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Source: *The Journal of Politics*, May, 1956, Vol. 18, No. 2 (May, 1956), pp. 297-323

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Southern Political Science Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2126986>

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## PARTY GOVERNMENT IN TURKEY

SARAH P. MCCALLY

ON MAY 2, 1954, TURKEY HAD the second free election in its history. But the average man in the small farming villages in which three-fourths of the country's population live remained complacent. The election caused less excitement than the country's standing in the European soccer competition. Although the press, and particularly the two major party organs, tried to stir up a feverish competition, and although the radios on the Anatolian busses hummed with candidates' speeches over the one nation-wide station, the groups of men in the coffee houses talked of spring planting, droughts, and floods, apparently more dear to their hearts than the elections. Turkey had experienced great prosperity under the Democratic Party, and the farmers had a higher income than ever before and were satisfied to continue the status quo. The Democratic Party was returned to power with 503 seats out of 541 in the Grand National Assembly, an even larger percentage than four years before.

On February 28, 1955, less than a year later, the average farmer was not complacent. The prime minister of the Democratic Party which was elected with such an overwhelming majority last year, proposed a land tax increase. The Grand National Assembly representing grass-roots Turkey rejected the government proposal for the land tax increase and approved an unbalanced budget with a deficit. The vote was 455 to 34.<sup>1</sup>

In vain the Prime Minister intervened to induce the Grand National Assembly to reverse the decision. He claimed that agricultural production had increased enormously because of the Government's efforts to build new roads, grain elevators, and flood control and irrigation projects. He claimed that the farmers, who now use chemical fertilizers, improved seeds, and machinery, are able to pay more than before the war when Turkish agriculture was stagnant. The Government's well-disciplined majority usually votes as a bloc, but the results of the land-tax vote reveal that the real political power in Turkey today lies with the peasant. This was the most significant set-back the Democratic Party has suffered since it came to power in 1950, when it succeeded in taking over the reins from

<sup>1</sup>*The New York Times*, March 1, 1955.

the oligarchic Republican Party which had ruled the country for twenty-seven years.

Ten years ago, the opinion of the Turkish peasant would have made little difference. He did not directly elect the deputies to the Grand National Assembly. The metamorphosis of the Turkish Republic from a one-party state in which all the elections, candidates, newspapers and even courts were controlled by the Republican Party, to a two-party state with open competition is a fascinating study. This metamorphosis was achieved without bloodshed. It involved the vision of the benevolent dictator Atatürk, who came to power at the time of Hitler and Mussolini; the education of an electorate which was only about 30 per cent literate; the increasing discontent with a democratic constitution which was given lip-service only; the persistent activity of rival groups who could not even call themselves legitimate parties until they were able to force through the right to organize; and finally, the Election Law of 1950, which permitted free elections.

Atatürk and the group of men who formed the Republic in 1923 firmly believed that the Turkish people were not ready to govern themselves. Although they proclaimed that Turkey would be a republic, and adopted a constitution in 1923, they controlled all the seats in the unicameral legislature which chose the cabinet and the president of the republic. Since that time Turkey has had the persistent urge to fulfill its nature as a parliamentary government as implied in the constitution. Never has the single existing party been accepted as a permanent principle. Never has this party been merged in theory with the state itself.

The experiment with a two-party system which began in 1946 has proved successful so far. But its success depends upon the political maturity of the Turkish electorate. It was not easy for most Turks to grasp the principle of democratic elections. A strong sultan was one who could resist all opposition. Who could trust a sultan if he could not suppress opposition and remain in power?

A portrayal of rural Turkey may be discovered in the following groups of statistics. According to the statistical abstract of Turkey published in 1952, 74.8 per cent of the Turkish population lives in villages of 500 or fewer inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> A cluster of small dwellings far from the road comprises a typical Turkish village.

<sup>2</sup>Küçük İstatistik Yillığı (Statistical Abstract) 1951, No. 343 (Istanbul: İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, 1952), p. 43.

Education is now compulsory in the villages which have schools. About 50 per cent of the villages now have primary schools.<sup>3</sup> In 1924-1925 Turkey had 5,907 primary schools. Today the figure is 17,318. In 1924-25 there were 64 secondary schools. Today there are 442. In the same period the number of lycees has increased from 19 to 92.<sup>4</sup>

Between the ages of 19 and 29, about 60 per cent of the male population is literate. At the age of 19 the female group has a 39.2 per cent literacy, but after that age female literacy drops sharply.<sup>5</sup>

Turkey has few large landowners and few landless peasants. Seventy-five to eighty per cent of Turkey's total population is engaged in farming, with the average peasant owning one or two plots of land, his oxen, and his sheep. He grows or makes everything he uses. He has been living much as people lived in Europe before industry developed. Under the Ottoman Empire the government did not concern itself with the villages beyond the collection of taxes, the conscription of soldiers, and the preservation of a minimum of law and order. Apart from these official demands, there was no occasion for a townsman to take any interest in the nation.

In theory, the policy of the new republic was opposed to this established divorce of urban and rural society, and much was said about the Anatolian peasants being the true Turks and the main source and culture of Turkey. The new Republican Government introduced a number of reforms aimed directly at reforming or assisting the villages. In 1924, the Grand National Assembly passed the Village Code, a remarkable document which sets out exactly what villages must do, how they are to be governed, how disputes are to be handled. The Code, which gives in detail the methods of election of the Headman (Muhtar) and the Council of Elders, says that the Muhtar shall be elected by all men and women over eighteen; in practice the custom permits an unofficial gathering of the senior men to decide on anyone who is willing to undertake the duties unless a formal election is imposed by a government official. If more than one is willing, whoever will accept least money is chosen.

<sup>3</sup>Milli Eğitim (National Education) 1932-1952, İstatistik Özetleri No. 7 (Ankara: T. C. Başbakanlık, İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, 1952), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>İstatistik Yıllığı (Statistical Abstract) 1952, Vol. 20, No. 342 (Ankara: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekâlet, İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü, 1952), p. 156.

<sup>5</sup>Küçük İstatistik Yıllığı, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-77.

By law every village must have a Council of Elders of four members who are appointed by the Muhtar and who meet once a month to supervise the Muhtar, audit the village accounts, and discuss all village business. In practice the council rarely meets. If the Muhtar is in doubt about any action, he asks the council's advice in an informal way. The watchman, cleric, and herdsman are the only other village functionaries, all chosen by general agreement at a more or less informal gathering of the senior members of the village.

This type of village life is typical of nearly eighty per cent of the Turkish people. The Village Code reflects the attitudes of the ruling class to the villages rather than the actuality of village life. The elasticity of the law is an advantage in a country where there is such a gap between the law and the social conditions in which it is to be applied. It has been said that the relationship between the city-educated officials and the often illiterate village Muhtar is the critical point of the whole administration of the rural areas.

Often the Muhtar has no interest in the government's wishes and in so far as is consistent with his own safety and comfort is on the side of the villagers against the authorities. Where the government official can check up, his orders are carried out, but where no check is likely, orders are ignored. One of the Muhtar's duties is the preparation of the electoral roll from among all residents of the village who are over twenty-two. In one village which I observed, the roll was prepared with care because the people entitled to vote would protest on election day if they found that they had been left off. It was not made out in the form prescribed, nor was it posted on the mosque door — a stipulation in the order.

Judge Resat Deniz, who had been president of the County Election Committee for the 1950 National Election of Deputies, has said that election day was a great social occasion. Everyone in the village turned out. The women pulled their ballots, carefully marked, out of the numerous folds in their clothing, sealed them in the official envelopes, and dropped them in the ballot box which had been inspected by the election committee. The customary procedure is for the party representatives to distribute ballots to all citizens a few days before election. Because so many of the voters are illiterate,

the ballots can be marked at home in consultation with anyone available.<sup>6</sup>

In both the 1950 election and the one in 1954, 88 per cent of the registered electorate of about 9,000,000 voted, a figure surprisingly high when one considers the low rate of literacy. One cannot be sure how informed the voting was, as the returns bore a direct relationship to the number of pamphlets passed out by the two major parties. The independents or minor parties who depended upon the names of their candidates' being written in received few or no votes in the small villages.

Party membership in these villages must be negligible, although I have seen no statistics bearing on this point. Party membership involves paying dues, and it is not every villager who has extra liras to give to the party or who considers the advantages of belonging to the party great enough to make the sacrifice. Party headquarters may be a coffee-shop where there are posters and flags and reading material for the members. Often the party representative is the operator of the coffee-house.

In the towns and cities of over two thousand, party activity is significant. The municipal organization consists of a mayor and council. Party rivalry is highly organized for the elections for the provincial assemblies. Turkey is divided into sixty-three provinces, which send representatives to the National Assembly at Ankara on the basis of one deputy for every 40,000 inhabitants. In the municipal and provincial as well as in the national elections, observers' committees composed of representatives of every party supervise the elections. (In the autumn of 1954 because of a bad harvest and consequent economic trouble, the Democratic Government postponed the scheduled municipal and provincial elections until June, when it was hoped that a more favorable political atmosphere would exist. Such action indicates the importance placed on these elections as indications of party strength.)

This picture of the Turkish electorate shows how great is the gap between policy formation and the villages who comprise seventy-five per cent of the electorate. Until the surprising vote on the Land Tax Issue, the Turkish parties appeared to be a superstructure imposed upon the electorate. Now both political parties must deal with the village farmer. As the years progress, he is

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Judge A. Resat Deniz, Üsküdar, Istanbul, July 10, 1953.

getting politically educated. Whether democracy can survive in Turkey lies with him.

#### TURKEY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The history of the struggle for a democratic form of government in Turkey lies especially with the educated classes and the military men who, because of their contact with Western democracy, attempted to bring a representative form of government to their people. At first they operated in the rarified atmosphere of the already existing cliques. Following the French Revolution, the Ottoman Empire, a theocracy under the rule of an absolute monarch, began to experience the impact of new political ideas as well as of new social and legal institutions brought into being by the nationalism of nineteenth century Europe. Separatist ambitions among the different elements of the Ottoman Empire speeded its disintegration. Under the influence of Turkish statesmen and diplomats, an era of reforms known as the Tanzimat Reforms began. An imperial Chapter of Reforms restricted the absolute rule of the Sultan, guaranteed the life and property of all citizens without distinction of race or religion, and created a Council of State with consultative powers. The new ideal of government by the people was proclaimed — an ideal which fell upon the rather unbelieving ears of the peasants.

The first experiment with representative government in Turkish history came in 1876, when Abdul Hamid II was forced to put the first constitution of the Ottoman Empire into effect. This constitution, which instituted a house of representatives and a senate, was a great improvement over the Charter of Reforms, but the indirect electoral system which it provided was rather primitive. Even so, the elected deputies took their work quite seriously and annoyed the Sultan's ministers with questions. Although the latter did not enjoy this new imposition on their duties, they were obliged to listen. The experiment was of short duration. In 1877, a war with Russia broke out and the Sultan, seeing an opportunity to resume his autocratic power, dismissed both houses of Parliament. This early period of reforms thus failed miserably, both because of the opposition of the Sultan and his entourage, and the pressure of foreign ambitions. The average culture of the mass of the people was still too little developed to defend the needed reforms.

## THE PARTY OF UNION AND PROGRESS

In 1908, under pressure from a patriotic revolutionary group called Young Turks, Abdul-Hamid II was forced to revive the Constitution of 1877 and to convene Parliament. The parliamentary system established at this time remained in effect until the occupation of Istanbul by the Allied forces in 1920. The hope that Turkey could survive and live by constitutional government gained strength. The Young Turks formed a party of Union and Progress, but they were naive in believing that the mere proclamation of the Constitution would guarantee its principles. During the short intervals when the Party of Union and Progress was replaced by the opposition party within the lower house, there were no evidences of a better administration. Political passions were unchanged, and the system of government remained the same — absolutism disguised as parliamentary rule. Even under this masked form, the direction of government affairs became too difficult. Government officials dissolved one parliament after another, only to order new elections more to their liking. The Party of Union and Progress held power when Turkey entered the First World War, but when the fatal hour for Turkey finally struck, the leaders fled.

A Turkish writer of 1924 lists three causes for the lack of realization of the aims of the Party of Union and Progress: (1) lack of social culture on the part of the masses of the people; (2) the fundamental incapacity of the rulers; (3) bad faith of the interested powers which strengthened by intervention the separatist tendencies of Slavic, Greek, or Armenian communities.<sup>7</sup>

## THE RISE OF MUSTAFA KEMAL

While Istanbul, the seat of the Turkish government, remained in Allied hands, nationalistic movements of resistance developed in Anatolia, supported by men from the Turkish provinces and led by Mustafa Kemal and several others. Two congresses at Erzerum and Sivas resulted in a declaration much like the American Declaration of Independence and called the National Pact. This document stated that the historic frontiers of Turkey were inviolable and that

<sup>7</sup>Salch Kerameth Bey, "The Young Turk Movement," Chap. XXI, in E. G. Mears, *Modern Turkey*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 489.



any attempt on the part of the Allies to occupy or to intervene in its affairs would be resisted. Mustafa Kemal, hereafter to play such an important part in the development of the Turkish Republic, was elected head of the combined movement which called itself The Association for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia (Thrace). On January 28, 1920, the lower house of the Ottoman Parliament approved the terms of the National Pact. In vain the Sultan tried to establish a liaison between the government at Istanbul and the Nationalists in the interior. The ineffective Ottoman Chamber of Deputies was dissolved by the Sultan in April, 1920. In the meantime, the Nationalists were going about rousing the villagers. As Head of the Representative Committee for this group, Mustafa Kemal called for the convening of an assembly in Ankara to be composed of newly elected delegates from the country. This new parliament called itself the Grand National Assembly and met on April 23, 1920. The same day a revised constitution called the Law of Fundamental Organizations was passed. Mustafa Kemal proposed to give all responsibility to the representatives of the people — a vague and unattainable feat considering the complete lack of political maturity of the Anatolian peasant at that time. He proposed to lodge both legislative and executive powers in the National Assembly, which was to elect a president and members of a cabinet to assist the president in carrying out the directives of the Assembly. Critics of this scheme saw many flaws in it. They thought that this exaggerated form of political democracy so suddenly thrust into the hands of the people would paralyze the executive, create mob rule, and finally lead to a dictatorship. These critics were Westernized men, and their ideal of government was based on existing familiar forms. However, the bulk of the people's representatives were simple Anatolians without education, and they judged the plan of Kemal to be the right one. Because of the urgency of uniting the country, the critics acceded to Kemal's views and his scheme was adopted.

From 1920 on, it was obvious that Mustafa Kemal and his associates held the leadership in the Grand National Assembly. In December, 1922, Kemal announced that his group in the Assembly would be extended in the form of a political party throughout the nation. He called it the People's Party. The following months he set out on a tour through the various sections of the country interviewing the people. He enunciated the nine principles on which

his candidates would stand for election. They included promises of various economic, judicial, and administrative reforms. Again it was repeated that sovereignty belonged to the people, and that the Grand National Assembly was the real representative of the people. On February 9, 1923, at Balikesir he said:

The nation has already suffered much from clashes between political parties. In other lands parties are formed to safeguard class interests. The bitter after-taste which we are experiencing is the direct result of the formation of parties here which emanated from the preconceived idea that we too were divided into classes. In speaking of the People's Party we must understand a party embracing the whole nation . . . the interests of all, whatever their professions and trades, combine in one perfect harmony and it is impossible to establish class distinctions among the citizens, since all come from the people.<sup>8</sup>

#### FORMATION OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

This grandiose appeal to the collective will of the people embodied by the symbol of the Party was not original with Mustafa Kemal. Both Germany and Italy were hearing it contemporaneously. Henceforth Kemal's party controlled the Assembly with very little opposition. There was a movement to oust him on the grounds that he was born outside the boundaries of the new Turkey, but the election returns showed that he was the people's choice for a leader. Turkey was proclaimed a republic on October 29, 1923, and Kemal was elected its first president. At that time several changes were effected in the Constitution. The executive powers of the Assembly were transferred to the President of the Republic, who was chosen from among its members. With the approval of the Assembly, the President picked the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Under this system it was possible for Kemal to be President of State, President of the Cabinet of Ministers, President of the controlling People's Party, and President of the Assembly. Yet "sovereign power" was still said to reside in the Assembly of the people. Furthermore, by 1924 the Sultanate and Caliphate had been abolished, the country had been liberated from the occupying powers, and Kemal Atatürk stood virtually unopposed.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>The (London) *Times*, Turkish Number, August 9, 1938, p. v.

<sup>9</sup>This name for him is not technically correct until 1935, when he decreed that everyone should choose a last name. His choice means "Preceptor of Turks."

## ONE PARTY RULE

At the time Atatürk was assuming power under democratic guise in Turkey, both Germany and Italy were also experiencing rising dictatorships. In all three countries, the conduct of political affairs rested in the personality of the dictator. The Turkish leader satisfied the demands of his people in the sphere of foreign politics before he started work on internal reforms. Atatürk belonged to the upper middle classes and was an officer, whereas Mussolini and Hitler came from the people. In Turkey, the People's Assembly was understood to represent not merely the will of the people but the completely unified will of the people. All the representatives belonged to the People's Party whose president, according to statute, was Atatürk. He appointed the Vice President and General Secretary of the Party who, with him formed the Presidial Council, whose decisions were absolutely binding on all members of the Party. The Council designated the candidates for the parliamentary elections and also elected the twelve party inspectors who were responsible for them. The People's Party (also called the Republican People's Party), and it alone, maintained an organization in every locality.

Examples of interlocking of the Party and the government were numerous. The provincial chairmen of the Party were so close to the central government that their prestige became great. Long lines of petitioners in search of jobs, relief, or favors for self or kin or friends filed through their offices. At the same time they relieved the civil governors of heavy burdens and the stigma of having to refuse favors. But there came a time when their prestige began to overshadow that of the governors, and many of the common people were unable to distinguish between the visible and the invisible government. In the summer of 1936, because of a quarrel with Atatürk, Recep Peker lost his position as Secretary of the Party. The work was assigned to the Minister of the Interior, Su Kru Kaya. At the same time, the secretaries in charge of the Party provincial organizations were removed, and their work was turned over to the provincial governors.

In 1934, by formal amendment the six main tenets of the Party were incorporated into the Constitution where they remain today as Article II. The six arrows of the Party appeared on flags flown side by side with the national star and crescent, on lapel buttons, on magazine covers, and even woven into rugs.

## FORMATION OF RIVAL PARTIES

The fact that this one-party rule could be broken by constitutional processes instead of by bloodshed is one of the most interesting developments in political party history. One reason which helps to explain why Atatürk did not suffer the fate of Mussolini and Hitler is that he possessed qualities of restraint which saved him from political or military adventure. Also, the one-party régime which he set up gave fair representation to all influential elements of the population and balanced expertly the interests of classes and localities so that it was able to carry out a fundamental reorganization of Turkish society without significant revolt save among the Kurds, the one minority of consequence which remained in the country.

Kasim Gülek, Secretary of the Republican People's Party of today, speaks of the prestige and authority of Atatürk. "The constitution of the state was democratic. The formation of political parties was not forbidden. But it took courage to oppose Atatürk."<sup>10</sup>

During the time Atatürk held undisputed power, a rival party was likely to be short-lived, for Atatürk usually found a way to disband any party which threatened his, with the excuse that the people were not yet ready for democracy. Nevertheless, between 1920 and 1923, two groups formed in the Assembly. One of these gave rise to the People's Party. And the other, by 1925, had developed into the Progressive Party, which differed with Atatürk and his followers over policy. It published its program, which not only was liberal in spirit but was also symptomatic of the existing duality of opinion in Atatürk's own party. Halidé Edib Adivar, active in Turkish politics since the formation of the Republic, claims in her book, *Turkey Faces West*, that not only two-thirds of the municipal elections were in favor of the new party but that a large number of the People's Party promised to join it.<sup>11</sup>

The revolt of the Kurds against the reforms of the new government became serious and gave Atatürk a chance to kill the new party. The extremists of the People's Party argued that the clause

<sup>10</sup>Kasim Gülek, "Democracy Takes Root in Turkey," *Foreign Affairs*, 30, No. 1 (October, 1951), 137.

<sup>11</sup>Halidé Edib, *Turkey Faces West: A Turkish View of Recent Changes and Their Origin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930) p. 220.

in the program of the Progressive Party advocating freedom of thought had encouraged the insurgents. Halidé Edib claims that the people were war-weary and would accept any means to avoid an armed struggle. Atatürk proposed the Law of Maintenance of Order which would establish revolutionary tribunals with absolute power of arrest and execution of anyone suspected of endangering the public order. The Prime Minister, Fethi Okyar, warily declared that a revolutionary law of that kind and tribunals for the regions in revolt were well enough, but not necessary for the peaceful parts of the state. After a ten-hour meeting, the Law of Maintenance of Order was passed in March, 1925. Fethi Okyar resigned.<sup>12</sup> The army then pacified the Kurdish regions, and the tribunals suppressed the opposition. All opposition and independent journalists were arrested and sent before a Tribunal of Independence sitting in the revolt area. The charge was causing the revolt by undermining the authority of the government. The suspended papers were not allowed to reappear. Halidé Edib continues: "But what is of supreme interest is the change of a democratic state, of five years' standing, into dictatorial one without either altering its form or even closing the National Assembly."<sup>13</sup>

After these extreme measures placed the country in the hands of Atatürk's Party backed by the army, he opened the way for "Independent" candidates to file their candidacy with the People's Party and, unless the Party disapproved, run for election. Several independents were seated, although their very existence depended upon good behavior.

In 1930, Atatürk agreed to try again to have some loyal opposition. In the summer of 1930, at a ball given at Yalova, Fethi Okyar, who had resigned from the Prime Ministership during the Kurdish revolts, announced his intention of forming the Liberal Republican Party. Atatürk's sister, Makboule Hanim, became the first woman member. By thus creating a close relationship with the new party, Atatürk claimed that he would maintain an impartial attitude toward political affairs. The points of issue between the two parties were as follows: (1) private at the expense of state enterprise; (2) more tolerant attitude toward foreign capital; (3) closer connection be-

<sup>12</sup>J. Walter Collins, "The Situation in Turkey," *The Contemporary Review*, CXXXVIII (October, 1930), 453.

<sup>13</sup>Edib, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

tween Turkey and the League of Nations; (4) freedom of the press.<sup>14</sup> From August to October, during which time the ill-fated party was allowed to exist, thirteen People's Party members went over to the new party and were excluded from the People's Party membership. Fethi Okyar went to Smyrna to make his first political speech. It was the occasion of encounters between the supporters and adversaries of the Party. Men sacked the offices of the government paper *Anadolu*, and many people were wounded. The new party was shortly dissolved under the pretense that the Turkish people were not yet ready to rule themselves.

As a result of this political turmoil, the Assembly decided to hold an election to prove that the deputies represented the majority of the nation. Atatürk even reserved thirty seats for which the electors were invited to elect thirty men holding independent views so that the government's actions could be examined and criticized. (Needless to say, his party controlled the choice of all other candidates for office.) The new Assembly included in its membership a few former farmers and laborers as well as the thirty independents. Atatürk was re-elected to the presidency, where he continued to remain in undisputed power until his death in 1938.

#### TURKEY LOOKS TOWARD DEMOCRACY

Many who claimed that power could not be transferred peacefully in the pseudo-republic of modern Turkey were surprised at the orderly transfer of leadership. The day after the President's death, the Grand National Assembly met and elected as his successor Ismet İnönü, Atatürk's principal military assistant during the struggle for Turkish sovereignty and his prime minister during most of the Republic's development. İnönü also assumed permanent leadership of Atatürk's party. Thus his machinery for government was essentially the same as that of Atatürk. İnönü inherited the desire to experiment with a democratic system of government from his predecessor and formed an Independent Group in the Assembly within the Party's own framework. Members who registered as Independents held their own caucuses and nominated their own candidates

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Osman Okyar, son of Fethi Okyar, in Istanbul on July 22, 1953.

for elections, *subject to party approval*. The leader of this group as well as of his own, İnönü appointed its executive head and members. The purpose of the group was to criticize discreetly, but if a member became too vocal, he was reinstated in the People's Party again. In several of the general elections, the Party entered more candidates than the number required in some constituencies, and the electors chose among them.

Thus Turkey had a nominal democracy between 1939 and 1945, during most of which time she stood at the brink of a war she successfully avoided. The Party abstained from censorship of the press, but if they contained offensive material, the papers were subject to suspension without a possibility of defense. Usually the reading public showed sympathy, and the losses incurred by suspension were covered by the increase in circulation which followed each suspension.

From 1945 onward, a group of men existed who were determined to take Turkey much further down the path which could lead to new strength through democratic processes. Most of these men had formerly been loyal and convinced supporters of the official People's Party and of its program. The rank and file of this potential opposition included many citizens whose formative and adult years had passed wholly during the Republican period. The time seemed to be ripe for forming an opposition party. Leader of this Democratic Party was Celal Bayar, a financier and early Nationalist, and a cabinet minister under both Atatürk and İnönü. At first this group registered a protest vote against the men who had been in power so long.

When the Charter of the United Nations was discussed in the Grand National Assembly, Adnan Menderes, deputy from Aydin, said that Turkey, by signing the Charter, had definitely engaged to practice genuine democracy. Refik Koraltan, Celal Bayar, and Fuat Köprülü, an authority on Turkish history, presented a joint motion that the People's Party respect the word and spirit of the Turkish Constitution and modify all laws of unconstitutional and dictatorial character.<sup>15</sup> The motion was rejected. When Fuat Köprülü and Menderes published articles in an independent paper, their act was considered a breach of party discipline, and both men were expelled. Koraltan criticized the decision of the Party in a

<sup>15</sup>Ahmet Emin Yalman, "The Struggle for Multi-Party Government in Turkey," *The Middle East Journal*, I, No. 1 (January, 1947), 53.

statement published in the same paper, and Celal Bayar resigned his seat.

The result of this serious criticism of the government's policy and actions was immediate. The People's Party liberalized its party electoral procedures. Heretofore the secondary electors had had very little choice of candidates who were presented to them. The decision was made to enable them to express their individual preferences by placing on the list more candidates than the number to be elected.

At the opening of the National Assembly in 1945 İnönü made a speech in which he pointed out the necessity for an opposition party which should have a free hand in campaigning, save that nothing should be done to imperil Turkey's international relations. (Identity of foreign policy between the two major parties has continued to be the case in the two elections since.) He also stated the need for the adoption of a direct secret ballot system to replace the old two-degree system provided by electoral law originally drafted in 1876 and since then maintained with a few modifications. Heretofore the people had cast ballots for secondary electors, who in turn had elected the deputies to the Grand National Assembly from a list presented by the Party, a system which would prove cumbersome and undemocratic in a country where more than one political party existed.

During the winter of 1945-1946, the Turkish press indulged in free criticism of the one-party system. A large section of the Istanbul press supported the new Democratic Party which was, at that time, an opposition with limited cohesion engaged in criticism of the men who had been in power so long. The peasants in Turkey began to show an unprecedented interest in politics. In an extraordinary speech to his party, İnönü stated that the People's Party did not believe that the desire to remain in power came before other considerations. If the Party won in the next elections, it should carry out its duties; if it lost, it would constitute the opposition, at the same time remaining on friendly terms with the party in power.<sup>16</sup>

In June, 1946, the existing Law of Associations was amended. The former law of 1938 prohibited the formation of new political groups and organizations of labor. The new law states that parties can now represent various groups — workers, peasants, and Social-

<sup>16</sup>Eleanor Bisbee, "Test of Democracy in Turkey," *The Middle East Journal*, IV, No. 2 (April, 1950), 177-178.



ists, but not religious or racist groups. More than a dozen parties took immediate advantage of the amendment, only to have three of them suppressed for left-wing activities and several more die of their own inconsequence. (The three which won even so much as a village election in 1946 were (1) Turkish Workers' and Farmers' Party, (2) National Resurgence Party, (3) Democratic Party.)

A new Election Law was passed. A single-degree direct election system was voted in to replace the old method of secondary electors, who in turn would vote for party candidates. A new majority system with single-member constituencies was added — the same type of system which England uses. Under this system, the party receiving just more than fifty per cent of the votes in any province elects all the deputies from that province. This new Election Law was hastily prepared to meet the deadline of the new elections. But the country was not experienced in democratic procedures. Even such a simple matter as voting in an election booth was unknown either to the man in the street or to the intellectual.

The first general election in which the two major parties participated was held in July, 1946. İnönü had advanced the elections which were to take place in the spring of 1947 to the previous summer, in face of the increasing strength of the Democratic Party. As one might expect, this election was subject to corruption, because of the inexperience of the electorate and the entrenched habits of a party so long in power. In some cases no choice of ballots was allowed. Also, the fact that the opposition party had not presented candidates for half the constituencies made a People's Party majority inevitable.

Istanbul voted solidly for the opposition, giving all the city's twenty-three parliamentary seats to the Democratic Party. The mayor of Istanbul, Dr. Lufti Kırdar, announced that if these results were ignored, the Democratic Party would boycott the Grand National Assembly. A compromise was reached. The Democrats questioned the validity of three hundred of the People's Party delegates, advancing complete documentary evidence in many cases. Finally the Democratic Party agreed to sixty-five seats in the Grand National Assembly, the Independents took six, and the People's Party took 396. This division did not reflect the total vote the Democratic Party would have obtained in an honest election.

Thus was broken the one-party rule of twenty-three years. For the first time the People's Party had to deal with a formidable opposition. Furthermore, it had acquiesced in the growing opposition to its entrenched power, a fact which should amaze those who study dictatorships. To its credit through the years it attempted to encourage second parties even though they were, admittedly, never allowed to last. Also, some choice of candidates had been allowed from time to time. Free debate in the Assembly committees and caucuses had developed. It must be remembered that for the major part of the twenty-three years, tremendous forces were opposed to each other. A powerful machine in full possession of the political scene and easily terrified at the possibility of having to yield power was pitted against a people not yet trained in the procedures of popular government and for that reason an easy prey to the political self-seeking and corrupt influences which existed. By 1946, the results of the popular education program had begun to show, the people had experimented with two attempts at political parties and were in a better position to experiment with democratic procedures. The reforms which had been made were taking root, making it possible for the country to stand the shock of free criticism and discussion. The powerful party machine had been broken, possibly because of the influence of Turkey's membership in the United Nations and the impact of Western ideals.

Before the transition from a one-party government to a system of two or more parties could be set up, however, many changes had to be made. Both the Nation Party, newly formed in 1948, and the Democratic Party demanded that, in the future, secret balloting and electoral committees made up of opposition members should be brought into being. As this was not done in time for the by-elections which took place on October 17, 1948, the opposition boycotted the thirteen by-elections. The Democratic Party announced that it would participate in no more elections until the electoral law was amended to ensure secret balloting and to give all parties joint custody of the ballot-box. In 1950, a new Electoral Law was passed which ensured the secret ballot, party inspection of the registration lists, and electoral committees composed of representatives of all political parties polling a certain percentage of the electorate in a constituency. Regulations changing the method of nomination of candidates were made. Anyone who possesses the qualifica-

tions for holding office can give written notice of his candidacy; he can be nominated by a political party or by means of an application signed by three hundred people who have the right to vote in the province concerned. Regulations were set respecting the time allotted rival parties at public meetings, radio time on the nationwide radio station, and the distribution of handbills and campaign posters. This electoral law seemed a workable instrument; the main changes made over the one of 1946 lay in secret balloting, impartial election boards, candidacy, and campaigning.

During the campaign of 1946, the Democrats brought up a fundamental question. Atatürk had been concurrently Chief of State and Permanent Head of his party. İnönü had also been designated permanent party chief. Atatürk's picture and İnönü's picture were hung together in every official building, in every classroom, in every store. This overt reverence for "the great leader" found its counterpart in non-democratic rather than democratic countries. In October, 1946, İnönü addressed the founders of the opposition Democratic Party. The editorial comment which followed raised the question of the resignation of the President of the Republic from the leadership of the People's Party. In December 1946, İnönü felt compelled to appeal to the absent Democratic Deputies to return to their seats which they were boycotting. (They left the Assembly because some of their proposals had been rejected.) İnönü realized his position as head of his party placed him in a difficult position when he had to work on bi-partisan issues. In the early fall of 1947, he declared himself for equal treatment of all political parties and expressed the desire to stand above political factions by recommending his own replacement as head of the People's Party during his tenure as President of the Republic. He resigned from the leadership of the Party in November, 1947, and assumed the rôle of Chief of State, nominally above party politics. At that time it was agreed by the party organization that if the chairman of the Party is elected president of the Republic, he must delegate his party functions to the vice-chairman. This clause is now contained in the Democratic Party rules also. Since 1950, İnönü's picture has been removed from public places, and Atatürk's, as founder of the Republic, hangs alone.

Another series of changes which had to be made was in the People's Party Regulations. The party's position as one party in a multi-party state made several corrections necessary over the Party

Regulations of 1935.<sup>17</sup> The 1935 Regulations stated that the Prime Minister, being of the Party, would be presiding officer of the Parliamentary Party Group (Article 99). Now, of course, the Prime Minister is not necessarily of the Party. The President-General of the Party presides over the Parliamentary Party Group.<sup>18</sup> Since the two-party system has been in effect, central party control has slackened. In 1935, the Party Council of the People's Party was composed of the President General of the Party, the President of the Grand National Assembly, the Party members in the cabinet and others (Articles 129, 130). In the revised Rules, the names of the President of the Assembly and the Party members of the Cabinet are left out for obvious reasons. Kasim Gülek, Secretary of the People's Party, said that in 1950 the local branches of the People's Party were given complete power to choose candidates for deputies to the Grand National Assembly.<sup>19</sup> The 1935 Regulations stated that the Council of the President-General directs the elections to the Grand National Assembly and decides on candidates for seats therein (Article 26). The clause, "All decisions handed down from the Council of the President-General are obeyed by Party Members without reserve or condition" (Article 28), has been left out of the revised rules. Now the local branches of the Party enjoy more freedom. With this freedom comes the responsibility to raise their own funds, for Central Committee of the Party no longer finances their activities. Kasim Gülek has stated that the young men in the Party now question İnönü severely on matters of interest. The Party has become a co-operative venture rather than, as in the days of Atatürk, the personal organization of one man.

The 1935 Regulations claimed (Article 7) that the Party counted as naturally potential members all Turkish youth in their minority. Because it controlled the education of the country, graduates of the schools had received preparation for Party membership. Now, the Party must count on an appeal outside the schools and cannot count all Turkish Youth as potential members any more than can its rival parties. Thus a thorough-going revision of the People's Party Regulations was necessary for it to fit into the multi-party

<sup>17</sup>The 1935 People's Party Regulations are translated in Donald Everett Webster, *The Turkey of Atatürk* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1939), pp. 173-177.

<sup>18</sup>C. H. P. Tüzüğü (People's Republican Party Rules), IX Kurultayca Onanmıştır, (Ulus Basimeve, Ankara, 1951).

<sup>19</sup>Interview in Ankara on July 24, 1953.

set-up. The Regulations of the Democratic Party are basically the same as the revised People's Party Regulations.

Mention should be made here of the discipline which the two major parties impose upon their members. The People's Party and the Democratic Party have elaborate machinery in the central headquarters and in the provinces to ensure the loyalty of party members. Once a person joins, he is expected to conform to the ideals of the party. He must not disobey the rules and regulations of the party. He is expected to vote for the party and he must not campaign against or run for a different party. If he does, he is expelled.

With these necessary adjustments in electoral procedure and party regulations, the elections of 1950 were held quite peacefully. Clearly, the leaders of both major political parties were trying to appeal to the enfranchised peasant masses. In all localities the arguments which the Democrats used with most effect were economic in nature. Prices were too high; government costs were too high; taxes were too high. It was an organized grass roots organization that the Democrats used. It was true that during the hard years from 1939 to 1945 the People's Party government had laid a heavier hand on the peasant youth for soldiers and on the villages for economic survival than had the popular Atatürk. These stringencies were resented by the villages, who did not forget that they had been imposed by the People's Party rule.

The third party, the Nation Party, entered the campaign but did not exhibit major ideological differences from the other two. This party said that Turkey needed American economic support rather than military support and felt that the aid might result in encroachments on Turkish independence and a loss of sovereignty.

On election day, May 14, 1950, the people marked their ballots in secret, if they were literate, choosing from the three party slates — the People's Party, the Democratic Party, and the Nation Party, with some independent candidates thrown in. The results showed a Democratic Party victory, with 50 per cent of the total vote; 45 per cent was for the People's Party, and about 3 per cent for the Nation Party. The new Assembly numbered 408 Democrats, 69 from the People's Party, 1 from the Nation Party, and nine independents. Voting and counting of the ballots proceeded without incident, and no one contended that the election was in any sense unfair.

The Democratic Party Election Manifesto stated:

Democratic reforms and developments already achieved will be jealously guarded, and made into a permanent feature of the national life. To this end, the government will prepare and suggest certain changes in the Constitution which will guarantee a stable order and government based on the desires, rights and freedoms of individual citizens.<sup>20</sup>

The independent daily, *Cumhuriyet*, of Istanbul of May 21, 1950, expressed the question which was on everybody's mind after the election: Was Celal Bayar to be elected President of the Republic, or was he to remain as President of the Democratic Party? He chose to become the President of the Republic; his election was assured because of the large Democratic majority.

RIVALRY UNDER THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Since the 1950 elections, party rivalry has been extremely active and at times uncontrolled. Each party has artfully pointed out the defects in the other while pledging itself to co-operation for the common good. The People's Party secretary, Kasim Gülek, stated that the Democrats, now powerful, are discriminating against provincial officials with "Republican sympathies."

One issue which has caused great bitterness between the two parties and has been given considerable attention in the American newspapers is the disposition of certain assets to which the Republican People's Party lays claim and which the Democrats insist were illegally acquired when the People's Party exercised one-party rule. The issue clearly arises from the interlocking of party and government which existed prior to the 1950 period. In the People's Party Constitution of 1935, one of the sources of revenue was listed as "subsidies from the central government and provincial and municipal treasuries in support of cultural enterprises, national education, sports and philanthropies provided by organizations of the Party" (Article 131). These activities centered around "People's Houses" which were built or acquired by the Party. (The nearest parallel to them in the United States are the Y.M.C.A.'s.) Needless to say, during the years when the Party held undisputed control of the government, these People's Houses provided ample op-

<sup>20</sup>*Turkish Elections of 1950 and United States Reaction* (Turkey Today, No. 12. New York: Turkish Information Office), p. 7.

portunity for party propaganda. Concerts, lectures, plays, dances were held there as well as adult education classes, art, hobby exhibits, workshops, and libraries. For the 1950 campaign, the dissemination of party propaganda was not allowed in the People's Houses unless all parties had an equal chance, and in 1950 the People's Houses passed into the hands of the government. Many of them have been closed; some are hospitals, some are libraries, and some are town halls. The disposal of the money given to the People's Party to maintain these centers aroused considerable discussion. The Democratic Party claimed that money given to the People's Party to improve the centers had not been used for that purpose and therefore should be given back to the government. There was indecision as to which courts, judicial or administrative, should handle the cases. Finally, the issue was concluded in December, 1953, but to nobody's satisfaction. The money under debate was seized by the vote of the Assembly 341-5. Nearly all the Republicans left the chamber. There were 141 abstentions.<sup>21</sup> The case remains an interesting but painful example of the transition from a one-party to a two-party state.

Another interesting case, which arose in July, 1953, involved the closing down of the small traditionalist Nation Party for a type of religious fanaticism peculiar to Near Eastern countries. Bayur, former president of the party, claimed that he had resigned because a reactionary group within the party had tried to assume control. All the party headquarters in the country were closed while the prosecuting attorney at Ankara conducted investigations. Many leaders and former members were abandoning the Party on the grounds that religious societies were making use of it to undermine the Republic and to further the union of all Islamic Peoples. On July 10, 1953 (as reported in *Cumhuriyet*) the Ankara Prosecuting Attorney said: "The incidents following the Fourth General Congress of the Nation Party, and activities based on Articles 7 and 12 of the Party's constitution were found to be in violation of the Law of Associations." (The Law of Associations of 1946 banned religious, secret, separatist, or subversive groups.) The mass resignation of many of the party members who objected to the way in which the reactionary group of the Party assumed control over the entire Party aroused the suspicion of the government.

<sup>21</sup>*The New York Times*, December 15, 1953.

On the claim that it embraced fanatical movements, this ill-fated party was dissolved on January 25, 1954, by court order, an action on the part of the government which was criticized severely by the People's Party as a partisan move.

#### CIVIL LIBERTIES IN TURKEY TODAY

Several alterations in the field of civil liberties have drawn bitter criticism from the opposition People's Party as well as from critics the world over. Although the opposition protested bitterly, the Grand National Assembly enacted a measure on July 6, 1954, giving the government power to discharge civil servants without rights of appeal.<sup>22</sup> University professors and all other classes of government employes except judges with more than ten years of service are affected. The People's Party considered that this group should have the right of appeal to the Council of State, a right it has enjoyed until now. The measure caused a bitter party fight, and passed by only a small margin.

Democratic Party officials, who claim that the new Press Law which was passed by the Grand National Assembly in its closing days in the summer of 1954 was needed to curb "scurrilous" attacks which they allege were transforming the political struggle into personal argument, declare that it will help prevent the "deterioration" of the national political life. Article 77 of the Constitution reads: "The press shall enjoy freedom within the framework of the Law and shall not be subject to any censorship or control prior to publication." Until its repeal in 1946, a clause in the law enacted under the People's Party permitted cabinet ministers to suspend a newspaper for an indefinite period of time without any form of court judgment. The new Press Law retrogresses to the pre-1946 era and provides imprisonment for anyone who "invades private life or insults the honor of government officials or a member of Parliament." If the person attacked occupies an official position, the term of imprisonment may be increased by one third or one half. Under Turkish law the accuser has no chance to prove his assertion if the person against whom he has made a charge is a state official. Under this new law, journalists also may be sentenced to one to three years'

<sup>22</sup>*The New York Times*, July 6, 1954.



imprisonment, if they publish false news likely to impair the financial or political credit of the state.

On September 10, 1954, an Istanbul criminal court sentenced Safa Killicoğlu, publisher of *Yeni Sabah*, one of Turkey's largest papers, to six months in prison on charges of inciting public opinion. The newspaper has been one of the major opposition newspapers to the Democratic Government. And seventy-nine-year-old Huseyin Cahit Yalcin has been put in jail because he criticized Premier Menderes. Many cases of newspapermen who have criticized the government have come before the special tribunal enforcing the new Press Law. The new regulations, instead of curbing political struggles, will serve to make the attacks even more intense at election time and will doubtless prevent journalists from making useful, constructive criticism of public policies or action.

For every step backward there seems to be a step forward. In January, 1954, the Democrats restricted the competence of military courts to cases involving military personnel, spies, and saboteurs, a decision which would make advocacy of Communism and many other subversive acts cause for trial in civilian rather than military courts. (One hundred and sixty-seven persons suspected of Communist affiliations were brought to trial before a military court in the fall of 1953.)

#### RECENT LAWS GOVERNING POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Changes in electoral laws have moved in two directions. On the credit side, the Democratic Party proposed a high court of elections to decide contested elections for the Grand National Assembly. Heretofore, the Assembly had ruled on the credentials of contested seats, and the party with the majority decided in favor of its members. The Democratic Party also proposed that the election lists of voters in each district be submitted to each political party to enable the party to check with the provincial judicial authorities on deletions or additions. There is wide-spread pressure for electoral law changes that would give Turkey proportional representation or smaller constituencies. Under the present law, the party receiving over fifty per cent of the votes in any province receives all the deputies from that constituency. This situation is especially criticized in Istanbul, which elects thirty deputies from among the Assembly's 478 members.

On June 30, 1954, the Assembly voted to bar political parties from using the state radio for the dissemination of election propaganda, although government officials were given the right to explain their activities. As the Turkish radio is nation-wide, the candidate for any one district consumes radio time for the whole nation. The opposition sees in this ban a partisan move, since all government officials belong to the Democratic Party.

During the elections of 1954, Celal Bayar made a protest against the possibility of three or four opposition candidates combining to present the voters with mixed lists of candidates. He pointed out that such a combination could produce a weak coalition for the first time in the history of the Republic — a situation epitomized by France. On June 30, 1954, after the election, the Assembly (composed of an overwhelming majority of Democrats) voted to outlaw electoral coalitions by banning mixed lists. This move was called partisan by the opposition parties. However, before the election, they had demonstrated their inability to get together on mixed lists.

#### TRENDS IN TURKISH POLITICS

The 1954 elections pointed up other interesting trends in Turkish politics. A new Republican National Party, formed on the ashes of the old one which was closed, has gained a substantial following among the uneducated. For a time the People's Party carried on negotiations with this new organization with a view to pooling resources to defeat the Democratic Party in the elections of 1954. But when the majority of the People's Party leaders objected to what they felt would be treason to their principles, the idea was dropped. The Republican National Party platform dealt mostly with civil liberties. It demanded constitutional guarantees of religious and civil rights and the creation of a constitutional court to rule on the validity of laws adopted by the Grand National Assembly. The election manifesto demanded that the essential elements of the Declaration of Human Rights drafted by the United Nations be incorporated in Turkey's Constitution. It also advocated a Supreme Judicial Council authorized to administer the conditions for promotion or retirement of judges in order to safeguard the judiciary from political pressure. The party also stood for the creation of a second chamber as a check on the Grand National Assembly.

All political parties set out to woo the Turkish peasant, and an informal campaign was waged in the summer of 1952. Both Democratic and Republican leaders were unusually active in visiting their constituencies and promising the prosperous farmer an even happier future under their auspices. Adnan Menderes, Premier; Ismet İnönü, President of the People's Party; many cabinet ministers, and even distinguished Madame Halidé Edib Adivar sought the grass roots opinion of the Anatolian villages. For the first time both major parties began to direct their attention to particular classes of citizens. Heretofore, all Turkish parties had sought to appeal to all segments of the population not only because the electorate was fairly homogeneous and politically unsophisticated, but also because stringent enforcement laws forbade political activity designed to foster class antagonism. The Republicans and Nationalists will probably become spokesmen for the small peasants, agricultural laborers, and the rising industrial proletariat. The Democrats, on the other hand, with the help of private foreign capital, have devoted themselves to promoting private enterprise and have aided the mechanization of agriculture, with most benefits going to the large landowners.

Another important trend which the 1954 election displayed was the rise of organized labor's part in this election. The Turkish Confederation of Labor Unions was formed with official sanction in September, 1952. During the 1954 election campaign, the newly formed Committee for Election of Worker's Candidates charged that the ruling Democratic Party and the opposition People's Party had failed to nominate enough labor candidates in the regular party primaries early in April. Unsuccessfully the government sought to close down the Committee, on the ground that it was illegally engaging in political activity; but Ankara's Fourth Court of Peace upheld the Unionists' right to campaign for election nominees favorable to labor's objectives. In the major cities the labor leaders encouraged strong union movements to prepare lists of pro-labor candidates from the Republican People's Party and Democratic slates as well as from other opposition parties. Turkey has an estimated 550,000 industrial workers, between 220,000 and 250,000 of whom are organized.<sup>23</sup> In its first public pronouncement on May 24, 1954, the Turkish Confederation of Labor Unions demanded broader col-

<sup>23</sup>*The New York Times*, April 26, 1954.

lective bargaining and the right to strike. Because the Confederation believed that it had helped the Democrats return to power, the election strengthened its confidence in its political power. Labor leaders appeared to have abandoned their once submissive attitude toward official authority and were prepared to use all means at their disposal to extract concessions from the government. Before they were elected in 1950, the Democrats had promised labor the right to strike, but the pledge was not fulfilled. From now on organized labor will be something of a power. It remains to be seen whether this labor force will divide itself between the two political parties, or will be espoused by one, or will set up its own party which will grow more powerful as time goes on.

A view of the Turkish political scene reveals a persistent drive toward parliamentary government as implied in its Constitution. Never has the existing one party been exalted above the government. Although many of the moves of the Democratic Party since it has been voted into power seem anti-democratic, the measures have not been passed with large majorities. The results of the land tax vote reveal that the real political power in Turkey today lies with the peasant and the future of Turkish democracy is tied closely to his ability to exercise that power wisely.