
MULTI-PARTY LIFE TRANSITION EXPERIMENTS IN THE TURKISH REPUBLIC (1925-1930)

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Introduction

Parliament, known as the First Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), was opened on 23 April 1920, and was vested with extraordinary powers which laid the foundations for the Republic of Turkey. The first TBMM was composed of members of the last Ottoman Chamber of Deputies who had travelled to Anatolia to join the national struggle, and of those who had been elected after Mustafa Kemal Pasha's circular of 19 March 1920. The deputies who travelled to Anatolia were selected by the Defense of National Rights Society (Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Milliye Cemiyeti). For this reason, the Defense of National Rights movement held the majority in the National Assembly and therefore was in a position of power. The Defense of Rights Society managed to maintain this majority after the elections of 1919 and 1920.

In terms of its composition, the First TBMM has been described as the most democratic parliament in the history of Turkish democracy. Belonging to vastly different ideologies, the deputies varied greatly in terms of their educational and professional backgrounds. It was mainly this social and intellectual variety that kept the parliament debates lively¹. Ideologically, the parliament had deputies who had formerly been part of the CUP, those who supported the Freedom and Accord Party, Turkish nationalists, Socialists, Islamists and Bolsheviks. The sole aim of this parliament was to successfully fight the battle for survival². Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, this parliament set out with the sole aim of saving the motherland, and it succeeded in bringing together people of differing and even conflicting ideologies around this aim.

The composition of TBMM changed greatly after the national struggle had ended successfully. After 1922, TBMM witnessed the political struggle between conflicting ideologies that were contained within itself. During this period, different groups within the parliament entered a power struggle to establish themselves as the superior authority. It is well known that opposing ideas, sometimes targeting Mustafa Kemal Pasha himself, were expressed for the first time during the peace talks in Lausanne. Latent opposition made itself clear over time, and even developed into an attempt to revoke the Pasha's right to be elected³. Although ultimately unsuccessful, this

¹ The professional make-up of the Parliament in 1920 was thus: those in official positions, 43%; self-employed, 18%; economics, 19%; others, 21%

Official positions: Military officers, civil servants, teachers

Self-employed: Lawyers, doctors, dentists, pharmacists and veterinarians

Economics: Agriculturalists, traders, bankers

Others: Religious scholars and journalists (Ergun Özbudun, **1921 Anayasası**, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi (AAM), Yay., Ankara 1992, p. 3). For parliament debates, see: Bülent Tanör, **Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri (1789-1980)**, Yapı Kredi Yay., İstanbul 2005

² Samet Ağaoğlu, **Kuva-yı Milliye Ruhu**, Kültür Bakanlığı Yay., Başbakanlık Basımevi, Ankara 1981, p. 25.

³ In a motion submitted to the presidency of TBMM by three deputies on 2 December 1922, changes in the Electoral Law were proposed. The proposed changes included the following requirements for election: having been born within the current borders of the state, and having resided for a period of five years in the same electoral district. The motion directly targeted Mustafa Kemal Pasha.

attempt made the opposition within parliament felt clearly by everyone. The rising voice of the opposition gave rise to concerns that there might be a threat to the new regime. The attempt at starting a crisis during Mustafa Kemal Pasha's 1923 trip around Western Anatolia can be taken as an obvious example of this. In a pamphlet published by a deputy from Afyon, named İsmail Şükrü Efendi, the caliph was called to lead the new state now that the sultanate had been abolished⁴. This is a significant development in terms of revealing the extent of the crisis.

When the Second TBMM was opened on 11 August 1923, it had a more homogeneous composition in comparison to the first TBMM. Acting on his concern that opposing ideas might cause greater trouble in the future, Mustafa Kemal Pasha had to design a parliament whose members were mostly selected by him. The press in Istanbul, which acted as the voice of opposition, very openly criticized this development. The fact that the majority in the parliament shared similar views, set the stage for the formation of parties within the parliament. As a result, the People's Party (HF) was established. However, with the beginning of the reform movement came once again differences of opinion, and opposing ideas began to be voiced. The sometimes very strongly-worded debates centered around issues such as the Proclamation of the Republic, the Abolition of the Caliphate, the Unification of Education Act. Differences of opinion within the HF were soon followed by resignations from the party, and then the first opposition party of the Republic, the Progressive Republican Party (TpCF), was established. An opposition party in the beginning, the TpCF soon became not only a platform to express different opinions but a safe haven for anti-regime elements as well. The conviction that the survival of the Republic was still tied to the existence of the HF caused the TpCF to be regarded as a serious obstacle in the way of the reform movement that was being planned. Although centered around issues of reform, the opposition also used negative developments in foreign policy - such as the issue of Mosul with Britain and the population exchange with Greece - against the government.

In the eyes of the government, a possible political and social unrest was a serious threat both for the HF and for the nascent Republic. In light of this, the ideal of pluralism that had been adopted in the name of democracy was dropped and the plan to transition to a multiparty system was discontinued. The Republican People's Party (CHF) maintained power as the sole political party of the republic until the establishment of the Liberal Republican Party (SCF) in 12 August 1930. Mustafa Kemal Pasha did not support a notion of government without a system of checks and balances. In his view, a government that was not kept in check would never reach perfection as there would be no one to point out its shortcomings. Therefore, the principles that had been adopted as benefiting the country would likewise benefit the CHF. It can be inferred from his attitude toward the opposition and the developments of the process that Mustafa Kemal Pasha maintained a sentimental connection to the CHF. The paradigms are highly flexible when it comes to the description of the Pasha as someone who not only abolished parties but also established them, as in the example of the SCF. The attempt at establishing pluralism in Turkey gave rise to the establishment of the SCF but, unlike the TpCF, this party represented a controlled sort of

⁴Dursun Ali Akbulut, *Salтанattan Ulusal Egemenliğe: Salтанat, Hilafet ve Millî Hâkimiyet*, Temel Yay., İstanbul 2006

opposition.

When the SCF began to give voice to the latent ideas of opposition and to act with a view to eventually rising to power, the CHF wanted to eliminate another obstacle in its way. Ultimately, the plan to establish parties in the name of democracy and pluralism failed once again. Shortly afterwards, this party also became a platform where anti-regime opposition from around the country came together. Fethi Bey, who had been chosen by Mustafa Kemal Pasha himself to lead the party, and his associates later chose to shut down their party as they had concerns about being perceived as a counterforce to the Pasha. Thus the attempts at establishing a multiparty system were discontinued until 1946, and Turkey was left with a single-party rule, citing the reason that the circumstances in the country were not yet suitable. When looking at the year 1930, certain initiatives, although ultimately failed, such as the Community Republican Party in Adana and the Republic of Turkey Workers and Farmers Party⁵ in Edirne, draw attention.

The Emergence of the Opposition and the Pashas Duel

The Progressive Republican Party, which emerged as a natural opposition party during the Second TBMM period, became one of the principle topics in examinations of democracy and government-opposition relations in Turkey. The Second Group had been formed as a result of resignations from the First Group. The divide between these two groups was not so clear during the First TBMM period. Although they cooperated in certain instances, the First Group with its numeric superiority (197 members) was generally the dominant group in parliament⁶.

The Second Group of the First TBMM was eliminated after the 1923 Elections, and it ensured that none of its members would enter the parliament. The two-stage elections meant that voters had indirect rather than direct influence on the composition of parliament. Therefore the will of those who made choices had more of an impact than the will of the voters, in terms of determining the composition of the parliament⁷. The main reason behind the elimination of the Second Group was that they had expressed opposing views effectively and had sided with the Caliphate. With this development, the First Group held both the parliamentary majority and power, giving the parliament a more homogeneous character. In this period, there was no need to hold elections with one party; however, after the victory in 1923 elections, the People's Party was established as a result of the need for political parties.

It was what happened at the Peace Conference of Lausanne that laid the foundation for the emerging opposition in the Second TBMM. The government was in favor of sending a delegation consisting of Foreign Minister Yusuf Kemal (Tengirşenk) Bey and Health Minister Rıza (Nur) Bey, which would be led by Rauf Bey. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was of the conviction that a delegation led by Rauf Bey would not succeed in such a matter of life and death⁸. In The Speech, Mustafa Kemal Pasha wrote that Rauf Bey had expressed his wish to go to Lausanne. On the

⁵ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasî Partiler 1859-1952*, Doğan Kardeş Yay., İstanbul 1952, p. 637-638.

⁶ Özbudun, p. 74.

⁷ Serap Yazıcı, *Yeni Bir Anayasa Yapımı Sürecinde Türkiye*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniv92011, p. 16.

⁸ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk (Söylev)*, İnkılâp Yay., İstanbul 2009, p. 541.

contrary, Rauf Bey stated that he had no such desire. He had instead suggested İsmet Pasha, citing his success in the Conference of Mudanya⁹. Despite warnings from his associates that İsmet Pasha was not suited for the position because of his loss of hearing and partial proficiency in English and French, Mustafa Kemal Pasha did not change his mind about sending him to Lausanne¹⁰. As a result of his insistence on İsmet Pasha, Mustafa Kemal Pasha asked Yusuf Kemal Bey to resign from his post as minister. Because foreign ministers were dealing with diplomatic talks. İsmet Pasha was thus made the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

There is tangible data proving the existence of tensions between İsmet Pasha and Rauf Bey during the Conference of Lausanne. It has been accepted that it was partly these tensions that ushered in a process that would result in resignations from the People's Party. Rauf Bey was held responsible for some of the problems with regard to the correspondence between İsmet Pasha and Mustafa Kemal Pasha. This caused İsmet Pasha to hold an unfavorable view of Rauf Bey. In response, Rauf Bey stated that he was not responsible for the delay, and added that it was caused by the intelligence activities of the British and the French who controlled the telegraph lines¹¹. Another reason for conflict was İsmet Pasha's acceptance of the offer that Karaağaç would be ceded to Turkey as a war indemnity and as compensation for confiscated ships¹². İsmet Pasha interpreted criticisms as a lack of confidence in the delegation, and even considered going back without seeing the conference through to the end¹³.

There have been those who found different reasons behind Rauf Bey's leaving İsmet Pasha in a difficult situation during the Conference of Lausanne. In his article, "Halk Fırkası Niçin İkiye Ayrıldı?" (Why did the People's Party Split into Two?), Mehmet Asım Us states that Rauf Bey would commission the Americans with the Samsun-Sivas line and create a crisis with the French, thus leaving İsmet Pasha in a difficult situation at Lausanne¹⁴. On the other hand, Ahmet Emin Yalman states that it is saddening that İsmet Pasha thought Rauf Bey was the reason behind the government's insistence, and adds that this was not fair to Rauf Bey¹⁵. Ahmet Emin Yalman's point is confirmed by Mustafa Kemal Pasha in The Speech. In the Pasha's view, it was difficult to find a sound basis for the conflict anywhere in the relevant documents and it was most likely the result of sentimental reasons¹⁶.

Having opened on 11 August 1923, the Second TBMM ratified the Treaty of Lausanne on 23 August 1923¹⁷. Following the elimination of the Second Group after the 1923 elections, the Istanbul based press severely criticized the fact that the deputies selected by Mustafa Kemal Pasha were made up the parliamentary majority¹⁸. Celal Nuri (İleri) went so far as to name the

⁹ Feridun Kandemir, **Hatıra ve Söylemedikleri ile Rauf Orbay**, Yakın Tarihimiz Yay., İstanbul 1965, p. 101.

¹⁰ Feridun Kandemir, **Siyasî Dargınlıklar**, C.2, Ekicigil Tarih Yay., İstanbul 1955, p. 44.

¹¹ Kandemir, **Hatıra ve Söylemedikleri İle...**, p.101.

¹² **Ibid.**, p. 104.

¹³ **Ibid.**, p. 105.

¹⁴ Mehmed Asım, "Halk Fırkası Niçin İkiye Ayrıldı?", **Vakit**, 12 December 1924, No: 2499, p.2.

¹⁵ Ahmet Emin Yalman, **Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim (1922-1944)**, C.3., Yenilik Basımevi, İstanbul 1970, p.70.

¹⁶ Atatürk, p. 605.

¹⁷ Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi (TBMMZC), 2nd Cycle, v.1, 9th Session, 23 August 1923, p. 264-291.

¹⁸ Seçil Akgün, **Halifeliğin Kaldırılması ve Lâiklik (1924-1928)**, Turhan Kitabevi, Ankara 1986, p. 120.

Second TBMM “The Parliament of the Self-seeking”¹⁹. The opposition press started a propaganda campaign, announcing that the caliphate would be abolished after the capital had been moved to Ankara. This development was interpreted by the government as an open manifestation of a latent opposition. In response to this, Mustafa Kemal Pasha made a decision to proclaim the republic as fast as possible. He used the pressure on the Fethi Bey government to start a governmental crisis to make all ministers, except Fevzi Pasha resign, and then on 29 October 1923, he proclaimed the Republic. Rauf Bey’s interviews with the Istanbul press regarding the proclamation of the Republic resulted in another crisis. To summarize the interview, Rauf Bey stated that the Republic had been rushed, that the first thing to take care of was really the issue of constitution, and that, for these reasons, he did not support the proclamation²⁰. This interview made Rauf Bey an open target. İsmet Pasha harshly criticized Rauf Bey during the People’s Party meeting on 22 November 1923. In response, Rauf Bey explained that he had criticized not the proclamation of the Republic but rather the way it had been done, which he thought was not right. Despite the interview in question, it can be observed that there was no move to expel Rauf Bey. It is noteworthy that this was probably done to avoid any internal conflict within the party, and that a strong emphasis was placed on unity²¹.

After the proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923, the first government of the Republic, led by İsmet Pasha, assembled on 30 October as per the directives of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. However, the government was faced with difficult issues in foreign politics such as the issue of Mosul with Britain and the problem of population exchanges with Greece²². The Commission for Population Exchange managed the process of exchanging Greek and Turkish populations without any serious obstacles. Despite of this, the social issues caused by the population exchange and the second clause of the agreement (regarding who would be considered part of an established population) soon created problems that almost turned into a *casus belli* between the two states²³. These developments were met with criticism domestically as well. Despite the issues in foreign politics, the TBMM issued such significant laws as Law No. 429 concerning the “Abolition of the Ministry of Sharia and the Foundations and the Ministry of the Chief of the General Staff,” Law No. 430 concerning the “Unification of Education,” and Law No. 431 concerning the “Abolition of Caliphate and the Deportation of the Ottoman Dynasty from the Republic of Turkey” as part of its activities in 1924²⁴. There were serious debates concerning every law excepts the amendments to the constitution. It can be observed that the latent opposition within the People’s Party sometimes found their expression during the debates concerning the constitution. After the ratification of the constitution, a parliamentary recess of six months (the maximum amount of time allowed by the constitution) was called by a majority of votes in an effort to fight opposition.

The fact that the decisions provoked protest from certain individuals proved the existence of

¹⁹ Mehmed Asım, “Halk Fırkası Niçin İkiye Ayrıldı?”, **Vakit**, 15 December 1924, No: 2502, p.2.

²⁰ **Tanin**, 2 November 1923, No:379, p.1.

²¹ “Fırkanın Sekiz saatlik Mühim İçtimal”, **Hâkimiyet-i Millîye**, 23 November 1923, No: 975, p.1.

²² Mehmet Gönlübol, Cem Sar, **Atatürk ve Türkiye’nin Dış Politikası (1919-1938)**, Ankara 1973, p.56 et al.

²³ **Ibid.**, p. 59.

²⁴ **TBMMZC**, 2nd Cycle, v.7, 2nd-3rd Session, 3 March 1924, p. 17/21-69.

considerable opposition. Following the resignation of the Minister of Public Works, Ahmet Muhtar Bey, İsmet Pasha called for a motion of confidence within the People's Party Caucus to have the government's plans concerning railway operations ratified. The motion received enough votes, with 86 in favor, 11 against, and 1 abstention²⁵. But this result was interpreted as a sign of danger. Considering the fact that all 287 members of the parliament belonged to the People's party, the turnout was very low. An important reason for the rise of opposition within the CHF was the much-debated topic of corruption and bribery claims. Turks and non-Muslims who used to be Ottoman citizens but later found themselves outside the borders of Turkey wanted to come to Turkey. It has been stated that Armenians especially, bribed public officials to enter Turkey²⁶. Following the bribery scandal, Ferit Bey, the then Minister of interior, had to resign from his post. It has been noted that Ferit Bey said: "If I start speaking, many more will be held responsible" during a secret session, and that suspicions rose when the parliament forbade questioning²⁷.

During the recess, rumors began to spread among the MPs that issues from the first legislative year would be raised, that motions would be proposed to the Parliament, that there would be resignations from the People's Party and a new political party would be established²⁸. The debates of the 46th Session, dated 20 October 1924, of TBMM which had assembled on 18 October 1924, prove that what had been a mere claim was actually true. What started the debates was the written question posed by the deputy from Menteşe, Esat Efendi, concerning schools, population exchange, public works and housing²⁹. The response to this was then presented by the Minister for Education, Vasıf (Çınar) Bey³⁰. However, what really heated up the debate was the written question concerning Population Exchange. Refet (Canitez) Bey, Minister for Population Exchange, Public Works and Housing, replied to the said written question but, unsatisfied by the response, Esat Efendi turned his written question into an interpellation. In his speech, Esat Efendi stated the following, threatening to take things to the Supreme Court: "*As you all know, we have a Constitution. Was not a Supreme Court supposed to be established per its article 61? Are our deputies free of liability? Is it just, no matter what they do? Are they free to act as they please*³¹?" The debates questioning the actions of the Ministry for Population Exchange, Public Works and Housing in a way foreshadowed a government-opposition conflict. It can be observed that the government was cornered by the opposition during the session on October 30. The reason behind the heated debates was the interpellation proposed by Esat Efendi. The rumors that had arisen during recess were thus confirmed, as the opposition made moves to challenge the government. In a speech, during which he stated that Esat Efendi's call for interpellation regarding the Ministry for Population Exchange, Public Works and Housing targeted the whole cabinet, İsmet İnönü challenged the whole opposition, making the air even tenser³².

²⁵ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Tek Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması (1923-1931)*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yay., İstanbul 1999, p. 100.

²⁶ Fahrettin Altay, *On Yıl Savaş (1919-1922) Ve Sonrası*, İnsel Yay., İstanbul 1970, p.379-386.

²⁷ Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Siyasî Hatıralar*, (ed. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu), v.2, Temel Yay., İstanbul 2007, p. 83.

²⁸ Tunaya, p.606-607.

²⁹ **TBMMZC**, 2nd Cycle, v.9, 46th Session, 20 October 1924, p. 26.

³⁰ **TBMMZC**, 2nd Cycle, v.9, 47th Session, 23 October 1924, p. 36-37.

³¹ **TBMMZC**, 2nd Cycle, v.9, 48th Session, 27 October 1924, p. 61.

³² Kandemir, *Siyasî...*, p. 108.

While these debates were taking place in the Parliament, a meeting took place between the 2nd Army Inspector Ali Fuat Pasha, Rauf Bey and 1st Army Inspector Kazım Karabekir Pasha, who was in İzmir on the occasion of festivities celebrating the city's liberation on September 9, 1924. The most important issue dealt with during this meeting was the possible existence of intelligence activities in Ankara. The pashas agreed that they could not ignore the fact that letters were being read, made a list of 5 topics and reached an agreement among themselves upon them³³. The list included:

1. One cannot remain an army inspector under suspicions
2. It is not right to resign from one's post as an MP, no matter the underlying reasons
3. While being in favor of reforms, it was agreed that these cannot be done to favor one group over another but that they should be for the welfare of the whole country and the entire population
4. Efforts must be made to make sure that the Republican regime is not misused for the interests of any one person or group
5. It is agreed that assembling in Parliament and striving there, to the best of one's ability, for the wellbeing of the country is the best solution for the current situation³⁴.

Soon after the meeting in İzmir, the 1st Army Inspector Kazım Karabekir Pasha and the 2nd Army Inspector Ali Fuat Pasha sent petitions to the Ministry of the Chief of the General Staff on 26 October and 30 October, respectively, and announced that they wished to resign from their post as inspectors, to return to being deputies. Karabekir Pasha stated the following in relation to his resignation:

*"I have resigned from the military and found refuge in the midst of the nation as I did not agree with things happening without the nation's vote, with personal desires having precedence over the wellbeing of our nation, and with the disregard for freedom of press. I could no longer occupy the position of Army Inspector like an aide-de-camp who is clueless about what is going on and never asks any questions"*³⁵.

While Karabekir Pasha emphasized the fact that his reports as army inspector were not taken into consideration and that this was the reason why he resigned³⁶, Ali Fuat Pasha, while not mentioning it in his petition, stated that his resignation was caused by the fact that his private

³³ Cebesoy, p.95.

³⁴ Cebesoy, p.97.

³⁵ Karabekir Pasha's resignation received extensive coverage in the newspapers of the time. "Kazım Karabekir Paşa Ordu Müfettişliğinden İstifa Etti", **Vatan**, 28 October 1924, No: 556, p. 1.

³⁶ Karabekir Pasha accused many of the MPs, stating that the "parvenus" who repeatedly accused him of being reactionary did not even take a look at his reports on Military Schools, which were based on a meticulous study. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu calls Kazım Karabekir Pasha's letter "*an ultimatum rather than a resignation*" (Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, **Politikada 45 Yıl**, İletişim Yay., İstanbul 2006, p. 60). Hasan Rıza Soyak argues that what happened within a fortnight of the resignation proves that the reasons presented in the letter were concocted so that he could return to the Parliament to establish a new political party (Hasan Rıza Soyak, **Atatürk'ten Hatıralar, Yapı Kredi Yay.**, İstanbul 2014, p. 288).

letters had been opened and read, to investigate his relations with different people, which caused him great discomfort. Ali Fuat Pasha writes the following in his memoir:

*“I, who have left my post as the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to become Army Inspector, was compelled to resign as a result of the government’s intelligence activity concerning my correspondence and whereabouts. The Minister of the Chief of the General Staff, who was my superior, was unable to find a solution”*³⁷.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha explains in The Speech that Ali Fuat Pasha only left a note for Fevzi Pasha’s aide-de-camp. The note read: *“I would respectfully request that you accept my resignation from my post as 2nd Army Inspector as I will return to being an MP”*³⁸. The resignations of Karabekir Pasha and Ali Fuat Pasha, which had happened without consulting Mustafa Kemal Pasha, gave rise to certain suspicions in Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s mind. Ali Fuat Pasha’s absence at a dinner reception at Çankaya exacerbated the crisis. Ali Fuat Pasha stated that he had deliberately been given no news of the reception. He claimed that Mustafa Kemal Pasha used his absence at the dinner as an excuse to compel all MPs of a military background to resign, and to keep them out of politics. There have been various interpretations of the fact that Ali Fuat Pasha did not or could not join Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s reception. Whoever was responsible for the situation has not yet been determined with certainty, despite much time passing. In response to claims about İsmet Pasha’s involvement, Yakup Kadri notes that he finds it highly unlikely that İsmet Pasha, who was the epitome of virtue and good morals in politics, would engage in such petty political ruses³⁹. According to Yakup Kadri, the real issue was that the pashas involved were allergic to İsmet Pasha. The reason behind this was their wish to make sure that İsmet Pasha did not have all of Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s confidence⁴⁰. Mustafa Kemal Pasha perceived the pashas’ actions as targeting himself, saying: *“Gentlemen, I have every confidence when I say that we are face to face with a conspiracy”*⁴¹. He pointed out that the newspapers Vatan, Tanin, Tevhid-i Efkâr, Son Telgraf and Toksöz, had an impact in catalyzing opposition around the country by making mention of a secret society targeting themselves.

Ali Fuat Pasha offered the following explanation for his falling out with Mustafa Kemal Pasha:

*“Everyone can see that the disagreement was more a result of circumstances. History is full of other examples of such a thing happening. The newcomers are always unhappy with the old ones. Although we acted with honesty from the very beginning and remained loyal to Atatürk with confidence, some people wanted to abuse our good intentions and Atatürk’s freedom to choose new companions. They accused us of things we would never think of, such as favoring the Sultanate or the Caliphate, and, even if for a short time, they managed to manipulate Atatürk’s feelings toward us”*⁴².

³⁷ Cebesoy, p. 102.

³⁸ Atatürk, p. 669-670.

³⁹ Karaosmanoğlu, p. 62-63.

⁴⁰ Karaosmanoğlu, p. 66.

⁴¹ Atatürk, p. 670.

⁴² **Hatıralar, Vesikalar, Resimlerle Yakın Tarihimiz**, v. 4, Vatan Gazetecilik ve Matbaacılık, İstanbul 1962, p. 231;

Karabekir Pasha mentioned a group of parasites who played a role in his falling out with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, stating the following:

“As is the case with every revolution, a group of parasites infiltrated the ranks of our statesmen also and endeavored to the best of their abilities. As soon as they saw that there was no danger after our great triumph, they surfaced, trying to find favor with those in positions of power, and began their efforts to create a separation between us”⁴³.

İsmet Pasha offered the following explanation for the disagreement:

“I would like to point out a characteristic feature of those who have had disagreements with Atatürk and followed separate paths. They think that we have been together since the beginning, that we triumphed together and founded this state together, and so they believe that we should each get the same say in matters”. It can be inferred from İsmet Pasha’s words that the pashas’ involvement in matters of state was not desired and that they were being excluded⁴⁴. A meeting Atatürk held with Ali Fuat Pasha on his way back from İzmir is worth noting as it offers insights into what the real issue between them was. The most notable dialogue of the meeting is as follows:

Mustafa Kemal Pasha: *“Our work is not done just because we have proclaimed the republic. We need to achieve some important reforms to be able to join the world civilization. It would be better for this purpose if we could move on for a while without opposition.”*

Ali Fuat Pasha: *“Our confidence is not in the least bit shaken. However, we are concerned with the fact that some parvenus who are seeking your favor are causing trouble”⁴⁵.*

Following the resignations of Karabekir Pasha and Ali Fuat Pasha, Mustafa Kemal Pasha took immediate action and requested the resignation of Fevzi (Çakmak) Pasha, the Chief of General Staff, and Cevat (Çobanlı) Pasha, 3rd Army Inspector, who were both MPs, as well as the resignations of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th Corps Commanders from their posts as MPs⁴⁶. Fevzi Pasha and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th Corps Commanders immediately sent their letters of resignation, while Cevat Paşa, 3rd Army Inspector, and Cafer Tayyar (Eğilmez), 7th Corps Commander, refrained from following suit. This was the end of their careers as military commanders. The commanders who had resigned, on the other hand, assembled in TBMM as MPs. In fact, these developments were proof of the difference of opinion within the People’s Party.

The Road to an Opposition Party The Progressive Republican Party (17 November 1924)

Refet Bey, Minister for Population Exchange, Public Works and Housing, who was thought to

⁴³ *Yakın Tarihimiz*, v.1, p. 38.

⁴⁴ Dursun Gök, *İkinci Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Dönemi (1923-1927)*, Konya 1995, p. 210.

⁴⁵ Altay, p. 378.

⁴⁶ Atatürk, p. 672.

be an inactive party of parliamentary debates, was appointed as deputy chairman and Recep (Peker) Bey, Minister for the Interior, took over his position as minister⁴⁷. The insistence of the opposition regarding what was on the parliamentary agenda heated up debates. The MPs often digressed from the topic under discussion and the debates took on a more personal character.

Recep (Peker) Bey sometimes directly targeted Rauf Bey during the debates concerning the proposed interpellation about the Ministry for Population Exchange, Public Works and Housing. Disregarding Rauf Bey's questions about the actions of the government, Recep Bey began to ask him if he really was a republican⁴⁸. In response, Rauf Bey stated the following in his speech: *"Is Rauf a Republican? Rauf is the offspring of a nation who has taken up sovereignty of their motherland and is a citizen of Turkey,"* emphasizing his stance in favor of national sovereignty. In response to allegations about him being in favor of the caliphate, he said: *"... In my view, there is no acceptable regime other than this republic which will realize the will of the people, who now has sovereignty. I would like to emphasize another point ... Gentlemen, let alone being in favor of the Sultanate or Caliphate, I would oppose even the creation of a post which would monopolize the authorities of this system"*⁴⁹. It can be observed that Rauf Bey and his associates faced open opposition and were under pressure to leave the Party. However according to Rauf Bey, the regime, established with the creation of TBMM on 23 April 1920 was in practice a republic, but the name could not yet have been pronounced openly because of certain reasons⁵⁰. Yunus Nadi, Topçu İhsan, Recep Bey and their associates, who were known as the militant group within the People's Party, also accused Refet Pasha of being in favor of the Sultanate and Caliphate. When asked *"Are you in favor of the Caliphate or the Republic?"* by Ali Saip Bey, the MP from Kozan, Refet Pasha offered the following answer:

*"Gentlemen! You all know very well that a person like Refet Pasha cannot be in favor of the sultanate. That someone like Refet Pasha who has been banished from politics thrice in his life would not follow any individual, would not support governance by any one person, would not support the man who calls himself caliph, for he knows that the so-called caliphate is there for personal gain, and morally ... (he was interrupted at this point)"*⁵¹.

Stating that the proposed interpellation about the ministry, which was at the center of debates during the session of November 5, targeted the whole council of ministers, İsmet Pasha proposed another interpellation which was accepted thanks to votes from pro-Government MPs. The opposition was only insistent about the Ministry for Population Exchange, Public Works and Housing. On 6 November, Feridun Fikri Bey called for a parliamentary inquiry of the ministry in question. Pro-Government MPs changed this request into a motion of confidence, and finally the government led by İsmet Pasha won the vote of confidence, with 19 against and 148 in favor⁵². 41 MPs did not participate in the voting. Considering the total number of MPs in the Parliament

⁴⁷ Tunçay, p. 101.

⁴⁸ **TBMMZC**, 2nd Cycle, v.10, 3rd Session, 6 November 1924, p. 105 et al.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵⁰ Rauf Orbay, **Siyasî Hatıralar**, Örgün Yay., İstanbul 2009, p. 561.

⁵¹ **TBMMZC**, 2nd Cycle, v.10, 4th Session, 8 November 1924, p. 133.

⁵² "Hükümete Kahir Bir Ekseriyetle İtimat Edildi", **Hâkimiyet-i Milliye**, 9 November 1924, No: 1267, p.1.

was 287, it is worth noting that the number of MPs who did not participate was quite substantial. While the opposition did not manage to achieve its goals, the government, despite its success, could not prevent breakaways from the party. Describing those who gave a vote of no-confidence as “*persons of principle*,” Ali Fuat Pasha stated that the vote of confidence in relation to the issue of the population exchange had been won, thanks to the votes of “*those who are scared to be seen as being against the republic*”. In his view, those people had come together and left the party⁵³.

The MPs who had given a vote of no-confidence, left the People’s Party on 9 November 1924. Among those who left the party were Dr. Adnan (Adivar), İsmail Canbolat, Refet Paşa; Erzurum MPs Rüştü Paşa, Halit Bey, Ziyaeddin Efendi; Dersim MP Feridun Fikri, Erzincan MP Sabit Bey, Sivas MP Halis Turgut, and Ordu MP Faik Bey⁵⁴. On November 28, Kazım Karabekir Pasha left the People’s Party, and he was followed by Cafer Tayyar Pasha who left the party on December 7. While resignations from the HF came one after the other, the pro-government newspaper Hâkimiyeti Milliye published news claiming that those who had left the party would come together to establish a new party of their own. It was stated in the relevant section of news that there was a lenient attitude toward the establishment of an opposition party, but that an assurance to remain loyal to the principles of revolution was needed to remove suspicions⁵⁵. According to Ahmet Emin Yalman, the fact that a pro-government newspaper published news about the former MPs establishing a new party meant that Mustafa Kemal Pasha gave the green light to the new party⁵⁶. Among all the news, comments, and rumors, one development is especially worth noting. Upon finding out that the new party would have the word “Republic” in it, the People’s Party changed its name on 10 November 1924 to include that same word⁵⁷. The MPs who had resigned from the People’s Party assembled in Erzincan MP Sabit (Sağiroğlu) Bey’s house to prepare their party program under the leadership of Ali Fuad Pasha. Once the preparations had been made, the opposition made a formal application, once again under the leadership of Ali Fuad Pasha, to the Ministry of Interior and established the first opposition party in Turkey on 17 November 1924⁵⁸. Thus, the first natural opposition party of the Republic, the Progressive Republican Party (TpCF), was established. According to the declaration presented to the Ministry of Interior on 17 November 1924, the founders of the party included Kazım Karabekir Pasha, Ali Fuat Pasha, Refet Pasha, Cafer Tayyar Pasha and Rüştü Pasha as well as Rauf Bey, Dr. Adnan Bey, Feridun Fikri Bey, and Halis Turgut Bey⁵⁹. The founders emphasized

⁵³ Ayfer Özçelik, **Ali Fuat Cebesoy**, Akçağ Yay., Ankara 1993, p. 301-302.

⁵⁴ **Yakın Tarihimiz**, v.4, p. 177.

⁵⁵ Hâkimiyet-i Milliye, 14 November 1924, No: 1272, p.1.

⁵⁶ Yalman, p.150.

⁵⁷ Hâkimiyet-i Milliye, 11 November 1924, No: 1269, p.1.

⁵⁸ **Tanin**, 18 November 1924, No:2475, p.1.

⁵⁹ While Ali Fuad Pasha was the secretary general during the foundation of the TpCF, Karabekir Pasha came to lead the party after his resignation from the People’s Party. The composition of the Administrative Committee was as follows: President: Kazım Karabekir Pasha

Vice President: Dr. Adnan and Rauf Bey (İstanbul)

Chief Clerk: Ali Fuad Pasha (Ankara)

Members:

Rüştü Pasha (Erzurum)

İsmail Canbolat (İstanbul)

Sabit (Erzincan)

the party's position in favor of democracy and reform. For this reason, they decided that the party would not have any more than thirty members. Ali Fuat Pasha stated the following in relation to this issue: *"If we had admitted the conservatives into our party as well, surely our number would have reached eighty. However, our sole purpose is to make sure that the government and the opposition can work side by side. We did not establish a party to rise to power"*⁶⁰.

With the establishment of the Progressive Republican Party, the Republic of Turkey experienced a multi-party system for the first time. In his written interview with the Times Istanbul correspondent, Mustafa Kemal Pasha stated the following on 11 December 1924, making it clear that he was pleased with the recent developments: *"The existence of political parties is natural in states which are based on national sovereignty and have a republican regime. There will certainly be parties in the Republic of Turkey which will check each other's activities."*⁶¹ There are claims that the version of this interview published by the Hâkimiyet-i Milliye newspaper was abridged, and that the unabridged version was included in a report sent on 25 November 1924 by the British Consulate in İstanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and that in fact Mustafa Kemal Pasha was not pleased with this development⁶². However, with the establishment of TpCF, Mustafa Kemal Pasha's Young Republic adopted the methods of Western Democracy for a period of time⁶³.

İsmet İnönü stated the following in relation to the establishment of the TpCF: *They think that we have been together since the beginning, that we triumphed together and founded this state together, and so they believe that we should each get the same say in matters. They mean that we occupy different positions but that our words have the same impact ... Both Rauf Bey and the others regard Atatürk as an unpredictable person. This is how they have known him from the beginning and this is why they are afraid of him. In their view, the only way to keep him contained and to be assured for good that he will be contained, is to make him resort to their assistance before he does anything at all. They wanted things to be this way regardless of their own situation"*⁶⁴. It can be inferred from this statement that İsmet İnönü linked the establishment of an opposition party to the uncertainty that the generals of the War of Independence felt in relation to Mustafa Kemal Pasha. According to Hasan Rıza Soyak, some pro-Committee of Union and Progress individuals were the ones who really dictated the actions and program of the TpCF behind the scenes⁶⁵. Considering the fact that many of the generals of the War of Independence had ties with the Committee of Union and Progress in the past, this view has some credibility.

Şükrü (İzmit)
Muhtar (Trabzon)
Halis Turgut (Sivas)
Necati (Bursa)
Faik (Ordu)

⁶⁰ Özçelik, p. 303.

⁶¹ Hâkimiyet-i Milliye, 11 December 1924, No: 1295, p.1.

⁶² Esat Öz, *Türkiye'de Tek Parti Yönetimi ve Siyasal Katılım (1923-1945)*, Gündoğan Yay., Ankara 1992, p.92-93.

⁶³ Lord Kinross, *Atatürk- Bir Millet'in Yeniden Doğuşu*, (Trans. Ayhan Tezel), Sander Yay., İstanbul 1973, p. 600.

⁶⁴ İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, (Ed. Sabahattin Selek) v.2, Bilgi Yay., Ankara 1987, p.173.

⁶⁵ Soyak, p. 281.

In his book, Çankaya, Falih Rıfki Atay made the following comment regarding the establishment of the TpCF:

“It is wrong to link the establishment of the Progressive Republican Party to such petty reasons such as personal jealousy, competition and discord. Such comments are made by those who are incapable of sound reasoning. There are dedicated democracy fighters among the founders of the party. They were in favor of a parliament with a system of checks and balances where there would be free elections, without team pressure. We can call these people the idealists of the Progressive Republican Party. There are modest patriots among them who want nothing but to make sure that everything is going on the right track, that there is no more pressure and corruption. Their motives were the abolition of personal government, and to establish a system of checks and balances in accordance with the principles of national sovereignty. Those who did not have anything personally against Mustafa Kemal but just desired to get rid of authority and system, those who desired nothing but to get rid of Mustafa Kemal, and those who wanted to stop the nascent revolutionary movement to re-establish the old order, were all united around these motives”⁶⁶.

Touching on the main reason behind the conflict that took place in the aftermath of the National Struggle, Hüseyin Cahit stated the following:

“... Once that sacred goal had been achieved, the deafening and dazzling desire for power which blinds the eye, began to dissolve the bond of sincerity that had existed between these selfless leaders of the national movement. As those who had provided actual service were no longer there, a vacuum formed around positions of power. Then, everywhere was infested with those crafty people who can benefit from every opportunity in every era. Now one cannot hear anything but them ranting and raving. It is as if there are no liberals or patriots left in the country but these parasites. It is not those who fell in battle or those who led the national movement who make sure today that the people who saved their motherland now have sovereignty; it is instead a group of pathetic creatures who have been hiding in their corners from the very beginning and are now in charge”⁶⁷.

There are interpretations claiming that a group of individuals like Kılıç Ali, Ali (Çetinkaya), Recep (Peker), Yunus Nadi, who are perceived to have played a secondary role during the National Struggle, were striving to drive a wedge between Mustafa Kemal Pasha and Refet, Ali Fuat, Kazım Karabekir and Rauf Bey⁶⁸. Lord Kinross pointed to the role of informants in aggravating the situation, stating that resignations from the People’s Party gained momentum as a result of the activities of these informants⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ Falih Rıfki Atay, Çankaya: **Atatürk’ün Doğumundan Ölümüne Kadar**, Doğan Kardeş Yay., İstanbul 1969, p. 395-402.

⁶⁷ Kandemir, **Siyasî Dargınlıklar**, v. 3, p. 21.

⁶⁸ Eric Jan Zürcher, **Millî Mücadelede İttihatçılık**, (trans. Nüzhet Salihoglu), Bağlam Yay., İstanbul 1987, p. 142-143.

⁶⁹ Kinross, p. 598.

TpCF's Program and Criticisms

Ali Fuat Pasha, one of the founders of the party and its first president, explained their motives behind establishing the TpCF as follows: *“Our intention was not to rise to power when we established the TpCF. We expressed this openly. Our intention was to make sure that there would be a system of system of checks and balances to keep those in power in line. It was only for this purpose that we needed to establish a system of checks and balances in the parliament”*⁷⁰. In order to eliminate possible suspicions concerning the TpCF, its party constitution of 64 articles and its founding principles were made public in newspapers. The purpose for its establishment was explained as such:

*“We have established the TpCF to offer our nation a true path in this new field it has entered on, which can be walked with certainty after having shown the will and ability to determine its future. One or two parliaments have been entrusted with the task of exercising sovereign rule. These parliaments give the power of execution, resulting from the task of ruling with what the people entrusted them, to a commission comprising of a limited number of MPs. Although an obligation, this is not without possible dangers. The most serious danger is the possibility that a rule of oppression may settle in and devoid the people of this right. There is an urgent need for any tool that will keep the nation and its ministers checked and prevent the Council of Ministers from leaving the right path”*⁷¹. It was thus emphasized that the party had been established to create a system of checks and balances and that it would make efforts to maintain national unity. Drawing on the proclamation of Republic, the party program included the following statements: *“The Turkish State is a Republic that is based on the sovereignty of the people. Liberalism, that is the love of freedom, and democracy, that is the sovereignty of the people, form the basis of the party. The Constitution will not be amended unless the people have authorized such amendments”*⁷².

The 6th article of the party program, *“The party respects all opinions and religious beliefs,”* made it clear that the party had adopted the principle of secularism and that it would not try to interfere with religious beliefs. However, although the founders of the party used such a Western formulation to clearly distinguish religion and politics, this was interpreted in Turkey to mean the exact opposite⁷³. According to the party program, the needs of the people, their interests and tendencies, the requirements of the age and principles of justice would determine the laws to be made. The party supported personal rights and freedoms, and accepted putting a limit on these, only when the Constitution allowed such a limitation⁷⁴. The founders of the TpCF voiced the following concern: *“If there is no counterbalance in the form of opposition, the Parliament may assume all authority and this may give rise to an authoritarian regime”*⁷⁵. Pro-government press published harsh criticisms of the opposition after the party had been officially established.

⁷⁰ **Yakın Tarihimiz**, v.4, p. 47.

⁷¹ Cebesoy, p.111-112.

⁷² “Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası'nın Millete Beyannamesi”, **Tanin**, 18 November 1924, No:754, p.1.

⁷³ Kinross, p. 601.

⁷⁴ “Yeni Teşkil Eden Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkasının Beyannamesi”, **Vatan**, 18 November 1924, No: 576, p. 1.; **Vakit**, “Yeni Fırkanın Programı”, 19 November 1924, No:2476, p.1.

⁷⁵ Kemal H. Karpat, **Türk Demokrasi Tarihi**, Timaş Yay., İstanbul 2010, p. 132.

Hüseyin Cahit expressed his reaction in these words:

“What a source of unrest the People’s Party turns out to be! Those who change as times change, political swindlers, tricksters, bandits and even traitors to the motherland, in short, all sorts of evil have infiltrated this party. In the past we believed the People’s Party to be made up of respectable politicians whom we trusted with administering and reforming the country; today, there is no hiding the fact that we are filled with fright in the face of this party”⁷⁶.

It has already been mentioned that the HF changed its name to Republican People’s Party (CHF) upon finding out that the new party would have the word ‘Republic’ in its name. It can be observed that Mustafa Kemal Pasha himself protested and criticized the inclusion of the word ‘Republic’ in the name chosen for the new party, the Progressive Republican Party (TpCF). In the Speech, Mustafa Kemal Pasha shares his view on the topic:

“How can one seriously trust the honesty of those who used to refrain from even simply uttering the word ‘Republic’, who wanted to end the Republic the day it was proclaimed, when they call their party ‘Republican’ and ‘Progressive Republican’ at that?”⁷⁷.

It is known that the extremists within the CHF spread rumors that there was no difference between the parties to decrease the level of sympathy felt toward the new party and to provoke heated debates. In a statement to the Times, Mustafa Kemal Pasha summarized his view on the TpCF’s party program: *“... The articles of the Progressive Republican Party’s program do not express any idea or principle that is against the principles of the People’s Party, there is nothing that provokes debates”⁷⁸*. In response to this statement that there was no difference between the two parties’ programs, Ali Fuad Pasha replied that the People’s Party did not even have a written program and therefore there could be no comparison. In his view, the real purpose of such a statement was to accuse the founders of the new party of having political ambitions⁷⁹. According to Ali Fuat Pasha’s statements, the founders of the TpCF did not turn against Mustafa Kemal Pasha but were rather expressing their opposition against the İsmet Pasha administration. In an article published by the Vakit newspaper on 19 November 1924, the differences between the two parties were explored and their different ways of interpreting the principle of national sovereignty were pointed out. According to this newspaper article, the TpCF held the belief that the principle of national sovereignty had to be widespread, and that certain arrangements were needed to achieve this⁸⁰.

One of the founders of the party, Kazım Karabekir Pasha, saw a connection between the process leading to the establishment of the party and what immediately followed the War of Independence:

“The two ideas we had after victory were these: 1. It would suffice if a group of thirty-forty

⁷⁶ Orbay, p. 602.

⁷⁷ Atatürk, p. 696.

⁷⁸ Orbay, p. 608.

⁷⁹ Orbay, p. 609.

⁸⁰ “Yeni Fırka İle Eski İttihat ve Terakki”, **Vakit**, 19 November 1924, No:2476, p.1.

people assembled around Mustafa Kemal Pasha. This assembly would produce a successful party and would do as it pleased. 2. Accepting the leadership of a few people who would be loved and respected by the whole country, and co-operating with the majority, that is, with the party”⁸¹. Karabekir Pasha claimed to have refused Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s offer to make him Prime Minister, and to have adhered to a path of opposition instead. His rationale behind this choice was this: “It was a compulsion to selflessly accept the task of facing the future challenges to our country and nation. I put up with everything to support my thesis, as I am someone who believes in freedom of organization for the future of the nation”⁸².

The Process Leading to the Closure of the TpCF and the Closure of the Party (3 June 1925)

The developments that took place during the process of establishing a new party not only moved those who had grievances with the government, but also other opposition groups that had remained dormant until then. Falih Rifkî Atay’s remarks on this point have already been shared earlier in this current work. The resignations from the People’s Party were in fact quite substantial. Accordingly, the CHF did not take this development lightly. In the first phase, 11 people resigned from the CHF on 10 November 1924, while the number of resignations reached 32 on November 22. Of these, 28 MPs joined the TpCF, while 4 MPs decided to remain independent⁸³. Commenting on the resignations from the CHF, Recep (Peker) Bey stated that resignation was the right choice for those who had left the party, and added that he wished in all sincerity that they would manage to benefit the country in their new positions. However, it can be observed that this sincere wish was soon forgotten and was replaced by heated debates⁸⁴.

Active for a period of six and a half months, the TpCF worked meticulously to stay true to the objectives expressed by its founders, and it seemed to be quite an effective opposition party. The main objective according to Ali Fuat Pasha was to form an opposition against the People’s Party, and not to rise to power⁸⁵. As per its specified objectives, the TpCF requested explanations for certain issues in the Parliament, expressed its opinion in the 1925 Budget talks, agreed to abolish the ashar tax, expressed its stand against the law that vested the Independence Tribunal of Ankara with the authority to sentence people to death, and accused the Republican People’s Party of having applied pressure against itself during the by-elections⁸⁶. Although it joined the parliamentary by-elections, it did not have candidates in every location and the candidates it did have did not manage to succeed. The party had emphasized in its program that it would be a democratic and liberal party that would respect different ideas and beliefs. Among its other principles were the single-degree election system, the idea that the constitution could not be changed without the approval of the people, that one could no longer be an MP once elected President, administrative decentralization, and not instituting further reforms without permission

⁸¹ Kandemir, v. 3, p. 34.

⁸² Kandemir, v. 3, p.34.

⁸³ Tunaya, p. 621.

⁸⁴ Kandemir, v. 2, p. 119-120.

⁸⁵ Cebesoy, p. 110.

⁸⁶ Tunaya, p. 610.

from the people⁸⁷. These principles were seen as an opportunity by anti-reformists, and those who favored a theocratic system government, such groups that started infiltrating the TpCF. The founders of the TpCF had no desire to pave the way for such developments. However, the events that followed put the party in a problematic position.

The effective opposition of the TpCF exacerbated the existing conflicts between them and the government. The debates that started during the budget talks continued after the talks and, at the end of the quarrel between Ardahan MP Halit Pasha and Ali Çetinkaya and his friends, Halit Pasha was shot dead. This was harshly criticized by the opposition and the pro-opposition media. Even though there are different opinions as to what started to quarrel,⁸⁸ the real issue was that the extremists within the People's Party could not tolerate opposition of any kind.

The Sheikh Said Rebellion started shortly after the death of Halit Pasha. The group within the People's Party which found Fethi Bey's policy to be too moderate, immediately formed a front against him. Because of the rebellion, the hardliners requested the imposition of martial law in Istanbul as well. Fethi Bey had the courage to respond to his critics with the following words: *"I will not resort needlessly to violence and have blood on my hands"*⁸⁹. It can be understood that the main reason behind the extremists' insistence on Martial Law was their wish to silence the press based in Istanbul. Unable to resist the increasing pressure for longer, Fethi Bey asked Karabekir Pasha to abolish his party. However, Karabekir Pasha rejected this request to abolish a party which did not even have any branches in the area where the rebellion was effective, saying: *"We have the legal authority to establish parties but not the authority to abolish them"*⁹⁰.

After Fethi Bey's resignation, the first thing by the new government, which was led by İsmet Pasha, was an addition made to the 1st article of the Treason Act, through which it managed to make law on the maintenance of order on 4 March 1925⁹¹. Commenting on İsmet Pasha leading a government once again, Yakup Kadri said it was "the Third Victory of İnönü"⁹². In fact, İsmet Pasha had already given signs that the measures taken in response to the rebellion would be very harsh: *"We consider it necessary to take a series of special measures which will come shortly into force. These will be aimed at, above all, terminating the violence caused by the recent developments, protecting our motherland from all sorts of plotting, establishing a state of calm and peace, and strengthening the state"*⁹³. In a declaration published on 8 March 1925, Mustafa Kemal Pasha stated the following in relation to the rebellion: *"I call upon government officials, both civilian and military personnel, to perform their duties with determination and without even a trace of hesitation"*⁹⁴.

⁸⁷ Cebesoy, p. 112-113.

⁸⁸ However, it is known that Halit Pasha had revealed the fact that some Mustafa Kemal Pasha supporters - including Colonel Arif - had been stealing from a government-owned industrial facility and using the money to fund their secret political campaign against the Pasha's enemies (Kinross, p. 603).

⁸⁹ Şerafettin Turan, İsmet İnönü –*Yaşamı, Dönemi ve Kişiliği*, Bilgi Yay., Ankara 2003, p. 90.

⁹⁰ Özçelik, p. 313.

⁹¹ **TBMMZC**, 2nd Cycle, v.15, 69th Session, 4 March 1925, p. 131.

⁹² Karaosmanoğlu, p. 74. Yakup Kadri states that, with the closure of the SCF in the following years, İsmet Pasha gained a "Fourth Victory of İnönü" without any personal involvement in the affair (Karaosmanoğlu, p. 98).

⁹³ Turan, p. 91.

⁹⁴ **Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri**, (ed. Ali Sevim et al.), AAM Yay., Ankara 2006, p. 568-569.

The Law on the Maintenance of Order vested government with the authority to “*ban, with the approval of the President, any reactionary organization, initiative or publication that aimed to start a rebellion and violate social order and internal security*”⁹⁵. Commenting on the passing of the law, Rauf Bey stated that this law was unnecessary and that the Republic was not in danger⁹⁶. With the Law on Maintenance of Order coming into force of the on 4 March with 122 votes in favor and 22 against, Independence Tribunals were also established. Karabekir Pasha shared the following views in relation to Independence Tribunals: “... *passing such a law is not an honor for the Republic. As for Independence Tribunals: Due to the meaning of the name, these courts should have been and were established during our War of Independence. For this reason, it was a great honor for our Supreme Parliament when these became history. If the honorable İsmet Pasha is under the impression that Independence Tribunals are the instrument of reformation, they are seriously mistaken*”⁹⁷.

Acting on the basis of the 1st Article of the Law on the Maintenance of Order, the government shut down the newspapers *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, *İstiklâl*, *Son Telgraf* and the magazines *Aydınlık*, *Orak ve Çekiç*, *Sebilürreşad* on 6 March 1925⁹⁸. In a statement, Mustafa Kemal Pasha expressed support for this move by the government: “*It has been decided that the severest punishment should be inflicted to publications aimed at damaging the Republic as well as those who humiliate the army of the Republic and its security forces for any reason*”⁹⁹. The government’s attitude toward the press grew harsher over a short period of time, and Tanin was added to the list of banned newspapers on April 15. Ali Fuat Pasha stated that the party had no intention other than to act as a legitimate opposition party¹⁰⁰. He also criticized the totalitarian mindset of the government, claiming that Independence Tribunals were more concerned with banning the TpCF and silencing the Istanbul press than with serving their original purpose¹⁰¹. One finds proof of Ali Fuad Pasha’s claims about the totalitarian mindset of the government in the fact that İsmet Pasha said, at a moment during the rebellion when he was sure victory was near, that opposition was unnecessary, and in the fact that he told Admiral Bristol that “*In this country, opposition equals insurrection*”¹⁰².

Right after the opposition press had been silenced, the documents of the TpCF in Istanbul and its other branches were confiscated by order of Ali Çetinkaya, head of the Ankara Independence Tribunal¹⁰³. At the same time, the pro-government press was publishing news claiming that the party had direct connections with the rebellion. In an article, Siirt MP Mahmud Bey claimed that the party program was filled with plans to create discord and that the party was responsible for

⁹⁵ Bekir Sıtkı Yalçın-İsmet Gönülal, *Atatürk İnkılâbı*, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yay., Ankara 1984, p. 470.

⁹⁶ *TBMMZC*, 2nd Cycle, v.15, 69th Session, 4 March 1925, p. 135.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134-135.

⁹⁸ “Üç Gazete, Üç Mecmua Kapatıldı”, *İkdâm*, 7 March 1925, No: 10032, p.1.

⁹⁹ “Reis-i Cumhuriyet’in Beyannamesi”, *İkdâm*, 8 March 1925, No: 10033, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ *İkdâm*, 9 April 1925, No: 10064, p.1.

¹⁰¹ Özçelik, p. 314. Ali Fuat Pasha uses the title “*Political Tribunal*” instead of the title “*Independence Tribunal*”. He was going to respond to the actions of the Diyarbakır Independence Tribunal and stated: “*These actions of this court, whose actions in matters of politics and political parties are determined by factionalism and which also possesses the authority to sentence people to death, are unprecedented. In this respect, the Ankara Independence Tribunal surpasses its counterpart in Diyarbakır by far* (Özçelik, p. 315).

¹⁰² Kinross, p. 612.

¹⁰³ *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, 14 April 1925, No:1400, p.1.

the rebellion¹⁰⁴. An article from the party program, “*The Progressive Republican Party respects differences of opinion and religion*”, was taken to be related to the Sheikh Said Rebellion, and the decision to ban the party was taken on 3 June 1925 on the basis of the law on the maintenance of order¹⁰⁵. According to Ali Fuat Pasha, the rebellion was planned, under British leadership, by the members of the Society for the Rise of Kurds and the Order of Islam, and none of these had any relationship whatsoever with the TpCF¹⁰⁶.

On 25 May 1925, the Eastern Independence Tribunal ordered the closure of all TpCF branches in its jurisdiction¹⁰⁷. Following the closure of the TpCF, many journalists and writers were arrested and sent to the Diyarbakır Independence Tribunal. Since the Independence Tribunal, stationed in Diyarbakır, had finished its term there and moved to Elazığ, they stood trial in the latter city. Considering the fact that the journalists were not sentenced in the end, it can be inferred that the petitions sent to Ankara were effective. Despite the fact that the journalists were released without being sentenced, their newspapers had still been shut down¹⁰⁸. In spite of the fact that the government had managed to shut down the TpCF and silence the opposition press, the pro-government press maintained its hostile attitude toward any opposition. It was said that “*There can be no room for mercy in politics, there is only room for interest and power, and it is this power that brings respect*”, and such statements encouraged the pressures¹⁰⁹.

Rauf Bey gave the following statement in response to the claims that his party was using religion for political gain:

“... *The constitution of the Republic of Turkey has an article which states that ‘the religion of the state is Islam’. By adding an article to our party program which states that ‘the party respects all opinions and religions’, we had made it clear that we respected freedom of conscience, and that we were far from religious intolerance or using religion for political gain. On the other hand, those who accused us themselves presented such exquisite examples of using religion for political gain, both with their speeches and the way they dressed, that we could easily prove this with incontrovertible documentary evidence*”¹¹⁰.

The oppression of party members and supporters following the ban on the TpCF reached its peak when, after the İzmir assassination attempt, all party members were arrested. Even though Independence Tribunals were originally founded in response to the Sheikh Said Rebellion, their real function was to prosecute all opposition against the system of the government to make sure that the new regime would settle in the country.

¹⁰⁴ **Cumhuriyet**, 17 April 1925, No:341, s.1.

¹⁰⁵ Nurşen Mazıcı, **Belgelerle Atatürk Döneminde Muhalefet (1919-1926)**, Dilmen Yay., İstanbul 1984, p.155.

¹⁰⁶ Özçelik, p. 316.

¹⁰⁷ Tunçay, p. 147.

¹⁰⁸ **Hâkimiyeti Milliye**, 14 September 1925

¹⁰⁹ Metin Toker, **Şeyh Said ve İsyanı**, Akis Yay., Ankara 1968, p.101.

¹¹⁰ **Yakın Tarihimiz**, v.4, p. 273.

LIBERAL REPUBLICAN PARTY

The Reasons Behind the Establishment of a New Party

In studies of the history of democracy in Turkey, the political parties are given special importance, as the existence of different voices in politics is the main indication of a democratic system. The first opposition party of the Republic, the Progressive Republican Party made quite an impact on the relationship between government and opposition. Established five years after the closure of this first opposition party, the Liberal Republican Party (SCF) differed from the Progressive Republican Party in terms of its character and reason for establishment. The most distinct difference was that the SCF represented an unnatural, controlled sort of opposition. President Mustafa Kemal Pasha himself was behind the establishment of the SCF. There were numerous internal and external reasons for the establishment of such a controlled democratic experiment.

The attempts at establishing a multiparty party system had come to an end with the law on the maintenance of order, and a Single-Party rule had prevailed with no opposition to stand against it. In the aftermath of the First World War, the empires of the previous era had been dissolved and a stand against totalitarian regimes had become dominant. The triumphant states were perceived as representing modern civilization, and the situation was taken as a victory that democracy had won against totalitarian regimes. This perception would last throughout the Second World War, too. Trying to express itself in such a political milieu, the Republic of Turkey took this perception of democracy quite seriously. It was well known, especially by Mustafa Kemal Pasha, that the prestige of the young republic in the democratic states of the West depended on its government's commitment to democracy. In his book, *Çankaya*, Falih Rıfkı Atay also states that neither the disposition nor the ideals of Mustafa Kemal Pasha would allow him to favor dictatorship. He believed that the reforms he perceived to be imperative for national liberation could prosper freely¹¹¹. From the initial years of the Republic onwards, a Single-Party rule was considered necessary for some large-scale reforms. The ultimate goal was to reach the level of modern civilization, to become Western despite the West, and to transition to a multiparty democracy, which was the most significant characteristic of the West¹¹². This reality is an important external reason in the transition to democracy. Proving the competence of the young Republic to the outside world was a significant factor in the establishment of an opposition party. The dissolution of empires after the war increased confidence in democratic regimes. Although totalitarian regimes were still there, democracy was the ultimate goal. In this sense, what Mustafa Kemal Pasha and his closely associated meant when they referred to the West, was neither the Soviet Union, nor Fascist Italy¹¹³. Single-Party systems are in fact approached with caution by those developed countries which have completed their transition to democracy. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was a head of state who paid attention to the views held by outsiders. In democratic countries, the Single-Party rule in Turkey was interpreted to be inferior to the Western practices of democracy. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was angered by the comments of

¹¹¹ İsmet Giritli, *Atatürk Yolu*, (Coordinated by Turhan Feyzioğlu), AAM Yay., Ankara 1995, p. 112.

¹¹² Server Tanilli, *Devlet ve Demokrasi –Anayasa Hukukuna Giriş-*, Çağdaş Yay., İstanbul 1996, p. 89.

¹¹³ Tunçay, p. 247.

European writers who claimed that, even though the Turkish system had a Western appearance, it was in essence an Eastern system¹¹⁴. It is well known that many Turkish statesmen had a hard time when faced with certain questions during their travels to the West, and that they informed Mustafa Kemal Pasha of this. An incident recounted to Mustafa Kemal Pasha by Kazım Özalp, the Speaker of the Parliament, is worth noting, as it sheds light on the situation:

“When I was in Vienna a while ago, the Neue Freie Presse newspaper asked for an interview. One of the questions asked of me was the number of political parties in Turkey. I told them that we had only one party. The journalist was surprised: “How can it be that the matters of governance can be undertaken by a single party? Then this means that there is no parliamentary control in your state.” In order to satisfy his curiosity, I told him: “No, we do have parliamentary control, but we have a style of our own. We keep our government in check by means of the party and commissions. Thus we avoid the unfortunate outcomes caused by the existence of many parties.” Even though my words were published in verbatim the next day, the journalist had added a joke to the article which basically meant this: ‘Look at this simpleton! He came to teach us a lesson about the parliamentary system in the very heart of Europe.’ Truly it is difficult to explain our parliament’s situation”¹¹⁵.

However, Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s initiatives toward the establishment of an opposition party changed the tone of European newspapers and increased Turkey’s prestige in Europe. Turkey was closely followed, especially by the press of democratic countries. In an article published on 19 August 1930, the Times recorded the following with regard to the establishment of a new party: *“Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s decision is very important. At a time when many claim that a single party has the right to have the last say in many countries, it is noteworthy that the Pasha made such a decision”¹¹⁶.*

Another important external reason was the 1929 World Economic Depression. What is known as “Black Thursday” in the U.S. quickly turned into a worldwide crisis, causing a dramatic fall in the prices of agricultural products in Turkey. The establishment of a new party was seen as a way to appease the embittered public. When the international crisis began to have a negative impact on the country’s economy, it became an internal concern with the rise of poverty at home.

The discontent felt by many people toward the Single-Party regime and its actions compelled the party to enter the process of drawing a new road map. It was understood that the political and economic problems faced by the country could not be handled within the CHF alone, and that alternatives other than Single-Party rule were needed. This is worth noting as an important factor. As poverty became the most significant problem in the country, the inability to realize plans and the oppressive policies of the Single-Party rule caused a general air of discontent in the public, and this in turn became an important internal reason for the transition to the multiparty system. In his report on the local elections of 26 October 1930, the Adana Party Inspector Hilmi

¹¹⁴ Kinross, p. 678.

¹¹⁵ Fethi Okyar, *Üç Devirde Bir Adam*, Tercüman Yay., İstanbul 1980, p. 396-397.

¹¹⁶ Soyak, p. 396.

Uran commented on the fact that the opposition was often referring to the discontent of the people, saying: *“It had the appearance of a force that had taken up people’s discontent as a weapon ...”*¹¹⁷.

The complaints that Mustafa Kemal Pasha heard during his tours around the country gave rise to the idea that the government needed to be checked. However, how such a mechanism would be made functional was the real issue. Seeing that the government was not receptive to criticism and was beginning to act irresponsibly, Mustafa Kemal Pasha believed that the establishment of an opposition party would be beneficial, as this party could work to keep the government in check. According to Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the interests of the country were identical with the interests of the CHF. For this reason, the establishment of a new party would be beneficial to the party, rather than to the regime¹¹⁸. In this way the shortcomings of the party could be pointed out and ameliorated, and the party would ultimately become stronger. However, certain interest groups within the party had worries about this project and played a part in bringing the experiment to an end¹¹⁹.

The Establishment and Actions of the Liberal Republican Party (12 August 1930)

Drawing on the idea that opposition from within the party might cause fractures like the TpCF had, the establishment of a new opposition party was chosen as the most logical path to follow. However, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s biggest concern about this was the possibility that an entity might form that would be against the founding principles of the Secular Republic. For this reason, it became necessary to have trustworthy men of state involved. Fethi Bey was chosen for the job, as he was a close friend of Atatürk’s and had previously been the first Speaker of the Parliament, as well as Prime Minister. Another reason behind this choice was the fact that Fethi Bey had shown the courage to openly criticize the İsmet Pasha administration¹²⁰.

While posted as the Turkish Ambassador in Paris, he came to Turkey on 22 July 1930 for a two-month visit. One day later, when he went to visit Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Yalova, Rize MP Fuat Bulca warned him, saying: *“You will be offered to lead the establishment of an opposition party. Don’t fall for it! It will only bring you trouble...”*¹²¹. In the following days, Mustafa Kemal Pasha told Fethi Bey the following in the presence of İsmet Pasha:

“Our system today is more or less a dictatorship. Even though we do have a parliament, we are seen as a dictatorship both domestically and internationally. German writer Emile Ludwig, who visited Ankara last year, asked strange questions about our regime and, was convinced in the end that it is a dictatorship, later wrote about this conviction of his. In reality, I did not proclaim the

¹¹⁷ For Hilmi Uran’s report, see: Hilmi Uran, **Meşrutiyet, Tek Parti, Çok Parti Hatıralarım (1908-1950)**, Türkiye İşbankası Kültür Yay., İstanbul 2008, p. 479-487.

¹¹⁸ Tunçay, p. 249.

¹¹⁹ Okyar, p. 490-491.

¹²⁰ Soyak, p. 395.

¹²¹ Okyar, p. 378. In a speech on the failed experiment of the SCF, Fuat Bulca stated the following: *“Only someone with the patriotism and virtues possessed by Fethi Bey could be entrusted with such a job, but nevertheless, I knew the experiment would fail. Unfortunately, I was proven right by how it ended.”* (Ibid.).

Republic for my own personal gain. We are all mortals. What will remain behind when I die is a system of despotism. However, I do not wish to be recorded in history as someone who bequeathed a system of despotism to their people... The real issue is to make sure that the Republican regime survives in this country without being dependent on the life span of individuals”¹²².

In response to the offer to lead the opposition party, Fethi Bey asked for Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s assurance that the President would remain neutral. Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s only condition for neutrality was his explanation that the new party would be located to the left of the People’s Party¹²³. However, even though the later statements of the founder were in accordance with this request, they gave way to accusations that he was a communist on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to accusations that he was harboring reactionaries in the party¹²⁴.

Fethi Bey was wary of the situation as he knew that such an initiative could place him in an opposing position not just to the government but also to the state in the future, and he had concerns that he could be accused of “treason”¹²⁵. However, it can be seen that, despite his promise to remain neutral, Mustafa Kemal Pasha never really cut his ties with the CHF¹²⁶. Even in his correspondence during the process of establishing the new party, Mustafa Kemal Pasha asked to be addressed as both President and Head of CHF¹²⁷. Fethi Bey requested from Mustafa Kemal Pasha the same budget as that of the CHF for the establishment and organization of the party. Mustafa Kemal Pasha asked him to have a meeting with General Secretary Saffet Bey, so that they could decide on a budget based on the CHF’s budget¹²⁸. On 9 August 1930, Fethi Bey wrote a letter to Mustafa Kemal Pasha, informing him about the new party, and Atatürk replied with a letter on 11 August. In summary, his response was: “... *I see that we agree on the principle of Secular Republic. This is the foundation I have always sought and will always seek in my political career*”.

On 12 August 1930, the Liberal Republican Party was officially established under the leadership of Fethi Bey. As can be inferred from certain indicators, the decision to establish a new political party had been given 2 months prior to that. In an article dated 13 September 1930, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, head of the Central Committee of Turkish Hearths, stated that “*We had heard one and half years earlier of Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s wish for a new opposition party*”¹²⁹.

Asım Us records the following in his memoir:

“On 17 June 1930, İsmet Pasha Said: ‘There will be an opposition party in the next election.

¹²² Okyar, p. 392-393.

¹²³ Okyar, p. 400.

¹²⁴ According to a notice issued by the CHF’s General Secretary Saffet Arıkan, the establishment of the SCF catalyzed actions of fanatical reactionaries as well as communists (Cemil Koçak, **Tek Parti –Cumhuriyet ve Şefler-**, Timaş Yay., İstanbul 2016, p. 200).

¹²⁵ In fact, Fethi Bey had always maintained his reservations about İsmet Pasha. Fethi Bey was always worried that İsmet Pasha could plot against him (Okyar, p. 408).

¹²⁶ See: Fahir Giritlioğlu, **Türk Siyasi Tarihinde CHP’nin Mevkii**, v.2, Ayyıldız Matbaası, Ankara 1965.

¹²⁷ Okyar, p. 414-415.

¹²⁸ Okyar, p. 416, 495.

¹²⁹ Cemil Koçak, **Tarihin Buğulu Aynası –Efsaneler Çökerken-**, Timaş Yay., İstanbul 2013, p. 247.

This is necessary for the establishment of a normal administration. No one will be able to do this if we don't do it now. We have the experience, we have a past. They don't think we can survive the debates. However, we have exactly the opposite opinion; people in this country are overly sensitive to what is said and written, this is sign of backwardness. We will get used to having debates and struggles just as western countries have. But I don't think this is a good time to speak of the new party, we still have a year and a half. We can talk about this in a year. We have our differences of opinion with Fethi Bey. We thought it was appropriate for him to lead a different party. Bu we cannot know if he will agree to do this. After all, it comes with a certain amount of risks”¹³⁰.

Established as a controlled opposition, the SCF did not have a media outlet of its own. It is known that there was an initiative to establish a newspaper that would be called *Kürsü* and managed by Lawyer Nesim Mazlıyah¹³¹. However, the newspapers *Yarın* and *Son Posta* in Istanbul and *Halkın Sesi* in İzmir adopted publishing policies that were in favor of the SCF. As the SCF had been planned as an opposition party within the parliament, the number of MPs that would join was decided after negotiations. Even though İsmet Pasha wanted to keep the number of MPs limited, Fethi Bey requested to have 120 MPs which would mean one third of the whole parliament. Through this move, Fethi Bey wanted to make sure his party would have some influence. The disagreement between İsmet Pasha and Fethi Bey concerning the number of MPs was solved by the intervention of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. In the end, they settled on 70 MPs for the new party¹³².

Fethi Bey's visit to İzmir was the most significant event in the SCF's history. Having started a tour around Western Anatolia in September, Fethi Bey visited Manisa, Aydın and Balıkesir after delivering a speech at a rally in İzmir. However, his actions were met with criticism from some CHF extremists who voiced their protest by means of the press. The newspaper *Anadolu*, which was owned by Haydar Rüştü Öktem, the CHF's Denizli MP, described Fethi Okyar's rally in İzmir as “*a mob of hired drunkards going wild*”¹³³. In this visit, Fethi Bey replied to the speech delivered by İsmet Pasha on 30 August 1930, when he opened the Ankara-Sivas Line. The visit turned, as it were, into a show of strength by the SCF. Addressing about fifty thousand people, Fethi Bey mentioned how difficult the tender terms and conditions were for railway services for foreign companies, and explained that it is only due to state interventionism that it became a habit for people to expect everything from the government. Calling for economic stability as the prerequisite for foreign investment, Fethi Bey pointed out shortcomings of the fiscal policy and of the way that monopolies functioned.

SCF's İzmir Tour was an important step towards the end of the party. Mustafa Kemal Pasha also reacted to the incidents that had taken place in İzmir. Mustafa Kemal Pasha appointed

¹³⁰ Asım Us, *1930-1950 Atatürk İnönü, İkinci Dünya Harbi ve Demokrasi Rejimine Giriş Devri Hatıraları*, Vakıf Matbaası, İstanbul 1966

¹³¹ “Kürsü Neden Çıkamadı?”, *Vakit*, 1 December 1930, No:4633, p. 1.

¹³² Okyar, p. 416-417.

¹³³ Cemil Koçak, *Tek Parti –Cumhuriyet ve Şefler-*, p. 209.

the Speaker of Parliament. Kazım Pasha, to investigate the incidents, and informed him that he approved of the government's ways. Additionally, in an open letter he dictated to Yunus Nadi Bey, which was published on 9 September 1930 in the newspaper Cumhuriyet, he gave a response that underlined his ties to the CHF¹³⁴.

A month after the SCF's show of strength in İzmir, the party achieved a considerable amount of success for a newly established party in the local elections held in October. Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya announced on 15 December 1930 that the SCF had won 22 of the 502 municipalities. Fethi Bey stated the following in relation to the results:

*"In fact the Liberal Republican Party won the local elections in every location where it ran. The People's Party experienced an unexpected defeat. Our rivals were all aware of this. In light of this, it became obvious that the People's Party could not maintain parliamentary majority after the next elections. I think the results made their biggest impact on Atatürk"*¹³⁵.

Another point worth noting about these elections is the low voter turnout¹³⁶. In Istanbul, 35,934 voters voted for the CHF, 12,813 voted for the SCF, while 250,746 voters did not vote at all. However, the SCF applied to the Parliamentary Speaker's office to request an interpellation of the Ministry of Interior with claims of electoral fraud.

The Closure of the Liberal Republican Party (17 November 1930)

Quite contrary to its founding principle, the success that the SCF achieved during the elections gave rise to ambitions of rising to power. In fact, such ambitions were made public by a statement from Fethi Bey, who said "... *If the people want this, sure... How else can we turn our ideas into actions?*"¹³⁷ This ambition has been interpreted as a development that brought the party to its end. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu states that "*Fethi Bey could have succeeded if he had kept his opposition within the confines of the parliament rather than taking it to the streets. MPs from the CHF would have joined his side over time*"¹³⁸. CHF authorities regarded SCF's ambition for rising to power without provincial organization as one of the reasons behind its failure. Hilmi Uran, the CHF's Adana Inspector at the time, reveals his views on the topic in his memoir. According to Hilmi Uran, if, instead of joining the Local Elections without proper provincial organization, the SCF had functioned as an auditing organization within the Parliament and then organized itself in provincial areas, it would have been of more service, both to itself and to the country. However, the party gained extreme levels of public support and created discomfort within the government¹³⁹. In his explanation for the extreme popularity of the party, Hilmi Uran points out to the belief that Atatürk was leading the new party. According to this belief, Atatürk had turned away from the People's party as a result of its actions¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁴ Okyar, p. 502-503.

¹³⁵ Okyar, p.514.

¹³⁶ "Şehir Halkının Ne Kadarı Rey Verdi, Niçin?", **Vakit**, 20 October 1930, No: 4592, p.1.

¹³⁷ Okyar, p.475.

¹³⁸ Karaosmanoğlu, p. 105.

¹³⁹ Uran, p. 194.

¹⁴⁰ Uran, p. 481.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha became aware of the SCF's ambitions to rise to power following their rapid success. Indeed, it is known that Atatürk told Fethi Bey the following: "I am keeping my promise (Referring to his promise to remain neutral). However, I also have a responsibility to keep the country in a state of peace and order. You are trying to rise to power immediately after a few months. You have no patience. Do you think you will be able to keep peace and order in the country if you overthrow the current government and replace it? First, you need to give me this confidence".

Efforts were made to hinder the rapid success of the SCF by means of pressuring it during the local elections¹⁴¹. It would be difficult to deny the existence of pressure during these elections. In a speech delivered at the Parliament on 1 November 1930, Mustafa Kemal Pasha warned all the parties about the incidents that took place during the Local Elections. However, the extremists within the CHF were not happy at all with this cautionary speech. Ağaoğlu speaks of an instance when Recep Bey had the courage to openly criticize this speech during a dinner hosted by Atatürk, and adds that Falih Rıfkı said he would stand against anyone, even Mustafa Kemal Pasha¹⁴². In his Memories of Atatürk, Hasan Rıza Soyak recounts the following:

*"The complaints and claims of the Members of the Liberal Republican Party were not all unrealistic. Atatürk was aware of this. In fact, one day, when I presented him with the election news, most of which were pro-CHF, he asked me: 'Which party is winning?' When I replied 'Our party, of course', he laughed and said: 'No, sir, not at all! Let me tell you which party is winning: it is the party of administrators! That is, the gendarmerie, the police force, district heads, district governors and governors... You should know this truth'"*¹⁴³.

While the opposition accused the government of having taken illegal action, the government accused the opposition of reviving reactionary sentiments. However, digression soon followed, and the debates took on a personal character. The extremists within the Republican People's Party (CHP) represented the debates as "opposition against Atatürk". In Fethi Bey's view, this was "... Because the possible loss of power meant for the People's Party that the governing elite centered around it would in turn lose the order of life they were used to"¹⁴⁴.

At the end of the debates on November 15, the Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya managed to win the vote of confidence from the majority, with 10 voting against him. This was the last blow to the SCF. In a petition he submitted to the Ministry of Interior on 17 November 1930, Fethi Bey announced that he had abolished the party. He stated the following in this petition¹⁴⁵:

"Dear Sir,

¹⁴¹ In a report of the Local Elections submitted on 26 October 1930 to the General Secretariat of the CHP by Party Inspector Hilmi Uran, it was concluded that the SCF's claims about interference with the elections were far from truth and that they were only playing the victim (Uran, p. 482).

¹⁴² Ahmet Ağaoğlu, **Serbist Fırka Hatıraları**, İletişim Yay., İstanbul 2011, p. 71.

¹⁴³ Soyak, p. 436.

¹⁴⁴ Okyar, p. 491.

¹⁴⁵ Okyar, p.528.

I had established the Liberal Republican Party at the request and with the approval of our Great Leader Mustafa Kemal. In my opinion, this request and approval ruled out the possibility that the new party would ever take political action against Atatürk. In fact, I had no desire to take on the responsibility to start a political initiative without this assuring thought. However, the current situation made it clear that our party may have to become a political rival to Atatürk in the future. I find it impossible, as party founder, to carry on with a political initiative that may one day find itself in this position. For this reason, I have decided to abolish the Liberal Republican Party. This decision has been announced to the party organization.

Kindly submitted for necessary action.

Fethi”

In response to Fethi Bey’s decision to abolish the party, Mustafa Kemal Pasha told Hasan Rıza Soyak the following:

“... I told Fethi Bey my decision. But what do you know! Fethi Bey told me that he did not want to face me as a rival in any way. No matter how many times I told him that we would not have to face each other in that way, that we would walk together side by side as friends who complement each other for the sake of a shared cause, he refused to hear me. In spite of all my persistence and appeals, he chose to abolish his party”¹⁴⁶.

Having survived for a period of three months, the SCF had become active in a very limited number of areas, just like the TpCF. As the SCF differed greatly from the TpCF in terms both of quality and quantity, it is necessary to make mention of their differences. To begin with, it was an opposition party whose planning and establishment were artificial. In Mete Tunçay’s words, the establishment of the party was, as it were, a game of chess Atatürk played against himself¹⁴⁷. His original plan was to lead both parties, boast their successes as his own, and avoid responsibility for their failures¹⁴⁸.

Its founders were not against Mustafa Kemal Pasha; on the contrary, they were his close friends. Unlike the TpCF, which had been banned by the government, the SCF abolished itself. While the TpCF only wished to remain an opposition party, the SCF had the ambition to rise to power. In response to the CHF’s statist economic policies, the SCF supported Liberalism. In its program and constitution, the party stated that it would remain loyal to, and uphold the Republic and its founding principles, nationalism, secularism, as well as Atatürk’s reforms. Unable to accuse the SCF directly of being reactionary, the government accused its members of not taking a stand against reactionism¹⁴⁹. Especially the pro-government press raced to press charges against the SCF. The Hâkimiyet-i Milliye newspaper, which was acting as the official publication of the CHF, described those who joined or supported the SCF as self-seeking reactionaries, saving the

¹⁴⁶ Soyak, p. 425.

¹⁴⁷ Tunçay, p. 250.

¹⁴⁸ Kinross, p. 678.

149 Tunaya, p.628.

title ‘patriot’ for the supporters of the ruling party¹⁵⁰. However, according to the ruling party, it was not the opposition groups within the SCF that brought its end but rather the anti-regime elements that had infiltrated the party. On 17 November 1930, Fethi Bey announced that the party was now banned.

Other Political Parties

Although outside the period under study here, during the period when the SCF was established and later struggled to survive, three noteworthy attempts were made at establishing parties. It would be suitable to make mention of these in the context of the multi-party system. These parties are:

1. Community Republican Party

The existence of this party, which was mentioned in the *Vakit* newspaper issue of 27 September 1930 in an article entitled “Is there a Third Party?”, was met with criticism in pro-government press. The founder of the party was Abdülkadir Kemali Bey, known as the “Counselor”. He acted as the president of the Independence Tribunal as well as the Kastamonu MP in the first parliament. Having joined the Second Group within Parliament, he was not elected in the second cycle. Kemali Bey, who used to publish the newspaper *Tok Söz* in Adana, was put on trial in the Eastern Independence Tribunal after the shutdown of his newspaper by an order of the Council of Ministers in late 1924. He was the father of Orhan Kemal. The founders of the party included such persons including Hasbi, Ali Vehbi, Bekir Sıtkı, Mustafa Ziya.

During its lifetime of three months, the party managed to open branches in Maraş and a few southern provinces¹⁵¹. It was closed on 21 December 1930 by an order of the Council of Ministers. It can be inferred from the news about the closure of the party that opposition groups were not welcome at all in the country. “Abdülkadir Kemali Fled to İskenderun” was a headline used by the *Vakit* newspaper in its issue of 29 December 1930¹⁵². In an article published by the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, dated 2 January 1931, Kemali Bey was said to have been “aware of his own treason before anyone else”. The title of this article was “The Nonsense of the Traitor”¹⁵³.

2. Turkish Republican Workers and Farmers Party

The news of an attempt at establishing a party in Edirne was announced in newspapers with titles such as “The Fourth Party - A Farmers Party is Established in Edirne”¹⁵⁴. Founded by Architect Kazım Tahsin Bey, the party was regarded by the government as having communist tendencies and was prevented from becoming active¹⁵⁵. In the 2nd article of the party program, the founding principles of the party were listed as protecting the Turkish workers and farmers against capital

150 Cemil Koçak, *Tek Parti –Cumhuriyet ve Şefler-*, p. 207.

151 “Üçüncü Bir Fırka mı?”, *Vakit*, 27 September 1930, No:4569, p. 1,5.

152 “Abdülkadir Kemali İskenderun’a Kaçmış”, *Vakit*, 29 December 1930, No:4661, p. 2.

153 Tunçay, p. 286.

154 “Dördüncü Fırka”, *Vakit*, 1 October 1930, No:4573, p. 1.

155 Tunçay, p. 286.

owners, rescuing them from the yoke of tyrants and usurers, and giving them a place in Turkish society. However, as a result of the claims that it had communist tendencies, the party was banned.

3. Secular Republican Workers and Farmers Party

This was an inconclusive attempt by Arif Oruç to establish a new party six months after the closure of the SCF. The government did not give permission for the establishment of the party, news of whose establishment made news¹⁵⁶. As Per Law No. 1881 on Press, dated 25 July 1931, Arif Oruç had to close his newspaper, Yarın, on 19 August 1931 after its last issue was published. In a pamphlet entitled Citizen's Fundamental Freedom, published on 12 March 1932, Arif Oruç supported freedom of the press in particular. In his view, freedom to establish political parties was of secondary importance in comparison to freedom of the press.

It was said that "there would be no security in the country, that anarchy would reign, that everything, perhaps the whole revolution, would go to waste." If the possibility of this party achieving success in the elections had not given rise to certain worries, there would have been no obstacle to the establishment of a checks and balances system in the parliament which would include a few parties administering the system in the name of the people. Accordingly, a compatible press would be established to bring about balance"¹⁵⁷.

In 1931, in addition to the aforementioned attempts at establishing new parties, rumors about the re-establishment of the SCF were spread. However, none of these were allowed to/could happen in the end, and Single-Party rule continued for an interrupted period of 15 years.

Conclusion

The First TBMM, which opened on 23 April 1920, had commanded the War of Independence and laid the foundation for a new state. The First Parliament had a democratic composition as its members came from different professional and ideological backgrounds. Debates about the regime that had started after the success of the National Struggle came to end with the proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923. The Second TBMM, which opened on 11 August 1923, had a homogeneous composition. This parliament, whose members had been elected by Mustafa Kemal Pasha, worked to make lasting reforms.

The MPs, who had devoted their time energy during the National Struggle to the salvation of the motherland, now experienced ideological differences. These differences led to the dissolution of the leadership of the National Struggle as sentiments and personal interests began to play a part. The process of democratization was catalyzed by the proclamation of the Republic. As the wider political conjuncture centered around democracy after World War I, in an effort to prevent the establishment of a totalitarian regime, Turkey made attempts to transition to a multiparty

156 Tunçay, p. 290.

157 Tunçay, p. 292.

system. Therefore, when the aforementioned dissolution found expression in the foundation of new political parties, this did not disturb the government. Especially in Mustafa Kemal Pasha's ideal state, a Single-Party system had never been the ultimate goal. In his view, a system of checks and balances which would serve to point out the shortcomings of governments would benefit the country above all.

However, the fact that the opposition found expression early on, even before the start of the reform movement, gave rise to concerns to the reforms that were being instituted being in danger. The opposition was regarded as an initiative that would damage the whole country, as the interests of the country were considered to be connected to the existence of the CHF. Those who had participated in the National Struggle were not all people who supported democracy and the proclamation of the Republic. It was obvious that, after a possible victory, people who had adopted the principles of socialism would become active in the country, just as there would be those who would work to save the sultanate and caliphate. Disappointed by the abolition of the caliphate and the proclamation of the republic, these groups used every opportunity to take action. As supporters of the Sultanate and Caliphate, Unionists and Socialists, who all managed to hide behind the democratic façade of political parties, used democratic initiatives for their causes, the well-intended multiparty democracy experiment was halted for a while to protect the regime and its revolutions.

Following the triumph of democracy against totalitarian regimes after World War II, Turkey also felt the need to establish itself as a multiparty democracy. As there were no longer any concerns about the survival of the reforms, the Single-Party system was abandoned.

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