

## CHAPTER SIX

### SETTLING THE ACCOUNTS: THE PURGES OF 1926

Although the political opposition in Turkey had been silenced, its press intimidated and its organization disbanded, Mustafa Kemal still did not feel totally secure. The dissident Unionists, the *Second Group* conservatives and the Western-type Liberals of the Progressive Republican Party had all lost the ability to express their political views openly after June, 1925<sup>1</sup> but they were still there, with their prestige and their following possibly still intact. The real extent of their popularity was hard to fathom once the Kemalist government had driven them from the political scene.

In the background there still loomed the spectre of a resurrected C.U.P. The leaders of the Committee who had helped to launch Mustafa Kemal and his movement were also still around, although Mustafa Kemal had prevented them from acting independently during and after the War of Independence.<sup>2</sup> They had been able to create and run secret organizations like the *Teşkilâti Mahsusa* and *Karakol* in the past and might do so again, especially since the former members of these organizations were still around and sometimes held prominent positions—even within the Kemalist group that ruled the country—because of their expertise and service record. Mustafa Kemal was too well acquainted with the ways of the Unionist *komitacı*'s to underestimate the potential danger to himself.

What could make the existence of these groups acutely dangerous was the climate of discontent prevailing in the country, both because of the continuing bad economic situation and because of the rapid succession of radical reforms, which gave rise to outbursts of popular protest in 1925 and early 1926.

In this situation Mustafa Kemal decided to secure his position for once and for all by the removal of all political competitors in one blow.

The first signs of the gathering storm could be seen in March, 1926, when—beginning on the 13th—Mustafa Kemal published his famous memoirs, or rather autobiographical anecdotes, in the newspaper *Milliyet*.

The character of these memoirs and the way in which they were published have been discussed in chapter one.<sup>3</sup> In the context of this chapter the most interesting question concerning them is: why did Mus-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, chapter 5, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *supra*, chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *supra*, chapter 1, p. 25.

tafa Kemal have them published? He was asked this very question by his audience, but he refused to answer it directly, saying that he could not explain the reasons at the time but that they would be evident to his nation from the text itself.<sup>4</sup> This certainly sounds ominous and because the publication was followed so soon by the anti-C.U.P. purges in the summer of 1926 Dény has already wondered whether the publication of these memoirs was perhaps meant as a preparation of the public opinion for the coming campaign.<sup>5</sup>

It is indeed hard to believe that this was totally coincidental, for the recurring theme in the memoirs is Mustafa Kemal's criticism of and opposition to the irresponsible policies of the C.U.P. before and during the First World War. It is, furthermore, more than probable that the government was already informed of the plot to murder Mustafa Kemal which formed the pretext of the purges of 1926, at the time these memoirs were published.<sup>6</sup>

I think that the testimonies of the most important accused at the trial in İzmir (June 26-July 13, 1926) make it clear that there was indeed such a plot and that it was not entirely set up by the government for the purpose, so I think we must conclude that the purges were planned but that the execution was at least partly improvised.

It is a pity that the third series of memoirs, which had been planned, was cancelled under pressure of the Turkish government, because this series would have been about the early years of the independence movement and so would have been an occasion for Mustafa Kemal to give his views on the rôles played by the other leaders of the movement, the founders of the P.R.P., as he later did in the *Nutuk*.<sup>7</sup> It would have been interesting to see whether Mustafa Kemal was planning to attack them too.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Ce but quel est-il? (*Bu maqsad ne olabilir?*) Je ne puis l'expliquer ici (*Buna ben burada izâh edemem*). Mais je ne doute pas qu'en lisant ces lignes, qui font connaître en toute sincérité mes projets et mes pensées (*tesavvurlarımı, düşüncelerimi samîmi olarak naql eder bu yazılar*) ma nation (*milletim*) se trouvera en possession des documents nécessaires pour comprendre par elle-même la situation.' (Dény, *Souvenirs*, p. 202.)

<sup>5</sup> Dény, *Souvenirs*, p. 202.

<sup>6</sup> Sebesoy, *Siyasî*, Vol. 2, p. 212-214. Avcıoğlu, Vol. 3, p. 1337.

<sup>7</sup> Criticism of the leaders of the independence movement is a recurring theme in Atatürk, *Nutuk*. Especially Refet (Bele) and Rauf (Orbay) come in for much vehement criticism. Refet for being unreliable (Atatürk, *Nutuk* 34, 51, 85, Atatürk, *Speech* 25, 38, 67) and for military failures (Atatürk, *Nutuk* 548, 585, Atatürk, *Speech* 465, 495), while Rauf is criticized for his behaviour in the parliament in İstanbul (Atatürk, *Nutuk* 360, 410, Atatürk, *Speech*, 311, 355) and for his attitude during the peace negotiations in Lausanne (Atatürk, *Nutuk* 791, Atatürk, *Speech* 656). Ali Fuat and Kâzım Pasha come in for criticism too, though rather less so. For a complete survey, see note 55. Besides, the whole last part of Atatürk *Nutuk* (from Atatürk, *Nutuk* 796, Atatürk, *Speech* 660 onwards) is devoted to the description of the actions of the opposition led by Rauf (first within the People's Party, then in the P.R.P.), which are fiercely denounced by Mustafa Kemal.

On May 7, 1926 Mustafa Kemal left on an inspection tour through Southern and Western Turkey (and not to recover his health as is sometimes stated. Mustafa Kemal had serious attacks of angina pectoris in 1924 and in 1927, but not in 1926, although his health was certainly heavily taxed by overfatigue and his habit of drinking half a liter to a liter of *Rakı* a day).<sup>8</sup> First he visited Adana, Mersin and his model farm in Silifke on the South coast and thereafter he crossed Anatolia to Mudanya on the Marmara coast. Then he went to Bursa where he took the waters at the spa of Çekirge.

Up to that time the trip had not been a success. His popularity was clearly shaken by his reform policies and by the harsh way in which some of the reforms (notably the 'hat law') had been enforced by the *İstiklâl Mahkemeleri* (Independence Tribunals). Mustafa Kemal was therefore rather depressed when he left Bursa on the fourteenth of June to travel to İzmir via Balıkesir. Originally he was to arrive in İzmir on the fifteenth but he unexpectedly announced his wish to stop for one day in Balıkesir so that his arrival was now expected for the afternoon of the sixteenth. This delay probably saved his life and it may be one more indication that Mustafa Kemal was aware of the conspiracy to murder him.

Towards eleven o'clock on the evening of June 15 a man reported to the office of the governor of İzmir. He declared that he knew of a conspiracy against the life of the President of the Republic. Following the directions of this man, who turned out to be the owner/operator of a motorboat, called *Giritli Şevki*, the other conspirators were rounded up around midnight in various hotels in İzmir. They were a number of professional criminals called *Çopur Hilmi*, *Lâz İsmail* and *Gürcü Yusuf*, led by one *Ziya Hurşit* (1892-1926), a former representative of Rize in the first Great National Assembly (from 1920 to 1923) and a prominent member of the Second Group.

They quietly surrendered to the police and *Ziya Hurşit* even handed over the revolvers and bombs he had in his room. Thereafter they were taken to police headquarters, where the interrogations were started that same night. The story told by the conspirators went as follows (according to the official indictment):

A group of people, one of them *Ziya Hurşit*, had more than a year before conceived the plan to assassinate Mustafa Kemal. For that purpose they had engaged the services of professional criminals and then examined the various possibilities of executing their plan. First they had tried it in Ankara: by shooting the president in his car on the way from his villa in

<sup>8</sup> Şehsüvaroğlu, p. 11-13, p. 20.

Çankaya to the town, by waiting for him when he left the *Anatolian Club* at night, and even by bombing the presidential loge in the parliament building. But none of these attempts had developed beyond the planning stage. Finally the conspirators had decided to make use of Mustafa Kemal's trip around the country. *Lâz İsmail* was sent to Bursa to explore the possibilities of an attempt there, taking his girl-friend with him as a disguise. But the situation in Bursa looked unpromising to him. Thereupon they decided to try it in İzmir. Ziya Hurşit and his helpers arrived from İstanbul on the fourteenth. As soon as they arrived, Ziya Hurşit contacted Edip, nicknamed *Sarı Efe* (The Blonde Chief), a former gendarmerie officer and Unionist *Fedaî*, who had acquired fame as a guerilla leader in the War of Independence.<sup>9</sup> He had been recommended by two of the other conspirators to Ziya Hurşit. Edip introduced Ziya Hurşit and his men to *Giritli Şevki*, the man who gave them away. Şevki gave them lodgings and after the attempt he was to have taken them across to the Greek island of Chios in his boat.

The plan was to wait for Mustafa Kemal's car at a crossing where it would have to go slowly to negotiate a bend and then to shoot the President with revolvers from various angles. If necessary, bombs hidden in bunches of flowers would be thrown into the car to finish the job.

It was the unexpected delay of the President's arrival that ruined the plan. *Sarı Efe* Edip did not wait for the outcome of the undertaking but left for İstanbul on the fifteenth. This, combined with the news of the delay gave Şevki the idea that the affair was blown and he decided to denounce the conspirators before he was himself denounced.

This is the version the conspirators gave to the police.<sup>10</sup> Another possibility is that Edip acted as a double agent and an informer for the government. According to Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) this was rumoured to be the case and Edip had acted as a government agent before. Some things Edip said during his trial point in this direction too and it was after all he who brought the conspirators into contact with Şevki.<sup>11</sup>

The next day Mustafa Kemal arrived in İzmir. He was received enthusiastically by the population and gave out a statement which was widely publicized:

'My humble body will someday surely turn into dust, but the Turkish Republic will endure forever and the Turkish nation will march forward with-

<sup>9</sup> *Sarı Efe* Edip figures in Atatürk, *Nutuk* as a prominent guerilla-leader (Atatürk, *Nutuk*, p. 530-532; Atatürk, *Speech*, p. 447-449). See also Bayar, Vol. 6, p. 1898.

<sup>10</sup> For Ziya Hurşit's statement to the police, see Erman, p. 32-33.

<sup>11</sup> Cebesoy, *Siyasî*, Vol. 2, p. 212-214.

out hesitation on the road of civilization according to the principles that will ensure its safety and happiness.'<sup>12</sup>

By this time the government in Ankara, led by İsmet Pasha (İnönü), had been notified too. It immediately sent the Independence Tribunal of Ankara to İzmir, where it arrived on June 18.

Perhaps this is an opportune moment to go into the composition and functioning of these tribunals. The Independence Tribunals had been instituted in 1920 as a means to deal effectively and quickly with the spies of the Sultan's government and to combat the growing number of desertions from the nationalist forces. After the nationalist victory in the War of Independence, the tribunals had been abolished, but after the passing of the *Takriri Sükûn Kanunu* in March 1925 two Independence Tribunals had again been instituted. One of them operated from Ankara, while the other was mobile and went from town to town in Eastern Anatolia to deal with the insurgents. Later that same year the tribunals had been used to enforce the implementation of reforms like the abolition of the *fez*. This so-called 'hat law', which demanded the replacement of the traditional headgear with the European hat, met with determined resistance from the population, especially in the East and along the Black Sea coast. The tribunals sentenced over 800 people in 1925 alone, 70 of them to death.<sup>13</sup> All in all, they had 7446 people arrested and 660 executed under the *Takriri Sükûn Kanunu*, not counting the deserters.<sup>14</sup> In theory, the members of the tribunals were elected by the members of the National Assembly from their midst. In practice they consisted solely of Mustafa Kemal's most dependable followers, handpicked by himself.

The tribunals did not operate according to normal judicial procedure. The defendant was cross-examined in court, whereby the president and the public prosecutor alternated and complemented each other. The defendant did not have the right to take counsel, to call witnesses, or to appeal against the verdict of the tribunal. Moreover, death sentences pronounced by the tribunal had been declared immediately effectual by the assembly.<sup>15</sup>

The tribunal that arrived in İzmir on June 18, 1926 was presided over by Kel Ali (Çetinkaya). This genial looking man of 46 was a veteran from the C.U.P. He had been one of its well-known *fedailer*. He had served in

<sup>12</sup> 'Benim nâçiz vücudum bir gün elbette toprak olacaktır. Fakat Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ilelebet payidar kalacaktır ve Türk Milleti emniyet ve saadetini zâmin prensiplerle medeniyet yolunda tereddütsüz yürüyecektir.' (Atatürk, *Söylev*, Vol. 3, p. 80).

<sup>13</sup> *The Times* of 5.8.1926.

<sup>14</sup> Tunçay, *Tek*, p. 168.

<sup>15</sup> By decree of 25.11.1925. For a detailed history of the *İstiklâl Mahkemeleri* see: Aybars *passim*.

Tripolitania together with Enver and Mustafa Kemal and later on had been an officer of the *Teşkilâti Mahsusa*. He had served as adjutant of Nuri Pasha (Killigil). He had fought the Greeks during their occupation of İzmir and he had been arrested and taken to Malta by the British. Although he had been such a C.U.P. diehard, he was very loyal to Mustafa Kemal and utterly ruthless when it came to defending his interests. As recently as February 8, 1925 he had personally shot and killed *Deli Halit* Pasha, the opposition representative for Ardahan, in the building of the National Assembly.<sup>16</sup>

The other members of the tribunal were *Kılıç Ali*,<sup>17</sup> *Lâz Ali* (Zırh) (1888-1951), representative of Rize,<sup>18</sup> *Reşit Galip* (1897-1934), representative for Aydın<sup>19</sup> and the prosecutor, *Necep Ali* (*Küçüka*) (1893-1941), representative for Denizli.<sup>20</sup>

Immediately after its arrival the tribunal began interrogating the suspects again and issuing orders for further arrests. The number of arrests grew and grew, until at the opening of the trial on June 26 more than a hundred people had been detained. One by one and in little groups they were transported to İzmir. Even after the opening of the trial the arrests continued. *Mithat Şükrü* (Bleda) for instance was arrested on June 30.<sup>21</sup>

When the names of those arrested became known, public opinion was shocked. All except two of the prominent members of the P.R.P.<sup>22</sup> had been picked up, a number of figures from the Second Group and many important members of the C.U.P.

Many of the detainees were still representatives in the National Assembly and could therefore claim immunity. To get this immunity suspended, the tribunal ought to have asked the National Assembly through its presidium for permission, but the tribunal defended its action by stating that this was superfluous because the arrested persons had been caught red-handed, an unusual interpretation of the concept.

As soon as they heard of the arrests of the first representatives, a number of P.R.P. leaders held a meeting at the house of *Refet Pasha* (Bele) to decide whether they would protest.<sup>23</sup> They eventually lodged a formal

<sup>16</sup> *Kandemir, Cinayetler*, p. 58 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 136, n. 89.

<sup>18</sup> *Lâz Ali* (Zırh) (1888-1951), lawyer and representative for Rize and Çoruh in the National Assembly (1923-1950).

<sup>19</sup> *Reşit Galip* (1897-1934), Doctor, representative for Aydın, member of the *Türk Ocakları* both before and after the Independence War, Minister of Education (1932-1933).

<sup>20</sup> *Necip Ali* (*Küçüka*) (1893-1941), lawyer, delegate at the Sivas congress (1919), representative for Denizli in the National Assembly.

<sup>21</sup> *Bleda*, p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> These two being *Abdülhak Adnan* (*Adıvar*) and *Hüseyin Rauf* (*Orbay*) who were abroad.

<sup>23</sup> *Kandemir, İzmir*, p. 74-75.

protest with the President of the Assembly, Kâzım (Özalp), but to no avail. This protest was even interpreted as an admission of guilt later on in the trial.<sup>24</sup> Rauf (Orbay), who was in London at the time and was summoned to appear before the tribunal through the Turkish embassy, lodged a similar protest in his written reply to the President of the Assembly, with similar results.<sup>25</sup> The Kemalist majority in the assembly simply did not feel like defending the rights of the opposition. The P.R.P. representatives to be arrested were: Ali Fuat (Cebesoy), Kâzım Karabekir, Refet (Bele), Cafer Tayyar (Eğilmez), Colonel Arif (1882-1926),<sup>26</sup> Rüştü (1873-1926),<sup>27</sup> Bekir Sami (1867-1932), Sabit (Sağiroğlu) (1881-1960), Ahmet Şükrü, Halis Turgut (1886-1926), Necati (Kurtuluş) (1882-1956), Halet (Sağiroğlu) (1880-1947), Münir Hüsrev (Göle) (1890-1955), Halil (Işık) (1879-1935), Zeki (Kadirbeyoğlu) (1884-1952), İsmail (Canbolat), Kâmil (Mitas) (1875-1957), Hulusi (Zarflı) (1883-1968), Abidin (1890-1926), Besim (Özbek) (1882-1965), Faik (Günday—Ziya Hurşit's brother) (1884-1964), Ahmet Muhtar (Cilli) (1871-1958).

The most important among the C.U.P. members to be arrested were Mehmet Cavit, *Hafız* Mehmet, *Küçük* Talât, Mithat Şükrü (Bleda), Dr. Nazım, *Yenibahçeli* Nail, *Filibeli* Hilmi, Azmi, İsmail Canbolat, *Kara* Vasıf and Ahmet Nesimi (Sayman). A number of people were summoned to appear but could not be arrested: Besides Rauf (Orbay), Abdülhak Adnan (Adivar) and Rahmi (Evranos) were also abroad and Abdülkadir (the famous C.U.P. *fedaî* and friend of Mustafa Kemal in Salonica, and the first nationalist governor of Ankara) and *Kara* Kemal had gone into hiding.

The tribunal spent the week from June 18 to June 25 preparing the indictment. At that time a sharp conflict broke out between the tribunal and the government in Ankara over the arrest of Kâzım Pasha (Karabekir) on the 22nd. The tribunal had notified the police in Ankara by telegram that all P.R.P. officials should be arrested. İsmet Pasha (İnönü) however, thought that this went too far and in his capacity of Prime Minister ordered the release of Kâzım, who after all had been a close friend of his since 1907.

The tribunal considered this an intolerable interference with the ju-

<sup>24</sup> Kandemir, *İzmir*, p. 85.

Erman, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> For Rauf's defence see: *YT*, Vol. 4, p. 272-274, 304-307, 337-339.

<sup>26</sup> Arif had been a very close friend of Mustafa Kemal, ever since their days together at the *Harbiye*. After the victory in the Independence War he vehemently criticized İsmet (İnönü)'s policies and alleged corruption and in 1924 he entered the P.R.P. He was known as *Ayıcı* (The Bear-leader) because he held a bear as pet during the campaigns.

<sup>27</sup> Rüştü Pasha (1873-1926) had been very active in arousing national resistance on the Eastern front, while commanding the Ninth Division (cf. supra, p. 98). Representative of Erzurum in the National Assembly after 1923.

diciary and turned to Mustafa Kemal, who stayed at the seaside resort of Çeşme near İzmir, for help. It even threatened to arrest İsmet himself for obstructing the law. Mustafa Kemal sided with the tribunal. İsmet was summoned to İzmir, a reconciliation between him and the tribunal was arranged and İsmet had to make a statement in which he said that he had misjudged the situation from Ankara and that he had now come to the conclusion that he could have the fullest confidence in the tribunal. Kâzım (Karabekir) was arrested a second time.<sup>28</sup>

Already before the start of the trial the line the prosecutor would take was clear from statements he made to the press. The conspiracy was the work of the C.U.P. leaders. Frustrated when their attempts to regain political power during and after the War of Independence had failed, they had first used the P.R.P. as a mantle organization and when the P.R.P. was banned they had decided to make one last desperate attempt to regain power through an attack on the President.

The trial started on the 26th in the *Alhambra* cinema in İzmir (nowadays a library). The judges sat on the stage with a large Turkish flag and a portrait of Mustafa Kemal behind them and the accused sat in the first three rows. After the identifications the trial started with the examination of Ziya Hurşit, who answered calmly and extensively to all questions.

He stated that he had planned the attempt with Abdülkadir and Ahmet Şükrü, the former C.U.P. central committee member and *fedâî* leader, whom he had got to know through Abdülkadir. Together they had enlisted the support of the professional gunmen İsmail, Yusuf and Hilmi. They had conferred with Şükrü in Ankara about the possibilities of an attempt there. They had also consulted *Ayıcı* Arif, because his house was conveniently situated for an attempt to shoot Mustafa Kemal on his way from Çankaya into town. Halis Turgut and *Hafız* Mehmet had first offered their help but later backed out. Nothing had come of their plans in Ankara and with the exception of Şükrü all of them had returned to İstanbul, where they continued to meet daily. Besides Ziya Hurşit and Abdülkadir, a former military veterinary called Colonel Rasim (a veteran of the national resistance movement, who also figures in the *Nutuk* as a member of *Kara Vasıf's* organization)<sup>29</sup> was also a participant in these meetings.

Finally, they tried once more and this time they decided to make use of Mustafa Kemal's tour for their purpose. From Şükrü they had received

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<sup>28</sup> Orga, *Phoenix*, p. 166, has a different version, in which Mustafa Kemal ordered İsmet (İnönü) to release Kâzım (Karabekir) in view of the public outcry over the arrests. But this is unlikely, because a. public opinion could not have reacted so quickly, and b. Mustafa Kemal later clearly backed the tribunal against İsmet.

<sup>29</sup> Atatürk, *Nutuk*, Vol. 1, p. 405. Atatürk, *Speech*, p. 351.



both arms and money. Their man in İzmir was an acquaintance both of Şükrü and Rasim.

Although Ziya Hurşit acknowledged that he had been a member of the P.R.P. after he had been prevented from being reelected as a member of the Second Group in 1923, and that he had started P.R.P. party branches in Lâzistan, he denied that the party was involved as an organization. Anyway, the P.R.P. had been banned before Abdülkadir and he made their first plans in the Autumn of 1925.

One of the most remarkable things about the interrogation of Ziya Hurşit and the other conspirators is, that they were never asked about their motives. Ziya Hurşit was asked whether the conspiracy had a political aim. He conceded this and this answer was widely publicized and taken to mean that larger political organizations were involved and that the aim of the conspiracy was a coup d'état. In fact, it is clear from the context of his statement that Ziya Hurşit did not mean to say more than that the assassination of the President of the Republic must inevitably have political consequences. He later even denied in so many words that the aim had been a coup d'état.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike Ziya Hurşit, the hired assassins declared that the P.R.P. had been behind the plot. Şükrü had given them money and revolvers and hidden one of them in his house in Şişli (İstanbul). Their statements were very damaging for Colonel Arif too. According to them he had invited them into his house for discussions on the conspiracy. This was confirmed by Arif's housekeeper and valet. But the statements of these simple people sounded so identical that there were many who wondered whether they had been rehearsed beforehand. This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that *Gürcü* Yusuf in his final defence protested that Mustafa Kemal had promised him that he would be spared if only he would 'tell the truth'. This statement caused commotion in the court and Yusuf was quickly silenced and removed.<sup>31</sup> It would naturally be very odd if these hired hands would have known more about Ziya Hurşit's relations with the P.R.P. than the leader of the plot himself.

Ahmet Şükrü, whose interrogation came next, was the key figure in the trial. He had been a really important member of the C.U.P., especially after 1913 and as Minister of Education he had been instrumental in the secularization of the Turkish school system and in the creation of schools for girls. After the armistice he had been interned on Malta and after his return to Turkey he had been governor of Trabzon and representative for

<sup>30</sup> Erman, p. 147.

<sup>31</sup> Erman, p. 148-149.  
Kandemir, *İzmir*, p. 102.

İzmit in the Great National Assembly. He had joined the P.R.P. in 1924 and was considered a protégé of Rauf (Orbay). So he formed a link both with the C.U.P. and with the P.R.P., once his involvement was proven.

Unlike Ziya Hurşit, Şükrü denied all involvement in the plot. According to him, Ziya Hurşit had been manipulated by Abdülkadir, whom he characterized as the evil genius behind the plot. Even in confrontations with those who accused him he kept to this statement.

Great play was made by the prosecutor and the president alike of the famous meeting of former Unionist leaders at Cavit's house in April 1923.<sup>32</sup> The tribunal tried to prove that this meeting was directly linked to the İzmir conspiracy, both being attempts by the C.U.P. to regain its former power. The meeting was presented as a devious plot to overthrow Mustafa Kemal.

The following piece from the interrogation of Şükrü is illustrative of the way the tribunal handled this matter:

- Pres.: 'Where did you get this idea to form a new party?'  
 Şükrü: 'What could be more logical? Didn't we need an opposition like any parliament? Can a democracy, a republic exist without an opposition?'  
 Pres.: 'A party means working for the elevation and progress of the fatherland. Conspiracy and terrorism do not fit into that.'  
 Şükrü: 'Of course, I agree.'  
 Pres.: 'Had not you too subscribed to the programme of the People's Party?'  
 Şükrü: 'The People's Party did not have a programme. It still has not.'  
 Pres.: 'It has principles...'  
 Şükrü: 'Principles do not constitute a party programme.'  
 Pres.: 'Did you found a new party to use it against the party that reconstructs, saves and reanimates the country that has been ruined for so long?'  
 Şükrü: 'Did you summon me to accuse me on account of my party?'  
 Pres.: 'You stand here before me as an assassin, who conceals himself behind party principles. As one of the prime suspects.'  
 Şükrü: 'Then ask me about that.'  
 Pres.: 'The tribunal asks whatever it wants to, in order to get information. It investigates anything and everything.'  
 Şükrü: 'Yes, but you abuse me in the meantime.'  
 Pres.: 'You have committed a crime... We have been as lenient with you as we could.'  
 Şükrü: 'Judges should be impartial.'<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. supra, chapter 5, p. 133.

<sup>33</sup> 'Size yeni bir fırka kurmak fikri nereden geldi?' 'Bundan tabii ne olabilir? Her mecliste olduğu gibi bizde de muhalefet lâzım değil miydi? Muhalefetsiz demokrasi ve cumhuriyet olur mu?' 'Fırka demek, vatanın yükselmesi, ilerlemesi için çalışmak demektir. Onun aslında komitacılık, çetecilik yoktur.' 'Tabii öyledir efendim.' 'Halk fırkasının programını kabul eden Siz değil miydiniz?' 'Halk fırkasının Programı yoktu ki. Hâlâ da yoktur.' 'Umdeleri var ya.' 'Umdeler, siyasi fırka programı değildir.' 'Uzun yıllar boyunca harap olmuş memleketi imar eden, kurtaran, canlandıran bir firkaya karşı koymak için mi yeni bir fırka kurdunuz?' 'Beni firkamdan dolayı itham etmek için mi

After the interrogation of Şükrü, the interrogations of the less important suspects and witnesses centered on the question of the involvement of the P.R.P. Faik, Sabit, Abidin, Rüştü Pasha and Halis Turgut were heard. Faik tried to put the blame on his brother (Ziya Hurşit)'s associates as much as he could.

The picture that emerged was that some members, notably Sabit, Halis Turgut, *Hafız* Mehmet and Rüştü appeared at least to have heard about the plans of the conspirators in 1925 and *Hafız* Mehmet admitted that he had first supported them, before backing out of the whole affair. Sabit had heard Şükrü brag about his plans at a time when they both had been drinking heavily and he reported what he had heard to Rauf (Orbay). Rauf consulted with the other former P.R.P. leaders, Refet (Bele) and Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) and went to Faik to ask him to talk to his brother and if possible to get him to leave Ankara as soon as possible. At the time both Ziya Hurşit and Şükrü denied that there was any truth in the rumour, putting it down to drunkenness. Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) supports the statements of Sabit in his memoirs. He heard of the affair through Rauf. The next day the former P.R.P. members decided that any one of them who suspected that there were any plans for conspiracy, should report to the government immediately. Neither Faik nor Sabit thereafter mentioned any new developments. When on June 29, 1926 the governor of Ankara told the newspaper *Hakimiyeti Milliye* (National Sovereignty) that the government had known of the plans for an assassination attempt since last winter and that it had closely watched Ziya Hurşit, Ali Fuat assumed that Faik or Sabit had informed the government after all. Rauf in his memoirs gives an identical account of the incident.<sup>34</sup>

On the fourth of July the trial of the great Pashas, the leaders of the War of Independence, started. They appeared not to be involved in the affair. They had heard about the rumours in December 1925 from Sabit and Faik, first through Rauf and then directly, but they had not been implicated at all. The only thing the tribunal had against Kâzım (Karabekir) was that he had been seen exchanging a few words with Ziya Hurşit at the entrance of the National Assembly.

The interrogations of the Pashas were mostly about the history of the P.R.P., the founding of which was denounced as a form of treason. Kâzım Pasha answered to the questions of the tribunal by saying that the split in

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karşınıza getirdiniz?' 'Fırka prensiplerine bürünerek bir suikastin mücrimi birinci derecede sanığı olarak karşımda bulunuyorsunuz.' 'O halde onu sorunuz.' 'Hakimler heyeti, aydınlanmak için ne isterse sorar, he şeyi araştırır.' 'Evet ama Siz, soracaklarınızı sorarken tekdir ediyorsunuz.' 'Sen cinayet yaptın. Sana azamî müsaadeleri tanıyorum.' 'Hakimler, tarafsız olur' (Erman, p. 106).

<sup>34</sup> Cebesoy, *Siyasi*, Vol. 2, p. 212-214. Cf. *IT*, Vol. 4, p. 306.

the nationalist movement had been the work of 'parasites of the revolution', who had wormed their way into the President's favour at the expense of his old comrades. No doubt this was an indirect attack at the members of the tribunal themselves.

During the trial the newspapers were used for a propaganda war against the accused, but this notwithstanding, the arrest and trial of the famous leaders of the national movement proved a great shock for Turkish public opinion. More serious and more potentially dangerous for the government were the signs of unrest in the army. At the arrival of the Pashas at the *Alhambra* cinema, the attendant military all sprang to attention.<sup>35</sup>

Mustafa Kemal became concerned about this aspect of the situation and directly after the interrogation of Kâzım (Karabekir) he held a meeting in Çeşme with the members of the tribunal. We know from the memoirs of Kılıç Ali and Falih Rıfki (Atay) that the decision was taken then and there to set the generals free at the earliest possible date. The bad impression which the interrogation of Kâzım Pasha had made, probably forced this decision.<sup>36</sup>

On the eighth of July the trial against Cavit was opened but it soon transpired that his case had been insufficiently prepared. Therefore it was decided that there should be a second, separate, trial for him and a number of other leading C.U.P. members.

This ended the interrogations and on July, 11, Necip Ali (Küçüka) started his requisitory. He demanded the death penalty for Ziya Hurşit, Ahmet Şükrü, Arif, Gürcü Yusuf, Lâz İsmail, Çopur Hilmi, Sarı Efe Edip, Rasim, Hafız Mehmet, Abidin and (in absentia) Abdülkadir and Kara Kemal. He demanded imprisonment for Halis Turgut, İsmail Canbolat, Rüştü Pasha, Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay), Adnan (Adıvar), Rahmi (Evranos) (the three lastnamed again in absentia) and a number of lesser figures. The prosecutor's speech again was a description of how the C.U.P., embittered because it could not regain power by legal means, had infiltrated and used the P.R.P. and how they had had a hand in the Kurdish revolt of 1925 and in the resistance against the 'hat law'. The founding of the P.R.P. was branded as irresponsible sabotage of the Turkish revolution. When the P.R.P. was disbanded, the former Unionists had—as a last resort—decided to murder the President.

After the requisitory, the president of the court adjourned the session with the announcement that verdict would be pronounced the next day at four o'clock.

The accused cannot have held much hope by then, because the day

<sup>35</sup> Harris, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> *The Times* of 6.7.1926. Kılıç, p. 67-68. Atay, *Çankaya*, p. 404.

before the requisitory (July 10), Ali (Çetinkaya) had said in an interview with the newspaper *Akşam* (Evening) that the plot had been hatched within the P.R.P. and that this party had been made up of former Unionists, reactionaries from the Second Group and personal enemies of the President. This publication before the end of the trial was seen as a most objectionable rudeness of the president of the tribunal by many among the public.<sup>37</sup>

When the verdict was pronounced the next day, it proved to be even harsher than that demanded by the prosecutor. On the strength of article 55 of the penal code (Conspiracy to overthrow the constitution and the government of the Great National Assembly based on it) the following were condemned to death:

1. Ziya Hurşit
2. Ahmet Şükrü
3. *Gürcü* Yusuf
4. *Lâz* İsmail
5. *Çopur* Hilmi
6. *Sarı Efe* Edip
7. Abidin
8. Halis Turgut
9. İsmail Canbolat
10. Rüştü Pasha
11. *Hafız* Mehmet
12. Rasim
13. Arif
14. *Kara* Kemal
15. Abdülkadir

(The two lastnamed still had not been caught).

The sentences were executed that same night. The prisoners were hanged on gallows that had been erected in several places in the centre of İzmir. The heroes of the War of Independence were all released the next day. The population turned their release into a spontaneous demonstration of affection, but with the exception of Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) they would never again play a political rôle in Turkey during Mustafa Kemal's lifetime.<sup>38</sup>

The second part of the trial was opened in Ankara on the first of August. Even more than the first part it was a real show-trial with lots of publicity

<sup>37</sup> *The Times* of 12.7.1926.

<sup>38</sup> Ali Fuat (Cebesoy)—an old personal friend of Mustafa Kemal—let himself be reconciled with him and even returned to the National Assembly as representative for Konya in 1933. According to Cebesoy, Mustafa Kemal told him that he released the 'Pashas' in 1926 because of his friendship with him (Cebesoy, *Siyaset*, Vol. 2, p. 224).

and extensive facilities for the Turkish and foreign press.<sup>39</sup> The most important among the more than fifty former Unionists who stood trial were Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay) and Abdülhak Adnan (Adıvar) (Both still abroad), Mehmet Cavit, Dr. Nazım, *Hüseyinzade* Ali (Turan), *Yenibahçeli* Nail, *Filibeli* Hilmi, Hüseyin Cahit (Yalçın), *Küçük Talât* (Muşkara), Hüseyin Avnı (Ulaş), *Kara* Vasıf, Mithat Şükrü (Bleda) and Ahmet Nesimi (Sayman).

Immediately after the opening of the trial it became clear that it was meant to be a political demonstration. The prosecutor said in his opening speech that the accused were responsible for the attempt in İzmir, which had to be considered as a preparation for a coup d'état and not as an act of revenge. In the rest of his accusation he did not concern himself with the conspiracy anymore but concentrated instead on what were to become the three themes of the trial: 1. the irresponsible policies and abuse of power of the C.U.P. leadership, especially during the War. 2. the attempts by Unionists to replace Mustafa Kemal in 1921<sup>40</sup> and 3. the Unionist congress of 1923.<sup>41</sup>

These themes were also the focal points of the first interrogation, that of *Küçük Talât*. Talât had been involved in the attempts of Enver to make a come-back in 1921.<sup>42</sup> What gave this whole show a very unsavoury character was the fact that everybody knew that the president of the court, Ali (Çetinkaya), had himself been a trusted henchman of Enver Pasha up until the very end of the World War. He had also been a close friend of Dr. Nâzım in C.U.P. days.

On August 10 the interrogation of Cavit began. The former Finance Minister, who had been an outspoken opponent of the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the World War, defended his record with determination and accuracy. After the usual historical survey he was questioned about the meeting of Unionists which had taken place in his house in April 1923. The prosecutor presented this meeting as a sinister plot to undermine the new state, while the president contended that the programme of nine points, which had been adopted at this meeting had been meant as a rejection of the *Dokuz Umde* (Nine Principles) laid down by Mustafa Kemal on April 8.

In the requisitory on August 23 no new facts were mentioned. It was again an inventory of the corruption of the C.U.P. and of the intrigues to

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<sup>39</sup> It seems the Turks followed the Soviet example with these trials. According to *The Times* (11.8.1926) the Independence Tribunals had been fashioned after the Russian revolutionary tribunals.

<sup>40</sup> *The Times*, 4.8.1926.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 133-135.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 129.

topple Mustafa Kemal in 1921 and 1923. The crucial weakness of the requisitory was that the prosecutor did not prove (and hardly tried to prove) a connection between these episodes and the conspiracy of 1926.

On the 24th Cavit held his final defence: a speech of 75 minutes in which he brilliantly defended both his political and his private life. But to no avail. Two days later, the following were condemned to death:

1. Cavit
2. Dr. Nazım
3. *Yenibahçeli* Nail
4. *Filibeli* Hilmi

Rauf (Orbay) and Rahmi (Evranos) were both condemned to ten years imprisonment, while some others received shorter sentences and 26 of the accused (among them Mithat Şükrü (Bleda) were set free.

These sentences made a deep impression, both in Turkey and abroad, where Rauf (Orbay) and Cavit had a considerable reputation.<sup>43</sup> After the requisitory several financial institutions and the Rothschild family tried to get the sentence commuted, but if this intervention had any effect, it was negative. Mustafa Kemal signed all sentences the day they were pronounced and they were executed that same night in Ankara. Mustafa Kemal himself held a party that night to celebrate the founding of his model farm outside Ankara.<sup>44</sup>

As an epilogue to this story we may note that *Kara* Kemal committed suicide on July 27, when he was discovered by the police in İstanbul and that Abdülkadir was caught while trying to escape to Greece in disguise. He was executed on August 31. *Giritli* Şevki received a reward of 6500 lira for turning in the conspirators on September 1, 1926.

It is clear from the nature of the accusation and from the way the tribunal tried to prove it, that the whole trial was a political affair. This is especially true for the second part in Ankara, where the prosecutor did not even try to establish a connection between the accused and the conspiracy itself. The character of a political purge is also apparent from the fact that groups and parties were accused, even though only a few *individuals* could be shown to have been involved.

Strangely, although the prosecution insisted all through the trial that the P.R.P. had been involved as an organization, it refrained from punishing any of the party leaders, except for Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay) and even he got off relatively lightly, considering that he was described as the 'master-brain' of the complot. It seems that even the Independence Tribunal did not dare to go that far.

<sup>43</sup> Commentary in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, in *Oriente Moderno* 6 (1926), p. 426.

<sup>44</sup> And not to celebrate the executions, as Armstrong writes (*Armstrong*, p. 222).

The individuals convincingly shown to have any involvement in the plot to my mind are Ziya Hurşit and *Sarı Efe* Edip. Ziya never denied his involvement, quite to the contrary, he took as much responsibility upon himself as he could, and the same goes for Edip, though he may have played a double game, as conspirator and government agent at the same time. The hired assassins were no doubt involved too. Abdülkadir, and Colonel Rasim were unequivocally implicated by the conspirators. This is supported by the testimonies of Faik and Şükrü.

Şükrü's rôle is more problematical. On the one hand he consistently denied his involvement all through the trial, even in confrontations with those who accused him. He did not make the impression that he did so out of fear. On the other hand, Ziya Hurşit, who tended to take upon himself as much responsibility as he could, did implicate him, as did Faik and the hired assassins. While Şükrü probably was involved to a certain extent in the plot, his rôle was emphasized during the trial because of his central position as a prominent member both of the C.U.P. and of the P.R.P.

Colonel Arif is in more or less the same position with regard to the evidence. He too denied and he too was implicated, in his case by the hired assassins and by his own housekeeper and valet. Their statements sounded rehearsed and may well have been produced by intimidation. Even if he was involved, he was involved only in the abortive attempts in Ankara nine months earlier.

A small circle of representatives and former representatives seems to have been 'involved' to the extent that they had heard rumours of a plot (Sabit, Faik, possibly Abidin) or had shown themselves sympathetic towards the ideas of the conspirators (Halis Turgut, *Hafız* Mehmet, possibly Rüştü).

Of all other persons who appeared before the tribunal I think we can in all fairness say that their involvement in the plot was not even made likely, let alone proven.

It has already been pointed out that the tribunal never asked the accused about their motives. The reason may be that it did not want any criticism of the regime or of the President ventilated publicly or that it had already been decided to present the plot as inspired by the C.U.P. through the P.R.P. The conspirators were sentenced in accordance with article 55 of the penal code and thus for an attempt to overthrow the government. But, although we have no statement of any of the main figures about his motives, it is highly unlikely that it was intended as a coup d'état. After all, as was pointed out by Ziya Hurşit during the trial, the conspirators intended to flee to Greece by boat directly after their attack. It is clear from Ziya Hurşit's utterances that he had no clear plans for what was to happen after their attempt. The list of cabinet members who were to have taken



over after the coup as published by TASS during the trial<sup>45</sup> looks very suspect. Fevzi Pasha (Çakmak) figured on it as Prime Minister. But Fevzi Pasha was kept at the head of the Turkish army all through this period. He was not summoned to appear before the tribunal. It is far more likely that Ziya Hurşit's motives were a mixture of political ideas and revenge.

He had been one of the most vocal leaders of the opposition to Mustafa Kemal in the first Great National Assembly and he was especially known as a critic of the personality cult that developed around the figure of Mustafa Kemal. When Mustafa Kemal returned from his victory in the battle of the Sakarya and the representatives went outside to cheer him, according to one story Ziya stayed behind in the hall and wrote on the blackboard: 'A nation creates its own false god and then bows to it.'<sup>46</sup> In 1922 he had been a leading opponent of the abolition of the Sultanate. But Ziya also had grounds for revenge. He had been a friend and collaborator of Ali Şükrü, the representative of Trabzon, who was murdered on March 27, 1923 by *Topal Osman*, Mustafa Kemal's personal bodyguard,<sup>46</sup> and of another opposition representative, *Deli Halit Pasha*, the representative of Ardahan, who had been shot and killed on February 8, 1925 by Ali (Çetin-kaya). It is certainly possible that revenge was one motive for Ziya Hurşit's action.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, Ziya Hurşit must have been bitter because, like all his *Second Group* colleagues except three, he had been prevented from taking part in the elections of 1923.

The trials of 1926 undoubtedly had the character of a political purge. The question is: which groups were purged and for what reasons? If we look at the antecedents of the accused and at the recurring themes in the indictments, we can discern three different groups, that were the object of this purge. (It is justified to look at the entire group of accused and not only at those condemned, incidentally, because even those of the accused who were acquitted by the tribunal were forced to withdraw from politics.) These three groups were: 1. the P.R.P.; 2. the C.U.P. leaders who had considered reviving their party at their 'congress' in İstanbul in 1923; 3. the group of Unionists that had campaigned for Enver Pasha's return to Anatolia in 1921.

The tribunal saw these three episodes as links in one chain: a series of attempts by a group of former Unionist leaders to regain political control at the expense of the new republic. Therefore it stressed the Unionist

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in *Oriente Moderno*, 6 (1926), p. 364.

<sup>46</sup> 'Bir millet putunu kendi yapar, kendi tapar.' (Erman, p. 104). Cf. Kılıç, p. 64.

<sup>47</sup> Kandemir, *Cinayetler*, p. 3-57. Mısıroğlu, p. 139-284. Rauf (Orbay) in *YT*, Vol. 4, p. 80-84.

<sup>48</sup> For Ziya Hurşit's revenge motive, see: Goloğlu, Vol. 6, p. 191.

character of the P.R.P., describing it as a mantle organization of the C.U.P.

But this continuity, which the tribunal took for granted (without proving it), has to be rejected. The group that worked for Enver in 1921 was not identical to the group that held the congress of 1923, if only for the reason that the most prominent among those who attended the meetings in April, 1923 had been interned on Malta (Hüseyin Cahit, *Kara Kemal*, İsmail Canbolat, Ahmet Şükrü) or in voluntary exile in Europe (Cavit, Dr. Nazım) in the summer of 1921.<sup>49</sup> The P.R.P. can certainly not be equated or identified with any of these groups, being founded and led by people who had been among Mustafa Kemal's closest collaborators, both in 1921 and in 1923.

The Unionist background of the P.R.P. leadership does not prove anything in this context. The nationalist movement—as I have tried to show in chapter 3—had been built largely by Unionist officers, politicians and administrators and it should come as no surprise that an offshoot of this movement, such as the P.R.P. was, was manned by former Unionists. The same observation can be made for the other heir to the national resistance movement, the Republican People's Party (R.P.P.) of Mustafa Kemal.

To trace the political antecedents of all the officials and representatives of this party would require a substantial amount of biographical research, the more so because we have no records of C.U.P.-membership and because no R.P.P. functionary was likely to brag about his Unionist background after 1923 and certainly not after 1926. Nevertheless, even a superficial look at the leadership of the 'Kemalist' governing party, confirms the suspicion that it was dominated by former Unionists as much as the P.R.P. To quote but a few but telling examples:

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) | president of the republic                                   |
| 2. İsmet (İnönü)           | prime minister  |
| 3. Ali (Çetinkaya)         | president Independence Tribunal                             |
| 4. Celâl (Bayar)           | finance minister, bankdirector                              |
| 5. Tevfik Rüştü (Aras)     | minister of foreign affairs                                 |
| 6. Cemil (Ubaydın)         | minister of internal affairs                                |
| 7. Ali Fethi (Okyar)       | prime minister  |
| 8. Kâzım (Özalp)           | president National Assembly                                 |
| 9. Recep (Peker)           | minister, secretary general R.P.P.                          |
| 10. Şükrü (Kaya)           | minister of foreign affairs<br>minister of internal affairs |

<sup>49</sup> In September, 1921 a number of Unionist prisoners on Malta had escaped to Italy. Among them were Kemal (who organized the escape), Şükrü, Sabit and Ali İhsan (Sabis). But by then Enver's chance to return to Anatolia had been lost because of the victory of Mustafa Kemal's troops on the Sakarya. (Şimşir, *Malta*, p. 436-439).

And not only the top politicians of the regime had a Unionist background. The same goes for its leading administrators (governors like Kâzım (Dirik) (1880-1941), Mazhar Müfit (Kansu) and Hilmi (Uran) (1884-?) and the director-general of state monopolies, *Hacı Adil* (Arda) (1869-1935)) and for the ideologues and publicists with links with the regime (Yunus Nadi (Abahoğlu), Falih Rıfki (Atay), Abdullah Cevdet).

Even the circle of long-standing personal friends of Mustafa Kemal, with whom he kept close contact, consisted of former Unionists (men like Nuri (Conker), *Kılıç Ali*, Salih (Bozok) (1881-?), Cevat Abbas (Gürer) (1887-1943), Ahmet Fuat (Bulca) (1881-1962) and Müfit Özdeş).

After all, had not Mustafa Kemal himself said (in an interview with the newspaper *Hakimiyeti Milliye* (National Sovereignty) in 1923: 'We were all members of it (the C.U.P., EJZ).'<sup>50</sup>

Since none of the people described above were purged in 1926, it is clear that there was no such thing as a general 'anti-Unionist purge'. Rather, three separate groups were purged from a movement which in its entirety was made up largely of former Unionists. The common denominator of these three groups was that they had all played an important rôle in the earliest phase of the national resistance movement and that they had at one time or another questioned Mustafa Kemal's leadership of that movement. On each occasion these attempts had been suppressed by Mustafa Kemal. Now why were these groups still considered to be dangerous in 1926? The C.U.P. had been the first modern political mass-movement in the Ottoman Empire and its widespread<sup>51</sup> organization had been the basis on which Mustafa Kemal built his organization in 1919. Therefore, the remaining Unionist leaders were potential competitors for the same power-base as Mustafa Kemal had and they could hope to command the loyalty of at least part of the movement. Moreover, the secret organizations of the C.U.P.—though formally dissolved—might still be slumbering and they might even have kept some of their arms caches and secret funds.

The Progressive Republican Party was dangerous for two reasons. In the first place because many of its leaders had such prestige among the population and especially among the military through their rôle in the War of Independence, that they might be able to mobilize them. In the second place, the social make-up of the P.R.P. made it dangerous. While the *Second Group* had represented a clearly different section of society than the R.P.P. (or *First Group*), mullahs, jurists and commercial groups, and had been based on local interests more than the *First Group*, the P.R.P. opposition had the same social characteristics as the R.P.P. It took its

<sup>50</sup> Tunaya, p. 560.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Landau, p. 65.

strength from intellectuals, bureaucrats and the military and had a large percentage of members with earlier political experience. Percentage-wise it had more intellectuals, more civil servants and more persons with previous political experience among its members than even the R.P.P. and—most important of all—it had an even higher percentage of military men among its members. 44% against 18% in the R.P.P.<sup>52</sup> Of course the R.P.P. was far bigger than the P.R.P. so these percentages are somewhat misleading about their respective absolute strength, but it is clear that the party was potentially a direct competitor of Mustafa Kemal.

The existence of these potential political competitors was made acutely dangerous by the climate of discontent that was prevalent in the country at the time.

The economic situation of the country was desperate as ten years of almost incessant warfare had exhausted all reserves of manpower and production. The Balkan Wars had led to the loss of the most prosperous provinces of the Empire and the war against the Greeks had wrought enormous destruction in the most productive parts of Anatolia. It is true that the National Product of Turkey (based largely on agricultural produce) had risen strongly in the years 1923-1926, but this growth was due to the restoration of normal cultivation after ten years of war and to the repair of the communications network.<sup>53</sup> Then there had been the exchange of the Greek minority in Turkey (except İstanbul) against the Turkish minority in Greece (except Thrace). The economic consequences of this operation were very serious for Turkey since it exchanged a large part of the commercially active middle class against the population of relatively unskilled farmers. Besides, the exhausted country was totally incapable of coping with the resettlement of such a group of new immigrants and there were corruption scandals, which gave rise to the asking of questions in the National Assembly.

The spring of 1925 had been dominated by the Kurdish revolt which gave rise to the banning of the P.R.P. The revolt had been quelled by the army and had been followed by large-scale activity of the Independence Tribunals, which in the course of a few months sentenced hundreds of people.

Without giving the torn country time to let its wounds heal and without waiting for public excitement to die down, Mustafa Kemal introduced one reform after another. On September 2, the *tekke's* and *türbe's* (Derwish monasteries and tombs of saints) were closed. On November 25, the *fez* (the traditional headgear) was forbidden and the hat, a symbol of impiety in the eyes of orthodox Muslims, was introduced in its place.

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<sup>52</sup> All of these facts and figures have been taken from Frey, p. 330-335.

<sup>53</sup> Hale, p. 57.

This last reform awakened in the population a stubborn resistance which far exceeded their reaction either to the abolition of the Sultanate or to that of the Caliphate. The Independence Tribunals were again called in and they forced the population into submission to the 'hat law' with Draconic measures.

On the first of January, 1926, the Gregorian calendar was introduced and during the spring the Swiss civil code and the Italian penal code were adopted.

In the summer of that year the position of the government was further weakened because on the fifth of June the treaty of Ankara was signed. This marked the end of the three year old conflict with Great Britain about the possession of the oil-rich *Vilayet* (province) of Mosul, but it also meant a clear-cut defeat for the Turkish government since the province went to the British mandate of Iraq.

Perhaps the purges of 1926 were also a way to divert the attention of the public from the country's problems.

Scarcely a year after the political trials of 1926, from 15 to 20 October 1927 Mustafa Kemal held his famous speech before the congress of the Republican People's Party. This speech, known simply as *Nutuk* (The Speech) has formed and still forms the most authoritative source for the Turkish historians of the Republic—as we have already had occasion to remark in the context of chapter one.<sup>54</sup>

Western history-writing also accepts it as a most important source. But while it is read and used as a description of the history of Turkey in the years 1919-1926 and especially of Mustafa Kemal's own rôle in it, its real character is different. The story of the struggle for independence is used by Mustafa Kemal as a background for criticism of the actions of the other leaders of the resistance movement (Rauf, Refet, Ali Fuat, Cafer Tayyar, Kâzım Karabekir, Kara Vasıf, Bekir Sami, Ali İhsan, Nurettin, Hüseyin Avni, Celâlettin Arif are all the object of his criticism)<sup>55</sup> and roughly the last hundred pages of the *Nutuk* (depending on the edition) are devoted entirely to the rift in the movement after the peace of Lausanne, which is depicted as the result of a plot instigated mainly by Rauf.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Felsefe*, p. 258, 404-432 for a recent Turkish discussion on the value of the *Nutuk* as a source and as a history.

<sup>55</sup> Criticism of the co-leaders of the movement is found in the following places in Atatürk, *Speech*: 24-25, 68, 89, 92, 531, 533, 536, 558, 563, 574 (on Rauf). 25, 38-48, 143, 242-243, 382, 495-496, 531-532, 570 (on Refet). 128, 189, 290, 337, 505, 538-540 (on Kâzım). 37, 167, 178, 201-202, 228, 294, 300, 303 (on Cemal). 559-563 (on Ali İhsan). 606-620 (on Nurettin). 56-57, 531, 533, 536, 554-555 (on Vasıf). 24, 426, 429, 570 (on Ali Fuat). 406, 551-552 (on Hüseyin Avni). 370-371, 406, 417 (on Celâlettin Arif). 68, 497-501 (on Bekir Sami). 349, 421 (on Cafer Tayyar).

<sup>56</sup> Atatürk, *Nutuk*, Vol. 2, from p. 796. Atatürk, *Speech*, from p. 660.

This, combined with the fact that the speech was read barely a year after all these people who were being criticized in it had been purged, makes it clear that the *Nutuk* was meant largely as a justification for the way they had been treated in 1926. Strangely, not one of the historians and biographers who used the *Nutuk* as a source seems to have been aware of its apologetical character.

Although Mustafa Kemal devotes much space to the developments of 1923-1925, he hardly mentions the İzmir-conspiracy at all. The conspiracy and the trials are only touched upon in one short passage at the very end of the *Nutuk*. It follows a description of the Kurdish rebellion of 1925 and goes like this:

'Of course, it resulted in the success of the Republic. The insurgents were annihilated. But the enemies of the Republic did not accept that the pages of the great conspiracy had been closed. Cowardly, they undertook their last attempt. This attempt appeared in the form of the İzmir-conspiracy. The crushing hand of the courts of the Republic again succeeded in saving the Republic from the hands of the conspirators.'<sup>57</sup>

This is all Mustafa Kemal ever wrote himself about the events of the summer of 1926. But how have these events been represented in Turkish and Western history writing?

As we have seen in chapter one, during Mustafa Kemal's lifetime and the years of İsmet (İnönü)'s presidency, there existed in Turkey an 'orthodox' historical tradition on the subject of the Turkish revolution and Mustafa Kemal's rôle therein, represented by works with an official character. The most important of these were the official biography of Mustafa Kemal published in 1926, the *Tarih* (Vol. 4) of 1931, which was re-published as *Türk Cumhuriyeti Tarihi* and *Histoire de la République Turque* in 1935, Enver Ziya Karal's *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi* (1945), and the articles on Atatürk in the *İnönü Ansiklopedisi* (1950),<sup>58</sup> and in the *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (1950).<sup>59</sup>

The passage in the *Tarih*, devoted to the conspiracy, starts with the banning of the P.R.P. in 1925. According to the *Tarih* a group within this party resolved to kill Mustafa Kemal and to restore the Ottoman constitution and Sultanate. Rauf is depicted as the leader of the plot and the Unionists are not mentioned. The whole passage closely resembles that in

<sup>57</sup> 'Nettice, bittabi, cumhuriyetin muvaffakiyetiyle tecelli etti. Asiler imha edildi. Fakat, cumhuriyet düşmanları, büyük komplonun safahatı hitam bulunduğunu kabul etmediler. Namerdane, son teşebbüse giriştiler. Bu teşebbüs İzmir suikastı suretinde tezahür etti. Cumhuriyet mahkemelerinin kahhar pençesi, bu defa da, cumhuriyeti, suikastçıların ellerinden kurtarmaya muvaffak oldu.' (Atatürk, *Nutuk*, Vol. 2, p. 893-894). The translation in Atatürk, *Speech*, is inexact.

<sup>58</sup> *TA*, Vol. 4, p. 114.

<sup>59</sup> *Life*.

the *Nutuk* but it is embellished with statements in praise of Mustafa Kemal, depicting the general relief when it became known that he had escaped the attempt and the despicable character of the would be assassins. The tone is extremely chauvinistic, as can be seen from this example:

'There can be no doubt that in the blood of these vile persons and of their partners in crime there is no trace of the qualities of the Turkish race. Such despicable and treacherous spirits can never issue from the noble, faithful and grateful Turkish nation. These are degenerates no nation can allow to take shelter in its midst. For Turks there is no worse, no more despicable characteristic than that of degeneracy.'<sup>60</sup>

The passage in Karal, *Türkiye* closely resembles that in *Tarih*. The blame is put on the P.R.P., and the Unionists are not mentioned. Rauf (Orbay) is no longer singled out as the leader of the plot. Karal also reserves relatively much space for the relief of the Turkish people on hearing that the attempt had been foiled. This is also the way in which the episode is represented in the *İnönü Ansiklopedisi*.

The article in the *İslam Ansiklopedisi* evades the whole issue by giving a chronological biography of Mustafa Kemal up to the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 and then switching to a review of the social reforms of Mustafa Kemal. The growth of political opposition, the P.R.P. and the conspiracy and trials of 1926 are not mentioned at all. The popular biography of Mustafa Kemal by Şapolyo,<sup>61</sup> which was published in 1944, likewise glosses over the episode of the trials. It would seem then, that during the 'Kemalist' period in modern Turkish history there were two alternatives for historians: 1. to neglect the trials completely, or 2. to depict them as a plot by P.R.P. politicians (Rauf being depicted as the main culprit in the earliest sources).

From the fifties onward the memoirs of Mustafa Kemal's contemporaries started to appear—among them those of people who had been involved in the trials (Ali Fuat (Cebesoy), Hüseyin Cahit (Yalçın), Rauf (Orbay), Mithat Şükrü (Bleda) and—from the other side—*Kılıç Ali*). Atay's *Çankaya*, which gives an eyewitness account of the trial in İzmir and is very critical of the political character of the trial,<sup>62</sup> was first published as a series of newspaper articles in 1952. To see what has been the effect of these publications on the mainstream of Turkish history-writing I looked at a number of recent publications.

<sup>60</sup> 'Bu sefillerin ve cürüm ortaklarının kanında türklük cevherinden eser bulunmadığına şüphe yoktur. Asıl, vefalı ve kadırşınas Türk Milletinden bu kadar alçak duygulu, nankör ruhlar doğamaz. Bunlar hiçbir milletin varlığında barındırmağa razı olamayacağı soysuzlardır. Türkler için soysuzluktan daha ağır, daha aşağı vasıf yoktur.' (*Tarih*, Vol. 4, p. 193).

<sup>61</sup> Şapolyo, *Atatürk*.

<sup>62</sup> Atay, *Çankaya*, p. 401-406.

It is (or was until September, 1980) rather more difficult to select works which represent the official or generally accepted version of history, than it is for the period before 1950, freedom of the press being a reality in Turkey in much of this period. I selected the *Türk Devrim Tarihi* (History of the Turkish Revolution) of Eroğlu because he was president of the *Türk Devrim Kurumu Atatürk ve Devrimlerini Araştırma Kurulu* (Commission for the Study of Atatürk and his reforms of the Foundation [for the study of] the Turkish Revolution) and therefore his works bear some sort of stamp of officialty. I selected the works of Ergin and Ateş because both these works by prominent economists are meant to be textbooks, in the latter case for university courses. Gencosman and Goloğlu were selected because they are well-known large scale histories of the period and Çeçen because it is one of the most recent efforts and because Çeçen is a recognized authority in the field (as official historian of the *Halkevleri* and member of the Turkish *Unesco*-commission) with more than a hundred articles on Mustafa Kemal to his name. Aydemir is included not because it has any official backing, but because it is by far the best modern Turkish biography of Mustafa Kemal. Mumcu and Kili are also important as a widely used textbooks. What conclusions can we draw from the treatment of the İzmir-conspiracy in these works, all of which appeared between 1970 and 1981? Ergin,<sup>63</sup> Çeçen<sup>64</sup>, İlkin and Mumcu<sup>65</sup> treat the episode in short passages, in which they follow the official version very closely. Eroğlu,<sup>66</sup> Goloğlu<sup>67</sup> and Aydemir<sup>68</sup> devote more space to it, but they too stick to the version of the tribunal. Compared with the pre-1950 period it is remarkable that these writers emphasize the rôle of the Unionists, which the earlier sources do not mention. Goloğlu has made use of *Kılıç Ali's* memoirs, but not of any of the others. Gencosman and Ateş do not mention the episode, which is certainly remarkable in the case of Gencosman's *ten volume* history. Avcioğlu, who often breaks new ground, gives a surprisingly short and orthodox account of the trials.<sup>69</sup> What do we conclude from this sample? In the first place that very little attention was still being given to the purges in recent years. In the second place that the publication of the memoirs of victims of the purges in the fifties and sixties does not seem to have influenced the historians at all. Again we see this curious Turkish situation, in which history-writing takes place in a kind of two-track system. On the

<sup>63</sup> Ergin, *Atatürk*, p. 160-161.

<sup>64</sup> Çeçen, p. 271.

<sup>65</sup> Mumcu, p. 141-142. İlkin, p. 162.

<sup>66</sup> Eroğlu, p. 201-203.

<sup>67</sup> Goloğlu, p. 189-215.

<sup>68</sup> Aydemir, *Tek*, Vol. 3, p. 285-303.

<sup>69</sup> Avcioğlu, Vol. 3, p. 1337.



one hand dissident versions of the history of the Republic do appear in memoirs and autobiographies. They are sometimes reflected in biographies and biographical articles.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, the biography of Mustafa Kemal and the history of the Turkish revolution (*Atatürk ve Devrimleri Tarihi*) seem to be immune from these influences and still to base themselves on the 'official' version, as laid down in the tribunal's verdict. Tunçay alone openly states that the trials were a form of 'political and judicial terror'.<sup>71</sup> I also looked at the way the purges are represented in Western writings on the period. The best known pre-war biographies generally follow the official line (for instance: von Kral,<sup>72</sup> Melzig,<sup>73</sup> von Mikusch,<sup>74</sup> Villalta,<sup>75</sup>) sometimes with sensational additions but without questioning the main facts (Froembgen,<sup>76</sup> Armstrong)<sup>77</sup>. Sometimes the trials are not mentioned (Georges-Gaulis).<sup>78</sup> Of the post-war ones Benoist-Méchin<sup>79</sup> gives a very unreliable but essentially orthodox account of the events, Sperco<sup>80</sup> is completely orthodox, Orga<sup>81</sup> is much more critical of Mustafa Kemal but also unreliable. Kinross<sup>82</sup> alone gives a reasonably accurate account and he does so without taking sides himself, explicitly quoting the statements of the accused and of the tribunal. The Marxist historian Glasneck sticks to the official version, but presents the conspiracy as a reactionary plot, aimed at halting the Turkish revolution.<sup>83</sup> Of the textbooks on the modern history of Turkey, Rummel,<sup>84</sup> Philips-Price<sup>85</sup> and Lewis, *Emergence*<sup>86</sup> give a short account of the trials of 1926, characterizing them as political purges. Ziemke<sup>87</sup> makes a distinction between the İzmir trial and the one in Ankara, seeing only the latter as a political trial. Webster<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> At least: since the nineteen fifties. A well-known biographical dictionary as that of Gövsa, which appeared in 1946, still glosses over the whole episode in the articles on those concerned.

<sup>71</sup> Tunçay, p. 161-167.

<sup>72</sup> Von Kral, p. 22-23.

<sup>73</sup> Melzig, p. 271-275.

<sup>74</sup> Mikusch, p. 321-322. Mikusch's addition 'Seitdem ist Ruhe' may be regarded as somewhat cynical!

<sup>75</sup> Villalta, p. 374-375.

<sup>76</sup> Froembgen, p. 246-255.

<sup>77</sup> Armstrong, p. 235-244.

<sup>78</sup> Georges-Gaulis, *Question*.

<sup>79</sup> Benoist-Méchin, *Kemal*, p. 376-385.

<sup>80</sup> Sperco, p. 132-134.

<sup>81</sup> Orga, *Atatürk*, p. 269-271.

<sup>82</sup> Kinross, p. 425-434.

<sup>83</sup> Glasneck, p. 228-229.

<sup>84</sup> Rummel, p. 154.

<sup>85</sup> Philips-Price, p. 134.

<sup>86</sup> Lewis, *Emergence*, p. 269-270.

<sup>87</sup> Ziemke, p. 392-394.

<sup>88</sup> Webster, p. 108.

and Davison<sup>89</sup> mention the episode only in passing, while von Kral<sup>90</sup> sticks to the official line. Allen, Bisbee, Hale, Lewis, *Turkey*, Robinson, Roux and even the voluminous Shaw, *History* do not mention either the conspiracy or the trials. The Marxists, while concentrating on the repression of the left in Turkey, pay scant attention to the conflicts within the nationalist leadership which culminated in the İzmir trial. Steinhaus mentions the conspiracy, but not the trials, while Harputlu and Keskin find no room for either.

The conclusion must be that the characteristic features of Turkish history and biography are also present in their foreign equivalents. Although a few authors recognize the political character of the trials of 1926, they do not on the whole question the basic assumptions of the Kemalist version. Attention for the episode is generally scant and a considerable number of these authors disregard it altogether.

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<sup>89</sup> Davison, p. 133.

<sup>90</sup> Kral, p. 24-25.