

LECTURES

Atatürk as a Young Turk*

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In the historiography of modern Turkey, the relationship of Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) is depicted as very contentious. While it is recognized that Mustafa Kemal was a member of the CUP and remained so until the dissolution of that organization in 1918, his disagreements with the leadership of the CUP before and during World War I are generally emphasized. The “storyline” is usually that of rivalry between two military leaders—Enver Pasha on the one hand, and Mustafa Kemal on the other, with Enver cast as an irresponsible and vainglorious gambler and Mustafa Kemal as the prescient voice of reason, who was disregarded for reasons of political and personal jealousy. This version of events ultimately seems to go back to Kemal’s published memoirs of 1922 and 1926, which stem from an era when he was establishing his hold on the political system of the new Republic and purging potential rivals, all former Unionists. Kemal’s position and prestige made sure that this version of history took hold, but perhaps seeing recent history in terms of a comparison between the two supreme military leaders of the age, one of whom had presided over the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the other over the emergence of the Turkish Republic, is a tempting paradigm in itself. The very fact, however, that this version of history originated in and was so closely linked to the political struggles of the period makes it imperative that we should look at the evidence afresh and form an independent opinion of what exactly Kemal’s place in the CUP was, dealing also with the issue of the supposed rivalry with Enver.

This is precisely what I aimed to do in the second chapter of my 1984 book *The Unionist Factor*.¹ However, since then almost 25 years have passed and important new biographies of Atatürk,² as well as monographs on topics like the Ottoman officer corps, the Balkan War and the Ottoman Empire in World War I,³ have appeared. Thus, I think it is a worthwhile exercise to summarize both the findings of the 1984 chapter and the evidence presented in the more

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¹Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

²Andrew Mango, *Atatürk* (London: John Murray, 1999); A. L. McFie, *Atatürk* (London: Longman, 1994); Klaus Kreiser, *Atatürk: Eine Biographie* (München: Beck, 2008).

³Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in Detail. The Ottoman Army in the Balkans 1912-1913* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport: Greenwood, 2001); Handan Nezir-Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

recent literature to get at a clearer picture of Mustafa Kemal—or Atatürk, as we have come to know him—in his Young Turk days.

Kemal joined the CUP in February 1908, with membership number 322.⁴ This in fact means that he was the 232nd person to join, as the CUP, in order to make itself look stronger and more attractive to prospective members, had decided to number new members joining after the initial ten from 111 upwards. By the time he joined, the CUP had already been well-established and had a clear leadership—consisting of the founders of the Ottoman Freedom Society (OFS) in Salonica (such as Talât, Rahmi and Mithat Şükrü), some of the members of the Paris-based Committee of Progress and Union (CPU) with which the OFS had merged in September 1907 (such as Bahaettin Şakir and Dr Nâzım), and the founders of the CUP branch in the most important military center, Monastir (Enver, Kâzım Karabekir, Ali Fethi [Okyar]). Kemal was not among the leading strata of the society, and this is something that probably rankled with him, as he may well have seen himself as one of the initiators of revolutionary activity in Macedonia. Here is why.

Like many of his colleagues, he had been involved in embryonic secret societies, both in Damascus in 1905 and in Salonica in 1906. Between February and May 1906, Kemal used an extended sick leave to visit his hometown of Salonica, where he met with some former classmates (Ömer Naci, Hüsrev Sami and Hakkı Baha) and founded the Fatherland and Freedom Society (*Vatan ve Hürriyet Cemiyeti*), which was intended as branch of another small secret society that he had founded in Damascus the year before. After Kemal's return to Syria, this society proved to be stillborn, but some of its members soon after became important in the OFS/CPU/CUP. Ömer Naci was among the founders of the OFS in September 1906, and he and Hüsrev Sami were sent to Paris to negotiate the merger with the CPU a year later.

In September 1907, Mustafa Kemal managed to secure a posting in Salonica and a transfer from Southern Palestine, where he was stationed at the time. From September 1907 until June 1908 he served on the staff of the Third Army in Salonica. In early July 1908, he was appointed inspector of the railway line between Salonica and Skopje, a position that gave him mobility and allowed him to fulfill a role in the internal communications of the CUP. This proved important when, shortly after, Enver took to the hills and started the constitutional revolution in the Tikvesh area and Kemal was used as the messenger who brought him arms and a document from the Central Committee, appointing him “General Inspector of the Internal Organization and Executive Forces in Rumeli.”⁵

During the revolutionary days of July 1908, Mustafa Kemal did not come to the fore as one of the leading representatives of the committee. He was not one of the “Heroes of Freedom” whose image was reproduced in journals and on picture postcards. On the other hand, he clearly was closer to the center of power than most ordinary members of the CUP (and there were about 2,000 of them in July 1908). This was due not so much to his own position or activities, but to his friendship with fellow officers Ahmet Cemal (the later Cemal Pasha), Ömer Naci and Ali Fethi [Okyar], who *were* at the center of things.

Several sources suggest that Mustafa Kemal was one of the members of the CUP who, after the revolution, pleaded for a complete disengagement of the army from politics; he seems to have made enemies with his insistence on this point at the first post-revolutionary congress of

⁴Kâzım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti 1896-1909* (İstanbul: n.p., 1982), 179.

⁵Halil Erdoğan Cengiz, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları 1881-1908* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1991), 107-108.

the CUP.⁶ Soon after, in September 1908, the committee sent him to Tripolitania on a mission to explain the revolution to its inhabitants and build support for the CUP. Mustafa Kemal claimed that the Unionist leaders intended this mission to be a kind of exile, but this seems unlikely. In the first place, it was a short mission, so if the intention was to remove Mustafa Kemal from either Salonica or the capital, it was not very effective; in the second place, the mission was not unimportant. Tripolitania was the empire's last African possession, and it was well known that Italy had designs on the province. Had the deeply religious Arab population of the province rejected the Young Turks or openly rebelled against the new regime, this would have created a serious embarrassment and might have led to the loss of the province. At the same time, it must be said that, while Mustafa Kemal was thus given an important political assignment, the plum jobs went to others: Ali Fuat [Cebesoy] was appointed military attaché in Rome, Ali Fethi in Paris, Hafız Hakkı in Vienna, and Enver in Berlin.

After his return from Tripolitania, Mustafa Kemal was appointed chief of staff of the Eleventh Reserve Division in Salonica. When the counterrevolution broke out in İstanbul in April 1909, the CUP gained the support of General Mahmut Şevket Pasha, the commander of the Third Army and inspector of the European Armies, who had his headquarters in Salonica. He ordered the Eleventh Reserve Division to advance by rail to the Çatalca line 30 miles west of İstanbul, as part of what was called (possibly on the suggestion of Mustafa Kemal)⁷ the "Action Army" (*Hareket Ordusu*). Therefore, in the first phase of the operations against the insurgency Mustafa Kemal played quite an important role, but his position was not that of commander or chief of staff of the whole Action Army, nor did he command the Eleventh Reserve Division. After the army had achieved its first objectives, Mahmut Şevket Pasha himself came over to take up the command for the march into the city. He brought with him his own staff, including Ali Fethi, Enver and Hafız Hakkı, who had been recalled from their diplomatic postings for the purpose. Mustafa Kemal, the same age but junior in rank and with less political clout, was expected to serve under them in the divisional staff. Again we see the same pattern: Mustafa Kemal was a prominent Unionist officer who was trusted with a key position during the CUP's life-and-death-struggle against its opponents, but he was definitely second rank when compared to figures like Enver, Cemal, Hafız Hakkı or Fethi.

After the suppression of the counterrevolution, Mustafa Kemal first served in an officer training unit in Salonica and then on the staff of the Third Army. In 1910, as an adjutant-major he temporarily commanded the 38th Regiment in Salonica because the commanding officer had fallen ill; in 1911, he served on the staff of Mahmut Şevket Pasha during the suppression of the Albanian rebellion in that year. In September 1911, he was appointed to the general staff in İstanbul, but never took up his post as he left for Tripolitania once more on 11 October.

The Italians had invaded Tripolitania on the flimsiest of pretexts and occupied the coastal areas. Their naval superiority made it impossible for the Ottoman government to send an expeditionary force, but a number of Unionist officers decided to go to the province to organize resistance from the desert. Some, like Fethi, went by way of France and Tunisia, but most went through Egypt, disguised as civilians. Mustafa Kemal travelled with his old friend Ömer Naci and two Unionist *fedaîs* ("self sacrificing volunteer"), Yakup Cemil and Sapançalı Hakkı. In Egypt he fell ill, but having recovered he joined another old friend (and distant family member), Nuri [Conker], and crossed the border into Tripolitania. Between

⁶Mango, *Atatürk*, 84.

⁷*Ibid.*, 87. (On the basis of Atatürk's own recollections).

December 1911 and October 1912, he fought with distinction in the guerrilla war against the Italians. His headquarters were opposite Derne in Cyrenaica while he served under Enver, who had overall command of the operations in North Africa and whose headquarters were nearby. Although they seem to have worked together well professionally, relations between the two men seem to have soured during their months in the desert. By the time they got back to İstanbul, the problems between them seem to have been well-known in army circles.⁸

Many of the volunteers who fought in North Africa belonged to the *fedaî* wing of the CUP. They were mostly lower-ranking officers who were used in the most dangerous missions. In 1914, the volunteers would be reorganized by Enver into the “Special Organization” (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*), but Mustafa Kemal seems to have been quite close to a number of them as well. We already noted that he travelled to Egypt in the company of two notorious *fedaîs* and in Tripolitania fought side by side with Ali [Çetinkaya], the man who would later become a close collaborator and notorious as one of the presidents of the independence tribunal of 1926. Some of Mustafa Kemal’s close friends—like Nuri [Conker], Hüsrev Sami [Kızıldoğan], and his long-serving adjutant Cevat Abbas [Gürer]—were all “volunteers.”

The Ottoman officers were still in North Africa, organizing the anti-Italian resistance, when the Balkan War broke out in October 1912. When news of the war reached Tripolitania, it was first decided that Enver would return to İstanbul and Mustafa Kemal take over, but when the extent of the disaster that had befallen the Ottoman army became clear, most of the officers decided to return and left Enver’s younger brother Nuri [Kılıgil] in charge of the guerrilla war. By the time they returned to the capital, the Bulgarians had occupied Thrace and the Ottoman armies held the Çatalca line to the west of İstanbul, the encircled fortress city of Edirne, and the Gallipoli peninsula. Enver was appointed chief of staff of the Tenth Army Corps, the strategic reserve with divisions in İstanbul, İzmit and Bandırma. Fethi was made chief of staff of the Bolayır Army Corps that defended the Gallipoli peninsula, while his friend Mustafa Kemal served under him as the head of operations on the army corps staff.

Militarily the situation was deadlocked, and in December an armistice was concluded. When the negotiations broke down, the great powers, on the initiative of Great Britain, communicated an ultimatum to the Porte on 17 January: the Ottoman Empire was asked to acquiesce on a new border along the line running from Enez on the Aegean to Midye on the Black Sea coast. This implied the loss of the old capital city of Edirne, a town that was still in Ottoman hands. When signs that Kamil Pasha’s government might accede to the demands began to emerge, the CUP leaders, who had been exposed to persecution by Kamil and his cabinet for months, decided to act. On 23 January, they executed a *coup d’état* and took over power. The decision for the *coup* was taken in a small inner circle of Unionists. Some leading Unionist officers in the field, such as Enver and Fethi, had been consulted beforehand, and as Fethi opposed the plan, he was left out of the final preparations. Enver, on the other hand, personally led the *coup*.

The weakness of the army left the new government just as powerless to regain the lost territories as the old one had been. In order to satisfy the demands for offensive action, the chief of the general staff, İzzet Pasha, now decided to execute a plan prepared by the staff for an amphibious operation against the Bulgarian troops opposite the Gallipoli peninsula. The plan envisaged a combined operation of the Bolayır Corps and the reserve, the Tenth Corps. The Bolayır Corps—commanded by Fahri Pasha, with Fethi and Mustafa Kemal on his

⁸Münir Aktepe, “Atatürk’ün Sofya Ataşeliğine Kadar İttihat ve Terakki ile Olan Münasebetleri,” *Bellekten*, no. 38 (1974): 285.

staff—would engage the Bulgarians in front of Bolayır, while units from the Tenth Corps—commanded by Hurşit Pasha, with Enver as chief of staff—would simultaneously land in the rear of the Bulgarian army facing the Gallipoli peninsula at Şarköy and İnce Burun. The operation was planned in detail and extensively rehearsed in January. After a week’s delay due to a storm, it was executed in the second week of February, but ended in disaster. The Bolayır Corps attacked the Bulgarians at the agreed time, without checking whether the Tenth Corps had actually arrived. The Tenth Corps was half a day late in landing, due to the late arrival of the Ottoman battleships that were to provide covering fire. In the end, the landing went relatively well, and the Ottomans established a beach head west of Şarköy. However, by that time the Bolayır Corps had been mauled by the Bulgarians, losing half its strength in casualties. This put an end to any idea of catching the Bulgarians in a pincer movement, and after three days the expeditionary force was recalled. Amazingly, and thanks to Enver’s staff work, it escaped almost unscathed. After re-embarking, the Tenth Corps was ordered to Gallipoli to strengthen the now depleted forces on the peninsula.⁹

Now an acrimonious debate started between Gallipoli and Bolayır. Both army corps commanders and their staff officers entered the blame game with gusto. When Hurşit Pasha was appointed commander of the whole Dardanelles force, Fahri Pasha, Fethi and Mustafa Kemal all handed in their resignations to the vice-commander in chief, İzzet Pasha, who in turn notified the Grand Vizier on 20 February. Mahmut Şevket Pasha decided that the situation was so serious that he needed to go to Gallipoli in person to settle the affair. On 21 February, he heard all parties and then relieved Fahri Pasha, who seemed to be the most quarrelsome and was responsible for the fiasco at Bolayır, of his command. He intended to take Enver with him to serve as head of operations on the general staff in İstanbul, but the chief of that staff, İzzet Pasha, now intervened and asked the Grand Vizier to discuss the matter with him before taking such a step. The reason was that İzzet had by now received letters of resignation, written on February 19, before Mahmut Şevket’s visit to Gallipoli, from Fethi and Mustafa Kemal, as well as a memorandum in which they demanded a resumption of the offensive against the Bulgarians in order to save Edirne. İzzet submitted both to Mahmut Şevket.¹⁰

The existence of this memorandum has been known to modern historians since 1968, when Mithat Sertoğlu found it among the papers of Mahmut Şevket Pasha and published it,¹¹ but neither he nor later Turkish authors seem to have seen its true significance. Sertoğlu does not link it to the controversy following the failed Şarköy operation, but simply interprets it as an exhortation to liberate Edirne. Later, Münir Aktepe in the 1970s and Naim Tufan in the 1990s have interpreted the memorandum as a plan of action for the amphibious operation between 8 and 10 February— in other words, as a text written before that date.¹² This interpretation has to be rejected, however. The document is dated 4/5 February (*Şubat*) 1328 according to the old (Rumi) calendar, which means that it was written on 18/19 February 1913 according to the Gregorian calendar, *i.e.*, after the Şarköy action. The amphibious operation had been planned and prepared from early January onwards. Tufan’s assertion that Fethi and Mustafa Kemal wrote “4/5 Şubat 1328” by mistake and really meant “4/5 Şubat 1913” is not substantiated and extremely unlikely for Ottoman officers of the time. In addition, the

⁹Erickson, *Defeat in Detail. The Ottoman Army in the Balkans 1912-1913*, 259-272.

¹⁰Aktepe, “Atatürk’ün Münasebetleri,” 284-285.

¹¹Mithat Sertoğlu, “Balkan Savaşı Sonlarında Edirne’nin Kurtarılması Hususunda Hemen Teşebbüse Geçilmesi için Atatürk’ün Harbiye Nezaretine Uyarısına Dair Bilinmeyen Bir Belge,” *Belleten*, no. 32 (1968).

¹²Naim M. Tufan, *Rise of the Young Turks. Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000), 290.

memorandum recommends the immediate transfer of the troops “that are in Gallipoli harbor” to the Çatalca front; those troops (the Tenth Army Corps) only arrived there *after* the Şarköy expedition. In the end, this recommendation was followed, and the whole Tenth Corps with Fahri Pasha and Enver was shipped to the Çatalca front. Fethi and Mustafa Kemal were persuaded, either by the Grand Vizier or by Talât, who also got himself involved, to remain in their posts in Bolayır.

The events of February, described in such detail here (and in much more detail by Aktepe and Tufan), deserve our attention for two reasons. In the first place, they illustrate the extent to which discipline within the officer corps of the Ottoman army had broken down under the impact of politicization (a point also emphasized by Tufan). A row between three young officers, two of them lieutenant-colonels and one a major, was solved not by disciplinary measures, but through the direct involvement of the chief of the general staff and the Grand Vizier. Instead of coming in for a punitive posting to Basra or the Yemen, Fethi and Mustafa Kemal—who had been partly responsible for a disastrous defeat, handed in their resignation, *and* written a memorandum in which they made demands in a peremptory tone for a different strategy—were *persuaded* to remain in their posts.

The second point, and the one directly relevant to the subject of this essay, is that it allows us to place Mustafa Kemal within the CUP. During the whole episode, he emphatically sided with his friend Fethi against Enver, with whom he seems to have been on bad terms since their time in North Africa. The documentation makes it very clear, however, that the row was considered by all concerned to be one between Fethi and Enver, with Mustafa Kemal very much in a supporting role. That figures: Fethi was higher in rank than Mustafa Kemal and equal in rank to Enver. They were both army corps chiefs of staff and lieutenant-colonels. Mustafa Kemal was a major in charge of a section of the staff. Fethi and Enver were both important military members of the CUP inner circle, so much so that Fethi had been consulted during the planning stage of the *coup d'état* in January. Mustafa Kemal was close to, but not in the inner circle. While they resigned together and wrote their memorandum together, it was Fethi, who, a year later, was to publish a booklet (which seems to have escaped the historians' attention so far), called “The Reasons for the Lack of Success in the Battle of Bolayır: An Answer to the Author of ‘The Reasons for our Military Defeats’.”¹³ In the booklet, he defends himself against the accusation that it was the staff of the Bolayır Corps that had ruined the operation by initiating the attack without waiting for the Tenth Corps in order to claim the honor of defeating the Bulgarians.

Clearly, the events of February 1913 mark the breakdown of relations between Fethi and Mustafa Kemal and Enver, which was unfortunate for the former, as in the next months Enver was to emerge as the undoubted leader of the military within the CUP. In June, the Bulgarians attacked their former allies Greece and Serbia, and the Ottomans decided to make use of this opportunity to liberate Edirne. By joining the advance cavalry that was nearing the city unopposed, Enver managed to position himself as the liberator of Edirne. Mustafa Kemal was engaged in a sideshow, commanding the troops that broke out of Bolayır to conquer the port of Dedeğaç. On 4 January 1914, Enver was appointed minister of war. Fethi drew his conclusions. Rather than serve under Enver he left the army. He was offered the post of secretary-general of the CUP, but instead opted for the post of ambassador to Sofia. Mustafa Kemal was clearly under a cloud as well because of his support for Fethi, and he was persuaded by the latter and Ahmet Cemal to join him in Sofia as military attaché.

¹³Ali Fethi [Okyar], *Bolayır Muharebesinde Adem-i Muvaffakiyetin Esbabı. “Askeri Mağlubiyetlerimizin Esbabı” Muharririne Cevap* (İstanbul: Tüccarzade İbrahim Hilmi, 1330/1914-15).

Mustafa Kemal stayed in Sofia until after the Ottoman Empire's entry into World War I in November 1914. He then asked for a military command, a wish that was granted with his appointment as commander of the Nineteenth Division which was being formed in Tekirdağ for service on the Gallipoli peninsula.

The military career of Mustafa Kemal in World War I is covered in detail in the major biographies. He played an important role, first as commander of the Arıburnu section and then of the whole Anafartalar front during the Dardanelles campaign in 1915. His success as a front line commander under Esat Pasha and General Otto Liman von Sanders was known within the army. The journal *Harb Mecmuası* (War Journal) honored him with a full-length photograph, but he was not known to the wider public. The Dardanelles campaign in 1915 gave him a reputation as a very able commander in the army, but also as a hypersensitive and quarrelsome colleague. He had constant problems with the German officers, with Enver and ultimately also with Liman von Sanders. Again he had to be dissuaded from resigning. The pattern remained the same throughout the war. Mustafa Kemal served with distinction as commander of the Sixteenth Army Corps in Eastern Anatolia in 1916 and then as commander of the Seventh Army in Palestine in 1917 under Erich von Falkenhayn, and again in 1918 under Liman von Sanders. After the Ottoman retreat from Syria and the armistice of Moudros, he succeeded Liman von Sanders as commander of the remnants of the Syrian armies. All this time, he was involved in activities that at the very least undermined military discipline and can often be called political.

The trouble started when he left the Anafartalar front on "sick leave" and returned to İstanbul in November 1915. He approached a cabinet minister, Ahmet Nesimi, to voice his criticism of the military situation and the German role in particular. The minister apparently simply told him to address his complaints to the general staff. He also reported the conversation in a meeting of the cabinet.¹⁴ In 1916, while serving on the eastern front, Mustafa Kemal circulated a cipher telegram to the other commanders in the East, again criticizing the conduct of the war and asking them to take concerted action. Vehip Pasha, the commander of the Second Army and a man close to Enver, intercepted the cable and notified Enver Pasha in İstanbul. Enver reacted by offering Mustafa Kemal a choice: either refrain from further political activity, or resign from the army and enter politics officially. In case he chose the latter alternative, Enver was prepared to offer him a seat in parliament. It was a clever way of turning the tables on Kemal, who had so forcefully advocated a separation between army and politics back in 1908.

The same year, Kemal's name came up in connection with the attempted *coup d'état* of the Unionist *fedai* Yakup Cemil.¹⁵ After his arrest, the latter told his interrogators that he had wanted to replace Enver with Mustafa Kemal. There is no further indication of any involvement on Mustafa Kemal's part, but one of the other conspirators, a Dr Hilmi, who was also arrested and interrogated, sought refuge with Mustafa Kemal at his headquarters in

¹⁴According to Atatürk's recollection in 1926. See: Sadi Borak and Utkan Kocatürk, eds., *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Ankara: TİTE,1972), 108-110.

¹⁵For the story of the coup see Mustafa Ragıp Esatlı, *İttihat ve Terakki Tarihinde Esrar Perdesi ve Yakup Cemil Niçin Öldürüldü* (İstanbul: Hürriyet, 1975).

Silvan, north of Diyarbakır. Mustafa Kemal gave him a position on his staff and thus granted him protection.¹⁶

Mustafa Kemal had had strained relations with the German officers in Gallipoli. As a proud Turkish nationalist he deeply resented the overbearing attitude of many of the Prussian officers. In 1917, this showed itself again when he was appointed commander of the Seventh Army and had to serve under Erich von Falkenhayn. This former chief of the imperial general staff had been replaced by Paul von Hindenburg after his failure at Verdun and transferred to the Syrian command in 1917. He relied solely on his German staff, understood little of the circumstances in the Ottoman Empire, and did not consult his Ottoman commanders. Mustafa Kemal not only found this treatment unacceptable, but also opposed the, in his eyes totally unrealistic, offensive strategy agreed upon by Enver and von Falkenhayn. On 20 September 1917, he sent a long report to the war minister, detailing his criticism. Not content with sending this report to Enver, he also went over the war minister's head and sent a copy to the cabinet.¹⁷ When he received only a formal reply from Enver, he resigned his command. When he also refused the offer of the command of the Second Army in Eastern Anatolia, he was recalled and put at the disposal of the general staff in İstanbul. Back in the capital he seems to have teamed up with his old friend Fethi again, both of them trying to find a hearing with Talât and turn him against Enver.¹⁸

Mustafa Kemal stayed away from the front lines for almost a year, only returning to Syria, again to command the Seventh Army, in August 1918. By that time, von Falkenhayn had been replaced with Liman von Sanders, who handed over his command to Mustafa Kemal at the time of the armistice.

The object of this short essay is not to tell the story of Mustafa Kemal's life in the last decade of the empire. This has been done far better elsewhere. The aim is to establish his place within the Committee of Union and Progress. In order to do so, we first have to understand the structure of the CUP. This was not a monolithic organization with a single powerful leader. Nor was it led by a "triumvirate," as contemporary European observers often thought. Enver dominated the Unionist officers in the army after 1913, and Talât dominated the civilian wing of the CUP throughout, but the organization they headed was a complicated whole of interlocking and overlapping networks. As we have seen, Mustafa Kemal joined the CUP relatively late and was not part of the first echelon of the military wing of the CUP. He did not come to the fore in any of the big events of the first five years of CUP rule: the constitutional revolution, the suppression of the 31 March rebellion, the *Bab-ı Âli* coup, or the retaking of Edirne. Of the CUP members with access to power, he seems to have been particularly close to Ali Fethi, and to a lesser extent to Cemal Pasha, with whom he had worked closely in 1908 and again in 1917. His relations with Enver seem to have soured during their tour of duty in Tripolitania in 1911 and 1912, and especially as a result of the botched Şarköy-Bolayır operation of February 1913, in which Fethi and he jointly opposed Enver.

This meant that Mustafa Kemal was positioned very badly politically from 1913 onwards. After the liberation of Edirne, Enver's star rose quickly, and Fethi had to go into exile as ambassador to Sofia. From late 1914 onwards, Cemal Pasha took over the Syrian front, which meant that he was almost all-powerful in Syria and Palestine, but also that he lost most of his

¹⁶Jean Deny, "Les souvenirs du Gazi Moustapha Kemal. Version française d'après l'original turc," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, no. 1 (1927): specifically 132-133 and 207-217.

¹⁷Nimet Arsan, ed. *Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri IV (1917-1938)* (Ankara: TİTE, 1964), 1-8.

¹⁸Hüseyin Rauf [Orbay], *Yakın Tarihimiz* 2 (1962): 337, 368.

influence in the capital. Mustafa Kemal was left without effective protection. His spirited defense of the Anafartalar front gained him a reputation in the army (although he was never the highest commander on the Dardanelles front, or even the second- or third-highest), but this brought him little in terms of influence within the CUP. Between 1916 and 1918, he served with distinction, although without spectacular results on the Eastern Anatolian and Palestine fronts, but also gained a reputation as a trouble-maker through his constant breaches of army discipline and his political meddling. Still, as I said back in 1984, “the really amazing thing is that he was kept in important positions in the army at all. In what other army could an officer, who had laid down or refused a command four times, openly criticized the high command, not only to his military superiors, but also to [a minister], the cabinet and the head of state and whose name had been mentioned in an attempted *coup d'état* have finished up commanding an army group?”¹⁹

The answer, I think, lies in two factors. The first is that the CUP was so powerful that its prominent members were almost untouchable under law or army discipline. This showed itself very clearly in 1913, when chief of staff and full general Ahmet İzzet Pasha had to conclude that it was impossible to discipline two quarrelling lieutenant-colonels and a major because they were prominent Unionists. The second factor has to be that the internal structure of the CUP with its intricate web of interlocking networks made it very difficult to take action against a prominent member of one of the factions, without setting off a chain reaction. Talât, the ultimate “people manager,” kept his hold on the CUP precisely through his ability to manipulate and cajole the different factions and to play them against each other without alienating any of them.

Was there a rivalry between Enver and Mustafa Kemal, as the latter suggested in his memoirs and as has been assumed by many later historians and biographers? Not really. Mustafa Kemal never came close to challenging Enver for the leadership of the military wing of the CUP. Cemal, Fethi and Hafız Hakkı all were much more serious rivals to Enver before his meteoric rise in 1913. Mustafa Kemal’s memoirs seem to show that he developed an “Enver complex,” but there is no evidence that this was reciprocal. Nor is there any evidence that his career suffered, or that it was sabotaged by Enver or other circles within the CUP. His career shows a normal pattern of promotions. He was made a brigadier and a pasha in 1916, after his success at the Dardanelles, at the age of 35. Perhaps a promotion to lieutenant-general would have been on the cards in 1918, but then again: he spent almost a year without active duty in 1917 and 1918. The postings he received were substantial, including the command of an army corps, an army and, finally, an army group. He only was thwarted in his ambition to influence government policy and the conduct of the war in general. For that, he lacked political clout.

Somehow this quite successful Ottoman general, with important political connections and an extensive network within the circles of the CUP, emerged within a year from the end of hostilities as the leader of a movement “for the Defense of National Rights” in Anatolia, which was to resist successfully all attempts to carve up what was left of the empire and ultimately spawned the Republic of Turkey. The question is why this task fell to Mustafa Kemal.

For Turkish historiography this is not a question at all. The question does not arise because the start of the resistance movement, of the “national struggle” (*milli mücadele*), is attributed to Kemal’s own initiative. He is the prime mover, who decides who is to join *him* in his

¹⁹Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, 65.

struggle. If, however, we accept the thesis I proposed in my 1984 book—*i.e.*, that he was sought out and launched by those Unionists who were preparing a national resistance network in Anatolia—the question “why him?” does become relevant. This does not imply that we should deny Mustafa Kemal any agency in the matter. He certainly saw a role for himself in the post-war situation and actively pursued it. As Andrew Mango has carefully documented, from the moment he returned from the front in November 1918 until at least February 1919, Mustafa Kemal tried to get a position in the political world of the capital, preferably that of war minister. For this, he approached Grand Vizier Ahmet İzzet Pasha [Furğaç] and the sultan. Teaming up with his old friend Ali Fethi and using his newspaper *Minber* (The Pulpit) as a mouthpiece, he campaigned to bring down the government of İzzet’s successor, the octogenarian diplomat Tevfik Pasha [Okday]. He also seems to have approached both the British and the Italians about collaboration.

While this was going on, the foundation stones for the national resistance movement were being laid. Enver and Talât, before leaving the country, had instructed their followers, Colonel Kara Vasif, a member of the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, and Kara Kemal, an influential Unionist party boss from İstanbul, to found the organization *Karakol* (The Sentry), with the twin aims of shielding Unionists from persecution by the British and the Liberal Ottoman government and building up a cadre in Anatolia. Former Unionist party bosses like Filibeli Hilmi and Yenibağçeli Nail were sent out to provincial capitals as emissaries. From March onwards, high-ranking officers like Ali Fuat [Cebeşoy] and Kâzım [Karabekir] took up command in Anatolia and started to sabotage the disarmament and demobilization. They were actively supported by officers in the War Ministry and on the General Staff, such as Fevzi [Çakmak], Cevat [Çobanlı] and İsmet [İnönü].

Mustafa Kemal was in close touch with all of them. Several sources indicate that he discussed the situation with the *Karakol* leaders and the officers who were planning resistance in Anatolia from December onwards. Two independent sources claim that *Karakol* approached him with the offer that he should lead the resistance movement, although they differ in the details they give. As I wrote in 1984, the serialized memoirs of Şeref Çavuşoğlu, a *Karakol* member, claim that the organization was looking for a respected military leader and that they first approached Ahmet İzzet Pasha [Furğaç]. When he demanded guarantees about the availability of arms and money, the talks broke down and *Karakol* approached Mustafa Kemal through Sevkiyatçı [Transporter] Ali Rıza, a major in the army supplies department, who smuggled weapons and fugitive Unionists to Anatolia. Bilge Criss in her 1999 study of post-war İstanbul refers to the unpublished memoirs of Yenibağçeli Şükrü [Oğuz], a well-known Unionist *fedaî* and the brother of Nail.²⁰ He states that *Karakol* had first sounded out Enver’s uncle Halil Pasha [Kut], Hilmi and Nail, but that, when none of these could obtain an official posting to Anatolia, Mustafa Kemal was approached through his ADC, former Unionist *fedaî* Cevat Abbas [Gürer].

What are we to make of these testimonies from inside *Karakol*? Obviously, the memoirs were written a considerable time after the event and both the *Karakol* people and the officers who went to Anatolia before Mustafa Kemal did claim as large a share of the glory of the national struggle as they could. Some details are much more likely than others: İzzet Pasha was the most senior Ottoman commander and had a great reputation as a patriot, even if he was not a Unionist. Sevkiyatçı Ali Rıza was indeed close to Mustafa Kemal and later was rewarded with a seat in the National Assembly in Ankara, so Çavuşoğlu’s account has a certain logic to it.

²⁰Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation 1918-1923* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 100-101.

On the other hand, while Enver was still very influential with *Karakol* members, and while Halil, Hilmi and Nail were people very close to him, none of them had the stature of a potential national leader, and they were all directly implicated in the killing of Armenians. Thus, it seems unlikely that any of the three persons mentioned by Yenibahçeli Şükrü [Oğuz] could have played Mustafa Kemal's role. But if we leave the details for what they are, the general picture that emerges is coherent and compelling.

In the six months after the armistice, the groundwork for a national resistance movement was gradually laid down by *Karakol*, on the orders of the old leadership of the CUP. People, money and arms were smuggled to Anatolia, and officers were appointed to army corps commands in order to sabotage the demobilization and disarmament. This movement needed a leader who commanded respect in the army, with political acumen, trusted as a Unionist and a patriot, but not too closely involved either with the ruling clique of Enver and Talât or the Armenian massacres. It seems that from December onwards the *Karakol* leaders were actively approaching candidates. Mustafa Kemal fitted the bill perfectly and was probably approached as early as in December, but for six months he seems to have pinned his hopes on a leading position in the politics of the capital instead. By March or April, he seems to have lost hope, however, when the fiercely anti-Unionist cabinet of Damat Ferit Pasha took office on 4 March and more and more Unionists were arrested or re-arrested, among them his friend and collaborator Fethi. On 24 March, the İstanbul newspaper *Hukuk-u Beşer* started a campaign against the generals of World War I, among them Mustafa Kemal, demanding their arrest. All of this seems to have made him receptive to the pleadings of the Unionist underground and of his friends in the army, who had been encouraging him to come to Anatolia for some time. By the end of April, an appointment to the position of Inspector of the Ninth Army was secured, and on May 16 Mustafa Kemal left İstanbul for Anatolia. It would be more than eight years before he returned. By then, İstanbul was no longer the capital and Mustafa Kemal was president of a new republic.

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