

The Anatomy of the 1948 FLHG Liquidation: A Mirror of Intra-elite Conflicts in Early Cold War Turkey

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Niyazi Berkes, Pertev Naili Boratav, and Behice Boran¹ were dismissed from Ankara University (AU) in June 1948 and stood trial lasting until June 1950. The professors were accused of being advocates of communism and subverting the Turkish regime. Influential politicians and journalists waged a campaign against and criminalized the three professors² before the court made its ultimate decision that found Berkes, Boran, and Boratav innocent of all charges against them. The campaign against the three professors symbolized the changing balance of power in the governing party before and during the trial.

As Barbara Falk rightfully asserts, political trials reflect the political changes of the period within which courts operate.³ The professors' trial was typical of such trials. For historians of modern Turkey, it was the anti-communist policies of the government and the worsening of the Turkish-Soviet relations in the post-war period that

¹ See the appendix for brief biographies of the three professors.

² By the time Berkes, Boran, and Boratav were put into a trial, only Boratav was a professor. Berkes and Boran were associate professors. Some scholars have mistakenly regarded their trial as the trial of the “three associate professors” (*üç doçent*). For the sake of simplicity, Berkes, Boran, and Boratav were referred by the three professors or the professors in this paper.

³ Barbara J. Falk, *Making Sense of Political Trials: Causes and Categories*, vol. 8, *Controversies in Global Politics & Societies* (Toronto: Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, 2008) (hereafter cited as Falk: Political Trials), 7, 61.

brought about the professors' trial.⁴ On the eve of the Cold War, the direction of the Turkish foreign policy took on a new salience. With the end of the Second World War and Soviet territorial demands from Turkey, the Turkish government could no longer preserve its pre-war neutralist foreign policy. Faced with the Soviet threat, Turkey initiated closer relations with the West, particularly with the United States.⁵ From the United States' viewpoint, Turkey was a strategic ally that could aid the United States stop the Soviet containment in the Middle East.⁶ The setbacks in Turkish-Soviet relations and post-war Turkish-American rapprochement laid the groundwork for the growth of anti-communism in Turkey. The government and opposition parties united in crushing leftist groups. Although leftist groups in Turkey had been neither powerful nor organized,⁷ the transition from single to multi-party system led to the formation of leftist parties. These leftist parties were soon closed down due to the increased anti-communist environment,⁸ which led to the professors' trial for many scholars.

This view is not necessarily wrong but it neglects that the professors' trial mirrored the complexity of intra-elite conflicts that were mostly a result of the transition from single-party rule to the multiparty system. As will be explained below, the trial emerged as a result of the conflicts within the governing party, which predated anti-Soviet feelings. Although Turkey managed to preserve its neutrality during most of the course of the Second World War, popular unrest in Turkey grew out of high rates of inflation and the mobilization of a serious percentage of the Turkish population.

⁴ Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1977) (hereafter cited as Ahmad: Turkish Experiment), 29; Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Düzeni: Dün-Bugün-Yarın (C. 1) [The Order of Turkey: Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow (V. 1)]* (Istanbul, 1976) (hereafter cited as Avcıoğlu: Türkiye'nin Düzeni), 565-566; Cemil Koçak, *Rejim Krizi: Türkiye'de İki Partili Siyasî Sistemin Kuruluş Yılları (1945-1950) - 3 [Regime Crisis: The Founding Years of the Two-party System in Turkey (1945-1950) - 3]* (Istanbul, 2013) (hereafter cited as Koçak: Rejim Krizi), 10-11; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) (hereafter cited as Lewis: Emergence), 310; Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London, 2004) (hereafter cited as Zürcher: Turkey), 21.

⁵ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) (hereafter cited as Ahmad: The Making), 106-107; Mustafa Bilgin, *Britain and Turkey in the Middle East. Politics and Influence in the Early Cold War Era* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008) (hereafter cited as Bilgin: Britain and Turkey), 55-60; Martin McCauley, *Origins of the Cold War, 1941 - 1949*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008) (hereafter cited as McCauley: Origins), 64.

⁶ Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis. The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010) (hereafter cited as Khalidi: Sowing Crisis), 83; Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington, 2007) (hereafter cited as Spalding: First Cold Warrior), 63-64.

⁷ Ahmad: Turkish Experiment, 28.

⁸ Avcıoğlu: Türkiye'nin Düzeni, 565.

Confronted with the increasing domestic dissent, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP) (the Republican People's Party), the ruling party of the early Republican period, conducted a set of liberal reforms in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.⁹ Moreover, after the war, four MPs broke away from the CHP to found *Demokrat Parti* (DP) (the Democratic Party). Founded on January 7, 1946, the DP soon became the main opposition party in Turkey.

The formation of the DP, however, did not put an end to conflicts within the CHP. Instead, these conflicts expressed themselves in the ideological terms of the so-called radicals versus the so-called moderates. Scholars of modern Turkey labeled these two groups as radicals and moderates due to their approach to political and economic liberalization that took place in post-war Turkey. The first group was against the transition to multiparty system and the liberalization of the Turkish economy, whereas the second supported Turkey's post-war openness to the capitalist West.¹⁰ Instead of "radicals" and "moderates," I prefer the terms 'pro-liberalization' and 'anti-liberalization' in defining the two main groups within the CHP. As will be discussed below, a similar division took place also within the DP.

As such, the currently prevalent understanding in the scholarly literature of the trial in particular and the political conflicts in general have neglected other political groups in the CHP. Two of the groups were smaller in scope but affected the party politics and were pro-Nazi and left-oriented groups (see Fig. 1 for leading politicians and intellectuals of these groups). Although these two small groups were not influential as much as the two main groups, their effect on the Turkish political environment in the post-1945 period cannot be ruled out, especially in terms of educational and cultural spheres.

While the Second World War years radically changed balances between these two small groups, the early Cold War period and the increased anti-communism in Turkey gave a pretext to the radical right group in fighting against the left-oriented group. In the elimination of the left-oriented group from the political sphere, most of the DP

⁹ Ahmad: *The Making*, 102-106.

¹⁰ For example, see: Metin Toker, *Demokrasimizin İsmet Paşalı Yılları 1944-1973: Tek Partiden Çok Partiye 1944 - 1950 [The Years of Our Democracy with Ismet Pasha 1944-1973: From Single-Party to Multi-Party System 1944-1950]* (Ankara, 1990) (hereafter cited as Toker: *Demokrasimizin İsmet Paşalı*), 203-205; Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London, 2010) (hereafter cited as Zürcher: *Young Turk Legacy*), 292-293.

¹¹ Please note that there were several influential CHP members who did not fit into any of these four categories such as Mehmet Şemsettin Günaltay, who was prime minister of Turkey from 1949 to 1950, or Necmettin Sadak, who was foreign minister of Turkey in the same period.

Group	Leading Politicians and Intellectuals
Anti-Transition (so-called Radicals)	Recep Peker, Falih Rıfkı Atay
Pro-Transition (so-called Moderates)	Nihat Erim, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Kasım Gülek
Radical Right (former pro-Nazi)	Reşat Şemsettin Sirer, Orhan Seyfi Orhon, Behçet Kemal Çağlar, Peyami Safa
Left-Oriented	Hasan Ali Yücel, Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Saffet Arıkan, Asım Us

Figure 1: Main Groups in the CHP¹¹

members supported the efforts of the CHP administration.

In this study, by ‘left-oriented,’ I mean pro-Enlightenment, populist, advocates of free public education and health, defenders of the Kemalist revolutions, anti-racist, and anti-Nazi politicians in the CHP. For sure, the CHP was neither a leftist party until the-1970s (even in the early-1970s it became a ‘center-left’ party), nor were most of the party members anti-anti-communist in the late 1940s. More importantly, among the three professors, the only person who was claimed to have a secret affiliation with socialists groups was Behice Boran.¹² Pertev Naili Boratav and Niyazi Berkes only showed sympathy for left-wing ideologies and were not members of a political party and advocates of any political group. Rather they were members of a faculty that was the scene of a rivalry between two different groups within the Turkish political elites, as will be discussed below.

The struggle between the radical right wing and the left-oriented group within the CHP continued from the Second World War until the Turkish general elections of May 14, 1950, which brought the DP into power. All of this tied in with the professors’ trial. Only after the DP came to power were accusations against the professors completely dropped. In that regard, the professors’ trial symbolized the transformation of the CHP in particular and Turkish politics in general in the mid-to-late 1940s.

Before the analysis of the trial of Berkes, Boran, and Boratav, the methodology of this paper will be provided. This study focuses on the background of the trial rather than on the trial itself, and it examines the course of the trial in a chronological order within the larger framework of Turkish politics.

Based on plenty of primary and secondary sources, this article makes the argument that the post-war trial of Berkes, Boran, and Boratav was a result of, and simultane-

¹² Aclan Sayılğan, *Türkiye’de Sol Hareketler [Leftist Movements in Turkey]* (Istanbul, 2009) (hereafter cited as Sayılğan: Sol Hareketler), 224-226. Behice Boran’s professional political career began much later, as explained in the appendix on p. 87.

ously an indicator of, ideological conflicts within the single-party regime of the CHP during the transition from the single-party regime to the multiparty system in the late-1940s. It argues that rather than being the result of a deep-rooted antipathy within the CHP toward communism or the Soviet Union, the trial of the professors mirrored the complexity of intra-elite conflicts and should be seen in the context of conflicts among different groups within the CHP: the extreme right wing seeking to marginalize the three professors and the left-oriented group seeking to protect them. It is important to acknowledge plenty of studies that directly or indirectly deal with the trial.¹³ Some of them have provided excellent accounts of the trial and the prosecution of the three professors. Benefiting from these studies, the current paper aims to evaluate the professors' trial within a larger framework of the Turkish politics in the 1940s.

Methods and Sources

To show the complexity of the intra-party conflicts in the Turkish politics that eventually brought about the professors' trial, this paper draws from a body of primary and secondary resources. To demonstrate the crucial role of the parliament during the trial and the ways in which parliament politicized it, this paper explores minutes and meetings of the Turkish National Assembly as well as speeches of the outstanding political figures that Turkish newspapers used as a reference point in their campaign against Berkes, Boran, and Boratav. It also uses a few official documents regarding the trial that are held in *Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi* (BCA) [Republican Archive of the Prime Ministry].

In addition, this investigation uses the coverage of the trial by both pro-government newspapers – in this paper, *Akşam* [Evening], *Tanin* [Resonance], and *Ulus* [Nation] – and anti-government newspapers – in this paper, *Cumhuriyet* [Republic], *Kudret* [Power], *Tan* [Dawn], *Vatan* [Homeland], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], and *Zafer*

¹³ The most detailed account of the trial was given by Mete Çetik, *Üniversitede Cadı Kazanı: 1948 DTCF Tasfiyesi ve Pertev Naili Boratav'ın Savunması [Den of Intrigue at the University: The 1948 FLHG Liquidation and the Defense of Pertev Naili Boratav]* (Istanbul, 1998) (hereafter cited as Çetik: Cadı Kazanı). For a recent study, see Gökhan Ak, "Türk Düşünce Hayatında Mediha Esenel (Berkes) ve 1948 DTCF Tasfiyeleri İlişkisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme [An Analysis on the Relation between Mediha Esenel (Berkes) and 1948 FLHG Liquidations in the Turkish Intellectual Life]," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15 (30 2015): 251–293, <http://www.idealonline.com.tr/IdealOnline/pdfViewer/index.xhtml?uId=18522&ioM=Paper&preview=true&isViewer=true#pagemode=bookmarks> (hereafter cited as Ak: Lişkisi), 251-293.

[Victory].¹⁴ These critical sources reveal that Turkish newspapers, pro- and anti-government, did their part to keep the professors' trial in the forefront of their pages to shape public opinion in support of their campaign against the professors, with priority given to the demonstrations of the Turkish youth. They also show that not only pro-CHP but also most of the pro-DP newspapers expressed full appreciation for the dismissal of the three professors.

The last category of sources is memoirs that were written either by people who witnessed the trial or by central figures of political parties of the period. These memoirs are not always even-handed and might show a certain degree of bias, a factor that needs to be considered in interpreting them. Nonetheless, these memoirs, especially that of Niyazi Berkes, contain information that cannot be found in news columns and official documents.

Setting the Stage for the Trial

The professors' trial was neither an ordinary trial, nor was it connected with only the three professors. An examination of its background and its motivations would reveal that such a political trial was a result of the multi-layered and complicated transitions taking place in Turkish politics and internationally. After the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic, on November 10, 1938, political confrontation between different groups within the CHP escalated, and extreme right-wing groups increasingly amassed power and influence.¹⁵ During the Second World War, the CHP cadre decided to replace some of the old members of the party with young people who would represent the pro-liberalization group after the war.¹⁶ Accordingly, a set of intense conflicts within different groups in the party emerged.

¹⁴ For further details about the Turkish press at that time, see Semih Gökatalay, *Turkish Press and the Early Cold War (1945-1950)*, Unpublished Master's Thesis (Ankara, 2016) (hereafter cited as Gökatalay: Turkish Press), 81-92.

¹⁵ Korkut Boratav, "Folklorumuzda Bir Dev: Pertev Naili Boratav" [A Giant of our Folklore: Pertev Naili Boratav] *Cumhuriyet Kitap* [Republic Book], April 23, 1998, 4; Niyazi Berkes, *Unutulan Yıllar*, ed. Ruşen Sezer (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997) (hereafter cited as Berkes: Unutulan Yıllar), 155; Niyazi Berkes, *The Transformation of the Kemalist Regime* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969) (hereafter cited as Berkes: Transformation); Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Şeytan Üçgeninde Türkiye [Turkey in the Devil's Triangle]* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1987) (hereafter cited as Arcayürek: Şeytan Üçgeninde Türkiye), 46-47.

¹⁶ Mehmed Kemal, *Türkiye'nin Kalbi Ankara [The Heart of Turkey Ankara]* (Istanbul, 1983) (hereafter cited as Kemal: Kalbi), 72.

Intra-party Conflicts in the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education was one of the arenas in which an intense rivalry between pro-Nazi and anti-racist (or left-oriented) members of the CHP took place. As one of the anti-racist CHP members, Saffet Arıkan served as the Minister of Education in the late Atatürk period. Arıkan initiated a nation-wide program called "village trainer" (*köy eğitmeni*),¹⁷ which became a model of the Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*), a project that began on April 17, 1940, to increase the literacy rate among Turkish peasants and to speed up the economic development of rural parts of Turkey. In December 1938, Saffet Arıkan was replaced by Hasan Âli Yücel, who was Minister of Education from December 1938 to August 1946. Before and during the Second World War, Hasan Âli Yücel became a prominent figure in the left-oriented group, which largely dominated cultural and educational affairs of the party and government. At the same time, Yücel protected anti-racist professors whereas Reşat Şemsettin Sirer, General Director of the Higher Education until August 1946 and then Minister of Education until June 1948, backed the radical right-wing people, especially supporters of Turanism, the idea of Pan-Turkism.¹⁸

Some well-known and conservative liberal scholars of the period have discussed that Hasan Âli Yücel was not a left-oriented politician but instead he was categorically against the left. In one of the volumes that he presented very detailed accounts of Turkish political history in the early Cold War period, for example, political scientist and journalist Cemil Koçak claimed that Minister of Education Hasan Âli Yücel was a staunch anti-leftist politician.¹⁹ Later, Cemil Koçak repeated his claim in his column in pro-AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) *Star*.²⁰ Nevertheless, many people who were either university students or instructors in Ankara at that time claimed the opposite.²¹ Even more importantly, the three professors who had been persecuted

¹⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in the text are my own.

¹⁸ Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*, 143-147, Tokar: *Demokrasimizin İsmet Paşalı*, 26-27.

¹⁹ Cemil Koçak, *Tek-Parti Döneminde Muhalif Sesler [Opponent Voices in the Single-part Period]* (Istanbul, 2011) (hereafter cited as Koçak: *Muhalif Sesler*), 153-156.

²⁰ Cemil Koçak, "Hasan Âli Yücel'in Solcu Olduğu da Nereden Çıktı" [Where did Hasan Âli Yücel's Leftism Come from?], *Star* <http://www.star.com.tr/yazar/hasan-ali-yucelin-solcu-oldugu-da-nereden-cikti-yazi-710264/> May 21, 2018.

²¹ For some of the examples, see: İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, *Anılarım [My Memoirs]* (Istanbul, 1990) (hereafter cited as Çağlayangil: *Anılarım*), 319-320; Talip Apaydın, *Köy Enstitüsü Yılları [The Years of Village Institutes]* (Istanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 2009) (hereafter cited as Apaydın: *Köy Enstitüsü*), 190; Mina Urgan, *Bir Dinozorun Anıları [Memoirs of a Dinosaur]* (Istanbul, 2013) (hereafter cited as Urgan: *Anıları*), 112-113; Altan Öymen, *Değişim Yılları [The Years of Change]* (Istanbul: Doğan, 2014) (hereafter cited as Öymen: *Değişim Yılları*), 344. Doğan Özgüden, a Turkish journalist who had to escape from Turkey due to his 'leftist' ideas, also wrote in his memoirs about left-oriented actions of

in this period clearly and evidently explained how Hasan Âli Yücel protected them against the campaign of the pro-Nazi and radical right-wing group.²² Regarding the fact that Koçak was aware of such memoirs,²³ it is possible to claim that Koçak's biased view is most probably related to his family's relations with the DP.²⁴ Aside from such politically-biased views, an examination of both primary and secondary documents suggests that Hasan Âli Yücel was a patron of left-oriented academics with the three professors being a key example.

In the wake of the Nazi advances through Europe, the rivalry between Yücel and Siner increased the ideological gap between members of the Faculty of Languages, History and Geography (FLHG), a ministerial faculty,²⁵ which was founded to promote Atatürk's ideologies in Ankara in 1936. Supported by Siner, the pro-Nazi group held the majority in the faculty whereas the other group, including Berkes, Boran, and Boratav was in the minority.²⁶ Indeed, Siner's hatred of the three professors had begun long ago. Pertev Naili Boratav had travelled to Berlin in 1936 to study for a Ph.D. degree in folklore but had to leave the program as a result of the interference of Reşat Şemsettin Siner who was an inspector of Turkish students at that time and the leader of the campaign against the professors.²⁷ Siner's pressure on the three professors increased proportionally based on his power in the CHP.

Hasan Âli Yücel (Doğan Özgüden, *'Vatansız' Gazeteci. Cilt 1: Sürgün Öncesi* [*'Stateless' Journalist. Volume 1: Before the Exile*] (Istanbul, 2010) (hereafter cited as Özgüden: *'Vatansız' Gazeteci 1*), 34, 86-87, 109, 134-135).

²² See for how Berkes convincingly explains that it was Hasan Âli Yücel who protected Berkes and his friends against the attack of the Siner-backed group (Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*, 145-147, 157, 162, 249, 254-255). For Behice Boran's account of Hasan Âli Yücel, see Uğur Mumcu, *Bir Uzun Yürüyüş* [*A Long March*] (Istanbul: Tekin, 1993) (hereafter cited as Mumcu: *Yürüyüş*), 37-38. For Pertev Naili Boratav's account of Hasan Âli Yücel, see Boratav, "Folklorumuzda Bir Dev: Pertev Naili Boratav," 4.

²³ See for his views on Berkes's memoirs, Cemil Koçak, *Geçmiş Ayrıntıda Saklıdır* [*The Past is in the Details*] (Istanbul, 2012) (hereafter cited as Koçak: *Ayrıntıda*), 291-298.

²⁴ For one of his columns that he explained the anti-CHP attitude of his family see Cemil Koçak, "Bir Şehir Efsanesi Olarak İzmir" [İzmir as an Urban Myth], *Star*, April 27, 2013, accessed May 26, 2018 (<http://www.star.com.tr/yazar/bir-sehir-efsanesi-olarak-izmir-yazi-749039>)

²⁵ At that time, the faculty was a part and under the control of the Ministry of Education, which further increased the government's influence on the faculty members. Ankara University was founded in 1946, as the third university in Turkey. From that year onward, the FLHG remained as one of the faculties of Ankara University.

²⁶ Uğur Mumcu, *40'ların Cadı Kazanı* [*Den of Intrigue of the Forties*] (Istanbul: Tekin, 1993) (hereafter cited as Mumcu: *Cadı Kazanı*), 102.

²⁷ Boratav, "Folklorumuzda Bir Dev: Pertev Naili Boratav," 4.

The Trial of Turanists

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 further encouraged the supporters of Turanism, some of whom had contacts with Nazi agents in Turkey.²⁸ Nihal Atsız, one of the leaders of the Turanist movement and the owner of Turanist journal *Orkhon* [Orkhon],²⁹ wrote two open letters to Şükrü Saraçoğlu, Turkish Prime Minister from July 1942 to August 1946, on March 1, and April 1, 1944. In these two letters, Atsız claimed that some members of the FLHG such as Behice Boran and Pertev Boratav, who was a former friend of Atsız, were communists working with the Soviet Union. Atsız further claimed that Hasan Âli Yücel, Minister of Education, protected these communist faculty members.³⁰ The cause of Atsız's accusations lay in the anti-racist and anti-Nazi articles that Berkes, Boratav, and Boran wrote in the journal *Yurt ve Dünya* [Home and the World], which was published from January 1941 to March 1944.³¹

Another person that Atsız accused of being a communist and a "traitor" [*hâin*] was Sabahattin Ali, a leftist novelist and journalist. Sabahattin Ali was one of the contributors of *Adımlar* [Steps] a cultural journal that was published from May 1943 to April 1944. The editor-in-chief of the journal was Behice Boran. Faced with such defamation, Sabahattin Ali sued Atsız for libel over these false accusations. Starting on April 26, 1944, Atsız and other Turanists were put on trial by the government.

Being the first political trial of the period, the Turanists' trial was held at the same time as Soviet armies advanced towards Germany and when the tide of war had swung in favour of the Allies. The efforts of the Turkish government to improve its ties with the Soviet Union affected the course of the Turanists' trial. The trial ended on May 9, 1944, and the court sentenced Atsız to a four-month jail term, but his sentence was suspended.³² Among the defendants were two FLHG students, Osman Yüksel

²⁸ Auswärtiges Amt [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], ed., *German Foreign Office Documents: German Policy in Turkey, 1941-1943* (Moscow, 1948) (hereafter cited as Auswärtiges Amt: German Policy), 34-38.

²⁹ The title of the journal was a pan-Turkist reference to the Orkhon inscriptions.

³⁰ Şerafettin Pektaş, *Millî Şef Döneminde Cumhuriyet Gazetesi [The Cumhuriyet Newspaper in the National Chief's Period]* (Istanbul, 2010) (hereafter cited as Pektaş: Cumhuriyet Gazetesi), 603.

³¹ Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye'de Millî Şef Dönemi (1938-1945): Dönemin İç ve Dış Politikası Üzerine Bir Araştırma Cilt - 2 [The National Chief Period in Turkey (1938-1945): A Survey on the Internal and Foreign Politics of the Period Volume - 2]* (Istanbul, 2007) (hereafter cited as Koçak: Millî Şef Dönemi (1938-1945)), 341.

³² Kemal Sülker, *Sabahattin Ali Dosyası [The File of Sabahattin Ali]* (Istanbul, 1968) (hereafter cited as Sülker: Sabahattin Ali), 22.

Serdengeçti³³ and Hikmet Tanyu.³⁴ It is important to note that both Serdengeçti and Tanyu later gave evidence against Berkes, Boran, and Boratav during their trial.³⁵ Although there was no any direct link between the trial of Turanists and the professors, the course of the Turanists' trial later affected Berkes, Boran, and Boratav deeply.

The Raid of Tan [Dawn]

The sentence of the Turanists did not stop the rise of the radical right-wing groups in Turkey. On the contrary, the tension between Turkey and the Soviet Union further consolidated the hold of the extreme right views among the Turkish people. On March 19, 1945, Soviet officials informed the CHP government that they would not renew the Turkish-Soviet Pact of 1925, which would be terminated in November 1945.³⁶ Faced with the deteriorating Turkish-Soviet relations, most Turkish newspapers began to use more aggressive language towards the Soviet Union and targeted certain groups in Turkey that journalists considered “communist.”³⁷

One target of the anti-communist newspapers was *Tan* [Dawn], one of the anti-CHP newspapers of that time and a platform where all three professors intermittently contributed as guest authors. The columnists of *Tan* criticized CHP's anti-Soviet attitude and pointed to the need for the Turkish-Soviet rapprochement.³⁸ Pro-CHP newspaper *Tanin* [Resonance] and its owner Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, a pivotal figure of the CHP at that time, led the campaign against *Tan*. Yalçın called on the Turkish youth to protect their republic on December 3, 1945.³⁹ Next day, *Tanin* accused both *Tan* and *Yurt ve Dünya* [Home and the World] of being “fifth columns” [*beşinci kolları*] of harboring the Soviet Union and “communist propagandist” [*komünist propagandacısı*].⁴⁰

³³ At that time Serdengeçti was a youth leader. He also became *Adalet Partisi* (the Justice Party) (a descendant of the DP) MP for the province of Antalya from 1965 to 1969.

³⁴ Tanyu was also a youth leader who became a faculty member at AU in 1955 (Mumcu: Cadı Kazanı, 102).

³⁵ “Solcu Profesörler Behice Boran ve Niyazi Berkes Mahkum Oldular” [Leftist Professors Behice Boran and Niyazi Berkes were Sentenced], *Zafer* [Victory], February 11, 1950, 1, 6.

³⁶ Türkaya Ataöv, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1939 - 1945* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1965) (hereafter cited as Ataöv: Foreign Policy), 126.

³⁷ Outstanding among the advocates of the anti-communist campaign in the Turkish press are Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın of pro-CHP *Tanin* [Resonance], Nihat Erim of CHP-owned *Ulus* [Nation], and Mümtaz Faik Fenik of DP-owned *Zafer* [Victory]. For further details, see Gökatalay: Turkish Press, 102-120.

³⁸ Koçak: Milli Şef Dönemi (1938-1945), 348.

³⁹ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, “Kalkın Ey Ehli Vatan” [The Nation! Rise Up!], *Tanin* [Resonance], December 3, 1945, 1. The title was a reference to one of Namık Kemal's famous poems. As will be discussed below, Namık Kemal emerged as an important reference point in the campaign against the three professors.

⁴⁰ “Beşincikol Propagandası” [Fifth Column Propaganda], *Tanin* [Resonance], December 4, 1945, 1;

On the very same day, a group of college students in Istanbul who were mostly CHP members sacked the office of *Tan* and destroyed the printing house in Istanbul in which *Yurt ve Dünya* was also printed.⁴¹

The role that Yalçın played in the raid of *Tan* showed his destructive but powerful influence on the CHP youth. Actually, the increased power of Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın in the post-1938 period was another indicator of the changing CHP cadre in the period under consideration. Although he was a vocal opponent of the Kemalist reforms and sent into exile by the CHP government in the 1920s, Yalçın not only emerged as a leading figure in the pro-CHP press but he also became a prominent CHP member, as one of the leaders of the pro-liberalization movement following the death of Atatürk in 1938. Even after the end of the CHP rule in 1950, Yalçın remained as a leading figure of the party.

Despite Yalçın's accusations, *Tan* [Dawn] and its editors Zekeriya Sertel and Sabiha Sertel were not communists. Largely due to Yalçın's accusations, the raid of *Tan*, and Sertel's memoirs,⁴² historians of modern Turkey have regarded *Tan* as a leftist newspaper and argued that the Sertels were leftist journalists.⁴³ An examination of the Sertels' political stance, however, casts doubt on this common view in the literature. Since the beginning of the early republican era, the Sertels had always formed good relations with Americans.⁴⁴ Indeed, the Sertels' son-in-law was an 'American' journalist, who was the representative of the Associated Press, a U.S.-based news agency, in Turkey.⁴⁵ They maintained good relations with the United States during the Second World War. For example, Zekeriya Sertel went to the United States for a three-week tour after his trip in Britain in 1942. President Franklin D. Roosevelt welcomed Sertel and the other Turkish journalists such as Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın on October 2, 1942.⁴⁶

"Hürriyet Pehlivanları, Hürriyetin En Büyük Düşmanları" [The Wrestler of Freedom, The Greatest Enemies of Freedom], *Tanın* [Resonance], December 4, 1945, 1.

⁴¹ Hıfzı Topuz, *100 Soruda Türk Basın Tarihi* [The History of Turkish Press in 100 Questions] (Istanbul, 1973) (hereafter cited as Topuz: Türk Basın), 166-169; Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım* [What I Remember] (Istanbul, 2001) (hereafter cited as Sertel: Hatırladıklarım), 230.

⁴² Sertel: *Hatırladıklarım*; Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* [Like Novel] (Istanbul, 1987) (hereafter cited as Sertel: Roman Gibi).

⁴³ Zürcher: Turkey, 211.

⁴⁴ Sertel: *Hatırladıklarım*, 27.

⁴⁵ Emin Karakuş, *40 Yıllık Bir Gazeteci Gözü ile İşte Ankara* [There Ankara, With the Eyes of a Journalist of Forty-Year Experience] (Istanbul, 1977) (hereafter cited as Karakuş: 40 Yıllık Bir Gazeteci Gözü ile), 39.

⁴⁶ Other journalists with whom Zekeriya Sertel went to the United States included Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın (editor of *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning] and dean of Turkish journalists), Ahmet Şükrü Esmer (foreign editor of *Ulus* [Nation] and CHP MP for Istanbul at that time), Abidin Daver (editor of *İkdam* [Resolution]), and Ahmet Emin Yalman (editor of *Vatan* [Homeland]) ("President Greets Turks", *The*

The Sertels retained their sympathy for the United States until the end of the war. But in the aftermath of the war, what the Sertels wanted the CHP government to do was to take the fact that the Soviet Union was also a part of the Allies into account.⁴⁷ Accordingly, *Tan* was not a leftist but a ‘liberal’ journal.⁴⁸

Indeed, there was a certain, not always vocal, tension between Turkish journalists in regard to their position to the so-called anti-communist disposition. For instance, Necmettin Sadak, CHP Member of Parliament (MP) for the province of Sivas, the owner of pro-CHP *Akşam* [Evening] and the Turkish Foreign Minister after September 1947, claimed that Turkish youth revolted against “a movement of predisposing that constituted a threat to its own national existence” [*millî varlığını tehlikeye koymak istidadını gösteren bir cereyana*].⁴⁹ As Berkes claimed in his memoirs, however, Necmettin Sadak, as a former professor of sociology at Istanbul University, approved neither the raid of *Tan* nor the campaign against Berkes, Boran, and Boratav.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, assuming that Berkes wrote the truth, one can claim that concern over his political career might have led to self-censoring on the part of Sadak.

In effect, like Sadak, most of Turkish journalists had solid academic backgrounds and some of them were even former professors. Despite their academic affiliations, most of them did not write articles in support of left-oriented academics and remained silent. As will be discussed below, some of the intellectual journalists expressed their opposition to the campaign against the professors, but only in a very limited way.

New York Times, October 3, 1942, 5).

⁴⁷ For some examples of Sertels’ view that the Soviet Union was an ally of the United States and Britain, see Zekeriya Sertel, “Beşinci Kola Karşı Uyanık Olalım” [Let’s Be Aware of the Fifth Column], *Tan* [Dawn], June 23, 1944, 1; Zekeriya Sertel, “Müttefiklerle Sıkı İş Birliği Yapmak Ne Demektir?” [What does the Making of Close Cooperation with the Allies Mean?], *Tan* [Dawn], June 30, 1944, 1; Sabiha Sertel, “Beyhude Beklemeyiniz!” [Do not Wait in Vain], *Tan* [Dawn], May 11, 1945, 1.

⁴⁸ Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1925 to 1938 who was later liquidated by the CHP cadre, was one of the columnists of *Tan* [Dawn]. Aras was a left-oriented CHP member who favored close relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey when he was in charge of Turkish foreign policy. Due to his pro-Soviet views, American authorities were suspicious of Aras after 1945. For an example, see “Doc. 695, The Ambassador in Turkey (Wilson) to the Secretary of State, October 15, 1946”, in United States of America, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, The Near East and Africa, Vol. VII* (Washington, 1969) (hereafter cited as FRUS 1946, Vol. VII), 878-879.

⁴⁹ Necmettin Sadak, “Türk Gençliğinin Heyecanlı Gösterisine Dünya Hayran Kalmıştır” [The World Admired the Zealous Demonstration of Turkish Youth], *Akşam* [Evening], December 7, 1945, 1.

⁵⁰ Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*, 440.

The First Attack on the Professors

The raid of *Tan* became the first step of the process that finally led to the professors' trial although the three professors did not write editorials on a regular basis. While a group of the FLHG students showed their support for the raid of *Tan*, the Ministry of Education took ten days to set up a committee of investigation.⁵¹ The committee then accused the three professors of provoking Turkish youth against the government. In their reports during the investigation, Enver Ziya Karal, dean of FLHG, and Necmettin Halil Onan, General Director of Higher Education, wrote that these three professors could not stay in the faculty. Accordingly, on December 15, 1945, the Ministry of Education changed the positions of the three professors and made them personnel of the ministry.⁵² Newspapers reported this development as "the ministry personnel could not write political essays [*bakanlık çalışanları siyasî mahiyette yazılar yazamayacaklar*]."⁵³ What newspapers emphasized was that the three professors were not solely faculty members but they were also personnel of the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, like other civil servants, they were not allowed to produce any academic or non-academic work regarding political affairs. Regarding the fact that there was the single-party rule at the time, the government's pressure on the academics meant a decision that the CHP cadre made.

After they lost their positions, Berkes, Boran, and Boratav appealed to the Council of State. On April 26, 1946, the fifth chamber of the Council of State unanimously overruled the ministry's sanctions against the professors.⁵⁴ The decision of the Council of State, however, did not put an end to the campaign against the professors. On June 13, 1946, the National Assembly modified the University Law. With this change the National Assembly increased the autonomy of universities by decreasing the control of the Ministry of Education. During the discussions of the law in the National Assembly, General Naci Tınaz, CHP MP for the province of Bursa and former Minister of National Defense, stated that this law represented a very important stage of the Turkish Revolution. Tınaz also likened the power given to the universities to "an extremely sharp knife" [*gayet keskin bir bıçak*] and wanted the university administrations

⁵¹ Mumcu: *Cadı Kazanı*, 103.

⁵² Mumcu: *Cadı Kazanı*, 88-9; Çetik: *Cadı Kazanı*, 17.

⁵³ "Profesör ve Öğretmenler Siyasî Mahiyette Yazılar Yazamayacaklar" [Professors and Teachers could not Write about Politics], *Akşam* [Evening], December 16, 1945, 2; "Siyasi Mahiyette Yayın Yapan Memurlar" [Civil Servants who Wrote Political Publications], *Tanin* [Resonance], December 16, 1945, 2.

⁵⁴ May 14, 1946: Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (hereafter BCA) [Republican Archive of the Prime Ministry], 30 10 143 24 21.

to be “very skillfully” [*mâhirâne*] while using this knife.⁵⁵ Although he refrained from sounding off against the three professors by name, using the metaphor of a sharp knife, Tınaz subtly warned the administration of AU about the three professors.

The change in the University Law and Tınaz’s speech took place in a volatile political atmosphere. The first multiparty general elections of Turkey were held on July 21, 1946: while the CHP gained the majority with 390 MPs of 465, the DP only gained 65 MPs, and there were 7 independent MPs. 150 of the former CHP MPs were not re-nominated because of the intra-party tension in the CHP.⁵⁶ Many people who were known by their radical right-wing ideas became a part of the “new CHP.”⁵⁷ In the new assembly, the most powerful member of the radical right group was Reşat Şemsettin Sırer, who replaced Hasan Âli Yücel as the Minister of Education on August 5, 1946. Accordingly, after the general elections, not only was an opposition party present in the National Assembly for the first time but also the radical right-wing in the CHP gained even more power.

The next target of the right-wing group was *Köy Enstitüleri* (the Village Institutes). After Reşat Şemsettin Sırer became the minister, the Village Institutes became the target of his outright policies. No new village institute was opened after Sırer became the Minister of Education.⁵⁸ The demise of the Village Institutes during the Sırer’s term exemplified the conflicts between the extreme right-wing and left-oriented groups. Although President İsmet İnönü supported the pro-liberalization group in the CHP, his policy of the Village Institutes was very close to that of the extreme right-wing group. Even though the Village Institutes were opened during the presidency of İsmet İnönü in 1940, it was the same president who approved the campaign against the village institutions. According to Altan Öymen whose father was a leading figure of the CHP at that time, the reason behind such inconsistent policies was the attempts of the CHP government to show that it was intolerant of any kind of leftist ideologies after 1945 as Turkey wanted to be on the side of the USA in the Cold War conflicts.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ June 13, 1946: Minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (hereafter GNAT), 7. *Dönem* [Period], 4. *Yasama Yılı* [Legislative Year], 24. *Cilt* [Volume], 64. *Bileşim* [Session], 238.

⁵⁶ Altan Öymen, *Bir Dönem Bir Çocuk* [One Period One Child] (Istanbul: Doğan, 2012) (hereafter cited as Öymen: Bir Çocuk), 520-522.

⁵⁷ Öymen: Değişim Yılları, 398.

⁵⁸ Fulya Atacan, “Hayatımda Hiç Arkaya Bakmadım”: Mübaccel Kıray’la Söyleşi [“I Have Never Looked Back in My Life”: Conversation with Mübaccel Kıray] (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2002) (hereafter cited as Atacan: Arkaya Bakmadım), 85; Pakize Türkoğlu, *Tonguç ve Enstitüleri* [Tonguç and His Institutes] (Istanbul, 1997) (hereafter cited as Türkoğlu: Tonguç), 499-501. Finally, the *Demokrat Parti*, which came to power on May 14, 1950, closed down the Village Institutes on January 27, 1954.

⁵⁹ Öymen: Değişim Yılları, 413.

It was exactly in this period when the CHP cadre brought the issue of the three professors into the agenda of the National Assembly. The Village Institutes and the raid of *Tan* were also among the issues that MPs debated. Minister of Internal Affairs Şükrü Sökmensüer, implying Hasan Âli Yücel, claimed that some former ministers protected communists in the schools and universities.⁶⁰ Sökmensüer's long speech exemplified both intra-party conflicts in the CHP and the radical change in the party at that time.⁶¹ Although Yücel was a former minister of the CHP government and a current CHP member, a current minister of the same party accused Yücel of being an agent of the Soviet Union without offering any persuasive evidence.

Nonetheless, the campaign against Yücel and the three professors was not only an internal issue of the CHP. Many members of the DP, too, joined the campaign waged by Sıralar and his group against Yücel and his supporters. Samet Ağaoğlu, one of the founders of the DP, wrote in his memoirs that the DP founders waged a vigorous campaign against the three professors as well as their colleagues.⁶² Another DP member was Kenan Öner, a lawyer of the Turanists⁶³ and the chair of the Istanbul branch of the DP. Öner called Yücel a communist and traitor, and Yücel brought a defamation case in response.

As the second political trial of that period, the trial of Yücel-Öner started on April 17, 1947.⁶⁴ One of the witnesses for the defense was Orhan Şaik Gökyay. Interestingly enough, Gökyay was an old friend of the three professors. Following the political polarization that took place in Turkey during the course of the Second World War, however, Gökyay fell out with them. Gökyay was also sentenced during the Turanists' trial.⁶⁵ Another witness was Nihal Atsız who had been also sentenced during the trial of Turanists. Atsız claimed that Hasan Âli Yücel protected communist professors of the FLHG, referring to Berkes, Boran, and Boratav.⁶⁶ The changing role of Atsız

⁶⁰ January 29, 1947: GNAT, 7-4-24-64, 4-9.

⁶¹ Öymen: *Değişim Yılları*, 570.

⁶² Samet Ağaoğlu, *Demokrat Partinin Doğuş ve Yükseliş Sebepleri: Bir Soru [The Reasons for the Emergence and the Rise of Democratic Party: A Question]* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1972) (hereafter cited as Ağaoğlu: *Demokrat Partinin Doğuş ve Yükseliş Sebepleri: Bir Soru [The Reasons for the Emergence and the Rise of Democratic Party: A Question]*), 74.

⁶³ Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim - Cilt 2: 1922-1971 [My Observations and Experiences in Recent Years - Volume 2: 1922-1971]* (Istanbul, 1997) (hereafter cited as Yalman: *Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim 2*), 1469.

⁶⁴ Hasan Âli Yücel, *Davalar ve Neticeleri [Trials and Their Results]* (Ankara, 1950) (hereafter cited as Yücel: *Davalar*), 1.

⁶⁵ Boratav, "Folklorumuzda Bir Dev," 5.

⁶⁶ Mumcu: *Cadı Kazanı*, 149-150. The trial was concluded on November 19, 1947, and Öner won the case.

came from that fact that many pro-Nazi and racist Turkish figures of the pre-1945 period had become “nationalist” instead of “racist” with the defeat of the Nazis by the Allies.⁶⁷ Accordingly, conflicts between the CHP and the opposition in many issues notwithstanding, not only some CHP members but also members of the other parties, especially the DP, joined the campaign against Yücel and the three professors.

These counterattacks of the radical right-wing groups won the support of pro-CHP Turkish press, particularly after Siner took the post of Yücel on August 5, 1946. From then on, Turkish newspapers took on a more strident tone and pointed to the existence of “leftist” professors at the universities even more.⁶⁸ The provocations of Siner and newspapers resulted in protests against the three professors on March 5, 1947. On the same day, Pertev Naili Boratav was to give a speech about Turkish folklore at AU but was prevented by a group of young people, most of whom were not students of AU, violently protesting the conference, which forced Şevket Aziz Kansu, rector of the university, had to cancel the conference.

The same day, sixty-seven members of *Milli Türk Talebe Birliği* (MTTB) (National Union of Turkish Students),⁶⁹ sent a telegram to the National Assembly, complaining about the three professors “whose roots were outside [of Turkey]” [*kökü hâriçte*] and urging the government to dismiss them as soon as possible. This telegram appeared in both pro- and anti-CHP newspapers.⁷⁰ A key point about the telegram is that it was the CHP MPs who ordered the MTTB to send it. As Emin Karakuş, a journalist in Ankara at that time, later claimed in his memoirs, Şemsettin Siner hosted a group of young people at Ankara Palace, one of the most prestigious hotels in Ankara, before all these events took place and ordered them to “do their share” [*kendilerine düşen görevleri*].⁷¹

⁶⁷ Öymen: *Bir Çocuk*, 493.

⁶⁸ Pektaş: *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 603.

⁶⁹ MTTB was founded by the students of the medical faculty of *Darülfünun* (after 1933, Istanbul University) and remained active from 1908 to 1916. MTTB was reorganized in 1926 and students from other faculties involved in this organization. See Joseph S. Szyliowicz, “Students and Politics in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 6 (2 1970): 150–162, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263207008700144> (hereafter cited as Szyliowicz: Students), 151.

⁷⁰ “Ankara Üniversite Talebesinin Nümayişi” [The Demonstration of the Students of Ankara University], *Akşam* [Evening] March 7, 1947, 1-2; “Ankara Gençliğinin Kızıl Propagandayı Protestosu” [The Protest of Red Propaganda by the Ankara Youth], *Cumhuriyet* [Republic], March 7, 1947, 1, 3; “Üniversiteli Gençlerin Bir Tezahürü” [A Demonstration of College Students], *Ulus* [Nation], March 7, 1948, 1, 4; “Ankara’da Yüksek Tahsil Gençliğinin Heyecanı” [The Sensation of College Students in Ankara], *Vatan* [Homeland], March 7, 1947, 1, 4.

⁷¹ Karakuş: *40 Yıllık Bir Gazeteci Gözü ile*, 130.

Interestingly enough, sixty of the signatories were not even FLHG students, and several of them claimed that they did not sign such a petition during the professors' trial.⁷² Moreover, although MPs claimed that it was the students of AU who demanded the dismissal of the three professors, as Mübeccel Kiray, who graduated from the department of philosophy at the FLHG in 1944, claimed, Behice Boran was loved by her students, and her students were always looking forward to attending Boran's lectures.⁷³ Nevertheless, both MPs and journalists used this telegram as a reference point in their campaign against Berkes, Boran, and Boratav later. Even more interestingly, although it was obvious that these racist students were the main aggressors in the event, the AU Senate launched another criminal investigation against the professors.⁷⁴

The Dismissal of the Professors from their Positions

While the professors had to wrestle with another investigation, Harry Truman, president of the United States, recommended to the American Congress the extension of assistance to Turkey and to Greece on March 12, 1947. Truman's policy, which is known as the Truman Doctrine, aimed to halt the Soviet encroachments in the Middle East. The campaign against the three professors intensified after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine. On March 31, 1947, war-time Turanists (and post-war nationalists) who had been sentenced in May 1944 were found innocent.⁷⁵ Emboldened by these developments, Siner set out on another campaign against the three professors. Although the investigation of the three professors had to be conducted by the AU Senate according to the University Law, Siner maintained pressure on the Senate and tried to persuade the public of the evil of the professors.⁷⁶ Siner's systematic effort to dismiss the professors found support among the Turkish newspapers, even among the opposition ones. Such a support was explicitly stated in an article in pro-DP *Vatan* [Homeland] on May 16, 1947. *Vatan* called on the AU Senate to undertake a series of measures since "the youth was poisoned at the hands of these professors" [*gençlik bu hocalar elinde zehirlenirken*].⁷⁷ Despite being a vocal opponent of the CHP, *Vatan* and its editor-in-chief Ahmet Emin Yalman enthusiastically supported the campaign against the left-oriented CHP members and the three professors.

⁷² Çetik: Cacı Kazanı, 69.

⁷³ Atacan: Arkaya Bakmadım, 55-58.

⁷⁴ Boratav, "Folklorumuzda Bir Dev," 5.

⁷⁵ "Turancılar Davası Sona Erdi" [The Turanists' Trial Ended], *Ulus* [Nation], April 1, 1947, 3.

⁷⁶ Berkes: Unutulan Yıllar, 405.

⁷⁷ "Komünist Propagandası Yapan Üniversite Hocaları" [The Professors who make Communist Propaganda], *Vatan* [Homeland], May 16, 1947, 1.

Nevertheless, there were some journalists who criticized the government's intervention in the academia even though they were not necessarily anti-anti-communist. For example, in his column in anti-CHP *Cumhuriyet* [Republic], Nadir Nadi expressed such a critique, but Nadi also wrote that there was no place for "a professor who speaks with the mouth of Moscow" [*Moskova ağzı ile konuşan bir profesör*].⁷⁸ Nadi's limited criticism can be explained by the radical change in the political stance of *Cumhuriyet*. Founded by Nadi's father, Yunus Nadi, who was a close associate of Atatürk, *Cumhuriyet* became one of the leading pro-CHP newspapers in the early Turkish Republic. With the change of the CHP cadre during and after the Second World War, however, *Cumhuriyet* adopted an anti-CHP position.⁷⁹ For this reason, its editor-in-chief in this period, Nadi, became one of the few people who criticized the campaign against the three professors even if he did so in a limited way.

Meanwhile, conflicts between different groups within the CHP escalated. One of the anti-liberalization group was Recep Peker who became Prime Minister on August 7, 1946. With a growing influence of the pro-liberalization on the CHP and President İsmet İnönü, Peker was forced to leave his post on September 10, 1947. Peker's involuntary resignation was one of the many examples of the decreasing influence of the anti-liberalization group on the party and the government. Likewise, Falih Rıfki Atay, one of Atatürk's closest associates, quit his position as the editor of CHP-owned *Ulus* [Nation] while Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın and Nihat Erim, both of whom were staunch supporters of the campaign against the three professors, took this position afterward.

The liquidation of the anti-liberalization group from the government further increased the pressure on the three professors. Faced with pressure from politicians and the press, the AU Senate on December 26, 1947, prohibited the professors from lecturing and limited their interactions with their students. On the same day, right-wing students came to the FLHG to commemorate Mehmet Âkif Ersoy (1873-1936), a Turkish patriotic poet who wrote the lyrics for the Turkish National Anthem. Ersoy was used by the Sirer-led groups to incite the public against the professors and to exploit anti-communist sentiment among the youth.

The next day students demonstrated against Berkes, Boran, and Boratav in Ankara. According to the report sent by the police office in Ankara to the CHP government, even some CHP members found the demonstrations "extreme" and had warned the po-

⁷⁸ Nadir Nadi, "Üniversitede Softa Var mı?" [Is there any Fanatic at the University], *Cumhuriyet* [Republic], May 18, 1947, 1.

⁷⁹ For a very detailed account of *Cumhuriyet* in this period, see Pektaş: *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*.

lice about calming down the demonstrators and keeping CHP's youth under control.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, compared to other newspapers, CHP-owned *Ulus* [Nation] placed greater importance on the demonstrations. *Ulus* claimed that Turkish youth all around Turkey protested leftist professors. *Ulus* further exalted slogans of the demonstrators such as "any foreign ideology, communism being in the first place, could not meddle with this mighty homeland" [*başta kızıl komünizm olduğu halde hiçbir yabancı ideoloji bu aziz yurda el uzatmayacaktır*].⁸¹ Although most of the protesters were not even students of the FLHG, Turkish newspapers legitimated the violence of students. Such a campaign against the professors, of course, had a profoundly demoralizing effect on them.⁸²

As the next step, the AU Senate unanimously dismissed the three professors on January 10, 1948. The Senate declared the professors had committed "a crime against honor and dignity" [*şeref ve haysiyet kırıcı bir suç*] who were "civil servants" [*devlet memurları*] and were thus prevented from political activities. Upon the decision of the Senate, the professors appealed both to the Council of State and to the Inter-University Commission. The Inter-University Commission consisted of professors from both Ankara University and Istanbul University, which were two of the only three universities in Turkey at that time.⁸³ On February 22, 1948, the Inter-University Commission overruled the AU Senate's decision that dismissed Berkes, Boran, and Boratav. The professors from Istanbul thought that there was no real evidence to justify the dismissal of the three professors whereas those from Ankara claimed the opposite.⁸⁴ The disagreement between the professors from Ankara and Istanbul as well as the Inter-University Commission's decision were indicators of the tension in pro-CHP academia.

The Inter-University Commission's decision did not solve the three professors' problem, however. As newspapers reported, governmental authorities planned to reorganize Ankara University in a way that would exclude the three professors from the university.⁸⁵ Compared to opposition press, pro-CHP newspapers were more critical of the

⁸⁰ December 31, 1947: BCA, 30 10 65 407 14.

⁸¹ "Aşırı Solcu Hocalar Hakkında Prof. Dirisu'nun Ulus'a Demeci" [The Statement of Prof. Dirisu to *Ulus* about the Radical Leftist Professors], *Ulus* [Nation], December 28, 1947, 1, 3; "İzmir'deki Toplantıda" [At the Meeting in Izmir], *Ulus* [Nation], December 28, 1947, 4; "Turgutlu'da" [In Turgutlu], *Ulus* [Nation], December 28, 1947, 4. Turgutlu is a town of Manisa, a city in Western Anatolia. Reporting news from Turgutlu, *Ulus* aimed to show that Turkish people 'all around the country' were against Berkes, Boran, and Boratav.

⁸² Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*, 428.

⁸³ The other was Istanbul Technical University, which was founded in 1944.

⁸⁴ "Solcu Prof.ler" [The Leftist Prof.s], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], February 23, 1948, 1.

⁸⁵ "Ankara Üniversitesi Solcu Profesörler Meselesi" [The Issue of the Leftist Professors at Ankara Uni-

Inter-University Commission's decision. On February 24, 1948, for example, CHP-owned *Ulus* [Nation] reported a speech by Fahri Kurtuluş, CHP MP for the province of Rize and a former medical doctor. For Kurtuluş, the autonomy of universities was not something above the interests of both country and nation.⁸⁶ At the same time, pro-CHP newspapers and columnists chose not to comment on how the AU Senate unconstitutionally dismissed the three professors.⁸⁷

At that moment, one of the few people who spoke up for the professors among the pro-CHP columnists was Vâlâ Nureddin of pro-CHP *Akşam* [Evening]. In his article on February 24, 1948, Nureddin stated that the Inter-University Commission's decision respected constitutional law and congratulated the members of the Commission on the decision that they had reached.⁸⁸ Nureddin's exceptionality was most probably the result of his friendship with the three professors. Nureddin was one of the few left-oriented pro-CHP columnists at that time.⁸⁹ In the vast majority of cases, however, pro-CHP journalists did not share Nureddin's exceptional attitude. An article in *Akşam*, the newspaper for which Nureddin wrote, on February 28, 1948, illustrated the conventional attitude of the newspapers, particularly that of pro-CHP ones. As *Akşam* reported, the issue had not been concluded yet, it would continue.⁹⁰

As *Akşam* implied, Sırer brought his demand of dismissing the three professors to the National Assembly for a second time. This time, however, the MPs decided that the Inter-University Commission's decision required no interpretation.⁹¹ The Minister of Education appealed to the second chamber of the Council of State one more time. The chamber again decided that there was no real evidence showing that these three professors were guilty.⁹²

versity], *Akşam* [Evening], February 23, 1948, 2; "Solcu Prof.ler" [The Leftist Profs], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], February 23, 1948, 1; "Profesörler Döndüler" [The Professors have Returned], *Akşam* [Evening], February 24, 1948, 3; "Solcu Profesörlerin Durumu" [The Situation of the Leftist Professors], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], February 24, 1948, 1, 5; "Solcu Profesörler" [The Leftist Professors], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], February 25, 1948, 1, 5; "Günün Yeni Dedikodusu: Solcu Profesörler" [The New Gossip of the Day: The Leftist Professors], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], February 26, 1948, 5.

⁸⁶ "Solcu Öğretim Üyeleri Meselesi" [The Issue of the Leftist Professors], *Ulus* [Nation], February 24, 1948, 1, 5.

⁸⁷ "Solcu Profesörler" [The Leftist Professors], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], February 27, 1948, 1, 5.

⁸⁸ Vâlâ Nureddin, "Akşamdan Akşama" [From Evening to Evening], *Akşam* [Evening], February 24, 1948, 3.

⁸⁹ Later, Nureddin became a part of the campaign that aimed the releasing of Nazım Hikmet Ran, a Turkish communist poet, from the prison.

⁹⁰ "Solcu Profesörler" [The Leftist Professors], *Akşam* [Evening], February 28, 1948, 2.

⁹¹ Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*, 413.

⁹² "Solcu Profesörler Meselesi Danıştayda" [The Issue of the Leftist Professors in the Council of State], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], May 1, 1948, 5.

These developments did not discourage the Siner-led campaign waged against Berkes, Boran, and Boratav. Orhan Seyfi Orhon, CHP MP for the province of Zonguldak at that time who switched to the DP after 1950, brought the issue of the three professors to the National Assembly on May 3, 1948. Orhon asked the Minister of Education about the Inter-University Commission's decision.⁹³ Siner's reply to Orhon was a prepared one, implying the existence of a secret agreement between Siner and Orhon. In the beginning of his speech, Siner stated that the three professors had kept the governmental authorities "busy" [*meşgul*] for the last five years. The investigation of the professors, Siner claimed, was the result of a petition by the Turkish youth to the government imploring an end to the communist activities at AU. Siner, who endeavored himself to dismiss the three professors, ironically claimed that he could not intervene in the internal affairs of AU. He also asserted that the Inter-University Commission had reinstated the professors "without taking the general public discontent into account" [*umumi efkâr üzerinde uyandırdıkları huzursuzluğa bakılmaksızın*]. Furthermore, the reason why the professors from Istanbul had overruled the decision that dismissed Berkes, Boran, and Boratav was their ignorance about the academic environment in Ankara; that is, the professors from Istanbul could not grasp how dangerous Berkes, Boran, and Boratav were. According to "his opinion" [*kanaatim*], it was essential for the universities to get rid of any "foreign ideology" [*yabancı ideoloji*] that was against "national education" [*millî terbiye*]. Many MPs expressed their approval of Siner's speech by applauding him and yelling "bravo."⁹⁴

Taking the floor after Siner, Orhan Seyfi Orhon stated that while the freest and most democratic nations of the world, Great Britain and the United States, were "taking extraordinary measures" [*olağanüstü tedbirlere başvururken*] against the danger [of communism], the Inter-University Commission failed to "show the interest that was rightly expected from it" [*kendilerinden bihakkın beklenen alâkayı*]. After MPs interrupted Orhon's speech with a flood of applause, Orhon sarcastically asked whether the university's political autonomy existed at the expense of the state and the nation. Orhon pointed to the necessity of the presence of professors who "wholeheartedly" believed in the principles of Turkish Revolution and asked what exactly the three professors had done for the FLHG, which was Atatürk's own project. Instead of working for the development of "nationalism," Orhon claimed, the three professors tried to destroy nationalist principles. Orhon further accused Berkes, Boran, and Boratav of

⁹³ May 3, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-11-54, 247.

⁹⁴ May 3, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-11-54, 247-249.

being “traitors” [*hâinler*]: these three professors were making communist propaganda against Turkish nationalism “behind the mask of progressiveness” [*ileri fikirlilik maskesi altında*] against Turkish nationalism. As Orhon concluded, this issue was not related to the autonomy of universities, rather it was related to “the freedom, security, and welfare of the Turkish nation” [*milletimizin hürriyeti, emniyeti ve selâmeti*]. MPs applauded Orhon several times during and after his speech⁹⁵ and Turkish newspapers kept the public informed of these parliamentary debates.⁹⁶

Despite the decision that was taken in the National Assembly, not every CHP member wholeheartedly supported the campaign against the professors. An anonymous article in pro-CHP *Akşam* [Evening], titled “Komünist, Solcu, Sol Temayüllü” [Communist, Leftist, Left-Oriented], was an example of critical voices in the CHP.⁹⁷ Even though there was no signature under this article, it was written in Refik Halid Karay’s usual column and the writing style was very similar. By hiding his identity, Karay made a distinction between communists, leftist groups, and the ones who had a tendency toward the left. For him, according to the Turkish Constitution, being a communist who believed in the historical materialism of Karl Marx *per se* was not a crime: the criminal element of communism was being dependent on an international communist party or spreading communist propaganda as a Soviet agent. According to Karay, in free and democratic countries such as Turkey, leftism was not a crime by any means. Socialists, the deadliest enemies of communists, were leftists. Karay, then, asked whether socialism, the number one enemy of communists, could be a crime in Turkey, where communism was a major offense. If being “left-oriented” [*sol temayüllü*] was a crime in Turkey, then, as Karay asserted, it was necessary to sue those who established etatist policies in the 1930s and who defended the present regime in Turkey. In short, as Karay concluded, if they [implying the three professors] were communists, they had to be taken to court; if they were leftists, they deserved encouragement because of their hostility towards communism, and if they had tendency to the leftism then they deserved to be congratulated for being “progressive scientists.” Therefore, for Karay, communism became a danger and even a crime only if it affiliated with the Soviet Union.

The unsigned article and limited criticism of Refik Halid Karay need to be evaluated within the changing composition of the CHP in this period. As one of *Yüzellilikler* (the

⁹⁵ May 3, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-11-54, 249-252.

⁹⁶ “Sol Temayüllü Profesörler” [The Left-oriented Professors], *Akşam* [Evening], May 4, 1948, 2; “Solcu Profesörler” [The Leftist Professors], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], May 4, 1948, 1, 5.

⁹⁷ “Komünist, Solcu, Sol Temayüllü” [Communist, Leftist, Left-Oriented], *Akşam*, 9 May 1948, 1.

150 *personae non gratae* of Turkey), Karay had been exiled from Turkey following the formation of the Turkish Republic due to his support of the Allies, who had invaded Turkey after the First World War. After he returned to Turkey in 1938, Karay changed his political position.⁹⁸ Soon enough, Karay became a permanent columnist in pro-CHP *Akşam*. Even as a former victim of an official campaign, however, Karay did not have sympathy for the three professors. Nonetheless, he emphasized that being left-oriented was not a crime in Turkey.

Regardless of such criticism, after waging a systematic campaign that was conceived by Reşat Şemsettin Sırer and nurtured by other politicians as well as various newspapers of that time, the radical right-wing groups finally managed to bring the issue to court, and the trial of the three professors began on June 16, 1948. Even though the efforts of Sırer and his supporters were not very successful at the beginning, their campaign was all the more easily fueled by anti-Sovietism and anti-communism. And though the accusation that the professors were “fifth columns” for the Soviet Union was unsubstantiated, Turkish press always criminalized Berkes, Boran, and Boratav by publicly branding them as traitors.

Despite the accusation by radical right groups that the three professors were “fifth columns” of the Soviet Union, the direction of three professors was with the western academia. Both Berkes and Boran held Ph.D. degrees from American universities. In the examined period, several articles of Berkes and Boran appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*.⁹⁹ Mübeccel Kıray, a future eminent social scientist of Turkey, was able to apply for American universities thanks to the encouragement and a reference letter of Behice Boran.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly enough, reporting the dismissal of the professors, even newspapers from the United States called the three professors “liberal” and the Sırer-backed faculty members “extreme rightist members.”¹⁰¹ Despite such groundless claims, the three professors were sent to trial. More importantly, after

⁹⁸ Nuray Mert, “Refik Halid Karay,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Cilt 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler [Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Volume 9: Periods and Mentalities]*, ed. Ömer Laçiner (Istanbul, 2009), pp. 882–884 (hereafter cited as Mert: Karay), 882–884.

⁹⁹ For an example, see Niyazi Berkes, “Sociology in Turkey,” *American Journal of Sociology* 42 (2 1936): 238–246, <https://doi.org/10.1086/217392> (hereafter cited as Berkes: Sociology), 238–246. He also wrote three book reviews for the same journal from March 1936 to October 1937. Like those of Berkes, Boran’s articles, too, appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*. For example, see Behice Boran, “Sociology in Retrospect,” *American Journal of Sociology* 52 (4 1947): 312–320, <https://doi.org/10.1086/220017> (hereafter cited as Boran: Sociology), 312–320.

¹⁰⁰ Atacan: Arkaya Bakmadım, 80.

¹⁰¹ “Ankara University Asks Ruling on ‘Reds’,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 1947, 20 (hereafter cited as New York Times: Ruling on ‘Reds’), 20.

they were not reinstated to their positions following the end of the trial, two of the professors (Berkes and Boratav) went to western countries, not to the Soviet Union.

The Trial

The fourth criminal court in Ankara began the trial of such internationally-known and prolific professors on June 15, 1948. The judge was Talât Karay, a person eager to build a career in politics, as Berkes claimed.¹⁰² Cemil Bengü, who was a deputy prosecuting attorney, served as the first prosecutor. Lütü Musluođlu and Turhan Kapanlı took this position in the upcoming sessions. The defense attorney was Saffet Nezihi, a leftist lawyer who initiated a campaign in 1938 to urge the government to release Nazım Hikmet Ran, a Turkish communist poet.¹⁰³ While the professors' trial took one year, six months and twenty-five days, only thirty-two sessions were held. The court listened to almost one hundred witnesses for the defense while there were forty-nine witnesses for the prosecution.

The Beginning of the Trial

During the first session, the reading of the alleged offense took almost one hour. During the second session, which was held in the afternoon of the same day, the court heard the witness and the accused. Pertev Naili Boratav was accused of being against Turkism [*Türkçülük*] and disparaging Namık Kemal and his nationalist ideas. Indeed, disparaging Namık Kemal (1840-1888), who was an influential Ottoman poet and intellectual, was deemed a criminal offense because he was accepted as “the poet of the homeland” [*Vatan Şairi*] who influenced the founders of the Turkish Republic. Boratav was also accused of preventing a nationalist student from reading a patriotic poem. Boratav found the accusations about his anti-nationalism groundless. He claimed that it was impossible for him to be against nationalism and Turkism because he had always appreciated the “positive effects” [*müsbet tesirleri*] of Ziya Gökalp as well as his friends

¹⁰² Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*, 479.

¹⁰³ June 6, 1938: Taha Toros Arşivi [The Archive of Taha Toros], “Avukat Saffet Nezihi ve Fuat Ömer Tarafından Nazım Hikmet’in Affi Hakkında Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Başkanlığına Gönderilen Dilekçe,” [The Petition regarding the Amnesty of Nazım Hikmet sent by Lawyer Saffet Nezihi and Fuat Ömer to the Presidency of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey], accessed May 26, 2018 (<http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11498/8906/001635516019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)

on the development of the Turkish intellectual life. Like Namık Kemal, Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was accepted to be one of the founding fathers of the Turkish nationalism. Through his writings and doctrines, Gökalp played a prominent role in the discourse of Kemalist Turkey.¹⁰⁴ In other words, being against Ziya Gökalp meant being against the Kemalist regime. Continuing his defense, Boratav further asserted that he was against racism and Turanism. Boratav argued that witnesses for the prosecution confused Turkism with Turanism because the latter was nothing but racism.

Niyazi Berkes was accused of praising communism, indoctrinating students, continuously assigning Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* to students, not bringing a rightist student to a visit to İmralı (an island in the Sea of Marmara), and failing a nationalist student (Nasır Bolayırılı). Berkes denied all the allegations. In his opinion, there was no leftist or rightist student, only lazy or hardworking. As Berkes declared, he mentioned Marxism only while speaking about movements of thought in nineteenth-century Europe. He claimed that there was nothing strange about mentioning Marxism during his lectures on "sociology." In his response to the claim that he consciously failed a nationalist student, Berkes stated that the same student also failed when he took the same class later from another professor (Hamdi Akverdi). Finally, in his response to the allegation that he did not bring a rightist student on the school trip to İmralı, Berkes claimed that it was the Ministry of Education that prepared the list of students for the trip, not him.

Like Niyazi Berkes, Behice Boran was accused of failing a rightist student and not reading a nationalist student's thesis. In her defense, Boran claimed that the latter, Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, submitted his thesis only two days before his thesis committee's hearing although he was supposed to submit it two months before. Boran was also accused of eulogizing the Soviet regime during her lectures and conference speeches and of claiming that Soviet academics were superior to their western counterparts. In her reply to these accusations, Boran stated that she mentioned the Soviet regime only while comparing communism and capitalism at one of her conferences. Boran claimed that she had never championed the cause of communism, nor did she support the superiority of communism to capitalism. She also claimed that the witness who accused her of being an advocate of communism was a student (Selahattin Ertürk) who meddled in politics. Boran claimed his testimony was thus unacceptable. Furthermore, Boran asserted that she had not even once propagandized in favor of communism during her

¹⁰⁴ Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Selected Essays*, ed. Niyazi Berkes (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959) (hereafter cited as Gökalp: Turkish Nationalism).

nine-year academic career. After hearing the accused and some of the witnesses, the judge adjourned the trial to hear other witnesses.¹⁰⁵

The Two Crucial Days in the National Assembly

During the course of the trial, power politics continued to be on full display.¹⁰⁶ MPs discussed the dismissal of the three professors from AU on July 5 and 6, 1948. It was no accident that MPs brought the issue to the assembly at a time when the trial still continued. The debates of the MPs and the decisions that they made undoubtedly affected the course of the trial, according to the judge.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, an examination of the minutes of these two days will not only give insights into the course of the trial but it also will show the intra-party conflicts in the post-war CHP.

Among all the MPs, there were only two people who opposed the government's intervention in academia. The first one was General Sadık Aldoğan, MP for the province of Afyon Karahisar. According to Aldoğan, the Assembly needed to leave the issue to the university.¹⁰⁸ It is important to note that Aldoğan and four other MPs broke away from DP and founded *Millet Partisi* (the Nation Party), the second-biggest opposition party of the period only two weeks later, on July 20, 1948. As such, Aldoğan's critical approach was most probably related to his and his friends' opposition to the consensus that many members of the CHP and the DP reached in purging the three professors. In effect, compared to other Turkish newspapers, pro-*Millet Partisi Yeni Sabah* [New Morning] published more news about the professors' trial and adopted a relatively more sympathetic approach toward the professors. Regarding the fact that, *Yeni Sabah* was an 'anti-communist' and 'Islamist' newspaper and *Millet Partisi* was a 'conservative' party, their position in the professors' trial further substantiated the argument that anti-communism was not the main motivation behind the trial.

¹⁰⁵ "Solcu Profesörlerin Muhakemesi" [The Trial of the Leftist Professors], *Akşam* [Evening], June 16, 1948, 2, "Dedikodulu Solcu Hocaları Meselesinin Muhakemesine Niyahet Dün Başlandı" [The Trial of the Gossipy Leftist Professors Finally Started Yesterday], *Kudret* [Power], June 16, 1948, 1-4; "Üç Öğretim Üyesinin Duruşması Başladı" [The Trial of the Three Professors Started], *Ulus* [Nation], June 16, 1948, 1-5; "Solcu Profesörlerin Ankaradaki Duruşmaları" [The Trials of the Leftist Professors in Ankara], *Yeni Sabah* [New Morning], June 16, 1948, 1, 5.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Reşat Şemsettin Sırer, Minister of Education of that time, met rectors, the members of the AU Senate and of the Inter-University Commission to persuade them to dismiss Berkes, Boran, and Boratav from the university. See Mumcu: *Yürüyüş*, 39. As Berkes claimed, Sırer also tried to affect the course of the trial by meeting the judge in person. See Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*, 404, 455-456.

¹⁰⁷ "Solcu Profesörler Behice Boran ve Niyazi Berkes Mahkum Oldular" [Leftist Professors Behice Boran and Niyazi Berkes were Sentenced], *Zafer* [Victory], February 11, 1950, 1, 6.

¹⁰⁸ July 6, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-12-83, 806-808.

The second person was Adnan Adıvar, an independent DP MP for the province of Istanbul and a pivotal advocate of liberalism in Turkey.¹⁰⁹ At that time, the DP nominated several famous figures such as Adnan Adıvar who were not members of the DP as independent MPs. Although they were elected from the lists of the DP, these independent MPs had no obvious connection with the DP. The rationale behind the DP's decision was that these popular figures would work for the benefit of the country and they could also enhance the public support of the DP.¹¹⁰ Adnan Adıvar's exceptional attitude, therefore, did not reflect the view of the other DP members. Actually, Adnan Adıvar, too, was not against the dismissal of the three professors. Rather, he was against "directly mentioning the professors' names" [*doğrudan doğruya isim zikredilerek*] in the assembly. Adıvar further claimed that the National Assembly had the right to cut off funding from the universities, and universities had to appoint professors at the own will of the universities. For Adıvar, however, to mention somebody's name in the National Assembly was inappropriate for MPs and a violation of the University Law.¹¹¹ As such, even Adıvar's criticism was not related to the dismissal of the three professors. Rather than urging other MPs to end the sweeping persecution of the professors, what Adıvar demanded was to dismiss the three professors in a 'constitutional' way.

In his reply to Adnan Adıvar, Suut Kemal Yetkin¹¹² claimed that there was no other solution for such an "irremediable and chronic disease" [*tedavi edilemez müzmin bir hastalık*], referring to the presence of the professors. According to Yetkin, the real autonomy of universities had to be a "national autonomy" [*millî muhtariyet*].¹¹³ This was also very much the approach of Fazıl Ahmed Aykaç (CHP MP for the province of Diyarbakır),¹¹⁴ Behçet Kemal Çağlar (CHP MP for the province of Erzincan),¹¹⁵ and Reşit Tarakçıoğlu (CHP MP for the province of Trabzon).¹¹⁶ These three MPs, too, pointed to the primacy of "national autonomy" for universities. At that time, being "national" [*millî*] took on the general meaning of being an anti-communist/anti-Soviet.

¹⁰⁹ Kurtuluş Kayalı, "Adnan Adıvar," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Cilt 3: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık [Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Volume 3: Modernization and Westernism]*, ed. Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007), pp. 36–42 (hereafter cited as Kayalı: Adnan Adıvar), 36.

¹¹⁰ Öymen: Değişim Yılları, 397.

¹¹¹ July 5, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-12-82, 753.

¹¹² Yetkin was CHP MP for the province of Urfa and a leading protagonist in the campaign against the professor as well as one of the witnesses for the prosecution for the professors' trial.

¹¹³ July 5, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-12-82, 769.

¹¹⁴ July 6, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-12-82, 793-795.

¹¹⁵ July 6, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-12-82, 798.

¹¹⁶ July 6, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-12-82, 796-798.

Accordingly, MPs were not supposedly against the autonomy of universities, but they were opposed to the existence of universities whose members supported communism and the Soviet Union. But, of course, as explained above, the three professors did not have any apparent attachment to the Soviet Union.

After these discussions, MPs voted on the positions of the three professors and decided that there was no need to re-appoint them to their positions. Among 259 MPs who voted, only two MPs, Sadık Aldoğan and Nurettin Ünen (DP MP for the province of Çanakkale), voted against the dismissal of the professors.¹¹⁷ As explained above, Sadık Aldoğan's exceptional attitude was related to the formation of a new opposition party. Nurettin Ünen's decision, on the other hand, was another convincing proof that the professors' trial was not simply the result of the increased anti-communism. Nurettin Ünen was a staunch anti-communist and anti-Soviet politician.¹¹⁸ He was also a former CHP MP who criticized the post-war CHP administration after becoming a DP MP.¹¹⁹ First as an anti-communist CHP member and later an anti-CHP member of the DP, Ünen was vocally against the dismissal of the three professors.

Ünen's concerns about the decision of the MPs were not groundless. Indeed, the validity of the accusations by the MPs against the three professors was open to discussion. For example, the three professors were constantly accused of opposing the republican regime and the principles of Atatürk. As discussed above, some MPs claimed that the three professors were anti-nationalist scholars. Nevertheless, it was Pertev Naili Boratav who founded the discipline of 'Turkish folklore' in Turkey. Boratav he had been the chairman of the Department of Folk Literature at AU before losing his position. As Öztürkmen rightfully asserted, the professors' trial and the dismissal of Boratav from his position led to "the denationalization of Turkish Folklore." Namely, following his dismissal, the government closed the Department of Folk Literature, preventing the progress of scholarly works on the discipline in Turkey. The studies of Turkish folklore developed outside Turkey, accordingly.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ July 6, 1948: GNAT, 8-3-12-82, 813-4, 855-856.

¹¹⁸ For an example of his anti-communist and anti-Soviet studies, see Nurettin Ünen, *Ahlâk Meselesi ve Moskova Radyosuna Cevabım [The Question of Ethics and My Reply to Radio Moscow]* (Istanbul, 1947) (hereafter cited as Ünen: *Ahlâk Meselesi*).

¹¹⁹ Nurettin Ünen, *C.H.P. Neden Çöktü [Why did the CHP Collapse]* (Istanbul, 1950) (hereafter cited as Ünen: *C.H.P. Neden Çöktü*).

¹²⁰ Arzu Öztürkmen, "Folklore on Trial. Pertev Naili Boratav and the Denationalization of Turkish Folklore," *Journal of Folklore Research* 42 (2 2005): 185-216, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jfr.2005.0024> (hereafter cited as Öztürkmen: *Folklore on Trial*), 185-216.

Likewise, despite the claims of the radical right-wing groups that the three professors tried to destroy the regime, Niyazi Berkes was an advocate of Kemalism. Even his field research was conducted in order to search for ways to introduce the Kemalist revolution to the countryside.¹²¹ His well-known study *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, which promoted the Kemalist revolutions, is convincing proof that Berkes was not a political foe of Kemalism.¹²²

Likewise, despite the claims that Niyazi Berkes was a vehement enemy of Turkish nationalism, Berkes admired Ziya Gökalp, one of the founding fathers of Turkish nationalism.¹²³ His article on Gökalp in 1954 was persuasive proof that Berkes was not against nationalism.¹²⁴ Indeed, it was Berkes who later translated Gökalp's essays into English.¹²⁵ Regarding the fact that Berkes did not return to Turkey until his death in 1988, one can conclude that he wrote his studies abroad not to ingratiate himself with the Turkish government. Despite this, MPs and journalists who had close affiliations with the radical right-wing groups of the CHP called all the three professors "leftist" and "communist" professors.

The End of the Trial

On February 10, 1950, the judge removed Behice Boran and Niyazi Berkes from public office for three months for malfeasance, while the judge acquitted Pertev Naili Boratav. According to the reasoned decision that took one hour to be read, the speeches of ministers and MPs played a remarkable role in the decision according to the judge. Although Berkes and Boran had the right to appeal, they were demanded to pay the court expenses amounting to 450 Turkish Lira, and the judge refused to grant a reprieve.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Bazı Ankara Köyleri Üzerinde Bir Araştırma [A Survey on Several Villages of Ankara]* (Ankara, 1942) (hereafter cited as Berkes: Ankara Köyleri).

¹²² Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: MacGill University Press, 1964) (hereafter cited as Berkes: Secularism).

¹²³ Kurtuluş Kayalı, "Niyazi Berkes," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Cilt 2: Kemalizm [Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Volume 2: Kemalism]*, ed. Ahmet İnsel (Istanbul: İletişim, 2009), pp. 338–344 (hereafter cited as Kayalı: Niyazi Berkes), 338–344.

¹²⁴ Niyazi Berkes, "Ziya Gökalp: His Contribution to Turkish Nationalism," *Middle East Journal* 8 (4 1954): 375–390 (hereafter cited as Berkes: Gökalp), 375–390.

¹²⁵ Gökalp: Turkish Nationalism.

¹²⁶ "Solcu Profesörler Behice Boran ve Niyazi Berkes Mahkum Oldular" [Leftist Professors Behice Boran and Niyazi Berkes were Sentenced], *Zafer [Victory]*, February 11, 1950, 1, 6; "Solcu Doçentler Mahkum Oldu" [The Leftist Associate Professors were Sentenced], *Yeni Sabah [New Morning]*, February 11, 1950, 1, 5.

During the time Berkes and Boran appealed to the Court of Cassation, the general election approached. Following the election on May 14, 1950, the DP assumed power. The change in government and the DP's initial liberal policies might have played a role in the course of the professors' appeal: on June 6, 1950, the Court of Cassation reversed the decision and assigned the trial to another court. On June 30, 1950, Behice Boran and Niyazi Berkes were found innocent.¹²⁷ None of the newspapers that had long waged a campaign against the three professors apologized to Berkes, Boran, and Boratav. More importantly, although Berkes, Boran, and Boratav were found innocent at the end of the trial, the three professors were not reinstated to their positions. In other words, the professors won the battle but lost the war.

Conclusion

This paper has examined one of the most studied and well-known political trials of modern Turkey. There were two factors that played an important role in the conduct of the professors' trial: an anti-communist/anti-Soviet environment and intra-elite conflict within Turkish political circles, the latter playing a much more central role than the former. The 1948 FLHG liquidation was a turning point in the history of the department of sociology as the department lost two of its most prolific faculty members. The liquidation also damaged academic productivity of faculty members.¹²⁸

As has been argued in this paper, the professors' trial needs to be evaluated not as an isolated phenomenon but within the framework of Turkish politics, where radical transformations took place in the post-Second World War period. Accordingly, the 1948 FLHG liquidation did not only mean the dismissal of Berkes, Boran, and Boratav from academia but it also showed the liquidation of the left-oriented groups in the CHP during the early Cold War period.

The intra-party conflicts in the CHP in the period under consideration also show a need for the revision of the periodization of the early Turkish Republic. There has been

¹²⁷ "Behice Boran ve N. Berkes Beraet Ettiler" [Behice Boran and N. Berkes were Acquitted], *Cumhuriyet* [Republic], July 1, 1950, 1, 3; "İki Öğretim Üyesi Dün Beraat Etti" [The Two Professors were Acquitted Yesterday], *Ulus* [Nation], July 1, 1950, 2; "Solcu Oldukları İddia Edilen İki Hoca Beraat Etti" [The Two Professors who were Claimed to be Leftist were Acquitted], *Zafer* [Victory], July 1, 1950, 1, 8.

¹²⁸ Hayriye Erbaş, "Sunuş: Kırılmalar ve Kopuşları ile DTCF Sosyoloji Bölümü Örneğinde Üniversite, Bilim ve Sosyal Bilimler [Preface: University, Science and Social Sciences in the Example of the Sociology Department of the FLHG with its Turning Points and Discontinuities]," in *Sosyal Bilimler Tarihini Keşfediyor - DTCF Bilim Çevresi ve Sonrası* [Social Sciences are Discovering Their History - Academic Circles of FLHG and Afterward], ed. Hayriye Erbaş (Ankara, 2017), pp. 9-40 (hereafter cited as Erbaş: Sunuş), 14-16.

a tendency among historians of Turkey in assessing the years from 1923 to 1950 as the single-party rule. As the analysis of the background of the professors' trial showed, the composition of the ruling party radically changed even in a very short period of time. In other words, the fact that the same party ruled the country does not necessarily mean that political culture of the CHP had always had an internally coherent ideology and the CHP had been a monolithic political entity. To be more exact, it is not easy to regard almost three decades simply as "the years of dictatorship" because such a simplistic approach will neglect the drastic changes that took place in the 1930s and 1940s both within the CHP and in Turkey.

Appendix (Short Biographies of the three Professors)

Pertev Naili Boratav (1907-1998) graduated from the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Istanbul University (IU) in 1930. Boratav went to Berlin to have a Ph.D. degree in folklore in 1936. After his return to Turkey in 1937, Boratav was appointed as an associate professor of folk literature at the FLHG. After he lost his position in 1950, Boratav pursued his academic career in France until his death in 1998. Producing plenty of pioneering works,¹²⁹ Boratav was considered "the founding father of Turkish folkloristics during the Republic."¹³⁰

Niyazi Berkes (1908-1988)¹³¹ graduated from the Department of Philosophy at Istanbul University in 1930. Meanwhile, Berkes met Beryl Parker, a faculty member of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago who was invited by Turkish officials to Turkey as a part of the efforts to reform the Turkish educational system. Upon Parker's invitation and with a fellowship from the department, Berkes went to the United States in 1934. After finishing his Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago, Berkes came back to Turkey in 1939. He was appointed as an associate professor of sociology at the FLHG. Berkes translated six books to Turkish including Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and Aristotle's *Politics*. After his dismissal,

¹²⁹ For an example of his influential works that he wrote in this period, see Wolfram Eberhard and Pertev N. Boratav, "The Development of Folklore in Turkey," *The Journal of American Folklore* 58 (229 1945): 252-254, <https://doi.org/10.2307/536614> (hereafter cited as Eberhard/ Boratav: Folklore), 252-254.

¹³⁰ Hande Birkalan, "Pertev Naili Boratav, Turkish Politics, and the University Events," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 25 (1 2001): 39-60 (hereafter cited as Birkalan: Boratav), 39-60.

¹³¹ For his autobiography, see Berkes: *Unutulan Yıllar*. For a recent study on Niyazi Berkes, see Şakir Dinçşahin, *State and Intellectuals in Turkey: The Life and Times of Niyazi Berkes, 1908-1988* (New York: Lanham, 2015) (hereafter cited as Dinçşahin: State and Intellectuals).

Berkes went to Canada in 1952 and became a professor at McGill University. After his retirement in 1975, he moved to England where he died in 1988.

Behice Boran (1910-1987)¹³² graduated from the American College for Girls (now Robert College) in 1931 in Istanbul as the first Turkish top student of the school. After finishing her Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Michigan, she came back to Turkey in 1939. Like Niyazi Berkes, she was appointed as an associate professor of sociology at the FLHG. In addition to her lectures at AU, Boran translated the lectures of Carroll C. Pratt, an influential professor of philosophy who came to AU upon the invitation of Muzaffer Şerif, a close friend of Berkes, Boran, and Boratav. Furthermore, Boran contributed to the translation of internationally known academic books to Turkish which the Ministry of Education published.¹³³ Like Berkes and Boratav, Boran's academic productivity was not limited to translated works. Rather, all of them conducted field research, as required by their disciplines. For example, the Turkish Historical Society, a governmental organization, published Boran's book, which she wrote following her extensive field research.¹³⁴ Moreover, Behice Boran was the first Turkish academic who became a member of the American Sociological Society.¹³⁵ With her dismissal from her position, unlike Berkes and Boratav, Behice Boran chose to stay in Turkey. She founded the Association of Pacifists (*Barişseverler Cemiyeti*) in 1950. When Boran signed a petition to the government protesting the government's decision of sending Turkish forces to South Korea in 1950, she was sentenced to 15 months in prison. In 1965, she became an MP for the Workers Party of Turkey. After the 1971 Turkish military memorandum, the party was closed down, and she was sentenced to prison until 1974. Following the coup d'état of 1980, she escaped from Turkey and died in Brussels in 1987.

¹³² For biographies of Behice Boran, see: Mumcu, *Bir Uzun Yürüyüş* [A Long March]; Gökhan Atılğan, *Behice Boran: Öğretim Üyesi, Siyasetçi, Kuramcı* [Behice Boran: Professor, Politician, Theoretician] (Istanbul, 2007).

¹³³ One of them was Plato's *the Statesman*, which she translated with Mehmet Karasan: Eflatun [Plato], *Devlet Adamı* [The Statesman], Translated by Behice Boran and Mehmet Karasan (Istanbul, 1944) (hereafter cited as Eflatun: Devlet Adamı).

¹³⁴ Behice Boran, *Toplumsal Yapı Araştırmaları* [Studies on Social Structure] (Ankara, 1945) (hereafter cited as Boran: Toplumsal Yapı).

¹³⁵ Gökhan Atılğan, *Behice Boran: Öğretim Üyesi, Siyasetçi, Kuramcı* [Behice Boran: Professor, Politician, Theoretician] (Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2007) (hereafter cited as Atılğan: Behice Boran), 124.

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