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THE ASSASSINATION OF GENERAL İSMAIL MAHIR PASHA IN ISTANBUL (1908)

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ABSTRACT

Ismail Mahir Pasha was sent to Thessaloniki by Abdulhamid II as an inspector to investigate the Committee of Union and Progress which caused him to get caught by the radar of the Committee Union and Progress members when he returned to Istanbul. The Committee Union and Progress members sent him a fake letter to get him out of his household and consequently assassinated him on a street on December 2nd, 1908, by a man dressed as an officer who couldn't get caught. The aim of this article is to evaluate the reasons of the assassination process and who he was assassinated by and to examine the political results of this assassination.

Keywords: Abdulhamid II, İsmail Mahir Pasha, Committee of Union and Progress, assassination, Ottoman, İstanbul

L'ASSASSINIO DEL GENERALE İSMAIL MAHIR PASHA A ISTANBUL (1908)

SINTESI

Abdulhamid II mandò il generale İsmail Mahir Pascià a Salonicco con il compito di indagare intorno al Comitato per l'Unione e il Progresso. Al suo ritorno a Istanbul, il generale finì nel mirino dei membri del Comitato che gli inviarono una falsa lettera per farlo uscire di casa e di conseguenza, il 2 dicembre 1908, venne ucciso in strada. L'assassino, vestito da ufficiale, riuscì a dileguarsi. Lo scopo dell'articolo è approfondire le ragioni dell'assassinio e indagare su chi lo eseguì, oltre che esaminare i risvolti politici dell'omicidio.

Parole chiave: Abdulhamid II, İsmail Mahir Pasha, Comitato per l'Unione e il Progresso, assassinio, Impero ottomano, İstanbul

INTRODUCTION

The 19th century, which is considered to be the most painful years of the Ottoman Empire with the rapid events both inside and outside, had been a period when the modernization efforts of the state reached its peak. The beginning of radical reform movements in the basic dynamics of the state had been the scene of a sometimes secret and sometimes open struggle between tradition and supporters of change. Especially the new generation of military and civilian intellectuals, who grew up in the modern schools opened by Mahmud II, took action to realize a change in the most basic principles of the state as a result of the innovations brought by the Tanzimat. The members of Genç Osmanlılar Cemiyeti (Young Ottomans Committee), which sprouted in the mid-1860s, agreed that the reforms were insufficient and that what really needed to be changed was the management system. According to them, the way to keep different religious and ethnic groups that wanted to leave the state together was to establish a constitutional government. Although “the Young Turks”, who wanted to create a public opinion on this issue, especially in the newspapers and journals they published (Shaw & Shaw, 1977, 156–157), increased their pressure day by day and tried to have Sultan Abdulaziz declared the constitutional government, they were not successful in their attempts. When the military/civil committee, which replaced Sultan Abdulaziz, who was deposed by a palace coup, with Murad V, realized that the new sultan would not be successful in realizing this change, they turned their direction to Şehzade Abdülhamid (Akşin, 1995, 15). Sultan Abdulhamid, who ascended the throne with the support of the Young Turks, accepted the transition to the constitutional government, as there was no time to be lost in a period when the state was going through hard times and the Great Powers were increasing their pressure, and this decision was declared to the Great Powers.

A new era started in the Ottoman Empire with the Kanun-i Esasi and the parliament that was opened in an environment where the Sultan and the Young Turks did not feel trust towards each other. The Great Powers – Great Britain, France, and Russia –, which continued to follow a destructive policy through minorities, did not find this step sufficient, and with the Russians taking action (1877–1878 Ottoman-Russian War), Sultan Abdulhamid shelved the Kanun-i Esasi and the parliament system, which he promised to declare but took very slowly. Immediately after these developments, Sultan Abdulhamid started to liquidate the Young Turks and was successful in this. The very short life of the constitutional government brought along the emergence of a number of new formations against the Hamidiye Regime. In 1889, during the centennial patrol of the French Revolution, a secret and revolutionary organization, which would later become the Committee of Union and Progress, was established by five young people at the School of Medicine (Zürcher, 2004, 86). This organization, which is a continuation of the movement that started in the 1860s, mostly consisted of young officers, and carried out its efforts to have Sultan Abdulhamid re-declared the constitutional monarchy.

In a short time, the committee entered into relations with many internal and external societies and organizations that were fundamentally opposed to the Hamidiye Regime, thus the committee gained considerable power. The committee, which was active in Paris and Geneva, soon made Thessaloniki its center. Since the Third Army in Thessaloniki was the first place of duty for the newly graduated officers, the committee was able to be organized in many of the Balkan cities. Due to the intelligence network established by Sultan Abdulhamid, the committee had never made concessions from its secret structure in order not to be exposed. So much so that even the entrance ceremony to the committee was held in a certain secrecy and the members of the committee knew each other within certain limitations. The committee took the Carbonari organization, an Italian masonic organization, as an example and went for a cell-like structure. In this structure, many of the members of the organization were in contact only with the members in their cell and found it appropriate to agree among themselves with certain symbols (Ramsour, 2002, 27–28). In this way, a wave of mystery circulating as a word of mouth had transformed the committee into a more charismatic and withdrawn structure. Despite all the criticism, this secret structure of the committee did not change even after the 1908 Revolution, the members strictly remained faithful to the oath they had sworn while entering the committee, and they respected its legacy even after the committee was dissolved.

Apart from this committee, it is certain that there are smaller secret organizations within the secret committee. The most famous of these secret organizations is a group called the Fedais. The Fedais group, which consisted mostly of young and courageous officers of the committee, although there were a small number of civilians, was working as an assassination team that strictly followed the decisions taken by the general central. This organization, which the Committee of Union and Progress strengthened its power in the following periods and used to suppress the opposition, remains one of the dark spots of recent Turkish history.

FEDAIS AT WORK: THE ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE THE CENTRAL COMMANDER OF THESSALONIKI, NAZIM BEY, AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF İSMAIL MAHIR PASHA

The strengthening of the existing structure of the Committee of Union and Progress was achieved by establishing and merging with the Ottoman Freedom Committee, which was established in Thessaloniki. In 1906, ten civilians and soldiers, who came together in a place called Beş Çınar in Thessaloniki, established this committee in 1889 with the same purpose as five young students studying in Military Medicine Faculty. The ten people who attended the meeting were: the Director of Military Junior High School of Bursa (Bursa Askeri Rüşdiyesi) Mehmet Tahir Bey, Naki Bey, the French teacher of the same middle school, Talat Bey, the head clerk of the Thessaloniki-Monastery post-telegraph office, Rahmi Bey, Mithat Şükrü, Kazım

Nami, Ömer Naci, İsmail Canbolat, Hakkı Baha, Edip Servet Bey (Duru, 1957, 13). Sina Akşin states that another source is commemorating Captain İsmail Hakkı and Süleyman Fehmi in the place of the last two people (Akşin, 1980, 58). Since the members of the association thought that it would attract attention that ten people would gather in the same house every night, they chose Talat, Rahmi and İsmail Canbolat as the Supreme Delegation, which later took the name General Center (Çavdar, 1991, 26). Thus, the center of gravity of the committee shifted from Paris to Thessaloniki and other centers in the Balkans began to act under the control of Thessaloniki (Küçükkılınç, 2018, 26).

Upon the news that some opposition movements had started in Thessaloniki, the sultan sent Nazım Bey, one of his trusted men, the Central Commander of Thessaloniki and also Enver Bey's brother-in-law, to understand what was going on in Thessaloniki and Rumelia. After Nazım Bey gathered important information about the committee and was invited to Istanbul, the committee decided to eliminate Nazım Bey and Mustafa Necip Bey was chosen from the fedais for this job. The assassination, which took place in a plan that included İsmail Canbolat and Enver Bey, failed and both Nazım Bey and Mustafa Necip, who carried out the assassination, were injured. Mustafa Necip managed to escape, but with the guidance of Enver Bey, the news that the assassination was carried out by the Bulgarian komitadjis spread and Nazım Bey was convinced of this situation. This first assassination carried out by the association's supporters had failed, but both Nazım Bey's going to Istanbul and explaining the situation to the Sultan and other news from Thessaloniki showed Yıldız the seriousness of the situation. In a series of telegrams sent by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, it was stated that the young officers in Thessaloniki and Rumelia were in a motion to re-declare the constitutional monarchy and that they would take action in the near future.¹ After these events, Sultan Abdulhamid understood the purpose of the committee and sent a delegation consisted of Yusuf and Recep Pashas to Thessaloniki under the leadership of İsmail Mahir Pasha to confirm the information received and to meet with the commanders of the soldiers who were in Thessaloniki and the officers who wanted to make a revolution (Ziya Şakir, 2014, 244). The apparent task of the incoming delegation was to inspect the equipment depots of the Third Army (Ahmad, 2004, 18). However, the CUP (Committee Union and Progress) members knew the main purpose of the committee that in the book titled *İnkılâb-Why and How It Happened*, written by Doctor Mehmed Reşid Bey under the pseudonym Cevri, he used the following expressions for this committee:

1 Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, in the tahrir he sent to the Chief Inscription on 18 June 1908, talked about how harmful it was for the corrupters to enter an army, and that the mischief-makers in the army used weapons in the days when the Russian Emperor and the King of England met, and as a result, it was important and essential for their chiefs to be obtained. Because of this, the measures to be taken by Esad Pasha, who was in the Ministry of the Army of the Imperial Council, and İsmail Mahir, Yusuf, Recep Pashas and Fehmi Bey who came from Istanbul, ensured that those involved in this business were found out, and instead of the officer whose complacency and incompetence had not been seen for a while in the pursuit of bandits. He stated that redif officers with fixed loyalty should be appointed (İSAM.HHP, 19/1274, 18 June 1908).

As soon as it understood the importance of the intellectual revolution in Rumelia, the repressive government was alarmed. It began to send flocks of spies there. Among the spies, the one who showed the most effort was Nazım, the Central Commander of Thessaloniki. Therefore, removing his body was a duty for the Committee. Nazım Bey injured from the attack of a glorious officer and fled to Istanbul. After this, a committee consisting of Mahir, Yusuf and Receb Pashas was sent to Thessaloniki (Çulcu, 2011, 225).

According to Enver Bey, the delegation came to Thessaloniki one day after the assassination of Nazım Bey², and its task was to investigate this assassination and, more importantly, to engage in the discovery of the committee (Cengiz, 1991, 89). It is not known whether İsmail Mahir Pasha had a disputant nature, but disagreements arose between this delegation, which was sent to Thessaloniki for an important task, and the delegation was later recalled (Ali Said, 1994, 148). İrtem states that both the disagreements between the members of the delegation and İbrahim Pasha's failure to withdraw this delegation and his recommendation to recall it were effective in the recall of the delegation. He also adds that Yusuf Pasha, who was in the delegation, and Rahmi Bey, the Former Governor of Izmir, who was in Thessaloniki at that period, met from time to time because they were relatives, and that Rahmi Bey's intimidation of Yusuf Pasha by saying that the fedais would assassinate them had an effect (İrtem, 1999, 298). Regarding the reason why the delegation was called back to Istanbul, Feroz Ahmad provides the following information based on the British archives:

The flow of events accelerated when the delegation headed by Mahir Pasha set foot in Thessaloniki. The Commander-in-Chief of the Third Army Esat Pasha and Chief of Staff Ali Rıza Pasha were summoned to Istanbul. Considering that these two pashas were the chief culprits of the discontent in the Third Army, the Palace planned to appoint commanders loyal to the Palace who would impose stricter disciplinary rules in their place, thereby preventing movement among the soldiers (Ahmad, 2004, 18).

It can also be seen on the same archives that "İbrahim Pasha, who succeeded Esat Pasha, was known as a reactionary for a long time. However, after he became the Commander of the Third Army, he started to cooperate with the Macedonian General Inspector Hilmi Pasha, who was known to have liberal tendencies. Together, they sent spokespersons to the Palace several times, demanding that the delegation be recalled." The information is concluded as "Finally, at the beginning of July, Mahir Pasha was ordered to return to Istanbul (Ahmad, 2004, 18–19)." It seems that there were some disagreements between the delegation, especially

2 Süleyman Kâni İrtem writes that the assassination of Nazım Bey took place on 13 June 1908, while the delegation came to Thessaloniki on 15 June 1908 (İrtem, 1999, 292).

İsmail Mahir Pasha, and Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, and this attitude of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha was effective in inviting the delegation to Istanbul. A telegram written by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha to the Head Clerk on 24 June 1908 is important in terms of showing the current conflict between the two. In his article, Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha stated that he had always been loyal to the sultan and the state, but that dishonest people like İsmail Mahir Pasha had slandered that he had written a false letter to him, and that for this reason, he would not have any dealings or correspondence with the treacherous İsmail Mahir Pasha (İSAM.HHP, 2/137, 24 June 1908.) Alkan states that according to the French documents, the return date of the delegation to Istanbul was July 2 (Alkan, 2012, 195–196), it seems that the delegation served in Thessaloniki for 20 days between 12 June and 2 July 1908.

It is also possible to see what activities the committee did about the CUP members in the writings of the Rumelia Inspector Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha to the Palace about the activities of the committee. For example, in his letter dated June 11, 1908, it is reported that one of the members of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha's delegation went to Karaferye, Vodine and Yenice Districts and took action to immediately arrest the officer who was found to be a member of the association (İSAM.HHP, 2/137, 24 June 1908). Of course, the members of the committee did not tolerate these attacks, investigations and arrests against them, and they held a grudge against the members of the delegation, especially the head of the delegation, İsmail Mahir Pasha, whom they considered responsible for these actions.

On the days of the Nazım Bey Assassination, it is seen that the CUP members who were to be known for being Fedais carried out other assassinations, which were at least as important as the Nazım Bey assassination in terms of showing the power of the committee. When these events, which coincided with the days before the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, were evaluated collectively, it can be said that these assassinations had a significant impact on the realization of the proclamation of the constitutional monarchy. The first of these assassinations was the murder of Monastir Police Inspector Sami Bey, who was alleged to have been a spy on behalf of the palace, on 6 July.³ This event was followed by the murder of Hacı Hakkı Bey, who was a member of İsmail Mahir Pasha's delegation, and his clerk, Şuayb, whose movements were carefully followed by the CUP members. Again, at that time, the assassination of Naim Bey, who conveyed the important information he knew to Yıldız and went to Istanbul to provide information, and was promoted to lieutenant colonel for this reason, followed. On the evening of July 5, when Naim Bey was in Thessaloniki, on his way home from Beyazkule, he was shot by an officer named Abdülkadir, one of the fedais of the committee, but the victim survived, and an unranked soldier waiting in front of the police station finished

3 In the letter written by Talat Bey, under the pseudonym Sâî, to the "Ottoman Progress and Union Committee Headquarters Committee", there are the following lines about the murder of Sami Bey: "The General Inspectorate has been convinced that the murder of Monastir Police Inspector Sami was by our committee" (Kuran, 2012, 458).

the work that Abdülkadir had left unfinished (Ziya Şakir, 2014, 321–322). Just after the assassination of Şemsi Pasha, on July 10, Mustafa Şevket Efendi, Mufti of the Monastery Artillery Regiment, was killed by Abdülkadir, when he left the Colombo Hotel where he was staying in Thessaloniki to go to Istanbul (Kabacalı, 2007, 84). Some of the other assassinations carried out by the CUP member Fedais before and after the Constitutional Monarchy was declared are as follows: The Monastery District Commander Osman Hidayet Pasha was shot while he was reading the sultan's edict on 17th July and murder of Debre Governor Hüsnü Bey on 19th July. The political murders that took place around the same dates but whose dates could not be determined can be listed as follows: The Governor of Prilepe, the murder of the Serez Artillery Commander, the shooting of Lawyer Sabir Efendi in Skopje, the wounding of Major Rıfkı, who was a spy, by an officer named Siyami, in Thessaloniki Dock, the killing of Captain Bahaeddin from Crete by an officer in the warehouses behind the customs in Thessaloniki, the murder of Law Captain İbrahim, Law Enforcement Officer Cavalry Captain Ali in the Central Command, and a civilian from Thessaloniki in the morning on the day of the declaration of constitutionalism (Kabacalı, 2007, 84–85).

An unsuccessful assassination attempt on Nazım Bey's life on 11 June 1908, and then the delegation's arrival in Thessaloniki under the presidency of İsmail Mahir Pasha created great uneasiness for the committee. The committee, which was in danger of being exposed, had no choice but to carry out the revolution. Especially in the branches of the committee in various regions of Rumelia, the demands were rising at the point of starting the revolution as soon as possible. The CUP members thought that the first of the events that ignited the revolution was the meeting of King Edward VII of England and Tsar Nicholas of Russia in Reval to discuss the Macedonian Question on 9 June (Alkan, 2008, 48). This meeting about the future of Macedonia has been a driving force in the movement of the committee. The events that broke out due to a picnic that Austria railway workers had and Albanians misunderstood, in the region called Firzovik, located on the border with Austria, caused the Albanians to arm themselves and became a pressure element for the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy by being guided by the CUP members (Külçe, 1944, 52–53). As a result of these events that developed one after another, the step that actually started the revolution was that Resneli Niyazi Bey went to the mountain with about 150 of his men on 3 July. Resneli Niyazi Bey was called to Istanbul in connection with the assassination of Eyüp Sabri Bey and Nazım Bey, but he did not respond to this call and was followed by Enver Bey, who took refuge in Tikveş from Thessaloniki. With the news of the revolt reaching Istanbul, Sultan Abdülhamid sent Şemsi Pasha, one of his most trusted men, who knew the region very well and was influential in the region because he was an Albanian, to Monastir (Mustafa Ragıp, 2007, 12).

The arrival of Şemsi Pasha in Monastir caused a great indignation within the Committee. Knowing the effect of Pasha on Albanians, the committee made an assassination plan to eliminate the pasha in order to reach the result, and the task was

given to Mülazım Atıf Bey. On July 7, 1908, Atıf Bey shot and killed Şemsi Pasha while he was leaving the Monastir Telegraph Office, he was wounded but saved his life and hid by the CUP members and was safely smuggled into Resne (Özdemir, 2014, 179–180). Considering that the probability of suppressing the rebellion by Şemsi Pasha is very high, the murder of Pasha can be interpreted as one of the most important events in recent history. It can be said that the success of the rebellion with the death of Pasha and the subsequent transition to the constitutional administration paved the way for the power of the Union and Progress, which would shape a period (Babacan, 2005, 26). The abduction of Osman Pasha, who was sent to the region after the news of Şemsi Pasha's death, was also abducted by the CUP members, an indication that the influence of the central authority in the region was almost non-existent, and as a result of the telegrams sent one after another from different centers in Rumelia, Sultan Abdulhamid declared on 23 July 1908 that the constitutional administration was reinstated (Tunaya, 2004, 19).

Assassination of İsmail Mahir Pasha (December 2, 1908)

The five-and-a-half-month period between the assassination attempt on Nazım Bey, which was the first step taken by the CUP members in Thessaloniki on the way to the revolution, and the date İsmail Mahir Pasha was killed in Istanbul on December 2, was a period that witnessed important events almost day by day. The process that led to the death of İsmail Mahir Pasha, one of the most trusted pashas of Sultan Abdulhamid, started when the Pasha presided over the delegation sent to Thessaloniki to investigate the activities of the committee in the region after the assassination attempt on Nazım Bey.

Who was İsmail Mahir Pasha?

İsmail Mahir Pasha gives the following information about himself in the autobiography document:

I am the son of Zeynel Abidin Bey, who passed away in 1864, when he was the District Governor of Mina Sanjak of Yemen (the governors were called district governors at the time), who was one of the notables of the Konice Town of the Ioannina Province and who had the third medal of honor and medals. My date of birth is in Konice at the beginning of March 1853. After studying in some schools for a while, I was given the rank of battalion clerk in 1871 and went to the reserve unit settled in Yemen, and after giving the ranks of regimental clerk and regimental security officer there, I returned to Istanbul in February 1878 and served in Hassa Ordu-yu Hümayûn for three years. After transferring to the 3rd Army, I presented the ranks of major in 1885, district governor in 1891, and miralay in 1899 (BOA, Y.PRK.TKM., 33–15, 25 June 1903).

In the continuation of the document, İsmail Mahir Pasha stated that he had medals of the 4th rank for his achievements in the Battles of Serbia and Thessaly due to his services in Yemen, Majîdî, and Serbian Border Commissar, and that he served as a commander in the province of Kosovo, bandit pursuit and in the District Governorates of Gresne, Yakova and Kalkandelen. During the wars, he served as the Lamya outpost commander and the commissioner of the trustees. After the war, he served as the Commander of the Dömeke Provident Regiment, and with the evacuation of Thessaly, he performed his duties as the Commander of Public Security in Yanya. He was transferred to the Miralay of the 61st Regiment in Shkodër with his current rank. He also states that he was transferred to the 6th Humayun Army (BOA, Y.PRK.TKM., 33–15, 25 June 1903).

İsmail Mahir Pasha took part in the delegation sent to the island to investigate the Samos Events before he went to Thessaloniki to investigate the assassination attempt on Nazım Bey and the secret committee. This task is an important turning point in İsmail Mahir Pasha's professional life. Due to the active role played by Pasha during the events in Samos in May 1908, he was promoted to the rank of Ferik. The rebellion started by the Revolutionary Sofulis, who took all the orders from the Greek authorities, was closely followed by the Ottoman authorities. The Ottoman authorities, who took the path of solving the incident before it got too big, made political attempts, but the opposition group gradually increased its activities. The Sublime Porte realized that he could not ignore more issues and solve the problem through advice, and he felt obliged to take all kinds of measures, including military operations, in order to radically change this negative picture against himself on the island (Örenç, 1995, 145–146).

While the Bâb-ı Âli was carrying on its military preparations, considering the political aspect of the issue, it was beneficial to have a person from the civil servants on the island, and appointed the Thessaloniki Governor Rauf Pasha and his assistant Konstantinidi Pasha for this task. The rule was conveyed to Rauf Pasha, and he was ordered to leave his office to the Provincial Inspector of Rumelia by proxy, with the Eighteenth Shooter Battalion, which was dispatched from Salonika, and to act immediately, with the accompany with his assistant. Apart from these individuals, İsmail Mahir and Sadık Pashas, two of the Sultan's aides, were assigned to supervise the necessary measures (Örenç, 1995, 149).

İsmail Mahir Pasha was wounded in the leg as a result of the fire opened by the rebels in Samos.⁴ In the telegram sent to the Sublime Porte from the Thessaloniki Governor Rauf Bey, who was sent as a civil servant for the reformation of Samos, this situation was expressed as follows: "Yesterday, upon the urging of İsmail Mahir Pasha from the aide-de-camp, a house that dared to fire weapons on the Hamidiye Cruiser was bombarded, destroyed and punished by being destroyed. Troops were landed and they patrolled" (BOA, Y.A.HUS., 522–5, 18 May 1908).

4 Western Times, 1 June 1908: Women and Children Shot by Turkish Troops in Samos, 4.

İSMAIL MAHIR PASHA BECOMES THE TARGET OF THE CUP MEMBERS

The delegation, which was assigned to investigate the revolutionary movement in Thessaloniki, reached there one day after the assassination attempt on 12 June and settled in İsplândit Palas and started its activities immediately. According to Ahmad, the delegation, which remained in Thessaloniki until July 2, had little success in revealing the secret societies. Therefore, the organization of the Committee of Union and Progress in Thessaloniki remained as it was (Ahmad, 19). A similar interpretation is also seen in Kabacalı. Kabacalı states that this high commission of detectives returned to Istanbul without revealing the secret organization (Kabacalı, 2007, 91). Özdemir, like Ahmad and Kabacalı, states that the commission did not provide the expected preventive benefit, but on the contrary, the attacks of the fedais who were worried about being prosecuted increased even more (Özdemir, 2014, 213).

We can say that this delegation, headed by İsmail Mahir Pasha, did not fail much contrary to the above-mentioned researchers' claims, at least it put a serious pressure on the CUP members. As a result, Özdemir's writings about the increase in the attacks of the fedais are in a way an indication of the committee's discomfort with the committee. Ramsour writes that after the work of the delegation, some officers were arrested and sent to Istanbul (Ramsour, 168). Again, Avcı, in his work based on British secret reports, states that the delegation's arrival in Thessaloniki, departing from Istanbul, was enough to alarm the committee and, in Lowther's words, the arrival of the delegation was a signal for the committee to take action (Avcı, 2005, 197).

In this regard, a letter showing the perspectives of the CUP members towards the incoming delegation and how the members of the delegation were persecuted by the committee is very important. Although the exact date could not be determined, in the letter sent by Talat Bey under the pseudonym Sâî to the Headquarters of the "Ottoman Progress and Union Committee" after the assassination of Nazım Bey, Talat Bey wrote the following:

The measures taken by the government on recent events are very serious. With this, it is understood that they will be completely surprised by a more fundamental and serious action. Upon the case, the palace sent three pashas, one of whom was more stupid than the other; and one of them was ferik, a war governor and a doctor. (Names: İsmail Mahir, Yusuf, Receb Pashas and Hasan Fehim and Halim). These people attempted to deceive the people with lies such as the promise of becoming a vizier and the promise of thousands of liras, and when they were humiliated and belittled by everyone and some of them were intimidated by the committee, they were surprised at what they would do, even though they included the general inspector in their journals, they said that everyone from the highest ranking soldier to the soldier and from the governor to the villager was included in the committee. After sending them to Istanbul with fear, they were summoned to Istanbul by quarreling with each other when Indicator İbrahim Pasha became the army commander (Kuran, 2012, 458).

Talat Bey continues to explain the situation as

prior to the appointment of İbrahim Pasha, Indicator, Grand Vizier Ferid Pasha's brother-in-law, Mirliva Ali Pasha and Artillery Miralay Hasan Rıza Bey and subsequently Deputy Commander of the Army Ferik Esad Pasha were summoned to Istanbul. Of these, Ali Pasha and Hasan Rıza Bey are imprisoned in the Bâb-ı Seraskeri. Lastly, Erkam Harb Major Enver Bey was also tried to be summoned by fraud, but the treacherous purpose was understood and he temporarily abandoned his official duty to perform the duty of 'Rumelia Internal Organization and General Forces Inspector' of the Committee. Surely our officers there know what kind of hero Enver Bey is (Kuran, 2012, 458).

It was concluded in his statement that it was obligatory to keep this news confidential without being included in the newspaper (Kuran, 2012, 458).

Kuran interpreted this letter as “On the one hand, he cites the assassinations perpetrated against the lives of people whom they deem harmful to the committee, and on the other hand, he mentions that these people who were sent from the Palace were subjected to persecution one by one” (Kuran, 2012, 459) and indeed, the committee was thinking of taking some kind of revenge on the members of this committee.

Another proof that the delegation was influential on the CUP members is the assassinations of the members of the delegation. If the committee had been so ineffective, the committee's attitude towards them would not have been so harsh. The first of the members of the delegation to be assassinated was Hacı Hakkı Bey. Hacı Hakkı Bey was a member of the İstanbul Şehremaneti and was assigned to gather information about the committee in Thessaloniki. Talat Pasha gave the following information about Hacı Hakkı Bey in the letter mentioned above. “A nasty person named Hacı Hakkı Bey, one of the bad people of İstanbul and a member of the municipality, was appointed to the sleuthing organization here by Yıldız and started his duty as a spy. We hope that we will soon be acquainted with the supply and disclosure. Şuayıb, one of the spies of Fehim Pasha, the clerk of Haji Hakki, was killed at night.”

İrtem mentions about the incident of Hacı Hakkı Bey in his book as follows: “Even though it was understood that it was not possible to do anything to Abdülhamid as a result of the negotiations, it was decided to take action since eliminating his men would mean taking his sword from his hands and putting himself in danger. The attempt against Hacı Hakkı Bey in Thessaloniki was the result of this decision. Colonel Tunçay gives the following explanation against what Hacı İsmail Hakkı Bey wrote about what happened to him in Thessaloniki in the pamphlet “İzhar-ı Hakikat”, which he published after the constitutional monarchy: The articles of Hacı Hakkı Bey about the fact that guns were thrown at him or the house he lived in by others do not correspond to the truth. The execution of Hacı Hakkı Bey was decided by the Central Committee of Thessaloniki (İttihat Terakki), and his execution was written to the Fedai Division. A

person from the Fedai Division – who is in Ankara now. Maybe I don't write his name in case he doesn't want to publish it- had accepted. Captain Abdülkadir Efendi, who was one of the administrative committee of the Fedai Division, was also assigned to support and help this fedai. Hacı Hakkı Bey was returning home from the Beyazkule garden late that night, with his guard. The fedai shot at him in the back alley. Hacı Hakkı Bey fell on the ground shouting. His guard, on the other hand, was both running away and trying to get his revolver in its holster. The fedai followed him and fired at him, after seeing him fall too, he turned and aimed his gun at the head of Hacı Hakkı Bey, who was lying on the ground. But this time the revolver did not fire. He drew the second pistol next to him, which didn't work. He withdrew, unable to reload his automatic pistols. This is why Hacı Hakkı Bey escaped a certain death. The fact that he depicted the situation in a way that did not comply with the truth in his pamphlet, which he wrote after the Constitutional Monarchy, must have been based on the purpose of not arousing the enmity of the committee again. It is seen that İrtəm and Colonel Süleyman Fehmi Tunçay, who told the events by sending a letter to him, were wrong on some points. Because the book *Izhar-ı Hakikat* belongs to Ferik Hasan Tahsin Pasha, not to Hacı Hakkı Bey. It is already known in the sources that Hacı Hakkı Bey was killed as a result of an assassination on 6 July (Alkan, 2012, 352; Ahmad, 2004, 26).

Mustafa Şevket Efendi, Mufti of the Monastir Artillery Regiment, who, like Hacı Hakkı Bey, contacted the İsmail Mahir Pasha delegation and conveyed information to them, was killed in Thessaloniki on 10 July. Mithat Şükrü Bleda, one of the leading names of the committee, describes this assassination as follows:

The information given about the Mufti of Monastir, one of the ordinary informers of Yıldız Palace, was not in the mood that he was a person to be neglected at all. According to what we learned, he was constantly journaling the activities of our committee in Monastir. So it was decided that he was a dangerous person. The interesting thing is that this mufti took orders directly from Yıldız Palace and sent his journals there (Bleda, 1979, 38–39).

Bleda mentions that they had learned that he was preparing to go to Istanbul with an order from the Mabeyn and their Monastir organization had informed them that this man's life was dangerous. He goes on describing the event with the following details:

The mufti had come to Thessaloniki to go to Istanbul. This bigot had to disappear from his body. We learned that he was staying at the Colombo hotel in Thessaloniki. We understood that the guy knew a lot and that he would go to Istanbul as soon as possible and tell his master everything. In fact, the importance of this trip was evident from his rush. He was not supposed to go to Istanbul and we were going to finish the job right there. This time our "fedai" was Abdulkadir Efendi. As soon as he took this duty, he took off his military suit and dressed in civilian.

He went to the Colombo hotel and began to wander up and down the front of the building. The Istanbul train would depart early the next morning. Therefore, he had no time to lose. Abdulkadir Efendi, who could not sleep all night, saw the teacher with his bag in his hand coming down the stairs of the hotel in the early hours of the morning and drew his gun and stuck the bullet just as the mufti was getting into the car (Bleda, 1979, 38–39).

He concludes his description as “the mufti collapsed to the ground in blood, and in the rush of the hotel staff, no one had attempted to find out where the lead had come from” (Bleda, 1979, 38–39).

Another assassination event that took place after the delegation’s mission in Thessaloniki was quite interesting. On July 12, Sadık Pasha, a member of the delegation, was killed near Çanakkale by two people while he was on the way to Istanbul (Ahmad, 2004, 26) on the Sidon Ferry (Akşin, 1980, 74). İrtəm said that this incident was not caused by the CUP members but due to the disagreement between Rüstem Bey and Sadık Pasha, and that Rüstem Bey went to Prizren after the spies started to be shot by the CUP members and brought a young man aged 19–20 to shoot Sadık Pasha. He states that Sadık Pasha set off, one day after they came to Thessaloniki with this young man, and that he had this young man on the ship and had Pasha shot in the vicinity of Çanakkale. İrtəm further adds that since this assassination was in accordance with the wishes and interests of the committee, no voice was heard by the committee (İrtəm, 1999, 298–299). It is not known whether this claim, which we could not find in any other source, was true, but somehow another of the men trusted by the Sultan was eliminated. It is possible to say that these assassinations had a serious impact on İsmail Mahir Pasha, because it is known that after he arrived in Istanbul, Mahir Pasha did not leave his mansion much and did not meet with many people.

An event that took place after the delegation of İsmail Mahir Pasha left Thessaloniki is also important in terms of showing how the committee was perceived by the CUP members.

The incident showing that this committee commissioned by Sultan Abdulhamid was taken seriously by the CUP members, and Talat Bey, who referred to them as “idiots”, saw the departure of the delegation from Thessaloniki and the re-declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy as a victory for the members of the delegation, and in a broader sense, against Sultan Abdulhamid, has been experienced that it is important in terms of showing Talat Bey’s feelings towards the delegation, albeit a symbolic act. On the morning of July 25, two days after the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, Talat Bey informed his friends that Merkez-i Umumî would settle in İsplândid Palas. Although Rasim and Süleyman Fehmi Beys said that this was not the right thing to do, Talat Bey could not be controlled, and Talat Bey said: “We will live in the apartment where İsmail Mahir Pasha lived,” and the middle floor of the apartment overlooking the sea has been moved (İrtəm, 1999, 369).

The Return of the Delegation to Istanbul and the Murder of İsmail Mahir Pasha

The return of İsmail Mahir Pasha to Istanbul caused events that were at least as important as his departure. Because İsmail Mahir Pasha claimed that some high-ranking officers, especially Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, betrayed the palace, and he even made the same claim about Ali Pasha, the son-in-law of the Grand Vizier Avlonyalı Ferid Pasha. Pasha was exiled to Bursa in a short time due to these accusations (Ahmad, 2004, 19). While he was in exile in Bursa, he was arrested on 9 August 1908 together with the Inspector of the Military School, Zülüflü İsmail Pasha (Kabacalı, 2007, 91).⁵

The release of Mahir Pasha, whose detention did not last long, was reflected in the İkdâm Newspaper as follows: “It was stated to Bab-ı Ali that İsmail Mahir Pasha, who was imprisoned in the Ministry of War, wanted to be released on the grounds of his illness.⁶ It is seen from this news in the newspaper that İsmail Mahir Pasha, who was imprisoned for two and a half months, was released on the condition of residing in his household due to health reasons.

Sabah Newspaper, on the other hand, conveyed the developments after Pasha’s arrival in Istanbul to its readers as follows: “Before the Second Constitutional Monarchy, İsmail Mahir Pasha came to Dersaadet after he had acted against the members of the Union and Progress in the Third Army and was sent to Bursa after being detained for a while in the Ministry of War after the proclamation of the Freedom. After being there for a while, he came to Dersaadet this time”.⁷ It is understood from this news of Sabah Newspaper that İsmail Mahir Pasha was first arrested and kept in prison for a while in the Ministry of War, and then he was sent to Bursa.

The situation of İsmail Mahir Pasha’s appointment to Sivas ten days before he was assassinated was reflected in the İkdâm Newspaper as follows:

The request to send Ferik İsmail Pasha, who was later dismissed while he was an inspector of the Military School in the Hamidiye Period, to Sivas in order to be appointed to a division commandership that would be opened in the Fourth Army in the future, was sent from the Ministry of War to the Office of the Sadâret and it was asked about what work the aforementioned pasha would be busy in Sivas (!) from the relevant ministry.⁸

It is clear that İsmail Mahir Pasha feared that he would be assassinated by the CUP members at this time. Even before he left Thessaloniki, he said to Kazım Nami Bey, one of the most important members of the Committee of Union and Progress, perhaps because he was afraid of the CUP members, “Our master, sent us here to learn the state and behavior of the officers. I’ve been inquiring since the day we

5 Dundee Courier, 11 August 1908: The New Era in Turkey, 4.

6 İkdâm, 23 October 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa, 3.

7 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

8 İkdâm, 23 November 1908: Mahir Paşa, 3.

arrived. I saw no faults, no faults in our officers. All of them are decent, decent, valuable officers who protect the honor of military service.” He wanted to send a message to the Committee, perhaps through Kazım Nami Bey, whom he learned to be a member of the committee, by saying “I will report what I saw on my return (Duru, 1957, 26)”. However, it is clear that this message was not enough to save Mahir Pasha. According to the Sabah Newspaper, “Pasha, who prudently did not go out of his mansion too much, ordered his servants not to open the door and to open to those who came to the door once their identity was understood through the window according to the sentence ‘traitors become cowards.’”⁹

İsmail Mahir Pasha was killed on 2 December 1908 as a result of a well-designed assassination. Pasha did not accept the invitation of a man dressed as an officer who came to his house to bring a telegram that invites him to Mabeyn for different reasons on December 1st, but a day later, believing the telegram sent by the Minister of War and requesting a meeting, he left his house to go to the Ministry of War with his servant and he was shot and killed by a person wearing an officer’s uniform in front of Sultan Mahmut II tomb. When we look at the narration of this event in different sources, it is seen that the general line of the event is the same, but when we go into detail, different discourses emerge.

An officer who came to İsmail Mahir Pasha’s mansion on 1 December gave a telegram to the servants of the house and asked them to deliver it to the Pasha. In the telegram taken at 3.15 am on the 1 December 1908;

“To His Excellency Ferik İsmail Mahir Pasha

When you receive the telegram, it is reported that it is the order of the sultan to come directly to the Mabeyn-i Hümâyûn-ı Mülûkhâne in civilian clothes.

Cevad, the First Secretary of the Sultan” (BOA, Y.A.HUS. H., 1 December 1908) statement is included. As it can be understood from the telegram, İsmail Mahir Pasha was summoned to the Mabeyn in a civil manner with the signature of Ali Cevad, the Chief Clerk of the Mabeyn. It can be thought that those who sent this fake telegram to the pasha in order to carry out the assassination followed such a course because they thought that the pasha would attract more attention with his military uniform.

It seems that İsmail Mahir Pasha sensed that this telegram was a fake telegram prepared to drive him out of the house, and for this reason, he did not go to Mabeyn immediately. However, Ali Cevad Bey informed İsmail Mahir Pasha, who went before Ali Cevad Bey to learn the truth of the incident, that no such telegram was sent to him from the Mabeyn and that he would present the event to the sultan. When the situation was reported to the sultan by Ali Cevad, the sultan ordered that no such telegram was sent to the pasha and that his grand vizier should handle the issue. The content of the meetings between the Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha and the Minister of War Ali Rıza Pasha with İsmail Mahir Pasha and the fake telegram were written to the palace as follows:

9 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

Ferik İsmail Mahir Pasha was asked to come to the Sublime Porte at half past one o'clock in the night by sending the news that the pasha had to be seen for investigation and information regarding the telegram sent for the special memorandum dated December 1, 1908. He stated that he wanted to discover the correctness of the situation regarding their bringing and giving. According to the investigation carried out by sending civil servants to the Dersaadet Telegraph Office, to find out if such a telegram was received from the Mâbeyn Telegraph Center and it was unsuspected that it was not the original. Since it is not possible to predict what benefit it might be for him because it was classified by the person, or whether it would be something that was assigned against the pasha by another person, it is of great importance that the information to be received tomorrow by notification and referral to His Excellency the Minister of War, should be carried out (BOA, Y.A.HUS., 1 December 1908).

Kamil Pasha and Ali Rıza Pasha, who met with İsmail Mahir Pasha, who was summoned to the Grand Vizier at half past one at night, and saw the copy of the telegram, sent an officer to the telegraph office and revealed that such a telegram had not been sent to İsmail Mahir Pasha and there was no doubt that the telegram was fake. However, they stated that it was not known whether this fake telegram was taken by the pasha himself or by another person, and they also stated that this issue would be investigated. As a matter of fact, it is obvious that there is a distrust of İsmail Mahir Pasha's statement from this statement.

The information given by Ali Cevat Bey, who was mentioned on the fake telegram and one of the key figures in the assassination, after the assassination took place, also confirms the course of the event. Ali Cevad Bey describes what happened on the day and night of December 1 as follows:

I came to İsmail Mahir Pasha that day and said: I have received your telegram stating that I must come to the Imperial Palace today. However, since I did not dare to leave my house alone, he said that he had received a telegram saying that I would request that an officer be sent to the Ministry of War and that this work be done by the Ministry of War; he said that he did not send such a telegram to him, and that he suspected the situation because he knew about his situation, and was told that Sultan did not send such a telegram to him. When he presented the situation, he states that they ordered this telegram to be checked and sent to the Grand Vizier Pasha. He said that the Grand Vizier and the Minister of War had called İsmail Mahir Pasha to the Sublime Porte at night and talked to him, and upon the Pasha's telegram signed by Ali Cevat, he was sent home by saying no such telegram was sent to him from Yıldız or any other center, and that the matter would be investigated (Unat, 1991, 21).

It is understood that some events that cannot be fully understood took place the day before the death of Pasha. It is possible to see the traces of this obscurity in the

newspapers that reported the incident to their readers after the assassination took place. For example, Sabah Newspaper states that before the meeting in the evening, İsmail Mahir Pasha first met with the Minister of War, and writes the following:

The previous day, he had received a telegram from Mabeyn with the signature of Cevad containing an invitation to come to the Mabeyn. He went to the Minister of War, Ali Rıza Pasha, and showed him the statement and the telegram and asked him whether he should go or not. İsmail Mahir Pasha yearned for perseverance in the place where he was a regular in the Hamidiye Period and could not visit for a long time. So much so that the Minister of War could not find a face among His Excellency. It was also late. He has come to his house. The Minister of War told the situation to the Grand Vizier Pasha. Thereupon, in the evening, the Grand Vizier and the Minister of War summoned İsmail Mahir Pasha to the Sublime Porte and met with him. After the interview, Mahir Pasha went to his mansion.¹⁰

Yeni Gazete gives the following information about Pasha's last moments before the assassination: "According to our private investigation, the mood of the deceased has changed since a few days, he has always started to behave suspiciously, even being cautious, often not showing up to those who search for him in his apartment. In fact, on Tuesday evening, an unknown person went to his house and said that there was a telegram on behalf of Pasha, and the servant girl took it from the window." It is also reported in the newspaper that, in the telegram, which was written with a pencil on the printed paper, it was written that the Pasha would immediately go to the Mabeyn-i Hümâyûn. The Pasha did not respond to this invitation, but kept the telegram in his possession, either because he acted cautiously or because he thought that a Ferik would only be obliged to comply with that order of the Ministry of War during the Constitutional Period.¹¹

One day after this fake telegram was sent, someone dressed in an officer's uniform came to İsmail Mahir Pasha's mansion in Binbirdirek and gave a letter to the girl who opened the door. The girl took the memorandum to İsmail Mahir Pasha. The content of the memorandum was as the following:

"Good Lord

We need to meet for tonight's matter. I am ready for your presentation. On December 2, 1908, the Minister of War Ali Rıza¹²" was writing. Contrary to what was written in the telegram yesterday, Mahir Pasha, who received this memorandum, believed for some unknown reason that this time the invitation was real, and took his servant, Yanyalı Mahdi, with him and set out for the Ministry of War. "At four, half past four o'clock, as he was reaching the entrance of Fazlı Paşa Street opposite the Sultan Mahmud Tomb and a few steps away from the İstikamet Pharmacy, a gunshot was heard. An unknown

10 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

11 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Katli, 3.

12 İkdâm, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Katli, 2.

person from behind injured Mahdi, first in the left hip and then in his right hand, with a revolver.” According to the newspaper, while Pasha was turning back from his left at the sound of gunfire, he found himself in front of the assassin and, unable to take any action, extended his hand to the revolver in his pocket, but could not remove it because the revolver was wrapped in a handkerchief, and the unknown person suddenly fired and the bullet from his revolver hit Pasha’s heart. The newspaper concludes the news as “He fell on his back to the corner and the bottom of the wall. After the murderer fired two more shots, he was out of sight.”¹³

According to the news which was reported in Sabah newspaper, the notice that was received by the police mentions that the person who handed the revolver and was thought to be an officer was dressed in a soldier’s outfit and had a sword on his waist. After unloading the revolver, he walked towards Fazlı Pasha and went back to Divanyolu. It is also reported that “There he repeated the word (soldier run to the street) and repeated it in a hasty manner, and took the road towards Kadirga from the street next to Matbaa-i Osmaniye. No one saw his revolver in his hand during the incident.”¹⁴

Yeni Gazete conveys the moments after the murder to its readers as follows.

The neighborhood watchman, the gendarme waiting for the spot, the cavalry staff and those who heard the uproar immediately caught up with the scene and saw that the Pasha and his servant were lying injured, and they were transferred to the İstikamet Pharmacy there. Pasha surrendered his spirit while being imported from the door of the pharmacy. There, only the first aid was performed on the wounds of the servant Mahdi.

*When the gunshots were heard from the Pasha’s house there, they immediately ran and when they saw the victim in the pharmacy, they wanted to transfer him to his residence. After his examination was carried out by the police doctor, Pasha’s body was taken to his house and the butler was transferred to the municipal police hospital for treatment.*¹⁵

The official report of this assassination, which took place in the middle of the city, not too late, was kept as follows:

At four thirty in the evening on Thursday, the third of December, when we heard that guns were fired six times in front of Sultan Mahmud Tomb in Divanyolu, İsmail Mahir Pasha and his servant Mehdi bin Cevahir, who had a mansion in Binbirdirek, were lying wounded in Rauf Bey Pharmacy across the Sultan Mahmud Tomb. And Mahir Pasha, who was unconscious and was about to sober up, when his servant Mahdi was interrogated after his wounds were bandaged,

13 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Katli, 3.

14 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

15 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Katli, 3.

he said that a person dressed in a military suit came to the mansion at night and left a letter to the servant girl addressed to the Pasha, and then went out into the street with the statement that he was invited to the mansion by the Minister of War. When they came to the corner of Rauf Bey Pharmacy, a person who was thought to be a soldier emptied his revolver on them and that he had escaped by injuring him in three places before and then injured Pasha.¹⁶

The report goes on stating the event as, being examined by the doctors on duty, he was taken to the Prison General Hospital and Mahir Pasha, whose statement could not be taken because the treatment was not successful, passed away, Assistant Prosecutor Tevfik Bey was summoned by the duty doctor for the execution and procedure. It is reported that watchman İbiş, İbrahim, who worked at the Balcı Store, and Feyzi, the subscriber officer at the Matbaa-i Osmanî, who were at the crime scene, were interrogated one by one, a person in military clothes and a sword in his waist, who could not be identified, with a revolver in his hand, deserted to Fazlı Pasha and then again. The report finishes with the following words: “He hastily repeated the word (soldier run to the street) by going out on Divanyolu, and he escaped by turning towards Kadirga from Matbaa-i Osmaniye street, it was understood that no one saw him while he was using a revolver, and İsmail Mahir Pasha’s body was sent to his mansion on a stretcher.”¹⁷

Shortly after Pasha was assassinated, Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha was informed of the event by a telegram sent to the Grand Viziership with the signature of the Minister of Police, Sami, at six forty. The telegram sent by Sami Bey to the Grand Vizier is as follows:

To the High Presence of the Grand Vizier

This evening, at a quarter past five, an unknown person went to İsmail Mahir Pasha’s mansion around the Sultan Mahmud Tomb and took him out on the street under the pretext that the Minister of War wanted him. At a distance of one hundred and fifty meters from the mansion, he fled first by injuring his servant with a revolver and then murdering him. The murderer is being investigated by the police and the investigation continues by the summoned prosecutor. 4 December 1908 (BOA, Y.A. HUS., 526-13, 2 December 1908).

Kamil Pasha also conveyed the news of the assassination, which was reported to him, to the Palace with the following words:

The telegram of the Ministry of Police was presented, stating that Ferik İsmail Mahir Pasha was deceived by an unknown person and was killed by being removed from his house at night. This case indicates the possibility that the fake telegram, of which

16 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Katli, 3.

17 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Katli, 3.

the copy was presented with the sultan's special decree dated December 2, 1908, was prepared by the person who was hostile to the pasha, and it is clear that if the murderer is caught, the truth will be revealed, sir.

Grand Vizier Kamil (BOA, Y.A. HUS., 526-13, 2 December 1908).

Two days after the assassination took place, Sabah Newspaper had a meeting with the Minister of War, Ali Rıza Pasha, and the reporter asked Nâzır Pasha to tell what happened. The statement of Ali Rıza Pasha was reflected in the newspaper as follows:

“According to the information published about the culling of İsmail Mahir Pasha, according to the statement of his servant Mahdi, it was stated that a man dressed in a military uniform came to the house the previous evening and handed a letter bearing the signature of the Minister of War, even a copy of the memorandum was printed below.”¹⁸

It is stated in the newspaper that one of their reporters went to the Minister of War Pasha that night to get information about this memorandum. A detailed statement made by the Minister, declaring that such a resolution was not original, is included in the newspaper as follows:

While we were sitting here at four o'clock in the previous night, they had brought news that “İsmail Mahir Pasha has come and wants to see you”. “Come on,” I replied. He came to me a little later. He was in civilian clothes. “I received a telegram from Mabeyn. They are calling me there. I came to consult whether I should go or not,” he said. “I can't say anything to that. It's your decision to go or not,” I replied. He left and came back two hours later. “I thought, it won't be possible to go, it's late. I will answer the telegram,” he said. “You know,” we said to him. He's gone out. The previous day, while he was in the Assembly, Grand Vizier Pasha received a telegram from Mabeyn. In this, İsmail Mahir Pasha sent a telegram stating that he was invited to Mabeyn by telegram and that he could not go unless the Ministry of War was notified. No such invitation telegram was sent to him. Since there was an order “Let it be verified”, İsmail Pasha was summoned to the Grand Vizier's office to be verified, and even the telegram, which he claimed to have, was checked upon request. Mahir Pasha also left a copy of the telegram with me. Most likely, this telegram was also something fake. He said that I had sent a memorandum to Mahir Pasha when Mahir Pasha's brother Pertev Bey came here yesterday morning.

*Today, two officers from the Ministry of Justice Investigation Department came to me, declaring and expressing how Mahir Pasha arrived, how he asked for permission, and finally what I had replied to him, and I signed the paper prepared in that way. This is what the current situation is all about.”*¹⁹

18 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

19 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

The information given by Ali Rıza Pasha clearly shows that those who planned the assassination were watching all the steps of Mahir Pasha moment by moment. Especially Pasha did not want to go to the Mabeyn because he did not believe the first telegram, but when he was invited again by the Minister after the night he met with the Minister of War, he must have thought that the invitation was real this time, so he took his servant with him and set out. The most striking point here is that it was known to the assassin(s) that İsmail Mahir Pasha had a meeting with the Minister of War at night, perhaps through his men in the Ministry.

One of those who came to the scene after İsmail Mahir Pasha and his servant were shot was government doctor Nikolaki Efendi. Nikolaki Efendi, who came to his house and examined Pasha, kept the death report as follows:

When İsmail Mahir Pasha was examined in his own house, a hole with a diameter of seven millimeters was created by the bullet of the firearm fired closely at the front of his chest and at the sixth distance of the spine in the left rib cage, and this hole was scarred around it, and the right side of his back and the tenth spine in the lower part were slightly larger than the hole drilled. A large bullet exit was seen and it was understood that the bullet had pierced his heart while traveling and that he died from loss of blood due to his wound.²⁰

The body of İsmail Mahir Pasha was taken from his house at eight o'clock one day after the assassination and buried in the family cemetery near Merkez Efendi Lodge.²¹

Who Shot İsmail Mahir Pasha?

This assassination, which took place approximately four and a half months after the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, caused great indignation. The fact that the person who shot Pasha could not be caught caused the murder to remain unsolved. However, the way the murder was committed is similar to the previous murders of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress, civilians and mostly soldiers. Of course, wearing an officer's uniform and committing the murder with a revolver could be a method used by a power other than the CUP members to pin the murder on the CUP members. Apart from that, this murder may have been committed for a personal reason. However, the fact that İsmail Mahir Pasha went to Thessaloniki to investigate the Assassination of Nazım Bey and to gather information about the committee, that some members of this delegation were assassinated and the members of the delegation were threatened, draws attention to the CUP members.

There is no doubt that the most important issue that can clarify the point of who committed the assassination is the statements of the witnesses. Istanbul Chief Public

20 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Katli, 3.

21 Şura-yı Ümmet, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Katli-Tahkikat-ı Vaka, 3.

Prosecutor's Office Chief Assistant Tevfik Bey and Prosecutor Süleyman Sırrı Efendi conducted the investigation regarding the murder that took place in the evening hours. When the statements of those present, especially the Pasha's servant Mehdi, were asked, the guard Mehdi was asked, "Who shot you tonight, who killed Pasha? "He must be a soldier. Tonight, they shot at the corner opposite the Sultan Mahmud Tomb. Someone came to the house. When the servant girl gave a letter to be given to His Excellency Pasha and said, "The Minister of War is calling him," they shot both of us in the corner I said while I was going with the Pasha. I can't describe his appearance," he replied. Ibiş, who is the watchman of Uzun Şücaettin District, answered the question of what is the information about the incident;

Tonight at half past four, a tall man dressed in a black hoodie and boots, and I'd only recognize him if I saw him: 'Watchman, revolver being thrown upstairs' said to me. He also went downstairs. I also went to the crime scene. I saw Pasha in the pharmacy. The person who came across me also informed the Fazlı Pasha Police Station. The gendarmerie officer told me. I don't know how many rounds were fired, he replied.²²

From the other two witnesses of the incident, İbrahim Efendi, from the Balcı Kardeşler Store, heard six handed guns in Divanyolu, then a man fled towards the Fazlı Paşa slope with a revolver in his hand. After a while, two police officers came running and started the survey. He said that he saw him go to Divanyolu and go towards Kadırga. The other witness, Bosboğaz Newspaper subscriber Feyzi Efendi, reported that while he was closing the shop under the Matbaa-i Osmaniye at half past four in the night, he heard six gunshots and a soldier in a military suit ran past him and said as we had said above, "Is there no police station here?" has done.²³

The point of who committed an unsolved murder will remain in the dark. Because, as a result of our research on this subject, some names that were stated to have committed this murder, albeit different from each other, were reached.

Falih Rıfkı Atay was the first to give information about who İsmail Mahir Pasha was killed by. Atay points to Halil (Kut) Pasha by saying, "According to what I learned later, it was Enver Pasha's uncle who killed İsmail Mahir Pasha" (Atay, 2013, 56). Halil (Kut), who was Enver Pasha's step-uncle, was a member of the group of the Fedayeen of the Committee.

Mustafa Müftüoğlu, in a non-academic study (Küçükınlı, 2018, 17), stated that İsmail Mahir Pasha, the important man of the Yıldız Intelligence Organization, was marked in Thessaloniki, was always followed in Istanbul, and his relevance to the palace did not go unnoticed despite his pardon. He adds that it was Abdulkadir, who also committed many murders on behalf of the committee, who shot Pasha

22 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

23 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Katli, 3.

(Müftüoğlu, 1977, 77–78). Murat Çulcu also states that the murder was committed by Abdülkadir, one of the community's fedais (Çulcu, 1990, 230)

One of the names who gave information about who committed the murder is Süleyman Külçe. In the book of Külçe, he claims that it was Mustafa Necip who assassinated Nazım Bey in Thessaloniki who shot Pasha (Külçe, 1944, 55). Refi Cevat, on the other hand, claims that it was one of the fedais, Yakup Cemil, who shot the pasha (Ulunay, 1973, 249).

One of the most different and striking claims about who or by whom the murder was carried out is in the Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper, one of the media organs closely interested in the incident. The newspaper writes that Pasha was killed by one of the 21 young officers from Thessaloniki and this was done to avenge the sins of the old regime. It also added that the investigation carried out to find those responsible was done very carelessly.²⁴ The Innsbrucker Nachrichten Newspaper, on the other hand, conveys the news of the assassination as “It turned out that those who killed Mahir Pasha were former members of the Young Turks.”²⁵

Again, there is a different information in Neues Wiener newspaper that the murder was committed by former members of the Young Turks. The newspaper makes the following claim, which is not mentioned in any other source: “It has now become clear that those who killed the general were former members of the Young Turks. Mahir Pasha was sent to Thessaloniki for research twice. After he was sent, his death sentence was given by the committee there. But he managed to evade the two committee members tasked with the execution of the sentence. These members were therefore expelled from the committee. They executed the death sentence in order to get into the eye again.”²⁶

The Reichspost Newspaper, in its news dated December 5, 1908, reported that the assassination could have been committed by a very different hand:

*İsmail Mahir Pasha was Albanian. The investigation into him was inconclusive. On the one hand, this is predicted. This event may be an assassination of the Young Turk committee or an assassination of officers. Pasha had earned the hatred of the officers with his research in Salonika. On the other hand, it is claimed that this action may be an assassination of the Albanians, who are the compatriots of Pasha.*²⁷

The newspaper Neue Freie Presse published in Vienna, while reporting the murder of Mahir Pasha, expresses a different claim that we have not encountered in other newspapers. Newspaper conveys the news to the readers as;

24 Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 Dezember 1908: Ein Prozess des Sultans mit dem Kriegsminister, 2.

25 Innsbrucker Nachrichten, 5 Dezember 1908: Zur Ermordung des Generals İsmail Mahir Pascha, 9.

26 Neues Wiener Journal, 5 Dezember 1908: Der Mord an der İsmail Mahir Pascha. Die Tat ehemaliger jungtürkische Mitglieder–Vollführung eines früheren Todesurteils Ein Akt der Rehabilitierung, 12.

27 Reichspost, 5 Dezember 1908: Die Vorgänge in der Türkei, 2.

*İsmail Pasha was taken to the street at 10 pm by two officers with a modified fake letter from the Minister of War. He was then knocked down by eight shots. The reason for the assassination is not yet clear. İsmail Mahir Pasha, who was killed yesterday, must have been the person who arrested Enver Bey in the Monastir. It may have been carried out by the friends of Enver Bey, who was ambitious and resentful because of this.*²⁸

The murder of İsmail Mahir Pasha, who was targeted by the CUP members because of his negative attitude towards the committee in Thessaloniki and because he was one of the most trusted men of Abdulhamid II, as a result of an assassination, has a serious place both in the Istanbul Newspapers and in the transmission of the witnesses of the period. Both in the newspapers and in the memoirs, a negative attitude was taken against İsmail Mahir Pasha and the murder of Pasha, who was a loyal man of the Hamidiye Regime, was seen as the price of his old sins and it was emphasized that İsmail Mahir Pasha was not a very acceptable man as a personality. For example, Sabah Newspaper wrote about Pasha in our yesterday's issue that İsmail Mahir Pasha, who was one of the great spies of the Revolution, was injured and killed by a revolver bullet fired by an officer in Divanyolu in Çemberlitaş, and that his servant Yanyalı Mahdi was dangerously injured. İsmail Mahir Pasha came to Dersaadet after he had been involved in the fight against the freedom fighters in the Third Army before the Second Constitutional Monarchy and was sent to Bursa after being detained for a while in the Ministry of War after the proclamation of the Freedom. After being there for a while, he came to Dersaadet this time and instructed his servants not to open the door after his sentence 'traitors become cowards' and to open the door once the identity of those who came to the door was understood from the window.²⁹ It is possible to see similar expressions used by Sabah Newspaper in the Hukûk-ı Umûmiye Newspaper. While conveying the news of the assassination to its readers, the newspaper emphasizes that the loss of Pasha was not a cause for sadness because he was a person who put out fires and took pleasure in it, with the following words:

*İsmail Mahir Pasha, one of the most formidable spies of the Abdulhamid Era, was murdered by an unknown person with a revolver in front of the Sultan Mahmud Tomb at around four-four-thirty the previous night, and even his servant was injured. İsmail Mahir Pasha, who is known for having a great pleasure in demolishing houses and extinguishing fires and making it a habit to do so... [...] Although those who know İsmail Pasha's past cannot be affected, our government should work hard to find the perpetrator in order to put an end to the circulating rumor for this reason.*³⁰

28 Neue Freie Presse, 4 Dezember 1908: Die Ermordung Mahir Paschas, 3.

29 Sabah, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Maktûliyeti ve Lazım Geldiği Kadar Tafsilât, 2.

30 Hukûk-u Umûmiye, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa'nın Katli, 4.

Yeni Gazete, on the other hand, stated that there are many bad things to be said about Pasha in its columns, but it would be better not to talk about the dead behind them, and included the following words about Pasha:

After the official announcement, if it is necessary to talk about the personality of the Pasha, here; We prefer silence, observing the order of “remember the dead with goodness”. Let’s just add that İsmail Mahir Pasha, although he seemed very attached to western customs, was not well-informed. Although his speech was very neat and he was apparently very observant of military laws, he was not a soldier to be considered a casualty for our army, as can be understood from the official statement. May Allah Almighty forgive his negligence.³¹

Unlike Sabah, Hukûk-u Umûmiye and Yeni Gazete, Tanin, Şura-yı Ümmet and İttihat-Terakki Newspapers, which were published as the publication organs of the Committee of Union and Progress, avoided commenting on Pasha and only reported the assassination event to their readers.

One of the important names of the CUP, Tanin editor-in-chief Hüseyin Cahit Bey, while expressing that he does not approve of the assassination, states that Pasha is an insignificant person who should not be among the people to be killed, and adopts an attitude similar to the attitude of the newspapers of the period towards İsmail Mahir Pasha.³² Hasan Amca, one of the leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress, who was in front of the Sultan Mahmud Tomb at the time that İsmail Mahir Pasha was shot, and who was a witness to the event, wrote the moment of Pasha’s shooting and his experiences as follows.

I was walking on the cobblestone pavement opposite the tomb of Sultan Mahmut II. It was maybe 11 or 12 midnight. After a sound like the shutter of a shop was closing, I saw that one of the two people five or ten steps ahead of me, whom I can’t remember from where we came across, got lost, the other one knelt on the ground as if playing

31 Yeni Gazete, 4 December 1908: İsmail Mahir Paşa’nın Katli, 3.

32 He comments on the murder of Hüseyin Cahit Pasha: “In the 3 December 1908 issue of Tanin, the following lines in the “Latest News” section shed light on the event: “Last night, at around five-thirty o’clock in the evening, there was a meeting on the street opposite the Sultan Mahmut tomb. A murder was committed. Six shots were fired at İsmail Mahir Pasha, who was passing by, and because two of them coincided, Pasha died with the effect of his wounds, and those who threw weapons fled. The police are conducting the necessary investigation.” What was the reason and meaning of this political killing? While a revolution is being prepared, being made, assassinations against the oppression management men who are wanted to be destroyed in this way can be considered logical. But now that the Constitutional Monarchy has been realized and even the most hated men of the Abdülhamid administration were not touched, the murder of an unknown İsmail Mahir Pasha in the middle of the street in Istanbul was a very meaningless and inappropriate act. They whispered that, in order to gain the power and worthiness that the Committee was losing in Istanbul, they had killed a man who had been sentenced to death. Presumably the attempt was a big mistake if it came out of the Association. The dignity of an Association cannot be sustained by instilling terror in the people” (Yalçın, 2000, 87–88).

zeybek, and he made a gesture as if he wanted to get up even though he had opened his arms as in the zeybek game. He couldn't get up, he collapsed again. I got to him when he said in a spiteful voice:

- They shot the pasha, there, said. He pointed to a darkness receding from the opposite sidewalk. I turned to my right. I found the second person who had disappeared, slumped against the wall, almost taking their last breaths. A cloaked man was walking away from the opposite sidewalk in the direction of the Kadirga (Amca, 1989, 64–65).

Strangely enough, after explaining that Hasan Amca Pasha, who witnessed the event at the time of his murder, was taken to Rauf Pharmacy after he was shot, that his wife came to the Rauf Pharmacy, that he sent the woman to his house and that he accompanied the funeral to the Pasha's house, and said, "This murderer, who left the place of the tragedy he committed in cold blood, went away. Although he did not do anything more than mourn a family", he states that the murder of Pasha did not upset anyone but his family. Hasan Amca explained the reason why İsmail Mahir Pasha was killed: "There was no sin that İsmail Mahir Pasha committed that day... According to my investigation, this man was only an Albanian nobleman and is a relative of Şemsi Pasha. In this respect, he was chosen as a harmful man to be feared" and adds that he criticized the committee for this assassination (Amca, 1989, 67).

CONCLUSION

The last century of the Ottoman Empire can be considered as a very turbulent period. While the state was experiencing land losses on the one hand, it started to recognize the systems of the states where it lost land and accelerate its modernization moves in order to minimize these land losses. The fact that foreign states threatened the unitary structure of the State by fueling the nationalist movements within the minorities within the empire led to some reform movements towards these elements in the first place. Especially after the Tanzimat Edict, an atmosphere began to emerge among the Ottoman intellectuals that the establishment of a western style management system would play a role in preventing separatist and nationalist movements. First of all, these intellectuals, who tried to spread their thoughts by using the press organs, started to operate by establishing secret organizations over time.

Among these secret organizations, the organization that most influenced Turkey's recent history had undoubtedly been the Committee of Union and Progress. The Committee of Union and Progress is a committee that has not compromised on the principle of confidentiality since its establishment. Its main goal is the opening of the parliament, which was suspended by Abdulhamid II due to the 93 War, and the re-enactment of the constitution. For this purpose, the organization targeting Sultan Abdulhamid, which it saw as the biggest obstacle to the constitutional government, tried many legitimate or illegitimate ways for this purpose. There are smaller secret organizations formed within this secret committee, in which mostly junior officers from school are members, and the most interesting of these organizations is the group of bodyguards. This organization,

which was created to “eliminate the movements that the center of the committee saw as an obstacle to freedom or to decipher the structure of the committee”, carried out serious activities both before and after the constitutional monarchy, and it can even be said that it has signed off on events that will change the course of history.

One of the most notable assassinations of the committee was the assassination of İsmail Mahir Pasha, one of the important spies of the Abdülhamid era, on 2 December 1908. Mahir Pasha, who headed the delegation sent from Istanbul to investigate the situation of the members of the committee who made an unsuccessful assassination attempt on Nazım Bey, who was assigned to investigate the activities of the Association in Thessaloniki on 11 June, became the target of the Association during his short stay here, and the mission of the delegation ended and he moved to Istanbul. Upon his return to Turkey, Pasha was the victim of an unsolved murder. Of course, the murder of Ferik, one of the most loyal men of the Palace, in broad daylight in the middle of Istanbul, meant a clear intimidation to Sultan Abdulhamid. The foreign press, especially the Ottoman press, gave wide coverage to the event, and some newspapers even talked about a possible change of throne after this assassination event. Although the assassination of İsmail Mahir Pasha remained unsolved, it is accepted as an action carried out by the Fedayeen branch of the Committee of Union and Progress and was recorded as an event that deeply affected the political life of the period.

Before the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, in order to strengthen its dominance in Macedonia, the Committee, which eliminated the people that they saw as obstacles to the realization of the goals of the Committee, started assassination activities in order to show its power in the capital, where actually it was relatively weak, after Sultan Abdulhamid put the Constitution into effect for the second time on 23 July 1908. When it's evaluated the first of these assassinations, the Assassination of İsmail Mahir Pasha, together with the Assassination of Journalist Hasan Fehmi, it is seen that it had consequences that deeply affected the Ottoman political life. Just as the murder of Şemsi Pasha, one of the Sultan's most trusted men, heralded the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the murder of Mahir Pasha, one of the sultan's former aides, in Istanbul also heralded the 31 March Incident, which resulted in the dethronement of Abdulhamid II. It can be said that because of these assassinations, which made the Sultan feel that his authority in the capital was lost, the balance of power in the capital turned in favor of the CUP members.

ATENTAT NA GENERALA İSMAILA MAHIRJA PASHO V ISTANBULU (1908)

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POVZETEK

Po razglasitvi 2. ustavne monarhije je Odbor za zvezo in napredek še naprej usmerjal svoje napade na ljudi, ki so jih imeli za ljudi starega režima, in Mahir Pasha je bil kot stari pomočnik sultana Osmanskega cesarstva Abdulhamida II. nedvomno eden od tistih, ki so bili v nevarnosti. Kot izkušen vojak, ki se je zavedal te nevarnosti, ni imel nikakršnega namena, da bi zapustil svoj dvorec. Nekega dne, pred 2. decembrom 1908, ga je nekdo, ki je bil oblečen v vojaška oblačila, povabil na ministrstvo, vendar temu vabilu ni verjel in se z vednostjo vojnega ministra ni zglasil na ministrstvu, minister pa je sam potrdil, da je bilo vabilo lažno. Vendar pa je 2. decembra spet nekdo v vojaških oblačilih prinesel telegram, kjer je spet pisalo, da ga vojni minister vabi na ministrstvo. Po tem telegramu se je Mahir Pasha odpravil na ministrstvo, vendar ga je na ulici Divanyolu umoril nekdo v oficirskih oblačilih. Atentatorja ni bilo mogoče ujeti. Ta atentat, ki je bil podoben tistim, ki jih je izvedla skupina atentatorjev Odbora, imenovana »Fedais«, je ostal nerešen umor. Umor Mahirja Pashe, ki se je zgodil zelo blizu palače in samega sultana, sredi dneva in sredi Istanbula, je imel svoje politične posledice. Namen tega članka je oceniti razloge za atentat, raziskati, kdo ga je umoril ter preučiti politične posledice tega atentata.

Ključne besede: Abdulhamid II, İsmail Mahir Pasha, člani Odbora za zvezo in napredek, atentat, Otomansko cesarstvo, Istanbul

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