panic in Ankara, where the assembly prepared to leave the town for the safety of Sivas. Mustafa Kemal, at the request of the assembly, took personal command of the army and for three months all powers of the assembly were invested in him. The government requisitioned one-third of all foodstuffs and farm animals and all available arms and munitions in the countryside. Every last available recruit was called up.

The army took up positions on the Sakarya river, about 50 miles to the west and southwest of Ankara. There, in typically bare and hilly Anatolian steppe country, the decisive battle of the war was fought. It lasted for over a fortnight and ended with a Turkish victory when the Greek forces started to withdraw from 13 September onwards. The exhaustion of the Turkish army prevented it from pursuing its enemy. The front remained static for almost exactly a year, with the Greeks still in possession of western Asia Minor up to the line Afyon-Karahisar–Eskişehir.

During that year the political situation changed fundamentally in favour of the Turkish nationalists. In October an agreement on the return of Cilicia to Turkey was reached with a French representative in Ankara, Franklin-Bouillon. Despite Greek appeals, the Entente powers now declared their neutrality as Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary, tried to reopen negotiations, first along the lines of the proposals made in London, and then based on a complete Greek withdrawal from Asia Minor. These attempts were, however, unsuccessful and, after meticulous preparations, Mustafa Kemal ordered his forces to attack the Greek army on 26 August 1922. For the Greek army, which was poorly led by an officer corps divided by political squabbles between Venizelists and monarchists, the main thrust of the attack, coming as it did to the south of Afyon-Karahisar, was a complete surprise. They were routed everywhere and large parts of the army, including its commander-in-chief, were captured to the west of Afyon. On 30 August (now celebrated as ‘victory day’ in Turkey), the battle was won and after that the retreat of the Greek army to the coast – and beyond – became a flight. On 9 September Turkish cavalry entered İzmir.

With the Greek army defeated, there was nothing left between the

Turks and British forces, which still occupied the Straits zone. A confrontation seemed imminent. The Turks demanded the right of passage into Europe. The British government decided to stand firm and defend the Straits and called for support from the Entente partners and Dominions. When no support was forthcoming (except from New Zealand), the British government decided to fight on its own, if necessary, rather than suffer a loss of face, which it considered would endanger its hold over the Muslim populations of the empire. In the end, the sensible behaviour of the local commanders General Harington and İsmet Pasha (İnönü), who managed to avoid confrontations, defused the dangerous situation. On 10 October, after a week of negotiations in Mudanya on the Sea of Marmara, agreement was reached on an armistice. This left Istanbul and the Straits under British control for the duration.

### **Political developments within the National Resistance Movement**

The story of the development of the Turkish national resistance movement from the regional congresses of 1918 and 1919 to the victory of 1922 is at the same time the story of the emergence of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) as the clear leader of the movement. His authority was far from unchallenged, however. His authority over the armed forces was maintained throughout, despite his dismissal by the Istanbul government, because the leading commanders remained explicitly loyal to him. Political authority was another matter. The Unionist cadres who had organized the regional resistance movements with their congresses, and who had contributed decisively to the success of the movement through the activities of *Karakol*, were aware of the fact that they had been first on the scene and their loyalty to Mustafa Kemal was far from automatic. Their independence (*Karakol* even conducted its own talks with Bolshevik representatives in January 1920) caused serious friction with the pasha, such as when he had a public row with the *Karakol* leader Colonel Vasif at the Sivas congress.

The Unionist officers in the War Ministry in Istanbul, who supported the nationalist resistance, basically saw the latter as an instrument to put pressure on the Entente and to get it to revise the peace terms. They were displeased with the increasingly independent line of the Anatolian movement: at one point, they seem to have considered replacing Mustafa Kemal with the more tractable Kâzım Karabekir. What really finished them off as competitors were the British occupation of Istanbul in March 1920 and the deportation of leading *Karakol* members to Malta. The underground in Istanbul continued to function, but from now on it was effectively controlled from Ankara.

In the period between the occupation of Istanbul and the final victory

of 1922 two types of opposition emerged, which can roughly be classified as left wing and right wing. The left-wing opposition consisted not of hard-line communists but of people who supported a mixture of Islamic, anti-imperialist, corporatist and socialist ideas. Their common denominator was their anti-Western attitude. Their first serious organization was the *Yeşil Ordu* (Green Army), which was set up in May 1920 (with the approval of Mustafa Kemal Pasha). It was not a real army, but a political organization designed to improve morale within the nationalist forces and to counter the activities of the sultan's propagandists who operated under the name of 'Army of the Caliphate'. When *Çerkez* Ethem, at the head of his Circassian fighters, joined it, it became a force to be reckoned with and a potential threat. Mustafa Kemal Pasha had it disbanded in July. But the radicals in the assembly reorganized as the *Halk Zümresi* (People's Faction) the same month. Mustafa Kemal Pasha reacted by getting a number of people he trusted from among the People's Faction to found an officially approved 'communist' party (the *Türkiye Komünist Fırkası*), which was tightly controlled by people close to himself.

Neither the radicals nor the Third International, however, recognized the party because a real Communist Party already existed, founded in the spring of 1920 in Baku. In May 1920 it had been taken over by a group led by Mustafa Suphi, a former high-school teacher (and Unionist) who had fled to Russia in 1914 and had been interned there during the war. After the revolution he had helped to spread communist ideas among the 60,000 Turkish prisoners of war in Russia. His supporters, together with a number of like-minded people from among the 'People's Faction' in November formed the *Halk İştirakiyun Fırkası* (People's Socialist Party) in Ankara.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha took steps to crush this left-wing movement in January 1921. First he ordered *Çerkez* Ethem to disband his troops and let them be integrated in the regular army. When he refused, troops were sent against him, most of his men were taken prisoner and he himself fled and went over to the Greek side. With the strong arm of the left thus cut off, Mustafa Kemal dissolved the Popular Socialists. When Mustafa Suphi tried to enter Anatolia through Trabzon, he was forced to return and then drowned at sea, with a number of supporters, at the orders of the local nationalist commanders.<sup>19</sup>

It was not that the extreme left constituted a real threat to Mustafa Kemal's leadership: in fact, until the 1960s, the extreme left was a marginal phenomenon in Turkey. But its existence might have jeopardized vital Soviet support for the nationalists. This was especially dangerous as long as the former Unionist war leader Enver Pasha was around as an

alternative to Mustafa Kemal. Enver still had a high reputation in the army and among some of the local and regional Unionist groups on which the nationalist movement had been built.<sup>20</sup> After his failed attempt to reach the Caucasus in 1918 to continue the struggle from there, he had spent the next year and a half in Berlin, building up his contacts with the Bolsheviks. He tried to build a kind of Islamic Comintern on the basis of a group of former *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa* agents from different parts of the Islamic world who were living in Europe, and he visited the Soviet-sponsored 'Congress of the Peoples of the East' in Baku in September 1920 as a representative of North Africa. After the congress, he drew up a radical partly Islamic, partly socialist programme and founded a party (which was to be the Turkish affiliate of his worldwide Islamic revolutionary network), called the *Halk Şuralar Fırkası* (People's Soviets Party). At the same time he tried to get Soviet support by posing as a more reliable left-wing alternative to Mustafa Kemal.

What he really wanted was to raise a Turkish army in the Caucasus with Soviet money and arms and then to enter Anatolia at the head of this army. In the spring and summer of 1921 this idea might have been successful in view of the critical situation on the western front and the criticism within the assembly in Ankara of Mustafa Kemal's conduct of the war, but Soviet support was not forthcoming. The Bolsheviks kept Enver dangling for some time, using him as an implicit threat against Ankara. When they finally signed a friendship treaty with Ankara and it became clear that they would not support his scheme, Enver decided to go to Anatolia alone, relying on his reputation to pick up a following.

On 30 July he left Moscow for Batum on the Turkish border. He was refused entry into Turkey, but supporters from Anatolia met him in Batum and he was in constant touch with leading members from the nationalist organization across the border in Trabzon. Early in September his group even held a 'congress' in Batum, not as the People's Soviets Party, but as the Party of Union and Progress. This shows that he now no longer banked on Soviet support but aimed at the support of the Unionists in the nationalist organization. He was too late, however. While he was busy on the border, the battle on the Sakarya was at its height. The victory of 13 September saved not only Ankara but possibly also Mustafa Kemal's position. Enver stayed on for two weeks and then left for good. He never gave up his dreams of a new Islamic/Turkic empire, however, and he died in June 1922, fighting the Red Army at the head of Turkic guerrilla bands near the Afghan border.

The left-wing (or Enverist) threat was, however, not the only hurdle Mustafa Kemal had to overcome in 1921. His conciliatory policies towards the Soviet Union had caused anxiety among conservative

deputies from the east. In March they formed the *Muhafaza-i Mukaddesat Cemiyeti* (Association for the Preservation of Sacred Institutions), led by *Hoca* Raif (Dinç), one of the organizers of the Congress of Erzurum in 1919. This movement stressed the importance of religion and of the sultanate and caliphate.

It will be apparent from the above that the first national assembly was quite a heterogeneous and unruly body. It was to strengthen his hold on it and to make its actions more predictable that Mustafa Kemal organized his more dependable followers into the *Müdafaa-i Hukuk Grubu* (Defence of Rights Group) in May 1921. After the Greek threat had receded in the autumn of 1921, the opposition, temporarily silenced during the emergency, reorganized. It received a boost when by the end of the year the prisoners the British held on Malta were released and returned to Ankara. A number of them (including the former *Karakol* chief Vasıf) joined the opposition and founded the *İkinci Grup* (Second Group) early in 1922. The group was ideologically very heterogeneous and really only bound together by joint opposition to what was perceived as Mustafa Kemal's growing autocracy and radicalism. While the Defence of Rights Group generally had a majority in the assembly, neither group was very disciplined and the number of adherents of each fluctuated.

The victory in the independence war of September 1922 immensely strengthened Mustafa Kemal's position. He was now the *Halâskar Gazi* (Saviour and Conqueror) and he was determined to use this situation to consolidate his position in the postwar era. On 6 December he announced for the first time his intention to convert the Defence of Rights Group into a political party, to be called the *Halk Fırkası* (People's Party). In conversations with a number of leading journalists, he also talked for the first time about abolishing the caliphate and establishing a republic.

At the end of March, in a situation that was very tense because of the murder of one of the leaders of the Second Group by the commander of Mustafa Kemal's bodyguard, an amendment to the High Treason Law of 1920 was introduced in the assembly, declaring it illegal to campaign for a return of the sultanate. On 1 April, Mustafa Kemal announced his intention to dissolve the assembly and to hold new elections. A week later, he presented a nine-point manifesto for his new party. This was a curious mixture of general statements ('sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation') and specific items ('measures to improve the marketing of tobacco') taken from different sources.<sup>21</sup> On 15 April, the amendment to the High Treason Law was passed and the next day the assembly was dissolved.

While all this was going on in Ankara, in Istanbul the final congress of the Committee of Union and Progress took place. It was convoked by *Kara Kemal Bey*, the former Unionist party boss in Istanbul and one of the founders of *Karakol*, who had had secret discussions about the future role of the Unionists with Mustafa Kemal Pasha in İzmit in January. The congress drew up its own nine-point programme and offered the leadership of a revived CUP to Mustafa Kemal – an honour he declined.

The two-stage elections for a new assembly were held in June and July and, since Mustafa Kemal himself had thoroughly vetted the candidates, hardly any former Second Group members entered the new assembly. It met for the first time on 9 August 1923 and then – but only then – the Defence of Rights Group (now encompassing the whole assembly) reconstituted itself as the People's Party (PP). The new party took over all the assets of the Association for the Defence of the National Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia, which gave it a nationwide organization in one go. It was this new, much more tightly controlled, assembly that debated and ratified the peace treaty that was concluded in Lausanne between Turkey and the Entente powers.

### **The Peace Treaty of Lausanne**

Soon after the cessation of hostilities, the Entente invited the Turks to start negotiations. The Turkish side wanted them to take place in İzmir (in which case Mustafa Kemal himself would lead the delegation) but the Entente refused to negotiate on Turkish soil and eventually Lausanne was chosen. Britain, France, Italy and Greece were the hosts, while on the Turkish side both the government in Ankara and that in Istanbul were invited to send delegations. In reaction to this, the last grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire, Ahmet Tevfik Pasha (Okday), sent a telegram to Ankara suggesting that a joint delegation be sent. This caused a furore in the national assembly and led directly to the adoption, on 1 November 1922, of a motion to abolish the sultanate. Four days later, Tevfik Pasha handed over his seal of office to the nationalist representative in Istanbul, Refet Pasha (Bele), who ordered the Ottoman ministries to terminate all activities and, on 17 November, the last Ottoman sultan sought refuge on a British warship, which took him to Malta. His cousin Abdülmecit succeeded him, but only as caliph, not as sultan.

To the surprise of everyone, including himself, İsmet Pasha (İnönü) was appointed leader of the Turkish delegation in Lausanne. Mustafa Kemal chose him partly because İsmet was his most loyal and dependable supporter, but also because the prime minister, Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay), was known as an Anglophile, while the commissar for foreign

affairs Yusuf Kemal (Tengirşenk) was too pro-Soviet. İsmet duly left for Lausanne, armed with strict instructions not to deviate from the National Pact in any way. The conference opened on 20 November. Represented were Great Britain, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey, while the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Georgia, Romania and Bulgaria were invited to those sessions in which they had a direct interest. It was clear from the start that the negotiations would be extremely difficult because of the different perspectives of the two sides. The Entente, among whom the British foreign secretary Lord Curzon was by far the most dominant figure, saw themselves as the victors of the First World War. In their eyes the conference was meant to adjust the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres to the new situation. In the eyes of the Turks, they themselves were the victors in their national independence war and Sèvres for them was past history. They came to Lausanne with a maximalist interpretation of the National Pact, and with a brief to include the district of Alexandrette, the Syrian inland down to the Euphrates river, the province of Mosul and the Aegean islands adjacent to the Anatolian coast in the new Turkey, and to insist on a plebiscite for Western Thrace.

The Turkish delegation had a very hard time at Lausanne, especially in the beginning. They were not considered equal partners. Curzon adopted an extremely patronizing and arrogant attitude, which contributed to the bad-tempered atmosphere. The Turks were severely handicapped by their lack of diplomatic expertise. For fear of being tricked into major concessions, they remained almost totally inflexible, refusing to give direct answers or to be drawn into impromptu discussions. İsmet's deafness often served as a useful excuse. The Turkish delegation continually consulted Ankara, unaware that British intelligence intercepted all their messages.

The problems discussed came under three headings: territorial and military; economic and financial; and the position of foreigners and minorities. Little was achieved on any of these fronts in the first two months. Early in February all the main territorial problems (the border in Thrace, the future regime of the Straits) had been solved, with the parties agreeing to postpone the discussion of the Mosul question until later. The problems in the other two areas, however, proved insuperable. The Entente presented the Turks with a draft treaty, which it considered its final offer. The Turks refused to sign. The conference broke down and the delegations went home.

Extreme nationalist fervour now reigned in Ankara and at the beginning of March both İsmet and the government were vehemently attacked in the assembly for the few concessions they had made.

Mustafa Kemal had to intervene personally to get the assembly to empower the government to continue negotiations.

The Turkish side handed over 100 pages of amendments to the draft treaty it had been given in February. At the end of March, after its experts had studied the amendments, the Entente invited the Turks to reopen negotiations and, on 23 April, the parties reconvened. The Greek and Turkish delegations soon solved their bilateral problems, Turkey receiving a small border correction in Thrace in exchange for renouncing its claim to war reparations, but the main problem remained the Entente countries' insistence on economic and judicial concessions in exchange for recognition of the abolition of the capitulations. The Turkish side refused anything that amounted to an infringement of the complete sovereignty of the new Turkish state. The Entente position was weak because in none of its countries was the population prepared to go to war over these issues. Therefore, agreement was eventually reached on 17 July. İsmet asked the government in Ankara for permission to sign. When no answer was forthcoming, he asked for permission from Mustafa Kemal and got it. The treaty was signed on 24 July 1923.

Basically, though not in every detail, the goals of the National Pact had been attained and within the borders of the National Pact the Turkey that emerged was a completely sovereign state. The province of Mosul, which Turkey claimed but Britain occupied, remained part of Iraq pending a decision by the League of Nations; the *sancak* of Alexandrette remained with French Syria and, except for Imroz (Gökçe Ada) and Tenedos (Bozca Ada), the Aegean islands adjacent to Asia Minor, which the Turks had claimed, remained with Greece and Italy.

But Anatolia and eastern Thrace became part of the new state and there was no mention of Armenia or Kurdistan. The Straits zone was internationalized under a commission chaired by a Turk and demilitarized, except for a garrison of up to 12,000 men in Istanbul. The capitulations remained abolished, but Turkey had to honour all existing foreign concessions and it was not free to change its customs tariffs until 1929. All attempts by the powers to establish supervision over the Turkish judicial system had failed and all inhabitants of Turkey, including foreigners, were now subject to the Turkish courts. The only concession was that foreign observers were to be admitted to the Turkish courts. All wartime reparation claims were renounced. As far as the minorities were concerned, a clause was inserted, in which Turkey bound itself to protect its citizens, regardless of creed, nationality or language, but there was to be no supervision of Turkey's handling of its minorities.

The Entente had wanted a general amnesty to be part of the treaty.

Proposals for this were discussed in the sub-commission on minorities, but the Turks did not want to grant a general amnesty to opponents of the nationalists and, since no lists of 'undesirables' had been prepared, they were unable to specify who should be excluded from any amnesty. In the end, the Turkish government accepted the amnesty but reserved the right to make 150 – as yet unnamed – exceptions. The amnesty was announced on 16 April 1924, but the exceptions were still undetermined. A list was finally submitted to the assembly in June and, shortly afterwards, those of 'the 150' (*yüzellilikler*) who were still in the country were ordered to leave. The assembly accepted the peace treaty (although not unanimously) and it was ratified on 21 August. The Entente immediately began withdrawing its occupation forces. On 1 October 1923, the last British troops left Istanbul.

### **Turkey in 1923**

It is hard to envisage the condition of the country that had won its continued survival and its independence in Lausanne. After ten years of almost continuous warfare it was depopulated, impoverished and in ruins to a degree almost unparalleled in modern history. Demographically, it showed the effects of large-scale migration and mortality. Mortality among the Anatolian population had been incredibly high. The Ottoman army had always recruited most of its soldiers among the peasant population of Asia Minor (the 'soldier mines of the empire') and the countless casualties of the campaigns in the Caucasus, Gallipoli, Palestine and Mesopotamia turn up in the population statistics of Anatolia. Furthermore, from early 1915 onwards, eastern Anatolia had become a war theatre itself. This had led to great suffering among the Muslim population, which had partly followed the retreating Ottoman armies. It had also led to the deportation and partial extermination of the Armenian community. The First World War was followed by the independence war, during which campaigns had been fought both in the east and in the west. On the western front the retreating and fleeing Greek forces had committed large-scale atrocities among the Muslim population and some of the advancing Turkish troops had acted with comparable brutality against the Greek Orthodox population. Some 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims lost their lives, as well as between 600,000 and 800,000 Armenians and up to 300,000 Greeks. All in all, the population of Anatolia declined by 20 per cent through mortality, a percentage 20 times as high as that of France, which had been the hardest-hit country among the large European protagonists in the First World War. Only Serbia had lost a larger part of its population in the war. Even this number is deceptive, however. In the war zones

the number was higher: in some eastern provinces half the population was dead and another quarter had become refugees. There were 12 provinces, most of them in the west, where the number of widows among the female population exceeded 30 per cent. Anatolia's high mortality rate was not due only to warfare and atrocities. The wars had led to disruption of the infrastructure and a shortage of labour in agriculture. These in turn had led to famine and famines usually had epidemics, notably of cholera and typhoid, trailing in their wake.

Next to mortality, migration was the major demographic phenomenon. It has already been noted that the war of 1878 and the Balkan War of 1912–13 had brought hundreds of thousands of Muslim (mainly Turkish) refugees into the country. During and after the First World War several hundred thousand Armenians emigrated from Anatolia, mainly to the Soviet Union, France and the USA. Their example was followed by large numbers of Greeks from western Anatolia. Finally, under the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne, the remainder of the Greek Orthodox population of Anatolia (but not that of Istanbul), about 900,000 people, was exchanged against the Muslims from Greece (except the community in western Thrace) who numbered about 400,000. In actual fact, the large majority of the Greek population had already fled the country in 1922. The communities that were exchanged under the agreement were the inhabitants of the Black Sea coastal region and the Turkish speaking Greek Orthodox from Karaman. The migratory movements meant a net loss to the population of Anatolia of about 10 per cent, which should be added to the 20 per cent loss due to mortality.

The population changes meant that, culturally also, Anatolia in 1923 was a completely different place from what it had been in 1913. The larger Christian communities were practically gone (the Armenian community had shrunk to about 65,000 and the Greek community was down from around two million to 120,000); and Anatolia, which had been 80 per cent Muslim before the wars, was now approximately 98 per cent Muslim. Linguistically, only two large groups were left: the Turks and the Kurds, with many smaller groups (Greek, Armenian and Syriac-speaking Christians, Spanish-speaking Jews, and Circassian, Laz and Arabic-speaking Muslims) as well as immigrants from the Balkans. The city population had shrunk even further than the rural population. As a result of this ruralization of the country, 18 per cent of the people now lived in the towns, as opposed to 25 per cent before the wars started.<sup>22</sup>

In economic terms the havoc wrought by the wars was also considerable. The actual physical damage was limited: there were relatively few industrial installations that could be damaged and most

of those were in the Istanbul region, which had not been directly afflicted by the war. The major structural damage was to the railways and bridges in western Anatolia and to housing. It was caused both by the fighting and by deliberate destruction by the withdrawing Greek army. Large parts of the Greek and Armenian quarters of the great port city of İzmir were burnt to the ground in September 1922. It is still unclear who was to blame for this catastrophe. Far more serious was the fact that the emigration of the Greeks and Armenians also meant the exodus of the large majority of entrepreneurs and managers. With them went an irreplaceable stock of industrial and commercial know-how. And it was not just highly skilled personnel that was now lacking in Turkey. It went much further. There were whole regions where not a single welder or electrician could now be found. International trade in 1923 was one-third of what it had been ten years earlier. By far the most important sector of the Turkish economy was agriculture, which recuperated relatively quickly after 1923. Nevertheless, it took until about 1930 for the gross national product to reach pre-First World War levels.<sup>23</sup>

In one respect Turkey was lucky. Like other protagonists, the Ottoman government had incurred heavy war debts, but in the Ottoman case these debts were not to the United States, a victor, but to Germany, a defeated country. Therefore, the debt, which totalled about 160 million Turkish gold pounds, or 720 million US dollars, was informally written off.<sup>24</sup> This was not the case with the old consolidated Ottoman public debt. At Lausanne, it was decided that this should be apportioned to the successor states or territories of the empire and five years later an agreement was reached under which 65 per cent (a total of £78 million) of the debt fell on Turkey and was duly paid back over the years.<sup>25</sup>