

A GENERAL REVIEW OF TURKEY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS DURING THE DEMOCRAT PARTY PERIOD ACCORDING TO BRITISH DOCUMENTS, 1950-60.

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1950 was one of the most significant years in the development of modern Turkey. It was the first time that free elections in the real sense had been held since Atatürk; the one-party system was brought to an end; and it led to the fall from power of the People's Republican Party (the PRP) after 27 years. Although these changes were of great constitutional importance, the social and political structure of Turkey was not affected as deeply as expected. The Democrat Party regime that came into power on 14 May 1950 had a striking resemblance to its predecessor, mostly because the leaders of the DP shared the same social and political background as those of the PRP. In fact, some of the leaders, including Celal Bayar, had held prominent positions in the PRP. It seemed that although power had changed hands, it was a change of personalities rather than policies. The DP programme laid more importance on agriculture than industry, and was considering the privatisation of State-owned industries. However, Turkey being a largely agricultural country, it could not be expected for these policies to result in a deep change in national life, and furthermore, there had not been enough time for them to take effect.¹

The real significance of the elections held on 14th May 1950 was that for the first time in modern Turkey, there had been a change in power by normal constitutional processes resulting from the freely expressed judge-

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1 FO371/95267/RK1011/1, "Turkey: Annual Review for 1950", Charles to Bevin, 13 January 1951.

ment of the electorate. For such a long time the PRP had been equal to the State, the sole possessor of patronage and power, and few observers, even those who believed that the Democrats held a majority, seriously thought that the PRP would allow power to slip out of their hands. This was not a matter for surprise, considering the precedent of the 1946 elections, held shortly after permission had been given for the formation of opposition parties. It was President İsmet İnönü, who had insisted on free elections against the advice of a number of his followers, who was largely responsible for the fact that the PRP did not attempt to dispute the results of the 1950 elections, although he was not credited for this by the new regime.²

The reasons for the DP's overwhelming victory were many, some of them being the high cost of living, the corruption, inefficiency, and bureaucratic methods of the PRP. However, the most important reason was the desire for a change after 27 years of one-party rule. Although it had been thought that the less educated sections of the population would be afraid to use their vote against the government, it appeared that the majority of peasants and workers in the towns voted to overthrow the regime which they considered responsible for most of their hardships. A majority of merchants and the small class of industrialists also gave their votes to the Democrats, looking to them to provide more opportunities for private capital. What was more surprising was that large numbers of civil servants also appeared to have voted for them. Their strength in the towns had always been greatest, and now their victory was complete.³

However, the number of seats won by the Democrats in the Assembly was much more overwhelming than the result of the elections, the DP holding 434 against 52 for the PRP. Even though the figures of the actual vote showed that the PRP had received 40 per cent of the actual votes, the system of the simple majority vote, with party lists and large con-

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

stituencies, operated in favour of the majority party. The electorate's judgement was confirmed again later in the year in a series of local Government elections. In the Muhtar elections in August, the Municipality elections in September, and the Vilayet General Council elections in October, the Democrats gained a large majority of the seats, but the voting strength of the DP and the PRP had been the same as in the general elections.⁴

Apart from the elections themselves, the passing of the electoral law in February 1950 was the most important event in internal affairs. It met almost all the demands of the Opposition, and made falsification of the results practically impossible by providing for control of the elections by magistrates and the participation of representatives of all political parties at all stages of the voting. The elections were completely fair, yet the Democrats still accused the PRP of trying to influence the results by pressurising the voters prior to the elections.⁵ There was a marked lessening of tension between the two parties in the period immediately preceding the elections, neither party wishing to be accused of inciting violence. The transfer of power took place calmly, and President İnönü did everything possible to assist the installation of the new regime.⁶

The Democrats had repeatedly assured that they would not carry out a purge of the administration, nor that they would victimise their opponents, but it cannot be said that they kept their promises in this respect. During the summer of 1950, a large number of provincial Governors and subordinate local officials were removed from their positions on the grounds

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. By 1950, the most controversial point in Turkey's internal affairs between the People's Republican Party (the PRP) and the Democrat Party (the DP) had been that of the electoral law. The DP insisted, in and out of season, that the PRP, with the help of President İnönü, would try to falsify the 1950 elections as they had done with those of 1946. The President was unsuccessful in his attempts to clam relations between the two parties, which attacked each other bitterly. At the Democrat Party Conference in June 1949, as a result of suggestions that, in the event of interference with the elections, the public would have the right to "legitimate self-defence", the Party received a warning that they were provoking a revolution, and that any disorder that arose would be suppressed. These arguments continued. However, the passing of the new electoral law at the end of the year was welcomed as progress towards democracy by the President of the Democrat Party, Celil Bayar. Two of the points which the DP had been insisting on for two years - public counting of the votes and judicial supervision - were provided for by the law. Yet although the demands of the DP had been met in this way, this did not mean that the forth-coming general elections were to take place free of trouble. FO371/87933/RK 1011/1, "Turkey: Annual Review for 1949", Charles to McNeil, 7 January 1950.

⁶ Ibid.

that they had supported the PRP during the election campaign. Other changes on a lesser scale occurred in the administration in Ankara.⁷

Since the end of the one-party rule in Turkey in May 1950, the main theme in internal political affairs had been the relationship between the DP Government and the Opposition. The unhealthy tension between the DP, led by the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, and the PRP, the principle opposition party led by Ismet İnönü, increased steadily, the Government's occasional conciliatory gestures acted only to relieve the situation slightly.

The calm of the election period did not last long, and renewed hostilities began between the new Government and the PRP. In his first speech in the Assembly on May 29 1950 announcing the Government's programme, the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes opened the attack on the Opposition. He made clear the Democrats' intentions to protect themselves from criticism in advance by dwelling on the countless difficulties they had inherited from the previous regime. The Democrat members of the new Parliament, finding strength in their numbers and encouragement from their leaders, spent most of their parliamentary time investigating and publicising the corruption and mal-administration of their predecessors. Ex-President İnönü was the main target for attack; and attempts were made to involve him and his family, along with other members of the PRP, in old scandals. The validity of the mandate of some PRP deputies was a subject of confliction, as it was alleged that their election had been a result of pressure.⁸

The first measures of the Democrat Government were also controversial. The General Amnesty brought out in June of that year was ill-conceived and seemed to have been hastily improvised. The Government also wasted no time in making concessions to religious opinion, with the intention of appealing to the traditionalist elements who supported the Party in their rise to power. Within a few weeks they had abrogated the law

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

against the chanting of the call to prayer in Arabic, allowed the reading of the Koran on the radio, and introduced religious teaching into elementary schools. This new policy may be considered as a reflection of the religious revival taking place in Turkey in the 1950's, and many observers detected a sign of an undesirable reactionary movement.⁹

Relations between the two main parties declined throughout the rest of the year. The Government's decision at the end of July to send Turkish troops to Korea became an important issue in internal affairs. The Opposition maintained that they should have been consulted in advance, and the consent of the Assembly obtained. While they did not officially condemn the decision as such, many of their supporters insisted that Turkish troops should be kept for defence of their own country. They supported this argument by drawing attention to the fact that Turkey was not a member of the Atlantic Pact. However, at the end of the year, a vote of the National Assembly ratifying the Government's decision brought the controversy to an end.¹⁰

As expected, the PRP was disorganised after their overwhelming defeat. A majority of their members had lost their seats and Party contributions to the Assembly debates had been ineffective. Although they could have used the Government's failure to obtain either admission to the Atlantic Pact or an American guarantee to their own advantage; they chose unwisely to attack the Government on the Bill providing for pay and allowances to the troops in Korea. As the year draw to a close, it seemed that the Democrats were losing popularity. Their supporters had been expecting miracles, and they were disappointed in the lack of achievement of the new Government. In particular, the budget for 1951, published in December, provided for even higher expenditure and larger deficit than ever before, and thereby imposed hardships on the Turkish civil servants, who were numerous and politically influential. This was an obvious opening for the Opposition, and they took advantage of it.¹¹

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.

In 1951, the important success of the Democrat Party in securing an invitation for Turkey to join the Atlantic Pact raised their prestige to a new high level. They could claim that their bold foreign policy was beginning to pay, and that they had succeeded where their predecessors had failed. Despite some internal dissensions, there was no evidence so far that the Democrats were losing the country's confidence. At the by-elections of September 1951, in which one-third of the total electorate voted, support for the parties remained almost the same as May 1950. The PRP and the National Party had made some small gains in a few areas, but these were not enough to give them much confidence after a year and a half of opposition.¹²

The Government proved their administrative capacity both by improving the general economic situation and by the handling of the problem of the Bulgarian refugees, over 150,000 of whom had been assimilated with little disturbance by October 1951. It was the personality of the Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, to whom the Democrat Party owed its strong position. He handled internal political difficulties tactfully and skillfully, and emerged as the stronger from intrigues against him within his own party. He appeared to have an authority much greater than that of his recent predecessors. By contrast, the President of the Republic, Celal Bayar, played a self-effacing role, though as the founder and former leader of the Democrat Party, he still had a strong influence behind the scenes.¹³

The conduct of the PRP in opposition tended to be one of confliction, and did not improve their prestige. On the whole, they remained weak and ineffective. Their financial position was worsened by the passing of the law in August 1951, requiring the return to the State of some properties, such as the "Halkevis" (People's Houses), which were paid for by State funds and administered by the PRP formerly. Their Party newspaper, "Ulus", was also in a dangerous position. The frequent accusations by the

¹² FO371/101848/WK1011/1, "Annual Report on Turkey for 1951", by Knox Helm, British Embassy, Ankara, 2 January 1952.

¹³ Ibid.

Opposition against the Government of undemocratic behaviour were not very convincing. They had succeeded in unseating two Ministers suspected of corruption, but the Government's readiness to handle such incidents firmly probably added to their prestige. The Democrats were determined to show themselves as less corrupt than their predecessors, and so far they were succeeding.¹⁴

The Government faced threats to internal disorder from both religious reactionaries and Communist elements. After the 1950 elections, the atmosphere of liberty enveloping the country give rise to the relaxation of internal discipline, which had always been severe in modern Turkey. For the first time there were the signs of an organised Communist movement. This threat was dealt with by a number of arrests, and the passing of a law in December 1951 which amended the Penal Code, imposing heavier penalties for sedition and the death penalty for leaders of Communist groups. The reactionary movement made its presence felt in public demonstrations against Atatürk's reforms by religious fanatics, and by iconoclastic attacks against his memorials. As a result of such demonstrations and attacks, the Government found it necessary to introduce a Bill for "the protection of the memory of Atatürk" which provided for special penalties against this type of offence. Many of the Government's supporters opposed the passing of this Bill, like the amendment of the Penal Code, considering it undemocratic to prosecute people for their opinions, and that it was against Atatürk's own principles to place an individual, even if it be the founder of the Republic, in a category apart from his fellow citizens. However, the Government succeeded in convincing the majority that the threat to public order was serious enough to justify such strong measures. By the end of the year, the internal situation appeared to be in control once again.¹⁵

In 1952, party feeling was strong and sometimes even bitter, because there appeared to be no fundamental difference on policy between the parties. However, the Government was secure on the support of the electorate.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

The Prime Minister, with the full support of the President of the Republic, Celal Bayar, dominated the Turkish political scene throughout the year, and most issues centred around his personality. Knox Helm, the British Ambassador to Ankara, describes the Prime Minister as follows: "Vain and impatient alike of consultation and criticism, he concentrated power in his own hands, manipulating his cabinet with complete assurance and scorning to take counsel with his colleagues and with the parliamentary following on which his position depends. With his skill in debate and his command of irony and invective, he never failed to silence those of his followers who stood out against his growing authoritarianism. Those who suffered under his ridicule may have nourished resentment, but there was no sign of their combining to challenge his supremacy."¹⁶

The Prime Minister's impatience of criticism and desire to monopolise power was reflected in the attitude of the Government and the DP leaders towards the Opposition. Until mid December 1952, the two main parties had been caught up in a vicious circle of increasingly violent and destructive controversy, centering not around policy, but on the proper functions and mutual behaviour of the Government and Opposition. In June 1952, a deeper bitterness began to divide the two parties when the Judicial Commission of the Assembly approved the draft of a bill which would compel the PRP to return to the Treasury all the money they had received for the maintainance of the "Halkevis", and that they had spent for party purposes during the one-party rule. As a result, the PRP persistently accused the Government, and the Prime Minister in particular, of plotting to destroy their party and thereby remove all effective opposition. Government spokesmen, led by the Prime Minister, retorted with threats of repression, which could only serve to support the Opposition's charges. Nevertheless, these clashes did not have an affect on the administration of the country, nor did they incite the peasantry and people living in the towns of Turkey to violence. The only incident was a clash between Republicans

¹⁶ FO371/107547/WK1011/1, "Annual Report on Turkey for 1952", by Knox Helm, British Embassy, Ankara, 9 January 1953.

and Democrats in Balıkesir, while ex-President İnönü was on a speech-making tour in early October 1952. However, there was a prevalent atmosphere of political insecurity, and there seemed to be a possibility that the Government might tend towards a dictatorship, thus endangering the new democracy of Turkey. The moderates of both sides were relieved when, in December 1952, the Prime Minister made a sudden change of tactics and eased the tension by reasoning with the Opposition, reassuring them that he would respect their legal rights.¹⁷

The PRP leaders received the the Prime Minister's conciliatory gestures cautiously, and they were waiting for concrete evidence of his change of heart at the end of the year. The PRP was not in a situation to present a serious challenge to the Government. In the spring of 1952, it narrowly escaped division into conservative and liberal wings; although they were able to avert this breach, the Party did not have an effective direction and did not work out a definite programme. The National Party also suffered from an internal split; and the Peasant Party, founded in May 1952 by dissident Democrat deputies, could not draw off sufficient support from either Democrats or Republicans. Over all, the voting strength of the Government and Opposition parties seemed to have changed very little during the year.¹⁸

The Government continued to follow their policy of cautious liberalism beneath the troubled surface of party polemic. As in their previous two years of office, they introduced no important legislation. Most of the pre-election promises remained promises: a new forestry law, the right to strike, the repeal of "anti-democratic" laws, a new constitution, a bill to reduce the troublesome burden of the prohibited areas, were all mentioned as if they were part of the Government's programme, without them actually being submitted to the Assembly. The framework of government inherited from their predecessors lost little of its inflexibility, though a more liberal spirit continued to inform the Democrat administration. Due to good har-

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

vests, American aid, and the high prices paid by the Government for agricultural produce, the peasantry of Turkey became wealthier than ever before, and restraints on their freedom were probably at the lowest level than any other time in the history of modern Turkey. However, despite Opposition allegations, the Democrats could justifiably claim that the majority of the people were content.¹⁹

The most noticeable evidence of the liberal policy of the Government was the revival of religious observance. The profession and practice of Islam, which had diminished due to the concept of laicism in the previous regime, emerged again during 1952 as the people became convinced of the tolerance of the Democrats. New mosques were built, old shrines repaired, and places of pilgrimage openly visited. The DP leaders, who viewed Islam as a personal faith with no effect on thinking outside the field of religion and ethics, put forward a new idea of laicism, whereby religion should be guarded from all kinds of interference, on the ground that it laid no claim to power in the State. They were determined to crush any such pretence, as much as their predecessors, as they showed by their swift and firm action against the reactionary group responsible for an attempted assassination at the end of November 1952 of Ahmet Emin Yalman, one of Turkey's leading editors.²⁰

The Government continued to take action in cases of Communist activities. The Socialist Party, founded in 1950 but which had attracted little support, was dissolved in June 1952, and its leaders sentenced to terms of imprisonment for being involved in subversive propaganda. Meanwhile, the legitimate claims of the workers were approached with a cautious sympathy. Despite the fact that the promised right to strike had been forgotten, a few minor welfare measures were passed. In September 1952, with encouragement from the Government, the first Congress of Turkish Trade Unions met in Izmir and formed a Confederation of Labour. It was obvious from the start that the Government intended to keep a close watch on

¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Ibid.

the Confederation and protect it from subversive influences. However, during 1952, the Turkish economy, though not too well balanced, was booming and there was an all-round increase in production.²¹

In 1953, under the dynamic leadership of the Prime Minister, the Democrat Government continued its policy of economic development and liberalisation at home and close co-operation with the Western Powers abroad. According to the British Ambassador, the Prime Minister was still the undisputed leader of his party, and he deserved a major share of the credit for the success of his government's policy. To the same degree, however, his impatience of criticism and tendency to authoritarianism contributed to the unhealthy tension that had started to develop again in inter-party relations, and reached a peak in December 1952. The signs had not been totally unfavourable earlier: in December 1952, probably feeling that the violence of inter-party polemics had reached a dangerous level, Menderes made gestures of compromise to the Opposition, who responded, and the spring of 1953 the internal political scene was unusually calm. This uneasy calm came to an end in July when the Government, alarmed at the religious overtones at the summer Congress of the National Party, the second most important opposition party, decided to suspend the party, holding an investigation into its alleged exploitation of religion for political ends. The PRP felt this as a potential threat to all opposition parties, and that it could not pass unchallenged. The Government proceeded to introduce a legislation that increased the penalties against the use of religion for political ends, giving the police wide powers to bring an end to political meetings that might lead to disturbances, and this provoked further PRP protests.²²

The Democrat Party showed strong reactions to the criticisms of the PRP, and the relations between the two parties deteriorated once again, with the 1954 general elections on the horizon. The Opposition accused the Government, with justification according to the British Ambassador, of

²¹ Ibid.

²² FO371/112921/WK1011/1, "Annual Report on Turkey for 1953", by Knox Helm, British Embassy, Ankara, 1 January 1954. FO371/117717/RK1016/1, Internal Affairs, Annex D, Confidential. FO371/107555/WK1051/16, Internal Affairs, Knox Helm to G. W. Harrison, 10 April 1953.

failing to introduce the legislation necessary to carry out their principle election promises, and of not taking adequate steps to find a solution for the country's balance of payment difficulties. The Democrats replied by renewing the threat to impose the legislation that would deprive the PRP of the official property it had acquired whilst in power. The Prime Minister took the lead in attacking the Opposition, "showing that he regarded any criticism as little less than treason." On December 14, 1953, after last minute preparations, the Democrats' threat was implemented by means of a law that confiscated all PRP property, paying no attention to the manner or date of its acquisition. Knox Helm saw this action, which did not even have the full support of the Democrat deputies, as an ill omen for the future of democracy in Turkey, and a "most inauspicious curtain raiser to the election campaign itself".²³

The investigation into the actions of the National Party had not been completed, and there was some doubt as to whether or not it would take part in the 1954 elections, and if it did not, there was some speculation as to which main party its supporters would give their votes. The National Party incident brought to light the religious issue, one of the Government's main preoccupations in internal affairs. The Government was faced with a dilemma. If it went back on the liberal policy towards the practice of Islam in the new ideal of laicism it had proclaimed, then it might lose popularity. On the other hand, it feared that any concessions to religious feeling, still very much alive amongst the Turkish peasantry, may lead to religious reaction with political consequences that might endanger the fundamental basis of Atatürk's Republic.²⁴

In spite of these events, until the political bombshell of December 14, the Government seemed to be holding its position in the country. There was another good harvest, and the increasing returns from capital investments meant prosperity on the home front. Knox Helm states in his re-

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

port that the peasants in particular, forming the majority of the Turkish population, must have felt satisfied with a government who had helped them to increase production and bought their produce at high prices. He also adds that Turkey's economy had generally continued to increase, with American aid contributing usefully to the further expansion of agricultural production and to development schemes, in the field of transport particularly.²⁵

The accession to power of the Democrat Party in 1950 after the first free elections held in Turkey was considered as the dawn of a new age. The Party had the support of the peasants, the urban middle classes, and even of the small group of intelligentsia, convinced that Turkey was at last on the true path of democracy. However, by the time the next general elections were to be held in 1954, the scene had changed considerably. James Bowker, the British Ambassador to Ankara, notes that: "The Prime Minister, with his powerful personality and infinite capacity for work and concentration, has far outstripped his colleagues and attained a position of virtual isolation in power. Armed with his strong sense of mission to reconstruct Turkey into a modern industrial state, intolerant of advice and highly sensitive to criticism, Menderes, with the aid of pliable and subservient cronies, is pushing on at great speed with his grandiose schemes. Nothing can be allowed to check him on the way to his goal and his angry response to any form of opposition has already severely inhibited the development of the Democrat Party's earlier liberal political aims."²⁶

However, the situation was still comparatively favourable. Turkey had always been used to "strong and despotic individual rule and Menderes appeared to be producing results", and this is what really mattered. His repression of democratic rights and high-handed methods caused little resentment, except amongst genuine intellectuals, who had already begun to feel disillusioned. The Opposition again accused the Government of failing

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ FO371/136452/RK1015/20, Position of Turkish Prime Minister and Democrat Party, James Bowker to Selwyn Lloyd, 9 July 1958. FO371/117717/RK1016/1, Internal Affairs, Annex D, Confidential.

to introduce the legislation to implement their election promises and of ignoring the country's economic difficulties. Menderes retorted in such a way that reflected his regard for criticism of his Government as equal to treason. In the words of James Bowker: "Despite his autocratic tendencies Menderes is both capable and energetic and can produce the firm government which Turkey needs. Both he and his administration, as the national and local elections showed, have not suffered any recent general loss in popularity and it is expected that he will continue to wield power in Turkey for some years to come."²⁷

The approach of the 1954 general elections caused tensions in the relations between the Democrats and the Republicans even further. However, the popularity of the regime was once again confirmed by the Democrats' overwhelming victory in the 1954 elections. The elections were orderly and conducted freely, and the Democrats secured 90% of the seats, while the PRP still managed to receive over a third of the votes. The result was largely due to the effect of the Government's agricultural programme on the peasant vote, and the PRP's inability to offer a constructive alternative to the Democrats' programme.²⁸

In 1955 the weaknesses in the structure began to come to light. An increasing number of people had begun to realise that Menderes's economic policies were leading the country into bankruptcy, and that the glorious future he had promised had not got any nearer. At the same time, the vicious circle of opposition - repressive counter-measures - opposition was gaining more momentum. The first split appeared with the resignation of the nineteen DP deputies who formed the core of the Freedom Party in late 1955. This incident was closely followed by a major Cabinet crisis, caused by the unpopularity of some of Menderes's closest associates due to their handling of economic affairs. Despite these incidents, the Prime Minister had little difficulty in obtaining an overwhelming personal vote of confidence from his party. It seemed that faith in his powers had not dimin-

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

ished and, after a short period in which he made concessions to the more moderate elements of his party, he continued as if nothing had happened.²⁹

On the whole, 1955 was an eventful and difficult year for Turkey. In internal affairs, there was a steadily increasing feeling of dissatisfaction with Menderes's dictatorial methods, which resulted in a change of Government in December of that year, and a deterioration in the economy. However, in early 1955, the Government and Opposition had settled on a path of compromise and had moderated the abusive exchanges that had become part of Turkish internal affairs. This change was entirely for tactical purposes only, and there was no guarantee that inter-party relations might not be reduced, as the British Foreign Office expressed, to their earlier "farm-yard level".³⁰

In the earlier part of the year, the Prime Minister made public statements that he was willing to adopt a more conciliatory attitude to the Opposition, but all hopes born of these statements were quickly disappointed. The Opposition's criticism focused mainly on the illiberal aspects of the Democrat administration, particularly concerning the press law, was ineffective, and their damaging remarks concerning the Government's economic policy incited the accusation that they were involved in a conspiracy against Turkey and creating artificial shortages. Such criticism, whilst failing to affect the Prime Minister when coming from the Opposition, proved more effective when it came from within his own Party later in the year. The first open dissension within the Democrat Party concerned the question of the right of proof as a defence against charges of slandering members of the Government. This led to the expulsion of nine Party members and the resignation of ten others in October of that year. At the October Congress of the Democrat Party, the Prime Minister obtained a unanimous vote of confidence, yet there was great dissatisfaction within the Party. At its end, the Congress was hurried into approving, without proper

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ FO371/117717/RK1016/2, Minute by G. G. Simpson, 8 March 1955.

debate, the introduction of a bill permitting the expulsion from the Grand National Assembly of any deputies who resigned free, or were expelled from the Party to which they belonged at the time of their election. This was another cause of political controversy. In mid-November, the nineteen members of the Democrat Party who had resigned or been expelled formed a new party, the Freedom Party, whose programme was essentially the same as the Democrat Party but demanded a greater degree of personal freedom. The constitution and programme of the Party were officially announced in December, by which time its numbers had increased to 33, including 29 deputies, 6 of whom were ex-ministers, and all former members of the Democrat Party.³¹

This political revolt, along with the set-back the Government suffered at the Municipal Elections in November, when 22 per cent of the votes were won by Independents, encouraged free-speaking among the public, in the press, and also within the Party. Outspoken articles started to be published, about the right of proof and the right of expulsion, and also about the economic situation. It was on the later that a second revolt within the Democrat Party centred. At a long and heated meeting of the Parliamentary Group at the end of November 1955, accusations were directed at the Ministers of Finance, Economy and Commerce and the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, who were mainly responsible for the allocation of foreign exchange. Facing bitter attacks, the Prime Minister felt obliged to offer the resignation of the Cabinet, whilst securing a vote of confidence in himself. He submitted his resignation to the President of the Republic, who instructed him to form a new government. After a series of consultations lasting a fortnight, the new Government was formed in December. Nine of the former Ministers had not been included: those against whom the attacks in the Group had been specifically directed, and into whose activities it was decided to conduct a Parliamentary investigation.³²

31 FO371/123999/RK1011/1, "Annual Report on Turkey for 1955", by James Bowker, British Embassy, Ankara, 16 January 1956. FO371/117717/RK1016/17, Internal political situation in Turkey, Michael Stewart to Harold Macmillan, 6 September, 12 October 1955. FO371/117717/RK1016/2, Internal political situation in Turkey, James Bowker to A. Eden, 28 February 1955. FO371/117717/RK1016/45, New Turkish Government's Programme, James Bowker to Harold Macmillan, 20 December 1955.

32 Ibid.

The programme of the new Government expressed the intention of introducing more liberal political measures. Bills restoring the right of proof in cases of slander, repealing illiberal amendments in the Electoral Law introduced in 1954, and increasing the pensionable period for Government officials to thirty years were soon prepared. References were also made to the possibility of setting up a Committee to study Constitutional reform. Although these developments were welcomed by the press and public as marking a return to a more democratic form of government, many quarters still doubted the real extent of the Prime Minister's change of heart. At the end of the year, it could indeed be said that he had not given much convincing evidence of such a change.³³

According to James Bowker, the sections of the new programme dealing with economic policy was so full of ambiguities and evasions that it consisted no assurance that the country's serious economic difficulties were finally to be tackled effectively. This impression was not lessened by the people appointed to carry out the programme. At the meeting of the Parliamentary Group of the Democrat Party, to which the Government's programme was submitted before it was presented to the Assembly, it is reported that the Prime Minister promised there would be no more investment projects, that imports would be restricted to essentials, and that a Ministerial Council would be set up to co-ordinate and control economic policy if the Parliamentary Group desired. However, the year drew to a close without any sign of the Prime Minister being prepared to take the firm measures necessary to keep the growing inflation and the deficit on foreign payments, the source of Turkey's economic troubles, under control. In the Ambassador's own words: "...the Turkish Government continued throughout the year their policy of living beyond their means. They spent more than their revenue, they imported more than they could pay for, they invested more than was prudent, they used the Central Bank to finance the deficits of the Budget, the State Enterprises and the Soil Products Office and they tried to curb inflation by decree without adopting the methods of

33 Ibid.

retrenchment needed to stabilize the economy. The result was an expanding note circulation, a steady rise in prices, increasing difficulty in selling Turkish export produce, the dwindling of most imports other than capital goods, growing internal shortages, the stoppage of many factories dependent on imported supplies and an increase in foreign indebtedness in spite of the operation of many agreements for the liquidation of arrears. Against this background, the hopes placed in the possibility of successful drilling for oil (due to start in 1956) seemed exaggerated.”³⁴

Apart from these main events, the riots of September 6/7 in Istanbul and Izmir were important in terms of Turkey's development as a “western” country. They brought to light the fact that, in spite of the docility of the Turkish people and the expansion of the authority of the central Government since the Revolution, Turkey was still a long way off the stage reached by the democracies of Western Europe. The Government took strong measures to prevent further incidents, and Martial Law was swiftly imposed in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. They did not, however, use this situation to their advantage and tighten up political control. The fear that they might have imposed a dictatorial régime in the name of law and order diminished.³⁵

The year ended in an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety. The Government crisis of November 1955, and the events leading up to it, as well as the widening public reactions to the Government's irresponsible economic policy, lead to a lessening of the Prime Minister's authority and esteem which he had enjoyed earlier. Although his new Government had received a strong vote of confidence from the Democrat Party in the Assembly, the Party insisted on a larger part in the control of policy. Meanwhile, the new Freedom Party was becoming an attractive alternative for those Democrat deputies who were doubtful of their loyalty to the Democrat Party. In the opinion of the British Ambassador, whether or not Menderes would succeed in re-establishing his position depended not only

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

on his willingness to moderate his dictatorial methods of administration, but mostly on whether he would adapt his economic policy to necessity of the situation, thereby rendering Turkey eligible for further American financial aid, without which the country could not hope to emerge from its difficulties of that time. He continues to state that while the events of the last few months of 1955 were a cause of hope that Turkey would continue on the path of parliamentary government, they were also a reminder of how little administrative ability and experience Turkey had, and how dangerous such a political crisis might be for the country's internal stability.³⁶

As for 1956, the main feature in Turkey's internal affairs seems to have been the return of Menderes to his former self, after the set back he had suffered as a result of the riots of September 1955. Having recovered his former position, he was able to restore to the Cabinet those of his colleagues whose resignation he was forced to tender, with the exception of Fatin Zorlu. The Foreign Office remarks that the Turkish Government was still a "one-man-band show" by Menderes, and it was an unhealthy sign that there was none to replace him should he be forced to resign. "Menderes' policy of keeping all the strings in his own hands ensures that there is no-one in a position to challenge his own authority."³⁷

In January 1956, it seemed that the promises of constitutional reform and other liberal measures forced on Menderes by the revolt in his Party and the Cabinet crises of November 1955 were unlikely to be implemented, and indeed they were not. In fact, the Government took new measures to limit the possibilities of free-minded criticism or effective opposition. In May 1956 a number of judges were made to retire; and with this threat looming above them the remainder were forced to accept political direction in giving decisions. In June, amendments were passed to the already severe Press Law, limiting even further the freedom of the press to criticise the Government. At the end of May, they introduced a new law of

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ FO371/130174/RK1011/1, Minute by C. T. Brant, 7 February 1957.

meetings, requiring official approval for any political meeting except during an election campaign. The result of this was that Opposition parties were prevented from holding any meetings at all. During the summer and autumn recess of the National Assembly, the season for political campaigning in the provinces, the Government made use of these laws to harass the Opposition to such a degree that some members were even prevented from shaking hands with their supporters. The outcome was innumerable law-suits, against the Secretary-General of the PRP Kasım Gülek in particular, which never came to a conclusion, due to the infinite possibilities of appeal in Turkish Law. In December the Government began to take action to suppress the opposition growing in the universities, particularly in the Political Science Faculty of the University of Ankara. The liberty of teachers and students to indulge in politics had been a long-standing subject of argument. Due to a critical statement in his speech at the ceremonial opening of the academic year, the Dean of the Faculty was suspended from office. He resigned, as did a number of teachers in sympathy.³⁸

Each measure taken gave rise to great protest and controversy in the Press and elsewhere, even the Government as well as the Opposition exaggerated their importance. James Bowker remarks that "they are so much part of Turkish political life that undue attention need not be paid to claims, whether from inside or outside the country, that they mean the end of democracy in Turkey." He continues, however, that it was: "...a regrettable fact that as a result of these measures and of his general attitude of impatient rejection of any criticism, Menderes makes little appeal to the limited number of young Turks who are generally interested in their country's general progress in the less materialistic domains than those which fill the horizon of the present administration."³⁹

However, the Opposition parties were left with little chance for constructive action, and, in the Ambassador's opinion, they did not take ad-

³⁸ FO371/130174/RK1011/1, "Turkey: Annual Review for 1956", James Bowker to Selwyn Lloyd, 5 February 1957.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

vantage of such that they had. He writes that the PRP, the traditional Opposition party, did not offer a serious alternative. The Freedom Party had not made the progress it had hoped to, though its numbers had increased in the Assembly so that it had become the largest Parliamentary Opposition party. The third party, the Republican National Party, was little known. In the autumn of 1956, proposals were made to form an alliance between the three parties, but these came to nothing, and each side blamed each other for the failure. According to the British Ambassador, the responsibility was in fact divided: the PRP were jealous of their position in such an alliance; the Freedom Party wanted to concentrate on constitutional reform without any constructive policy; and the Republican National Party's attitude was ambiguous. He concludes that because their only chance of a victory in the next election was by being united, "their prospects remained dim"⁴⁰

The Government's plans for social and economic development were carried out, and their results were seen in 1956. As a consequence, there were many ceremonial openings of barrages, sugar factories and other industrial enterprises which gave the Prime Minister the chance to draw attention of the achievements of his Government and belittle those of 27 years of PRP rule. The political significance of these plans reinforced the Government's influence, as did the National Protection Law, passed in June 1956, which stabilised a wide range of prices temporarily. With this success, the energy and self-confidence of the Prime Minister returned. As before, he attacked the Opposition in his public speeches on a regular basis, describing them as unpatriotic for capitalising from the country's economic difficulties. Neither did he tolerate criticism from within his Party, and many critics were expelled for being too outspoken. However, speculations that there was a spread of discontent within the Party died down by the end of the year. The Prime Minister expelled Ministers who were not prepared to work along his line, and with the resignation of Professor Fuat Köprülü, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in June 1956, the British Ambassador points out that "he eliminated perhaps the only member of his

40 Ibid.

Cabinet who because of his great support within the Party might perhaps have been prepared to stand up to him." As a result, Menderes himself was effectively in charge of all the principal Departments of State: the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Finance and Defence. Those Ministers who had been subject to Parliamentary investigations after the Cabinet crisis at the end of 1955, and who were also friends of the Prime Minister, were formally cleared. A year later he reappointed the Ministries of the Interior and Finance, who had been obliged to resign, one after the riots of September 1955 and the other after the Cabinet crisis. The British Ambassador notes that all that was required to restore the position of Menderes and his Government to that which they had held in the summer of 1955 was the return of Fatin R. Zorlu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴¹

The economic situation at the end of 1956 is described in the British Documents as being confusing. The trade deficit had been reduced due to lower imports, but little improvement was shown when compared to the previous year. The external situation was precarious: the country had a large burden of foreign debt, with no likelihood that exports would pay for all the necessary imports for a number of years. As for the internal situation, the measures taken in June of that year to curb inflation under the National Protection Law did not show the expected results, after a short-lived stabilisation. Many consumer goods, including every-day household requirements, were unobtainable, and there were shortages of essentials due to price-control. The Turkish Government, especially the Prime Minister, appeared to be undisturbed by these facts, stating that they were temporary worries that were unavoidable if they wanted Turkey to be furnished with the modern equipment necessary to a country in its position in world affairs. The Turkish Government report for the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (O.E.E.C.) in October 1956 reflects this attitude: "Turkey ... firmly believes in the objectives which it has set itself; it is convinced that its partners will be ready to participate with increased understanding and sympathy in the efforts to attain those objectives." Accord-

41 Ibid.

ingly, the investment programme continued throughout the year unchecked. Included in the programme were the construction of new ports, barrages, electric power stations, iron and steel works, textiles and other factories, the increase of coal production and the modernisation of Istanbul and Ankara, with large-scale demolitions to make way for new thoroughfares. Some of these projects were greatly extravagant. Insufficient co-ordination meant that most of the vast expenditure on capital projects failed to produce a proper return. In spite of this, progress was made on projects that were essential for the development of the country. Furthermore, some of the projects were beginning to give results, particularly those in regard to electricity and cement production, and roads. Twelve foreign companies were working on the exploration for oil, and at the end of the year negotiations were being made with British and American companies for the construction of a large refinery near Istanbul.⁴²

James Bowker commented that the economic situation of 1956 was "characterised by a continuing ferment and a steady urge towards modernisation", combined with a feeling that a new era would dawn in about 1960 as the fruits of the investments of that time were reaped. However, although rapid progress was made, the weakness of the Turkish economy continued to cause doubt of the justification of such hopeful predictions. Little attention was paid to the fact that growing industrialisation created the requirement of increased imports of raw materials and equipment; that more and better roads requires more vehicles; and that even if oil were found in large quantities, huge sums would be necessary for its exploitation. Therefore, the Ambassador believed that the best Turkey could hope for in the following years was to be able to pay its way without adding to the already accumulating foreign debt, and to keep inflation under control. These objectives required greater discipline in planning and expenditure than had been exercised before. In spite of substantial contributions from the USA and NATO, defence expenditure was still a heavy burden on the Turkish economy, totalling at 25 per cent of the general budget. Military

⁴² Ibid.

defence measured progressed throughout the year within the framework of NATO programmes. There was no significant change in concept or material, and the active manpower of the Turkish armed forces and their auxiliaries remained at between 350,000 and 400,000. The American Military Mission to Turkey was the dominating foreign influence, and continued to assist the Turkish forces.⁴³

Disillusionment set in once more when it became clear that the Prime Minister was not ready to change his ways. Isolated resignations occurred throughout 1956 from the Democrat Party, the main body of intellectuals, and the urban middle classes, who had suffered the hardest blow from the Prime Minister's attitude of repression towards democratic liberty and the results of his economic policies respectively. These resignations continued throughout 1957, and this decline in the popularity of the Prime Minister and his Party was reflected in the results of the October 1957 elections, when the Democrats received a diminished majority, obtained, as the British Ambassador notes, "only after extremely dubious handling both of the election campaign and of the polling itself."⁴⁴

Events after the election, for example the difficulty the Prime Minister faced in forming a new cabinet, showed that disillusionment with the Prime Minister himself had begun to pervade the ranks and file of the DP Deputies, something which James Bowker did not find surprising. In 1950 they were full of hope and belief in their leader and backed by all sections of the population. However, eight years later, they were discredited by the intellectual elements of the country, and relied almost entirely on the support of the peasant masses, who had been less affected by the economic shortages, and in fact whose standard of living had improved, and who were indifferent to whether or not the DP fulfilled their early political promises. The general economic situation was already serious, and worsening rapidly, and hopes for the future remained as illusions in many

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ FO371/136452/RK1015/20, Position of Turkish Prime Minister and Democrat Party, James Bowker to Selwyn Lloyd, 9 July 1958.

minds. The Opposition was strengthening, and as mentioned earlier, the Democrat Party had had to "resort to every trick to hold the electoral line at all." In the Democrat's opinion, the cause of all these problems must surely have been the Prime Minister himself and his close associates. While they were willing to tolerate his rejection of counsel and his ever-increasing dominance as long as he produced results, when the results failed to materialise they lost their confidence in him.⁴⁵

In spite of all this, James Bowker believed that the Prime Minister's outstanding position in his Party was still his strongest safeguard for the future. So much had he overshadowed his colleagues over the years that there was no-one strong enough to build up an opposition and be put forward as a successor. In the same way, the Party had become so dependent upon Menderes that it would be unlikely to survive as an organised and significant political force in the event of his downfall. This situation was effectively expressed in a simile current in Opposition and even Democrat Party circles: "The Prime Minister is compared to a locomotive and the Deputies to trucks attached to it. The trucks know that if the locomotive stops they would pile up and crash; and that if the locomotive came off the rails, they too would have to follow suit." In the eyes of James Bowker, the only practical solution available to recalcitrant Democrat Deputies was to leave the Party and join the Opposition. However, the failure of the Freedom Party had made it unlikely for further splinter parties to be formed, so the only alternative chance would be to join the PRP. This must have been, as Bowker continues, Menderes' main fear as the desertion of 100 of his 400 Deputies would result in the elimination of his majority which would call for an immediate election in which he would stand little chance of success. He did, however, have some insurance against even this possibility. His past actions and the very stormy inter-party relations meant that the PRP would be unlikely to accept deserters from the DP, except for the purpose of overthrowing his régime. If such an event were to take place, the defectors would face political extinction and the Democrat Deputies who,

45 Ibid.

as Bowker notes, were "not known for their altruism", probably had this factor in mind.⁴⁶

Such a structure built on these foundations could not be stable and lasting, and James Bowker writes: "... it was difficult to anticipate exactly what the Prime Minister, having gone so far, would be able, or willing, to do at this stage to restore the situation. The final decision, as before, would rest with Menderes himself. It was hoped that when it had to be made it would not be found that the strain which had undoubtedly been imposed on his physical and mental energies by his virtually single-handed management of the Government and Party over the last years had seriously sapped the broad sense of statesmanship and responsibility which were undoubtedly among the varied attributes of this complex and evasive personality."⁴⁷

At the end of 1957, Menderes was faced with the following three difficulties. a) Despite the fact that public support for his Party had lessened, his internal policies had nurtured increasing opposition, bitterness, and even instability in the country; b) The Turkish economy was showing the signs of strain due to Menderes' reckless policy of industrialisation and expansion; c) The Cyprus question had entered a critical phase. C.T. Brant, from the British Foreign Office, notes that the first two of these were largely of Menderes' own doing. At the end of 1957, the country was united in agreement on the Cyprus policy of partition. However, in the event that the Prime Minister failed to satisfy Turkish opinion on this question, this series of difficulties might well lead to his being unseated. Brant continues to write that to his credit, Menderes had guided the country through some troubling international problems. He had continued Turkish support for NATO and the Baghdad Pact; he handled the propaganda campaign started in the early autumn of 1957 against Turkey by Soviet Russia over Syria coolly and steadily, and he had kept up correspondence with Soviet

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

and Western leaders well. "Menderes is, in fact, still the best Prime Minister we [the British Government] can expect to see in Turkey. But the internal dissension in the country is clearly a problem of which we [the British Government] must take account in the present year [1957]."⁴⁸

On the whole, 1957 was a troubled year for Turkey. In foreign affairs, the country was involved directly in the continuing effects of the Anglo-French intervention on the Suez Canal on the Middle East and the Baghdad Pact at the end of 1956, and then later in the critical developments which arised from Soviet penetration of Syria. The unresolved Cyprus question continued to trouble relations with Greece. In internal affairs, there was a rising increase in political tension which the result of the 1957 General Election did nothing but exacerbate.⁴⁹

A temporary calming of relations between Government and Opposition was brought about by conciliatory speeches in the National Assembly by İnönü and the Prime Minister. However, they were short-lived and the imprisonment in April 1957 of two Opposition journalists for eight months for insulting the Prime Minister restored inter-party relations to their former hostility. The effects of the Government's concession to Opposition demands to restore the constituency of Osman Bölükbaşı, the leader of the Republican National Party, to provincial status were eradicated by Bölükbaşı's arrest and imprisonment some two weeks later on a charge of insulting the moral personality of the Grand National Assembly. The Government's decision to hold the General Election in October 1957, and their amendment of the Electoral Law in order to prevent the co-operation between Opposition parties in elections brought inter-party relations to a peak of tension. The Republic Day celebrations of 29 October were marred by incidents nationwide that were the result of Opposition complaints of Government irregularities during the elections. The Democrats returned to power, but this time with a much reduced majority and divided over pow-

48 FO371/136450/RK1011/1, Minute by C. T. Brant, 18 February 1958.

49 FO371/136450/RK1011/1, "Annual Report on Turkey for 1957", James Bowker to Selwyn Lloyd, 4 February 1958.

er. It took over three weeks for Menderes to form a government, and the vote of confidence in the National Assembly after the Government's programme was obtained after a debate of such violence that had never been seen before. Three weeks later, the Government made further amendments to the Assembly statutes in order to restrict the activities of the Opposition even more. James Bowker writes that "The year thus ended on a depressing note of internal political strife. The circumstances surrounding the General Election and its outcome showed that Parliamentary democratic government in Turkey was yet in its infancy, with parties still tending to be groupings round leaders rather than round ideas and programmes, and the Government concentrating its attention on repressing an Opposition which regarded its main function as being to oppose. Only the fact that this melancholy picture was recognised and deplored by an increasing number of responsible persons relieved a situation which otherwise boded ill for the future."⁵⁰

In the economic field, Turkey's balance of payment continued to deteriorate during 1957. Extravagant capital development, such as the building of new power stations, communication facilities and industrial installations continued at the expense of further inflation and shortage of consumer goods and foreign exchange. If it were not for American economic aid, totalling \$80 million, and also \$70 million worth of United States surplus agricultural commodities, the situation would have been much worse. The Government's policy was one of carrying on regardless, relying with faith on the Turkish nation to bring success to their mission of providing the country with a firm industrial foundation. After the General Election, it seemed that their somewhat reckless pursuit might be moderated. In the economic programme announced by the Prime Minister in early December 1957, there were suggestions of restraint concerning new large-scale investments, such as the Bosphorous Bridge project, and some restriction on internal credit. The budget for the financial year beginning 1st March 1958, tabled on 1st December 1957, showed an increase of

⁵⁰ Ibid.

11%, modest compared to the increases of previous years. In spite of this, the Government was still following a policy of expansion and development in the economic field. James Bowker notes that "The majority of Turks continued to point to what seemed to them the impressive catalogue of achievements since 1950. To them this showed the awakening of Turkey after one hundred years of sleep, and in their minds inflation was equated with expansion." On the positive side, Turkey had gained new highways, port installations, power stations, cement and sugar factories, increased coal, and iron and steel production, engineering, chemicals, textiles, paper and other industries. A majority of these plants would be operating within a few years. The search for oil, in which sixteen foreign companies were participating, continued. At the same time, Istanbul, Ankara and other cities were being reconstructed expansively and expensively. This process involving massive demolitions became known as "Menderazing", due to the personal interest taken in it by the Prime Minister.⁵¹

However, from the foreigner's point of view, in particular the businessmen who had been waiting for nearly five years for debts to be paid, probably saw things differently. In spite of the severely restricted imports, there was a heavy trade deficit for the twelfth year in succession. Exports were lower than they had been four years before, despite a slight increase in 1957 over 1956. There was a desperate shortage of imported spare parts, vehicles, tyres, industrial raw materials, pharmaceuticals and other goods. Foreign debt increased over the year, and in the second half of the year defaults on progress payments on capital contracts, guaranteed by Turkish Treasury Bonds, occurred with increasing frequency. Furthermore, the Turks had to obtain credit from the foreign oil companies in order to pay for basic oil imports. In short, inflation had more or less neutralised the benefits that increased production had brought to Turkey. The price of basic foodstuffs, rent and clothing rose steadily throughout the year. The money in circulation increased by about one-third, and the volume of credit increased. The criticism of these rising prices and shortages became

51 Ibid.

more vocalised, in particular during the period before the elections, but the Government regarded this as disloyalty. At the end of the year, the economic outlook was not encouraging. Agricultural yields, which comprised of over 85% of Turkish exports in those years, of were poor, and therefore export prospects were worse than in previous years. Although Turkey was used to continual financial crises, the crisis at the end of 1957 was, in James Bowker's words, one "which stopgap measures could no longer solve." In terms of defence expenditure, 28% of the Turkish budget was allocated for 1957/58. This showed an increase on the previous year and was to be spent on buildings and installations, as well as the security and gendarmerie forces. United States military aid amounted to about \$280 million. The Joint United States Military Mission for Aid to Turkey (JUSMMAT) continued to assess the scale and organise the distribution of military equipment from the United States and to supervise the use made of it in the Turkish armed forces. As a result of the Syrian crisis occurring in the second half of the year the delivery of much new equipment was accelerated.⁵²

According to the British Ambassador to Ankara, Bernart Burrows, 1958 was a year of decision for Turkey. It was the most difficult year for Menderes since he came to power in 1950. On the internal and external front, it was a year of importance and dramatic developments for Turkey and Anglo-Turkish relations. The Cyprus question was a dominant feature during the first eight months, and began to make its presence felt on the internal scene. Burrows continues to note that it was "difficult to strike the correct balance between the bad and good features of the year." The bad ones, including the agitation over Cyprus and the increasing violence of inter-party dissension seemed to be "more spectacular"; but on the other hand, the steady development of Turkey's relations with the West in NATO and other forms of free world co-operation, the return to reasonableness in the later stages of the Cyprus problem particularly at the United Nations, the satisfactory initiation of the economic stabilisation

⁵² Ibid.

programme despite the political disadvantages it entailed for the Government, and the notable revival of Anglo-Turkish friendship in the last weeks of the year, "all pointed to Turkey's underlying sense and strength as factors on which the Western world and the United Kingdom in particular could confidently count in spite of the vagaries and disappointments of the earlier months."⁵³

Menderes and the Democrat Party, having finished 1957 with a comfortable majority in the general elections held in October of that year, saw themselves a year later in 1958 with their position in Parliament and the country badly shaken. The cost of living was rising and the possibility that they would have to face another general election before the statutory term had finished was being widely discussed. On the whole, 1958 was not a good year for Menderes, partly for reasons beyond his control and partly because of his own mistakes. By mid-summer Turkey's finances had reached such a desperate level that the United States and Turkey's main partners in the West decided that a major rescue operation was necessary. At the end of the year, Burrows writes that of all the many problems that faced him, on Cyprus there seemed to be "a ray of hope".⁵⁴

The internal political situation deteriorated throughout the year, the rabble-rousing tactics of the two main parties causing a dangerous atmosphere of tension in the country from time to time. Not only was there a decline in inter-party relations, but there was also a corresponding weakening of the Prime Minister's position and standing within his Party and in the country, in the urban areas particularly. This was mainly due to discontent over the economic situation and the hardships caused by the new economic stabilisation programme, but the Prime Minister's illiberal political methods and pressure from the PRP also contributed. The latter half of the year was marked by a new phenomenon - for the first time in many years public opinion began to swing in favour of the PRP, which had been strug-

⁵³ FO371/144739/RK1011/1, "Annual Report on Turkey for 1958", B. Burrows to Selwyn Lloyd, 17 February 1959.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

gling ever since 1950 against the unpopularity it gained during the last years of power. The PRP maintained offensive tactics throughout 1958. They attacked the Government on all aspects of internal and economical affairs, and publicly contested their defeat in the 1957 general elections. By nurturing the atmosphere of a permanent election campaign in the country, and by successfully provoking the Prime Minister into violent threats and statements, they followed their aim of undermining the solidarity of the Parliamentary rank and file of the Democrat Party and of causing mass defections and the collapse of the Menderes régime.⁵⁵

On the other hand, the tactics of Menderes and the Democrat Party were for the most part defensive. They made frequent attempts to silence the press, and, with few exceptions, the Government managed to prevent the discussion of important and controversial matters in the Grand National Assembly. They were not unknown to threaten repressive action against the Opposition and even İsmet İnönü himself. Burrows writes that the DP propaganda machine revealed its weaknesses in this warfare. When the Government should have called for austerity and sacrifice, he continues, while emphasising the achievements of the régime since 1950, "it merely reiterated vague and increasingly unconvincing promises of a glorious future around the corner."⁵⁶

Burrows writes that the PRP were on the winning side of the battle. Despite the threat of and actual imprisonment, almost all the press in Istanbul and Ankara was in open opposition to the Government at the end of the year. The Opposition were successful in evading restrictions imposed on their activities in the Grand National Assembly by organising tours of the provinces by their leaders on a scale that equalled and even surpassed those of the DP. By late autumn these tours, mainly undertaken by İnönü in person, had aroused such enthusiasm for the PRP, even in DP strongholds, that the local authorities remained powerless to enforce the strict

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

laws against meetings and demonstrations. In a similar way, İnönü's cry for "unity of force" amongst the opposition parties, against Menderes' call for a "national front" in face of the PRP threat, caused the hasty dissolution of the Freedom Party and its amalgamation with the PRP - a move which brought about a notable gain in prestige. Meanwhile, the DP had been severely shaken by internal discontent. The deteriorating economic situation resulted in a serious crisis within the Party in June 1958, and there were even calls for the resignation of the Prime Minister, who was unable to persuade his Deputies to disperse their constituencies until he promised them there would be no more price increases, and that he would obtain more foreign aid. The acquisition of this aid relieved this crisis slightly. However, by mid-November it was obvious that there were serious disruptions within the Democrat Party, and that substantial opposition element - estimated at over 150 Deputies - was forming against the Prime Minister and his close associates. A series of sharp price increases resulted in a crisis in which three Deputies resigned and joined the PRP. For a few weeks an atmosphere of uncertainty prevailed, the PRP preparing themselves in hope of an early victory. By mid-December Menderes had the situation under control again. It seemed that he had promised his Party that there would be no more price increases for a while, and that he had persuaded his Deputies that solidarity was absolutely essential for the sake of survival against the threat of the PRP, and that their personal futures depended on their loyalty to his leadership.⁵⁷

Briefly, 1958 drew to a close with the country disturbed by violent inter-party struggle, the Opposition enthusiastic with new found popularity, and "with the majority of the Democrat Party hanging together largely from self-interest." Burrows commented further that in spite of all this, Menderes was still the dominant character. "His political skill, his tireless even though sometimes misdirected energy, and his evident sense of political and national purpose were still perhaps the most important factors in the situation." Burrows writes that one of the most unfortunate aspects of

⁵⁷ Ibid.

the internal political struggle during 1958 was the fact that foreign affairs had become an extensive element in inter-party strife. Generally the Opposition had supported the Government over most of the major problems of Turkish foreign policy, even over Cyprus, despite the Government's not being able to handle the situation well during the summer of that year. However, the PRP wasted no time in using the events in Iraq on 14 July as a weapon against the Government, both for their general policy towards the Arab world, and for their support of what they saw as the dictatorial and unrepresentative régime of Nuri Said. Furthermore, the PRP made a dangerous comparison between the conduct of Nuri Said and that of Menderes. Burrows comments that "This allegation stimulated a tempest of invective on both sides of a kind which had not previously been heard and which, if continued, must have weakened the previously general belief in parliamentary democracy."⁵⁸

Such was the decline in the standard of Turkish political conduct in 1958 that the country's armed forces, previously immune from political life, had become a subject of common debate and even inter-party rivalry. Burrows notes that it was obvious before and since the 1957 elections that the Army (which can include the Navy and Air Force here) generally favoured the PRP, probably because it was led by İnönü, a famous and successful general, and that they made this clear during the election campaign. Immediately after the close of the campaign, the Government took disciplinary action either directly or through subservient toadies in the General Staff, which in some cases displayed obvious vindictiveness. The discontent which followed this was highlighted by the Iraqi revolt, and a number of foreign missions in Ankara "with more imagination than experience of Turkish character" speculated on the possibilities of a military coup in Turkey. Although there was little likelihood that the armed forces would stage a coup at that time, they were a numerous and important element in the country, and it was only natural that they should become more politically conscious. Both main parties were aware of this, and it was not-

⁵⁸ Ibid.

able that Menderes took measures designed to restore his standing with the military in the second half of the year.⁵⁹

In 1959 the acute political controversy between the parties characterised the internal scene in Turkey. From the practical point of view, their programmes were not much different. Much of the argument seemed to be about the exercise of political freedom and the alleged misuse by the Government of organs of the Administration, in particular the police, the radio and the Ministry of Justice, in order to make life more difficult for the Opposition. Burrows writes that "some of this is true, but it is doubtful how far this line of attack will get the Opposition in terms of practical politics. The judiciary are no doubt not quite as dependent as they are in the United Kingdom. Ankara Radio is very far from being as impartial as the BBC (the British Broadcasting Company), and the police in some cases have shown gross favouritism for the Government Party and against the Opposition. To the unprejudiced observer the business of Parliament appeared to be conducted in a highly partisan manner."⁶⁰

The application of the press law resulted in a number of journalists going to prison and a few newspapers being closed down for short periods. However, the Government could argue on this last point that a fair number of the convictions were for what might by any standards be described as personal defamation, and that the press was entirely free to print criticisms of the Government's policy as long as it steered clear of too pointed personal accusations. The majority of the press was certainly in opposition to the Government, and had no hesitations in saying so. Burrows comments that one of the more "disagreeable" features of the way things were being conducted at that time was that the Valis (provincial governors) and other civil servants were getting more and more involved in party politics, though most of them were not originally party appointees. On the other hand, as an illustration of the paradox of the Prime Minister's character, a

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ FO371/153030/RK1011/1, "Annual Political Review for Turkey for 1959", B. Burrows to Selwyn Lloyd, 26 January 1960.

considerable amount of attention was also being paid at his express direction to improve the standards of the Turkish administration. The principles and standards of the British Civil Service were used as models in this matter, and the assistance of British officials and teachers was sought for the Institute of Public Administration and other Faculties dealing with related subjects.⁶¹

When judging the internal scene, Burrows writes, it must be remembered that it had only been fourteen years since there had begun to be two parties in Turkey. The democratic freedom that the average voter probably valued the most at that time was the right to express his opinions freely in the village coffee-shop, and this remained basically unimpaired. Burrows saw the most vital point for the future of Turkey's political evolution to be the extent to which the Government permitted the next elections to be freely and fairly conducted. He continues by saying that Menderes' determination to win was very great and he was taking as few chances as possible. Perhaps the use of radio and certain elements of the state structure to secure support for the Party in office was found acceptable by most of the Turkish people "as one of those things which go with being in power." Nevertheless, the actual falsification of election results was probably in a different category altogether and would provoke a much more serious public reaction.⁶²

On Menderes' attitude to democracy, Burrows writes the following: "There was some reason to believe that Menderes and his closest associates did not like to regard Turkey as being merely at an early stage on the road towards a democratic system of the full purity known in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, and that he was not using the powers of the state against the Opposition merely because he wanted to stay in power, but that he had come to the belief that the Turkish character demanded or would tolerate a degree of authoritarianism a good deal greater

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

than was present in the more advanced Western systems, and that the economic development of the country could be carried out much more efficiently and more quickly if the Government was not too much bothered by the Opposition. On this theory the apparent use by the Government of the religious motif for political purposes was in no more than a symptom of the Government's wish to maintain the individuality of the Turkish character, and of their belief that this character would be more likely to retain its natural solidarity if it was allowed to remain based on traditional, even somewhat, primitive, Islamic roots, than if these were torn up in the name of Westernisation and replaced by a half-digested reliance on the inevitability of progress towards democracy, such as was fashionable a hundred years or so ago in the West."⁶³

Whatever the degree of political inspiration might have been, it was an undoubtable fact that there was a swing back towards the expression of religious feeling. Two examples from the more primitive areas of the country brought this to light. During one of Menderes' tours in 1959 in the south "a villager in the crowd waiting to greet him on the road offered to sacrifice his son as the Prime Minister passed." It is very probable that it was only a gesture, and Menderes immediately put a stop to any further proceedings, but such an event could not have taken place at all a few years before. The second incident occurred in Kayseri where a number of dentists felt it necessary to affix to the doors of their consulting rooms a notice signed by the local religious leader to the effect that it was not against religious law to have teeth filled, as had been announced by a preacher in one of the mosques. At the same time the elements in Turkey who believed the Turkish revolution had not gone far enough, who would have wished to see it completed by the removal of the authoritarianism which hampered the full play of democracy, and would have wished to resist with force the reintroduction of religious influences in every-day life should not be underestimated. These elements included the large majority of the educated people of the generation who had grown up with the revolution, and filled

63 Ibid.

most of the senior posts in the Administration, Universities and business at the time in question. More importantly, the editors and journalists of most of the newspapers were on the watch for evidences of "reaction" to bring to the notice of the public at frequent intervals. There was also a risk of the attribution to the Government leaders of more decisive and definite views on these questions than they actually held. Burrows comments that "it was in itself a tribute to the strength of the democratic idea that very little had hitherto been said in public about its being inapplicable to Turkey and still less about the possibility that the reform movement inspired by Atatürk had now gone far enough."⁶⁴

As mentioned earlier, the Army felt discomfort because of the practices of the Menderes Government and sympathised with the PRP. From their point of view, ten years of the Menderes regime had had a negative effect on the economic, social and political situation in the country, and they believed that there had been a move away from Atatürk's reforms. As a result, on 27 May 1960 the Turkish Armed Forces overthrew the Democrat Party regime and arrested all the leaders of the former Government. The Committee of National Union presided over by General Cemal Gürsel, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Land Forces, assumed control. The next day the new Government was formed with General Gürsel as Head of State and Prime Minister.

64 Ibid.

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ABSTRACT

In this article, an evaluation was made of the events occurring in Turkey's internal affairs during the Democrat Party period according to British documents. The coming to power of the Democrat Party, and the relations with the People's Republic Party and other opposition parties are also dealt with. In addition, the policies carried out by the Democrat Party in ten years of its power, political, social and economic fields are mentioned, and the reflections of these policies on internal politics and in the British documents are also dealt with.

ÖZET

Bu makalede, İngiliz belgelerine göre, Demokrat Parti döneminde Türkiye'nin iç işlerinde yaşanan olayların genel bir değerlendirilmesi yapılmaktadır. Demokrat Parti'nin iktidara gelişi ve muhalefet partileri, özellikle Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, ile olan politik ilişkileri üzerinde durulmaktadır. Ayrıca, Demokrat Parti'nin on yıllık iktidarı sırasında siyasi, sosyal ve ekonomik konularda uyguladığı politikalara değinilmekte ve bu politikaların iç politikadaki ve İngiliz belgelerindeki yansımaları ele alınmaktadır.