



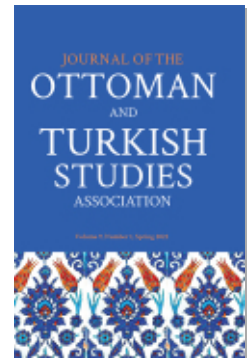
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after the Young Turk Revolution

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“We Do Not Want Spies Anymore”: The Abolition of Spying after the Young Turk Revolution*

Arda Akinci

ABSTRACT: One of the first measures taken by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), after assuming power in 1908, was to abolish spying. This has been mostly treated as a simple outcome of the change of power. However, this article offers a different perspective on the abolition of spying in 1908 and the subsequent exile of the spies in 1909. This study focuses on the abolition of spying in the Ottoman Empire as a significant idea shaped since the earlier years of the Young Turks’ opposition to the rule of Abdülhamid II and followed strictly as a policy after they assumed power. Rather than treating abolition of spying and the exile of spies as a byproduct of the 1908 Revolution, this study takes it as one of the pillars of the Young Turks’ ideological discourse and a central policy of the CUP. The article maintains a thread from the origins of Young Turk aversion to spying to the exile of the spies in 1909 following the 31 March Incident. This research aims to contribute to the social history of the late Ottoman historiography by placing the abolition of spying into a larger context together with its agents – the spies.

KEYWORDS: Abdülhamid II, Young Turks, Committee of Union and Progress, 1908 Revolution, Spying

On 30 June 1909, the Second Court Martial (*İkinci Divân-ı Harb-i Örfî*) sentenced Emsaleddin Efendi, a low-ranking military officer, to exile. A communiqué dispatched by the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Public Order reveals that he had been found guilty of spying.¹ Only four days later, Emsaleddin Efendi was banished to the district (*sancak*) of Kayseri, a remote town in central Anatolia.² Once there, until his death in 1935, he ceased to exist in the eyes of the

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1. BOA, ZB., D:496; G: 44; I:1/1 / (17 Haziran 1325/30 June 1909).
2. BOA, ZB., D: 496; G: 44; I:2/1 / (21 Haziran 1325/4 July 1909).

Ottoman imperial administration and, after 1923, the Republic of Turkey.³ His exile remains a puzzle given that he had been decorated with two imperial orders and had never been promoted to the higher ranks of the army. On the one hand, we could ask why was a loyal and decorated officer exiled? What could explain the exile and confinement of an officer worthy of imperial orders? On the other, we could also ask why was Emsaleddin Efendi, a man who never reached high rank, considered enough of a threat to warrant exile in the first place? The answer to these questions lies not only in the story of Emsaleddin Efendi himself, or his having been a spy, but also in how the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) perceived spying and treated even the lowest ranking spies as a major threat once they assumed power.

The lives of spies after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 remains largely a mystery. Shortly after coming to power, the new regime exiled Hamidian-era spies and destroyed archival documents related to spying. From the beginning, CUP policies on spying reflected their overriding ideological aversion to the role that spying played in the Hamidian regime. Scholars have to this point not focused on the abolition of spying as a political statement by the CUP. As a result, the abolition of spying and details about individual spies themselves have not been the subject of academic interest.

While many aspects of the Young Turks as a political opposition movement and as a ruling party have been extensively studied, the abolition of spying has yet to be analyzed as a significant policy following the 1908 revolution. Even the most comprehensive works on the Young Turk opposition and CUP rule only briefly mention and shallowly address the abolition of spying.⁴ The

3. There are only two documents in the Ottoman Archives about Emsaleddin Efendi, both regarding the imperial orders he received. First, a Fifth Class Medjidié Order in 1896 and a Fourth Class of the same order in 1899. See BOA, I. TAL, D:99; G:85 (17 Haziran 1312/29 June 1896); BOA, I. TAL., D:175; G:3 (1 Mayıs 1315/13 May 1899).

4. Some examples of the literature on the Young Turks and the CUP are as follows. Here it is necessary to state that none of these works are specifically concerned with spying or the abolition of spying. However, in one way or another all deal and engage with the phenomenon of secret intelligence during the reign of Abdülhamid II. See Feroz Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki: 1908–1914*, trans. Nuran Yavuz, 5th ed., Kaynak Yayınları 19 (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1999); Aykut Kansu, *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey, 1908–1913*, Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia, v. 70 (Boston: Brill, 2000); Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi: Elusive Transformation: The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, trans. Ayda Erbal, 1. baskı, Araştırma-Inceleme Dizisi 52 (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim, 1995); M. Şükrü Haniyoğlu, *Preparation For a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908*, Studies in Middle Eastern History (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); M. Şükrü Haniyoğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, Studies in Middle Eastern History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Naim Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999).

majority of the existing scholarship treats abolition as an incidental byproduct of the CUP’s assumption of power, not as a significant policy concern in its own right. In recent years, however, two important additions to the literature—both published doctoral dissertations—have begun to shed light on this subject. Hasan Ali Polat’s “II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Siyasî Sürgünler (1908–1918)” engages extensively with the 1909 exile of Hamidian-era spies. The final chapter of Emre Gör’s “II. Abdülhamid Döneminde İstihbarat” places the CUP’s abolition of spying at the center of analysis.⁵ This article builds upon this nascent literature and proposes a new perspective on the abolition of spying and the exile of spies following the Young Turk Revolution. It suggests that the abolition of spying by the CUP in the first days of the 1908 revolution marked the culmination of Young Turk views on spying developed over years in opposition. Most importantly, by citing several individual examples, this article foregrounds the human aspect of the abolition of spying and the exile of spies.

The article is composed of three main sections: The first section focuses on how the Young Turks and the CUP perceived the intelligence network and the spies of Sultan Abdülhamid II during their early years in political opposition, as well as the CUP’s confrontation with the sultan’s spies. The second part analyzes how the CUP’s aversion to spying as a practice, and to those who engaged in spying, turned into tangible policies in the years following the 1908 revolution. The final section focuses more on the human aspect of the abolition of spying by discussing individual cases of Hamidian-era spies exiled as a response to the 31 March Incident (1909), the attempted counter coup against the CUP government.⁶ The article ends with concluding remarks regarding Young Turks’ approach to the Hamidian intelligence network and its agents and lays the ground for inquiries for further research. As a whole, the article shows how a focus on these individual stories can help us to humanize spies and reveals that the abolition of spying in the days following the 1908 revolution was not merely a retaliation against Hamidian rule, but rather a long-term policy adopted and strictly followed by the CUP.

5. The third section of Gör’s book focuses on the transformation of the structure of the secret intelligence network and the abolition of spying in 1908. See Emre Gör, *Abdülhamid Döneminde İstihbarat: Mutlakıyetten Meşrutiyete İmparatorluğun Haber Alma Faaliyetleri 1876–1909*, 1. Basım, Kitap Yayınevi ; Tarih ve Coğrafya Dizisi, 353. 107 (Kağıthane, İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2019), 334–50. Polat, on the other hand, focuses on the political exiles after the 31 March Incident, including those accused and founded guilty of spying by the Second Court Martial. See, Hasan Ali Polat, *II. Meşrutiyet döneminde siyasî sürgünler (1908–1918)*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2020), 214–71.

6. The counter coup happened on April 13, 1909, but commonly known as 31 March Incident (*31 Mart Vakası*) in Turkish historiography by referring to the date in Julian calendar. The details regarding the attempt and its impact on the trial of spies will be discussed in more detail below.

Realizing these aims is not as easy as it may first appear. One of the biggest obstacles to telling this story is the lack of available primary sources on spying during the Hamidian regime. The destruction of relevant documents after 1909 deprives historians of the original spy reports, information crucial for tracing the lives of spies. Moreover, the exile of men like Emsaleddin Efendi to remote parts of the empire meant that Hamidian-era spies, fearing a similar fate, avoided writing memoirs or otherwise sharing their stories and experiences. This lack of primary sources has naturally led to a dearth of scholarship on the subject, and the work that does exist is often highly speculative and distorted. Nevertheless, by tracing documents from various subfolders of ministries, provinces, and Yıldız Palace in the Ottoman Archives, I was able to put hitherto unutilized sources together with newspaper accounts from the period. Additionally, and uniquely, this article benefits from an interview with the great grandchild of Emsaleddin Efendi conducted in January 2020. While political and legal changes in post-revolutionary movements have been studied extensively, the human aspect of these changes has been relatively less examined, especially in the late Ottoman context. Thanks to the information shared by Emsaleddin Efendi's descendant, this study brings the human dimension of the abolition of spying by following the example of Emsaleddin Efendi rather than simply focusing on the legal changes imposed after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. This way, this article also aims to understand how the experience of exile shaped the family memories across multiple generations.

Emsaleddin Efendi was found guilty by the Second Court Martial in 1909 as part of a wave of prosecutions against Hamidian-era spies.⁷ The verdict stated that Emsaleddin Efendi had been spying under the supervision of Zeki Pasha, former Field Marshal of Imperial Arsenal of Ordnance and Artillery. Specific details about his time as a spy were not revealed, such as when and where he was stationed or the nature of his spying activities. Apparently, for the tribunal, the mere fact of his having been a spy was enough to warrant a guilty verdict. The court ordered him “. . . to be removed immediately from his military duties and exiled to an appropriate location . . .”⁸ Emsaleddin

7. According to Emsaleddin Efendi's descendants, there were three main turning points in his life. One of them must have happened in the late 1880s or early 1890s, when he left his hometown for Istanbul to join the military. The second was his marriage to a woman from the imperial palace, Melek Hanım of Crete. Finally, the last turning point would be his close working relations with the Field Marshal of Imperial Arsenal of Ordnance and Artillery (*Tophâne-i Âmire Müşiri*)—Zeki Pasha.

8. BOA.I. AS., D:85; G:21; I:1/1 / (21 Mayıs 325/7 June 1909). The original document states “. . . mevâki-i münâsibeden birine teb'idine . . .”

Efendi's great-grandson offers more insight into the trial. According to him, Emsaleddin was first sentenced to death, but thanks to the efforts of his wife, Melek Hanım, his sentence was re-evaluated and commuted to exile. Melek Hanım had been raised at the palace and may have used her connections there to obtain a commutation. His place of exile was not chosen randomly, which also supports the theory that Melek Hanım's networks in the palace might have played a crucial role. Emsaleddin Efendi was sent to a remote village of Kayseri called Büyük Bürüngüz, which happened to be his hometown.⁹

At this point, it is possible to speculate on what Emsaleddin Efendi's family reported concerning the role that Melek Hanım played in Emsaleddin's case. As is discussed in greater detail below, those found guilty of spying by the Second Court Martial were commonly exiled; few faced the death penalty. Among those who did face the death penalty was Kabasakal Çerkes Mehmed Pasha, one of the most infamous spymasters (*serhafiyye*) of the Hamidian era, who was tried before the Second Court Martial in 1909. While Emsaleddin Efendi's verdict clearly mentions that he was exiled because of spying, none of the available records give a reason for Kabasakal Mehmed Pasha's execution.¹⁰ In other words, it is unclear why when most Hamidian-era spies were sentenced to exile, Kabasakal Mehmed Pasha was sentenced to death. This archival silence can help us to speculate more on what Emsaleddin Efendi's descendants report about his sentence. Since there are no records on spies receiving the death penalty—or at least linking that sentence to their spying activities—it is possible that Emsaleddin Efendi was never faced with the death penalty to begin with. If that is the case, then it might appear his wife, Melek Hanım, did not play a critical role in his sentencing. However, even if Melek Hanım did not intervene to have Emsaleddin Efendi's death sentence commuted to exile, circumstantial evidence still points to Melek Hanım having played a major role in Emsaleddin Efendi's fate after 1909. Compared to most high-ranking bureaucrats who were found guilty of spying and exiled to remote regions, Emsaleddin Efendi, as a lower-ranking officer, was instead sent to his hometown. After arriving in their place of exile, most convicted spies likely led solitary lives, separated from their families. Emsaleddin Efendi was at least given the chance to return to his hometown.

9. Ziya Alp, Emsaleddin Efendi, interview by Arda Akıncı, January 7, 2020.

10. There are no available primary sources in the archive why he was executed, i.e., whether because he was a spy or for another reason. For more information on Mehmed Pasha's execution see, Emre Gör, "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi'nden Bir İstihbaratçı Profili: Serhafiye Fehim Paşa (1873–1908)," *Stratejik ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3, no. 1 (March 7, 2019): 79; Kansu, *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey, 1908–1913*, 144; Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople: The Recollections of Sir Edwin Pears 1873–1915* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1916), 303; "Executions in Constantinople," *The Mail*, July 21, 1909.

Therefore, Melek Hanım emerges here as an important figure by changing her husband's fate through leveraging the connections she established during her time at the imperial palace to ensure that Emsaleddin Efendi was exiled to a familiar location rather than a remote part of the empire.

Emsaleddin Efendi's life after his exile to Büyük Bürüngüz is a mystery as there are no archival documents attesting to his activities while there. According to his family, upon arrival in Kayseri, he secluded himself from the outer world. He did not hold a job or send his children to school. It was only the third generation—his grandchildren—who broke this cycle. Furthermore, Emsaleddin Efendi never discussed his life as a military officer nor his memories as a spy with his family.¹¹ The secretive life that Emsaleddin Efendi led, as well as the lack of archival documents about him, leaves us, on one hand, with little accurate information. On the other hand, his example offers us the opportunity to reflect more broadly on the lives of spies after the abolition of spying. Emsaleddin Efendi's silence regarding his past as a spy, and the isolated life he led with his family following his exile was probably not uncommon behavior among former Hamidian-era spies. The fact that spies, regardless of their rank, left no surviving memoirs points to the secretive lives they led after 1909. Furthermore, even the most high-ranking bureaucrats were barred from civil and political life. Their fates could be partly related to regime change and partly to the CUP's policies on spying after 1908. It is quite likely that in 1909, Emsaleddin Efendi feared not only for his life but also for the safety of his immediate family. After 1908, spies were popularly viewed as personifications of the worst elements of Hamidian despotism. As a result, the new government initially forswore both spies and spying, at least until 1909, and popular sentiment against spying resulted in the lynching of at least one Hamidian-era spymaster (*serhafiyye*), Fehim Pasha, in Bursa shortly after the re-establishment of the Ottoman constitution.¹²

The Formation of Young Turks' Attitude towards Spying

For the case of Emsaleddin Efendi to have meaning, it is crucial to examine how the political opposition perceived spying during the reign of Abdülhamid II. After all, Emsaleddin Efendi was only one among many other former spies whose lives remained invisible and unaccounted for after the regime change. Hence, his story can give us more details about the lives of spies after exile. Certainly, Hamidian-era spies did not all share the same experiences after

11. Alp, Emsaleddin Efendi.

12. For more information on the case of spymaster Fehim Pasha see Gör, "II. ABDÜLHAMİD DÖNEMİN'DEN BİR İSTİHBARATÇI PROFİLİ" and Süleyman Kâni İrtəm, *Abdülhamid Devrinde Hafiyelik ve Sansür: Abdülhamid'e Verilen Jurnaller*, ed. Osman S. Kocahanoğlu, Tarih/Kültür Dizisi 7 (Çemberlitaş, İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 1999), 36–40.

1909. Nevertheless, the story of Emsaleddin Efendi stands out for the tantalizing insight it can provide into their lives post-exile. Negative popular perceptions of Hamidian-era spying and intelligence-gathering activities emerged during the sultan's reign but reached their peak immediately after the CUP assumed power in 1908. Criticisms of Hamidian-era spies and spying published in Young Turk newspapers provides insight into how the political opposition positioned themselves against Abdülhamid's notorious spy network.

The Young Turks emerged as a political opposition movement in the late 1880s among students attending the empire's modernized military schools. This same cadre would later form the basis of the CUP. The Young Turk opposition was hardly ideologically unified.¹³ A particular understanding of Abdülhamid's personal rule, however, helped to bring opposition intellectuals together with students of the military and medical schools. There were several reasons why all these groups opposed the Hamidian "machine," as Carter V. Findley describes the Ottoman state during the Hamidian era.¹⁴ For the sake of clarity, I will focus on how the political opposition defined the complex, empire-wide spying network created by Abdülhamid's regime and how that fed into perceptions among the political opposition of the "tyrannical character" of his rule.

According to the opposition, if Abdülhamid II was a "tyrant" and his regime was a "period of oppression" (*devr-i istibdâd*) then his spies were the group that most facilitated this oppression. Beginning as early as the 1890s, but particularly after 1908, critical newspaper articles, political pamphlets, memoirs, novels, and other cultural products placed significant emphasis on spying in their critiques of the regime. After all, the existence of a strong surveillance network in Istanbul is the primary reason why the members of political opposition organized themselves far from the imperial capital. As Şükrü Hanioglu argues, the CUP before 1907 was "a network of scattered branches, most of them outside the empire, that engaged in the distribution of propaganda material. The branches within the country were working against insuperable odds because of the sultan's effective spying network."¹⁵ We can see how in the political imagination of the time, spy-

13. Often in the literature, the terms Young Turks and the CUP are used interchangeably. However, it is important here that the term Young Turks refers to a larger movement, whereas the CUP refers to the political party that took shape in the 1890s and whose members assumed the leadership of the 1908 Revolution. For more information see Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. VIII (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2007), 511.

14. Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922*, Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 288. The reforms Hamidian Era has been a matter of extensive academic studies. Besides the Findley's chapter, see François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, trans. Ali Berktaş (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), 333–51.

15. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 2001, 232.

ing played an important, maybe even generative, role in the formation and organization of the political opposition. It loomed large in their thinking and became one of the prime reasons for their opposition to the Hamidian regime.

An early sign of opposition specifically to spying can be seen in an unsigned newspaper article entitled “Hafiyeler (Spies),” published in 1896. According to the newspaper, the piece came from a writer in Istanbul. The article argued that spying was a degrading and immoral path that left people without their dignity and humanity, and Yıldız Palace, the headquarters of the Hamidian regime, was forcing people to spy upon others, resulting in the destruction of many lives, including those of the spies themselves.¹⁶ The article appeared in *Meşveret*, a newspaper published by an influential member of the CUP, Ahmed Rıza. The newspaper could only be published in Paris as the “publication of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress.”¹⁷ Even there, in 1896, due to pressure from the Sublime Porte, the French government suspended the publication and subsequently only allowed the newspaper to be published in French.¹⁸

Another article published in 1896 in the London-based Young Turk newspaper, *Hürriyet* (Liberty), also reported critically about spies. The article was sent to the newspaper by the group’s special informant based in Istanbul. It claimed that spies had recently become a threat to the public, citing an event that had taken place a week ago near the Çırağan Palace, the gilded prison that housed Murad V, Abdülhamid II’s brother and immediate predecessor as sultan, following his deposition in 1876. According to the informant, children had been flying a kite near Çırağan when an unexpected wind dropped the kite on the palace grounds. Spies, who had already surrounded the palace from the sea and the land, witnessed this and informed the “cruel warden of Beşiktaş”—the district where the palace is located—and then proceeded to investigate whether the kite bore a message to the deposed sultan.¹⁹ The article criticized the overly intrusive actions of the spies, and took things a step further by claiming that the event made clear the disgraceful nature of their behavior, with the regime’s paranoia boundless enough to be suspicious of children flying a kite. For the opposition, the Hamidian regime’s spies were dangerous not simply because of their constant surveillance of the public—including members of the opposition themselves. They had also become a potent symbol of the “autocratic rule” that dominated the empire. For them, spying was not only a regime tool, but the very personification of Abdülhamid II’s fears of being dethroned.

16. “Hafiyeler,” *Meşveret*, February 16, 1896.

17. Originally writes *Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin vasıta-i neşriyatıdır*.

18. Azmi Özcan, “Meşveret,” in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2004).

19. “Muhâberât: İstanbul Muhbir-i Mahsumumuzun Mektubu,” *Hürriyet*, September 1, 1896.

The Young Turks published newspapers not only in western European capitals but also in those parts of the Ottoman Empire where the power of the imperial government was weak. One such place where the political opposition enjoyed a degree of freedom was Cairo. Although technically under Ottoman sovereignty, Egypt had been ruled by a hereditary *khedive*, a descendant of the Ottoman governor Mehmet Ali Pasha, who had been installed by Istanbul following Napoleon's occupation in 1804. By 1882, British imperial presence in Egypt had further weakened Ottoman imperial authority. The Young Turks found in Egypt a more favorable political environment and took advantage of the complicated political arrangement that emerged out of foreign intervention and Egypt's autonomous status within the imperial system to publish newspapers critical of the Hamidian regime. On 30 September 30 1899, an article entitled "Ahlâk" (Morals), appeared in one such newspaper, *Hak* (Right). The article criticized spies on moral grounds, stating that:

... [they are] called spies, these human-shaped creatures. Drinking the blood of their brothers, stabbing the homeland in the chest . . . If they were to be why they do such things, they would only say "because it is in my interest to do so . . ." ²⁰

The article not only reflected the political opposition's views of Abdülhamid's spying network, it also speculated on how such a regime would come to an end, closing with the following argument:

... the government cannot last [for many more] years like this. It [the empire] will disappear, either thanks to a force deriving from the people's revolution or with an attack from external enemies. Either way, the spies will die. In case of a revolution, of course, the fatherland will strangle the traitors who tried to strangle the fatherland. ²¹

From the perspective of Young Turk writers, spies were no less than traitors to the fatherland. Depicting Abdülhamid's spies as traitors grew out of the political opposition's belief that that reestablishing constitutional monarchy, they would free the fatherland from the oppression of autocracy.

The political opposition, far from having a unified political ideology, did unite around two crucial moral concepts that were inherited from one of the key figures of their predecessor, Namık Kemal of the Young Ottomans: *vatan*, or patria, and *millet*, or nation. ²² However, as the article in *Hak* demonstrates, the

20. "Ahlâk," *Hak*, September 30, 1899.

21. Ibid.

22. For Namık Kemal's perception of fatherland, see his article entitled "Vatan". See Namık Kemal, *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinin Meseleleri: Bütün Makaleler: Siyaset, Hukuk, Din, İktisat, Matbuat*, ed. Nergiz Yılmaz and İsmail Kara, 1. basım, *Çağdaş Türk Düşüncesi* 38 (Sirkeci, İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2005), 474–7. Furthermore, for some examples of Kemal's impact on the ideological formation of the CUP members see Kâzım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki cemiyeti:*

biggest obstacle preventing the realization of their goals of saving the fatherland was Abdülhamid's spy network. The article's emphasis on the fatherland was not random. On the contrary, in the political imagination of the CUP, the concept of fatherland occupied a crucial place. From the Young Turks' perspective, they had resorted to forming an underground organization in order to save and liberate the Ottoman Empire. Abdülhamid II's spies, on the other hand, were trying to expose and crush these efforts. One way or another, the end of the spies would soon come. The Young Turks predicted that either the spies would strangle the nation or the people would do the same to the spies. The article hinted at what would befall the spies in case of a revolution that derived from the will of the people. Indeed, the article anticipates by almost ten years the fate of spymaster Fehim Pasha, the spy who would be lynched in Bursa shortly after the revolution.

As the political opposition had to organize itself largely outside Istanbul, they were forced to seek alternative ways of influencing public opinion. They had to find means of circulating their ideas by somehow breaking through the Hamidian regime's otherwise effective spying and censorship efforts. One member of the Young Turks, Kadri Raşit, explains in his memoirs how the Young Turks operated to overcome the censorship mechanisms of Abdülhamid II:

Soon we started publishing *Meşveret*. Each of us gave five franks monthly to cover the expenses. We used to send five hundred copies to Istanbul. Copies were sent to a certain Frenchmen, whose name I cannot recall, via the French Post Office in Istanbul, and the newspapers were distributed thanks to his agency. I used to write all the names and the addresses of people who were supposed to receive the newspaper . . .²³

One commonality among these various articles is the fact that they were published anonymously. All three publications mentioned above deliberately hid the names of their authors or informants. This is not surprising given the risk such informants took on by reporting from the imperial center. Fearing retaliation, newspapers endeavored to protect their Istanbul-based sources and authors. The extraction of knowledge from Istanbul, especially regarding the politics of the Yıldız Palace, was carried out incognito.

If the sultan was "paranoid" enough to create a network of spies to prevent any mass movement against him, the members of the political opposition were equally afraid of the sultan's spies. Whether or not this fear of being spied on

1896–1909, Emre Yayınları Yakın tarih serisi, 22 11 (Istanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1993), 52; Kazım Nami Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Anılarım* (Istanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1957), 6.

23. Kadri Raşit Anday, *Hatıraları, Canlı Tarihler* (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1947), p. 80 as seen in Çiğdem Önal Emiroğlu and Kudret Emiroğlu, eds., *Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti: Paris merkezi yazışmaları kopya defterleri (1906–1908)*, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2017), 9.

was justified, the obsession shaped the mindset of the Young Turks and the members of the CUP. The fear reached the point where they even accused some of their own members of spying. The target of one such accusation was Mizancı Murad, a prominent intellectual and a member and fervent supporter of the CUP. Even though the accusation that Murad was a spy was based on little more than rumor, at least for a while, some members of the political opposition believed it. This suspicion in part reflected internal disputes among committee members based in Paris. However, Murad's personal trajectory likely also led credence to these suspicions. Murad returned to Istanbul in 1897²⁴ and met with Abdülhamid II's spymaster following the sultan's general amnesty issued after the empire's victory in the Greco-Turkish War that same year.²⁵ In the summer of 1897, Ahmed Celaledin Pasha arrived in Paris to contact some of the most important figures of the CUP, including Mizancı Murad, who had agreed to withdraw from the opposition and return to the imperial capital.²⁶ Murad was later awarded a position in the Council of State (*Şurâ-yı Devlet*).²⁷ This move was typical move for the sultan. He often tried to convince his adversaries to work for the palace, hoping to keep them close and under his control rather than having them far from the capital working against him.²⁸ As the case of Mizancı Murad reveals, paranoia was not unique to Abdülhamid II. On the contrary, the opposition confronted similar issues of trustworthiness and questioned the loyalty of their own people. Murad, a prominent CUP member, was not free from such suspicion. In that respect, the struggle between the sultan and his opposition created a mutual paranoia, both Abdülhamid II and the Young Turks were cautious of each other and of their own allies.

Spying naturally held very different meanings for the imperial administration than it did for the political opposition. From Abdülhamid II's perspective, intelligence activities constituted a crucial element to protect the moral basis of his rule, while opposition newspapers characterized spies as disgraceful individuals and traitors who lacked basic morals. If the latter predicted that spying

24. Fuat Süreyya Oral, *Türk Basın Tarihi: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Dönemi, 1728–1922 & 1831–1922*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Yeni Adım Matbaası, 1967), 143; Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Anıları*, 9.

25. Abdullah Uçman, "Mizancı Murad," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2005), 215.

26. Emre Gör, "Sultan II. Abdülhamid'in İstihbarat Şeflerinden Ahmed Celaledin Paşa: 'Gözdelikten Firara' Hayatı ve Faaliyetleri," *Journal of Universal History Studies* 4, no. 1 (June 15, 2021): 37, doi:10.38000/juhis.901489.

27. Uçman, "Mizancı Murad," 215.

28. In fact, Kazım Karabekir claims that Murad turned against the CUP very soon after the revolution. See Kâzım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki cemiyeti: 1896–1909*, Emre Yayınları Yakın Tarih Serisi, 22 11 (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1993), 342–43. Murad was arrested and exiled to Rhodes after the 31 March Incident (see below), accused of provoking the counter-coup attempt with writings in his newspaper. See, BOA, ZB. D:414; G:70 (27 Mayıs 1325/9 June 1909).

would eventually bring the end of the Ottoman dynasty, the former entrusted the fate of the empire to the spying networks. Nevertheless, the striking dichotomy does not end there. The political opposition did not consider their own intelligence gatherers to be spies (*hafiyye*), characterizing them instead as “informants” (*muhbir*). To what extent the political opposition was concerned with the actual work of spying and intelligence gathering remains a question. It seems that it was more the moral connotations of the label “spy” (*hafiyye*), a term the imperial administration itself embraced to describe the work of intelligence gatherers, that was problematic, rather than the job they performed. That may be why the actions of opposition “informants” were considered normal and valuable, and nothing comparable to the work carried out by regime “spies.” Not only did the word “spy” connote intelligence gatherers in the service of Abdülhamid, but in the minds of the Young Turks, the very essence of a spy’s job was categorically different from that of an informant. While informants worked together with the political opposition to free the Ottoman Empire from the *oppression* of Abdülhamid II, spies were the tools used by the sultan to prevent the patriots from reaching their aims. In other words, an informant worked for the people, whereas a spy opposed the morally justified cause of the CUP.

Approaching the Revolution: Hamidian Spies as the CUP’s Target

By the time of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, anti-spying sentiment had become even more visible in some the daring actions taken by the Committee. The main objective of the CUP in the final months of preparation for the revolution was to maintain the organization’s secret nature. The success of Abdülhamid’s spies created anxiety among CUP ranks, leading to a concerted effort to crush the spy network operating in Macedonia. Failing to do so might mean the end of the CUP’s revolutionary efforts.²⁹ Only a month before the revolution took place, the CUP attempted to assassinate one of Abdülhamid’s most important military personnel, Ömer Nazım Bey, garrison commander of Salonica, ground zero of the planned revolution.³⁰ The CUP believed that Nazım Bey was spying on the activities of military personnel in the region and regularly sharing information with the palace about a possible *coup d’état* attempt.³¹ The CUP’s suspicions were not entirely misplaced. Indeed, Nazım Bey was tracking opposition members based in Macedonia who were in contact with agitators based in Europe and distributing contraband documents among military personnel. He sent a spy report to the office of the chief secretary of Yıldız Palace as early as 25 September 1907, claiming that “a certain lieu-

29. Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki*, 16.

30. Gör, *Abdülhamid Döneminde Istihbarat*, 337.

31. M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation For a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908*, Studies in Middle Eastern History (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 266.

tenant called Muhiddin Efendi was distributing malicious documents among the officers."³² Based on Nazım Bey's reports, the chief secretary issued an order to the Third Imperial Army and the General Inspectorate of Rumelia for stricter surveillance and investigation of such individuals.³³ Hence, Nazım Bey's function as a spy who reported to the imperial center made him a priority for the CUP on the list of spies to be assassinated.³⁴

The committee's original plan had been to carry out the assassination earlier in March, yet his unexpected trip back to the imperial capital forced a change of date. On June 11, 1908, a mere month-and-a-half before the revolution, "a self-sacrificing volunteer" of the CUP, Mustafa Necib, attempted the assassination. He ended up only wounding Nazım Bey.³⁵ Of course, assassinations were a common tool used by similar underground political organizations both in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere in Europe at the time. Yet, as Emre Gör points out, the CUP had specifically targeted Abdülhamid's intelligence agents in the region.³⁶ Although the assassination attempt was anything but unique, it does show how Ömer Nazım's surveillance of the CUP activities had itself provoked major concerns within the Committee.

If the regime's spying motivated the CUP's opposition to Hamidian rule, it was at the same time the most trusted solution used by the palace and the sultan to counter CUP activities. As rumors of a coming *coup d'état* increased in the summer of 1908, after the failed assassination attempt, Abdülhamid II deployed even more spies to Macedonia, specifically to track the activities of the Third Army stationed in Salonica, the army in which a majority of prominent Committee members served. After the attempted assassination of Ömer Nazım Bey, the palace ordered a series of detailed investigations to locate and uncover CUP members. Moreover, one of the most trusted and loyal officers Şemsi Pasha was directed to the region to command the army against the bands of the CUP.³⁷ After the assassination of Şemsi Pasha in early July, the sultan became even more reliant on his spy network. Sir Edwin Pears, who resided in Istanbul for forty years, later recalled learning that Abdülhamid had employed almost forty spies to gather intelligence about troops stationed in Macedonia. Ironically, this produced the unexpected effect of driving more troops into the hands of the CUP and the revolution as troops learned that their ranks had been infiltrated by regime spies.³⁸

32. BOA, Y. EE., D:15; G:44 (12 Eylül 1323/25 September 1907).

33. BOA, Y. EE., D:15; G:45 (26 Muharrem 1326/29 February 1908).

34. Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki*, 16.

35. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 2001, 266.

36. Gör, *Abdülhamid Döneminde İstihbarat*, 337.

37. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 2001, 266–7.

38. Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople: The Recollections of Sir Edwin Pears 1873–1915*, 231–2.

The CUP's "Abolition" of Spying

As CUP membership rapidly increased in the leadup to July 1908, the moment for revolution also could be seen on the horizon. On July 3, 1908, Niyazi Bey (Resneli Niyazi) ignited the spark of revolution when he and more than two hundred men under his command seized mountainous territory in Macedonia. Niyazi Bey may have considered continuing the resistance to the Hamidian regime from his mountainous perch, but the continuous pressure the CUP put on the sultan and the imperial administration in subsequent weeks finally convinced the sultan to reinstate the constitution.³⁹ From the moment the constitution was restored until the December 1908 elections, Şükrü Hanioglu argues that the CUP functioned much like the Committee of Public Safety in revolutionary France.⁴⁰

Given the Young Turks' perception of spying and its association with "autocratic rule," their next step after the restoration of the constitution was to call for its full abolition. This was not only a demand that came from intellectuals or prominent members of the political opposition, but one that arose from the public as well. Kazım (Karabekir) Pasha, a member of the CUP and one of the leaders in the later Turkish War for Independence, explained in his memoir that in 1908, people celebrated the declaration of the constitution in the streets. During these demonstrations, he claims Kazım Pasha and his friends made some people chant "[An] end to spying! We do not want spies anymore", which could be heard along another slogan that people were chanting: "Long live our Sultan!"⁴¹ Furthermore, he confirmed that one of the first tasks of the new regime was to abolish the practice of spying that had destroyed so many people's lives.⁴²

Karabekir also recalled going out on the night of 25 July to Pera, one of Istanbul's most crowded streets, soon after the constitution was restored. He and some of his friends, who were also members of the CUP, chanted, "Spying has to be abolished. Otherwise, no one will believe in the constitutional monarchy. The government shall either kill or lynch them."⁴³ He notes an anecdote from the same night, a quarrel that took place between the lawyer Baha and a certain pasha, when the former accused the latter of being a spy. Karabekir claims that he intervened in the discussion to defend the pasha out of respect for the uniform he was wearing. Karabekir advised his friends to be patient, until the government abolished spying ". . . no one should accuse innocent people of spying. These innocent people might face insults or even worse

39. Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki*, 21–8.

40. M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "İttihat ve Terakkî Cemiyeti," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 481.

41. Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki cemiyeti*, 1993, 335.

42. Ibid.

43. Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki cemiyeti*, 1993, 336–7.

things. I proposed a more organized movement against spies unless the government abolishes spying. They agreed . . ."⁴⁴ Similarly, Kazım Nami Duru narrates how the popular sentiment against spies turned into action as soon as the constitution was restored. He recalls that the next morning, three bodies were found in the cemetery close to the military barracks in Salonica. Duru claims that "according to the rumors those found dead were spies", but adds, "no one knew who killed them, and no one pitied them either."⁴⁵

As expected, upon assuming power, the CUP demanded a full abolition of spying together with a general amnesty for political criminals. Only a day after the restoration of the constitution, on 24 July, the Office of Grand Vizier sent a correspondence to the Inspector General of Rumelian Provinces granting the general amnesty and declaring the abolition of spying.⁴⁶ Although the Office of Grand Vizier abolished spying on 24 July 1908, the Council of Ministers waited five days to communicate the order.⁴⁷ On 30 June, a day after the official communication by the Council of Ministers, the grand vizier, Said Pasha, communicated the decision of the Council of Ministers to the Ministry of Interior, stating spying was abolished throughout the empire, and the ministry's spying budget revoked.⁴⁸ Although the exact date the abolition took effect has been cited differently in various sources, all confirm that it was one of the first things that the CUP demanded from Abdülhamid II. Emre Gör argues that spying was abolished on 25 July, a day after the 24 July date cited here, with a communiqué sent to the provinces, commissariats, and foreign representatives that all the budgets for spying were revoked.⁴⁹ In his memoir, Karabekir also points to a day later than Gör, that is 26 July, but argues that it was the newspapers that announced the abolition of spying.⁵⁰ Kenan Olgun claims, however, that spying was abolished on July 30, a day after the declaration of the Council of Ministers.⁵¹ Nonetheless, these dates are all relatively close to one another and confirm that spying was indeed abolished soon after the declaration of the constitution, demonstrating that the CUP considered spying to be one of its primary targets and forced Abdülhamid II to take swift action.

The CUP's profound antipathy toward spying and surveillance damaged the empire's intelligence capacity. For almost a full year, until the establishment

44. Karabekir, 337.

45. Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Anıları*, 22.

46. BOA, BEO., D:3362; G:252132 (11 Temmuz 1324/24 July 1908).

47. BOA, Y. EE., D:71; G:93; I:2/1 (16 Temmuz 1324/29 July 1908).

48. BOA, DH. MKT., D: 1273; G:59; I:1/1 (17 Temmuz 1324/30 July 1908).

49. Gör, *Abdülhamid Döneminde İstihbarat*, 339.

50. Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki cemiyeti*, 337.

51. Kenan Olgun, *1908–1912 Osmanlı Meclis-i Mebusanı'nın Faaliyetleri ve Demokrasi Tarihimizdeki Yeri* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2014), 37.

of the “intelligence bureau/branch” of the Security General Directorate (*Emniyet-i Umumiyye Müdiriyeti*) in 1909, the imperial administration had no institutionalized intelligence organization.⁵² At that point, the responsibility for gathering intelligence was transferred to the new directorate.⁵³ More importantly, the CUP’s anti-spying policies also shaped popular perceptions of and writing on spying for years to come. Both newspapers, pamphlets, and even literary works published in the empire by the opponents of Abdülhamid II and those published by foreigners denounced the Hamidian regime and its spying network. On 29 July, Hasan Hayri, a lieutenant commander at the Imperial Arsenal, a colleague of Emsaleddin Efendi, although it is unknown if they served together, published an article in a local newspaper entitled *Yeni Edirne*. In it he proclaimed, “Now, finally spying is abolished. From now on, we do not have to whisper in each other’s ears to explain ourselves, but we shall shout it!”⁵⁴ Three days after the appearance of Hasan Hayri’s article, the same newspaper published the official communique of the Grand Vizierate announcing the abolition of spying.⁵⁵ For the opponents of the Hamidian regime, it was a clear achievement to celebrate. They had eliminated the pressure of being surveilled—or at least the idea of it. As soon as the second constitutional period began, the erstwhile political opposition, now firmly in power, had won the right to freely criticize Abdülhamid and his spying network. They began to use their real names in bylines of newspaper articles rather than sending them unsigned, confident that the threat posed by spies had finally passed.

As early as July 1908, criticisms made of Hamidian-era spies became more common in the press and elsewhere. Works published in the domestic and foreign press strongly emphasized Abdülhamid II’s extensive spying network and attributed its existence to his highly suspicious personality. Lucy Mary Jane Garnett touches on the ubiquitous nature of Abdülhamid’s spying network, in her 1911 book entitled *Turkish Life in Town and Country*. She states:

The Sultan’s fear of conspiracies prompts the most arbitrary and tyrannical enactments with reference to all public assemblies whatever. . . . Government spies are everywhere—in all public offices, at railway stations and custom-houses, in the

52. Gör, *Abdülhamid Döneminde İstihbarat*, 351.

53. Polat Safi, “Ottoman Special Organization—Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa: An Inquiry into Its Operational and Administrative Characteristics” (Doktora Tezi/Doctoral Dissertation) İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2012, 19.

54. Hasan Hayri, “Nevzad-ı Vatanın Terbiye-i Dimağiyesi,” *Yeni Edirne*, July 29, 1908.

55. “İlân-ı Resmî: Sadaret-i Celîleden 18 Temmuz Sene 324 Târihli Telgrafnâme Süretidir,” *Yeni Edirne*, August 1, 1908.

bazaars and markets, on steamboats, in coffee-houses, and public baths. A spy, too, may find himself be under surveillance . . .⁵⁶

And she was not alone. In his memoirs, Sir Edwin Pears also elaborated on Abdülhamid II's spying network. Like Garnett, Pears claimed that "He [Abdülhamid II] had got the Press entirely under his control. He had suppressed every form of public meeting. He had established a system of espionage so complete that if three Turkish subjects met together at least one would be a spy."⁵⁷ In addition to his memoirs, Pears also published a book on the life of Abdülhamid II, in which he explained the development of spying in the Ottoman Empire under his rule. He claims that, "Between 1885 and the end of Abdul Hamid's reign, each year witnessed a steady growth in the number of the reports of spies, locally known as '*Djournals*':⁵⁸ Devised at first to inform the Sultan of subjects' plots were plotting against him . . ."⁵⁹ Basil Williams, the editor of Pears's book, affirms the author's perception of Abdülhamid II by simply apologizing to the reader for including Abdülhamid, "a sorry creature," in the series entitled *Makers of Nineteenth Century*.⁶⁰

Given the negative opinions expressed in these foreign editorials, it is not surprising to discover that the Ottoman *former* opposition also treated the sultan harshly. Spy reports supposedly presented to Abdülhamid II before the revolution—hence, before the abolition of spying—were published in newspapers to draw public attention to the outrages committed by Hamidian-era spies.⁶¹ The language used in such writings makes clear the contemporary opinion of spying. For example, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı defined spying as a matter of wicked character.⁶² Literary works that criticized spying increasingly became visible in the public sphere.⁶³ One of the most striking pamphlets published about spies is probably the "List of Spies (*Hafıyyelerin Listesi*)" written by a certain Mahmud

56. Lucy Mary Jane Garnett, *Turkish Life in Town and Country*, ed. William Harbutt Dawson (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), pp. 45–46.

57. Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople: The Recollections of Sir Edwin Pears 1873–1915*, 145.

58. *Djournals*, as Sir Edwin Pears wrote, or *journals*, known as 'jurnal' in Turkish, referred to the spy reports of the period. Word also in time started to be used as a verb as 'jurnallemek' which referred to the action of spying on someone or sending a spy report on someone.

59. Sir Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, ed. Basil Williams (London: Constable & Company LTD, 1917), 199.

60. Pears, V.

61. "Bir Jurnal (Jurnalcilik Hakkında)," *Servet-i Fünun*, February 11, 1909.

62. Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, "Casusluk, Hafiyelik Sıfat-ı Lâ'inesi," *Sırât-ı Müstakîm*, Haziran 1320; Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, "Casusluk, Hafiyelik Sıfat-ı Lâ'inesi Mâ'bad," *Sırât-ı Müstakîm*, Temmuz 1320.

63. Ahmed Raci, *Yıldız'da Yeni Casuslar Cemiyeti Yahud Yaverân Tensikâtı* (İstanbul, 1324); Hasan Nadir, *Bir Hafıye Ailesi Yahud Mazlum-ı İstibdâd* (İstanbul: İkdâm Matbaası, 1326);

and delivered to the members of parliament. Mahmud claims at the beginning of his two-volume pamphlet that the second volume consists of the names of 990 spies. The first part gives details on categorical information, such as how many rankings the spies held or the stations of spies in Istanbul, together with the list of high-ranking spies that also includes Zeki Pasha.⁶⁴ Consequently, denouncing former spies became a rhetorical tool for taking vengeance upon the Hamidian regime, as the then-political opposition and now the powerholders made spies into the main symbol of Hamidian despotism and autocracy.

31 March Incident and Trials of the Spies

In such a hostile environment for former spies, it is perhaps surprising that despite abolishing spying, the CUP initially took no legal actions against them. That situation changed, however, after the failed countercoup attempt by Abdülhamid's supporters in 1909, known as the 31 March Incident (*31 Mart Vak'ası*).⁶⁵ Two weeks after the failed coup attempt, the CUP managed to reassume power with the help of the Action Army (*Harekât Ordusu*), which marched on Istanbul from Macedonia. One of the first actions of the CUP was to depose Sultan Abdülhamid II on 27 April, and to replace him with his brother Mehmed Reşâd, who assumed the throne as Mehmed V.⁶⁶ After deposing the Sultan, the CUP started to take matters more firmly into its own hands. Soon after being restored to power, the CUP government started arresting military officers whom it believed had been associated with the countercoup attempt.⁶⁷

The failed coup also changed the fate of the former spies who had already been unemployed for almost a year. Two milestones occurred soon thereafter. The first of these was the establishment of a Commission for the Investigation of Documents (*Tedkîk-i Evrak Komisyonu*). The Ministry of War took the initiative to establish this commission that consisted of several notables and members of parliament, and around ten military officers. It was entrusted with analyzing and categorizing all documents found in the Yıldız Palace and sending the documents to the relevant institutions.⁶⁸ One category among the

Yıldız'ın Bozduğu Ahlâk Yahud Zavallı Ma'sum Hafiyeler (İstanbul: Meşrutiyet Kütüphanesi, 1324).

64. Mahmud, *Hafiyelerin Listesi Yahud İstanbul'da Kimler Hafiyelik Etmis*, (Istanbul, 1326).

65. The counter coup attempt happened on 13 April 1909, but it is remembered in the Ottoman history as 31 March 31, as the Julian calendar was in use.

66. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 285.

67. Aykut Kansu, *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey, 1908–1913*, (Boston: Brill, 2000), 137.

68. Asaf Tugay, *İbret: Abdülhamid'e Verilen Jurnaller ve Jurnalciler*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Okat Yayınevi, 1961), 17.

documents that the commission was tasked with investigating was the *journals*, or spy reports. The exact date of the establishment of the commission is unknown, but a document sent to the Ministry of War argues on 20 April 1911, that the *journals* were being sent to the ministry to aid the commission's investigation.⁶⁹ Located in a building in the garden of the Ministry of War complex, the commission investigated former spy reports over several years following 1909. According to a member of the Commission, Asaf Tugay, once Enver Pasha became Minister of War in 1914, the commission was abruptly ordered to burn the reports. According to Tugay, neither he nor the rest of the commission knew who issued this order. After the reports had been destroyed, Tugay managed to rescue some copies that had not yet been analyzed and published them almost fifty years after the incident. The burning of the reports deprived historians of the original spy reports, although some of the very limited original spy reports that still survive are cited and published in Tugay's book.⁷⁰

The second milestone occurred when the Second Court Martial began to investigate cases of higher-ranking imperial bureaucrats and military personnel accused of spying during the Hamidian era. At its meeting on 26 May 1909, the Council of Ministers discussed the ruling of the Second Court Martial and the resolution of the Action Army regarding the exiles of some high-ranking bureaucrats and military personnel who had been convicted of spying. The Council stated that the convicts had to be exiled since their presence in Istanbul posed a threat to public order. According to the minutes of the meeting, those who were tried by the court martial had, through their spying activities, devastated the lives of many individuals and their families. Furthermore, the Council of Ministers agreed that all the medals and honorary titles that had been awarded to those found guilty should be revoked and their properties confiscated.⁷¹

The meeting minutes also reveal the names of exiles along with their places of exile as decided by the Second Court Martial. The names included Tahsin Pasha, Abdülhamid II's former first secretary; Memduh Pasha, former minister of the interior; and Reşid Pasha, former prefect of Istanbul. All three were to be sent to the island of Chios. The former minister of war, (*serasker*) Rıza Pasha, was to be sent to the island of Mytilene; and the former minister of the navy, Hasan Rami Pasha, the former governor of Hijaz Province, Ahmed Ratib Pasha, and the former Central Commander, Sadreddin Pasha, were to be sent to the island of Rhodes. One important name among the listed was that of Zeki Pasha, Emsaleddin Efendi's former supervisor and erstwhile field marshal of

69. BOA, BEO., D:3884; G:291300; I:1/1 (7 Nisan 1327/20 April 1911).

70. Tugay, *İbret*, 17.

71. The original document states "*İhbarât-ı câsus-kâraneleriyle ikây-ı cinâyete ve birtakım ailelern mahv ve perişanına sebep oldukları ifade . . .*" BOA, MV, D:128; G:14 I:1/2 (13 Mayıs 1325/26 Mayıs 1909).

the Imperial Arsenal of Ordnance and Artillery. The court decided that Zeki Pasha was to be exiled to Rhodes together with Ahmed Ratib and Sadreddin Pashas.⁷² Another document from the same date (26 May) reveals how fast the actions were taken regarding the convicted spies. The minister of interior sent two copies of the same letter, one to the Ministry of Public Order and one to the Province of the Archipelago (*Cezâyir-i Bahr-i Sefîd Vilâyeti*), forwarding the names of those who were to be exiled to various Aegean islands.⁷³

On another note, the Ministry of Public Order prepared a list, signed by the commander of the Action Army on 23 June, which reveals that more than one hundred high-ranking bureaucrats and military personnel, as well as a few civilians without titles, were sent to their places of exile on 20 June on the vessel, *Şark Vapurı*. The list included such prominent figures of the Hamidian Era such as Haşim Pasha, the former Minister of Education; Hamdi Bey, the former minister of public order; and most importantly, spymaster Kadri Bey.⁷⁴ This list included not only those associated with spying but also those who were accused of corruption and fraud. The document does not show the precise accusation against every single defendant, it only states their place of exile and the type and length of their punishment. Most of these individuals were exiled to the islands, probably to ensure that they were completely isolated from the imperial capital.

The list, however, did not include the names of the ministers mentioned at the meeting of the Council of Ministers, nor that of Emsaleddin Efendi. One can infer that Emsaleddin Efendi's verdict was given on another occasion, and that he was exiled only once the more prominent figures of the Hamidian Era had already been exiled. This next list also did not include Zeki Pasha which might mean that he had already been exiled when the commander of the Action Army signed the document for those exiled on 20 June. The CUP and the court martial likely took up the cases of higher-ranking spies first to minimize the threat they posed to the new regime. Once the main threat—i.e., those who had access to offices and more influential people had been eliminated from the political scene—the cases of the *ordinary* spies of Abdülhamid II had been taken up.

Conclusion

Though we have no information on the fate of spies after 1909, we can reflect on how the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 affected the lives of many spies through the example of both Emsaleddin Efendi and his superior, Zeki Pasha. While Emsaleddin Efendi led a secluded life with his family in his home

72. BOA, MV., D:128; G:14 I:1/2 (13 Mayıs 1325/26 Mayıs 1909).

73. BOA, ZB., D:414; G: 65 (13 Mayıs 1325/26 Mayıs 1909).

74. BOA, DH. MUI., D:8-1; G:2; I:12/25 (10 Haziran 1325/23 June 1909).

village of Büyük Bürüngüz, Zeki Pasha was confined at a fortress on Rhodes for several months if not more. In August 1909, he wrote a petition asking to serve the rest of his penalty outside the fortress, due to his deteriorating health.⁷⁵ Zeki Pasha managed to return to the imperial capital and lived a life isolated from the political sphere, and he died in Büyükada in 1914.

These two cases are more significant than they might at first appear. Both spies can be regarded more as representatives of a much larger whole, neither the only nor even the key actors of intelligence gathering during the Hamidian Era. As the documents here attest, several spymasters attracted far more attention from the CUP than did these men. However, either as a consequence of how spies were perceived after 1908 or as a result of the destruction of the spy reports, today's researchers are deprived of key archival sources and ego documents that would tell us more about both the system and the many individuals it involved. These two cases for which we have relatively more information, do tell us something about the process of the abolition of spying and the lives led by former spies after 1909. Furthermore, these individual cases provide valuable insights into the broader anatomy of a revolution and the change of regime that followed.

From the point of view of the political opposition movement led by the CUP, the main objective was to restore the constitutional monarchy that Abdülhamid II had abandoned thirty years before, thereby bringing freedom to the nation. The opponents of the Hamidian regime targeted the extensive spy network, surveillance activities, and individual spies as symbols of everything that was wrong with the old regime. They specifically targeted spies as the key pillars of what they considered to be Abdülhamid's tyrannical autocracy. Even after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, historical works regarding the Hamidian era continued to identify spying as the very soul of the regime's particular form of oppression.⁷⁶ Similar associations and perceptions of the Hamidian Era prevailed for long decades, at least until the 1990s shaping the literature and the scholarly discussions on intelligence activities. Here it is worth noting that such discussions had their roots in the early days of political opposition against Abdülhamid II and significantly increased in the years following 1908.

Neither the abolition of spying only days after the restoration of the constitution nor the exile of spies after the 31 March Incident should come as a surprise. Rather it can be seen as a performance by the CUP to demonstrate its commitment to erase the traces of the Hamidian regime and bring liberty and freedom to the Ottoman Empire. One way to erase the past was to pursue the bureaucracy created by Abdülhamid II and the worst symbols of his regime.

75. BOA, DH. MKT., D:2909; G:44 (11 Ağustos 1325/24 August 1909).

76. Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, VIII: 265.

The first two years following the revolution witnessed extensive changes and reforms in the day-to-day functioning of the State, not simply of the government. With each alteration, such as granting amnesty to political prisoners or constitutional changes regarding the appointment of bureaucrats, the new powerholders created—or at least tried to create—a visible break with the old regime.⁷⁷ As a centerpiece of the Hamidian regime, at least according to the opposition, spies became the prime target; they were left outside of the new regime both in social and political terms. The perception of spies and spying by the opponents of Abdülhamid II and his rule forced former spies to lead secluded lives after 1909.

Attacking the extensive Hamidian spying regime enabled the CUP to prove its commitment to the cause of restoring the freedoms of a constitutional monarchy. On the one hand, the existence of a hated intelligence mechanism presented much-needed legitimization for the insurgent CUP to make a case against the legitimate Sultan. After all, one of the main complaints of the political opposition was the autocratic nature of the rule of Abdülhamid II, symbolized by the spying network. On the other hand, its abolition provided the opportunity to prove that the CUP government was not merely a successor to the Hamidian regime, but rather that it stood for a very different set of principles. The new regime rejected both the state mechanism created by Abdülhamid II and its symbols, such as spying and surveillance, at the high cost of leaving the Empire deprived of an intelligence system.

The cases of Emsaleddin Efendi and his superior Zeki Pasha are not merely cases of how the lives of some bureaucrats were shaped by the revolution. They present an opportunity for historians to read and track lesser-known traces of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, its ideologies, and its policies toward the Hamidian regime. Spies were regarded as the central figures of Abdülhamid II's rule, and they allowed the CUP to articulate what they had opposed in the old regime. The common perceptions of spying and spies manifested themselves in the newspapers, pamphlets, and the memoirs of prominent members of the political opposition, and historical discussions after 1908. The parallel evolution of the two cases of spies, along with the larger background, provides insight into the mindset of the Young Turks, while at the same time revealing how their perception of spying turned into vindictive practice when they came to power.

The literature on spying that has evolved since the reign of Abdülhamid II has tended to overlook the lives of spies in favor of focusing on spying as an institutional pillar of Hamidian regime. Spies' secluded lives in exile never became a matter of study. Rather, their fates were treated as an incidental consequence of the alleged "crimes" they had committed by surveilling and

77. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 296.

spying for the regime. Often, even the leading scholars to forget that spies were simply employees of the imperial administration who had to be punished because they were the human symbols of everything wrong with the regime. Real people with real families who were mostly unremarkable bore the burden of embodying the alleged moral decay of the Hamidian regime. Without taking this human aspect into account as seen from the two cases, such histories are doomed to be overly one-sided incomplete records of history, misleading the scientific discussions and research.

Maybe now, in the words of Carlo Ginzburg, it is time to turn "toward our predecessors passed over in silence, discarded or simply ignored."⁷⁸ The intelligence activities during the Hamidian Era remain a blind spot to historians. Even more of a blind spot than the institution is its actual agents. This research has aimed to shed some light on the circumstances surrounding the lives of former spies and on our general understanding of the phenomenon of spying in the post-1908 period. It cannot be definitive in any sense. Rather it proposes a starting point to build academic interest in the subject.

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78. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xiii.