

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939



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Abstract

The paper aims at presenting the personality of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, his role in the Turkish War of Independence, and the foundation of the Turkish Republic as reflected in the covering of the contemporary serial publications in the newly established Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Atatürk's reforms and his personal political rise were followed by the Yugoslav press firstly with caution, then with enthusiasm, reaching its pinnacle during the non-official visit of the king Aleksandar and queen Marija to Istanbul in October 1933. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was an autocratic state, and it will not be wrong to assume that the views expressed in the capital's newspapers were not only reflecting the official state policy, but were very probably also composed according to the king's personally dictated lines. The both heads of states, leaving the First World War as high military officers fighting on the opposed sides in the war, although not directly confronted, seem to have passed a long road from suspicion to sympathy, and, if judging by the press reports on the Istanbul visit, even friendship. The main sources for the research are contemporary daily press and monthly journals, published in Belgrade between 1919 and 1939.

Keywords: Atatürk, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Press, The Balkans, Foreign Policy.

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YUGOSLAVYA KRALLIĞI'NIN 1919-1939 ARASI BASININDA MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK VE TÜRK KURTULUŞ SAVAŞI

Özet

Tebliğın amacı, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün şahsiyeti, Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşundaki rolünün, yeni kurulmuş Yugoslavya Krallığı'nın muasır seri yayınlarına nasıl yansıdığını incelemektir. Atatürk'ün reformları ve siyasi yükselişi ilk başta temkinli, daha sonra heyecanla ve özellikle Ekim 1933'teki Kral Aleksandar ve Kraliçe Marija'nın gayrı resmi İstanbul ziyareti ile birlikte gıpta ile takip edilmeye başlanmıştı. Yugoslavya Krallığı otokratik bir devletti, dolayısıyla başkent gazetelerinde arz edilen görüşler sadece devletin resmi politikası değil büyük olasılıkla Kral'ın kendi direktifleri doğrultusunda da yazılmıştı. Her iki devlet adamı da Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan, doğrudan düşman cephelerde olmasalar da, savaşın farklı taraflarda savaşan yüksek rütbeli subayları olarak çıkmışlar ve görünen o ki temkinden karşılıklı anlayışa, hatta İstanbul ziyareti ile ilgili basın raporlarına göre arkadaşlığa uzanan uzun bir yol geçmişler. Araştırmanın ana kaynaklarını Belgrad'da 1919'dan 1939'a kadar basılan muasır günlük gazeteler ve aylık dergiler teşkil ediyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Atatürk, Yugoslavya Krallığı, Basın, Balkanlar, Dış Politika.

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS
REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF
YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939

The developments in Asia Minor in the aftermath of the First World War, and the emergence of the Turkish national state on the ruins of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire naturally draw attention of the European press. As expected, the particular interest was shown by the daily press published in equally young Kingdom of Yugoslavia (founded in 1918). Atatürk's reforms and his personal political rise were followed by the Yugoslav press firstly with caution, then with enthusiasm, reaching its pinnacle during the non-official visit of the King Aleksandar and Queen Marija to Istanbul in October 1933. Aleksandar was a fanatical anti-communist, not only for being himself member of the European royalty, and as such deeply distressed at the events in Russia, and he understandably saw the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire as a part of the world revolution, or at least as inspired by it. However, the two states were founded about the same time as antitheses of long-lasting empires. The both heads of states, leaving the First World War as high military officers fighting on the opposed sides in the war, although not directly confronted, seem to have passed a long road from suspicion to sympathy, and, if judging by the press reports on the Istanbul visit, even friendship. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was an autocratic state, and it will not be wrong to assume that the views expressed in the capital's newspapers were not only reflecting the official state policy, but were very probably also composed according to the King's personally dictated lines. Here I will examine the covering of the events related to personality of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk using the printed editions of the three biggest Yugoslavian newspapers of the time concerned: *Politika*, *Pravda*, and *Vreme*.

Politika (Serbo-Croatian: politics) is the oldest daily newspaper still in circulation in the Balkans. It was founded in 1904 by Vladislav F. Ribnikar, and for the most of the time owned and edited by the members of Ribnikar family. It was printed in Belgrade. During the period concerned the owners were Slobodan and Vladislav Ribnikar, and the editors-in-chief were Darko Ribnikar, and Miomir Milenović. The newspaper was not printed in war times ie. between 1915 and 1919, and later between 1941 and 1944. The newspaper claimed to maintain an independent and centrist political stance. *Pravda* (Serbo-Croatian: justice) was owned and published between 1904 and 1941 in Belgrade by Pavle Marinković, and Sokić brothers. Only between 1916 and 1918 it was published in Thessaloniki. The editor-in-chief for the most time was Jovan Adamović. The newspaper was nominally an organ of the youth wing of the Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka), and as such maintained conservative-liberal political stance. *Vreme*

(Serbo-Croatian: Time) was published in Belgrade between 1921 and 1941, was founded by a group of prominent members of the centre-right Serbian Radical Party (Srpska Radikalna Stranka) on the direct initiative of King Aleksandar, so the newspaper mostly reflected official views of the court and the regime.

The first mention of Kemal Pasha in Yugoslav press, at least to the best of my knowledge, is dated with 11 of February 1922. *Vreme* relates the news that the Popular Assembly in Ankara gave a vote of confidence to Kemal Pasha, and postponed all its sessions until the fourth of May.¹ Like the rest of the European press, Belgrad newspapers were meticulously covering the Greek-Turkish war, and were sincerely hoping for the soon end of enmities. So, *Vreme* of 2.6.1922 optimistically shares an information on the direct negotiations between Greece and Turkey, in the same time indirectly questioning the legitimacy of the Istanbul government, adding that the “Kemalist circles“ claim to have no whatever knowledge on them, and indirectly accepting them as a parallel government.² The new situation was not warmly wellcomed by Great Britain whose government protests the commercial agreement of Italians “with Kemal“.³

The Belgrade press was also very much concerned with the news on the activities of the Turkish army in the Eastern front and the alleged attempts of Enver Pasha to create a Bolshevik state in southern Russia and Caucasus. So, the daily *Vreme* of 22.12.1921 reports on concentration of Turkish military forces around Batum, which is to become the very center of the revolution in central Asia. There were rumors that Enver was organizing the local branches of the Union and Progress Party and preparing proclamation of a new Soviet republic.⁴ On 15.3 of the next year there is a follow-up with an emphatic title “Enver Pasha, the Bolshevik,“ reporting that the Turkish army entered Bukhara, where Enver proclaimed a Soviet republic and immediatelly came into contact with Moscow.⁵

The first more comprehensive report related to Kemal Atatürk was published in *Vreme* of 5.1.1922 as an unsigned editorial with the title “The Politics of Kemal Pasha.” The author offers a broad insight in the dire

¹ *Vreme*, 11.2.1922.

² *Ibid.* 2.6.1922.

³ *Ibid.* 4.5.1922.

⁴ *Ibid.* 22.12.1921.

⁵ *Ibid.* 15.3.1922.

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS
REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF
YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939

situation of the defeated Ottoman Empire, asserting that in the time when Kemal Pasha stood as an undisputed head of the nationalistic forces, Istanbul under foreign occupation was only "a shadow of power where a gendarme of allied forces exercised more power than a Turkish minister." The Sultan, with no real ally, could only retain an illusion of independence symbolized in the office of caliph. As an unofficial voice of the Royal regime, *Vreme* reflects the attitude of Belgrade's political circles in expressing a slight suspicion regarding the sincerity of the alleged enmity between Kemal and the Sultan. The author praises Kemal Pasha's military genius and ability to impose discipline on rowdy elements (the author uses Turkish word "bashibozuk" used also in Serbo-Croatian with the roughly same meaning) and rendered them into a new army "which could match better equipped and trained Greek troops." Rightly guessing that the Greeks were only puppets in a proxy war led by the Great Powers, Kemal only reluctantly took advantage of his military success, hoping to acquire more through diplomacy, "knowing how to threaten even with an alliance with Moscow, as well as how to conclude separate economic agreements (like the one with France) which could be regarded as the first step in recognition of his regime, and way to obtain a favorable compromise with Greeks, or allied forces' authorisation for throwing them into the sea." The author is positively surprised with Kemal's reform of the parliament, "on strange and original basis," and predicts that he will stick to his promises only until he deem it useful. On the other hand, *Vreme* relates the rumors about Kemal's fight against "Enver's Soviet brigands," and speculates both on the veracity of the reports as well as sincerity of Kemal's intentions.⁶ Indeed, in a short news item of 20.3 *Vreme* reports that "Kemal threatens with a Soviet revolution if his demands are rejected."⁷ Two weeks later, the same paper publishes a short telegraph report from Ankara via London, claiming that Kemal Pasha was killed.⁸ There was no follow-up to the news.

A month later, in another editorial, *Vreme* offers a further insight into the war in Anatolia and the Greek-Turkish relations. According to the unsigned analysis, the both sides have exhausted human and material resources, and see no aim in extending the war without any change in position or noticeable advance. The author rebukes the Greek side for being unable to realize its original intentions, and specifically Venizelos for letting

⁶ *Ibid.* 5.1.1922.

⁷ *Ibid.* 20.3.1922.

⁸ *Ibid.* 17.1.1922.

Constantine resume the throne. Regarding the National Schism of Greece, Yugoslavia was understandably taking side of its war ally Venizelos, and feeling a deep resentment towards the pro-German King Constantine. The author concludes that the Great Powers do not see in Constantine's Greece a potential to defend itself and retain its rule. The author states that "Kemal's Turkey had showed much more dynamic and determination, and proved that it can effectively exercise control over the area. After France had already granted its blessing to Kemal's rule, now Great Britain also agreed that Asia Minor should remain in Turkish hands," predicting "that a revision of Sèvres is on its way, and the Greece will be forced to leave not only Anatolia, but Smyrna too." The editorial concludes that the Greek destiny is an example for all freedom-aspiring nations, that no one will help somebody who is unable to defend himself.⁹ As a follow-up and confirmation of the editorial's prediction, on 31.3.1922 *Vreme* reports on results of the Eastern conference, and Greek loss of Anatolia, the author ascribes all liability to Constantine's faction, and grants only a lukewarm sympathy for Venizelos.¹⁰ On 25.4 *Vreme* publishes a short news that Ankara government accepted a meeting with the Allies in İzmit, without further details.¹¹

The events of 1923 eventually leading to the proclamation of the Republic were much better covered by the daily newspaper *Pravda*, which obviously had its own correspondent in Ankara, and was not confined to agency news. In a short item of 1.12.1923 *Pravda* predicts unrests in Istanbul after an alleged decision of the Ankara government to move the seat of the caliphate from Istanbul to Konya.¹² There was no follow-up to the news. The next day *Pravda* brings a long article being, at least to the best of my knowledge, the first elaboration of the Kemalist inner policy in Yugoslavian press. The unsigned text on the first page, entitled "News from Turkey" depicts the actual events in Turkey in a rather positive way. It is strange that the text was sent on 14. November, but published the whole two weeks later, so it seems that it had got stuck in the state censor's office, from where it was finally released. The author was astonished with the new appearance of Turkey, "renewed by Kemal Pasha's nationalism and bolstered by Lausanne treaty." Turkism became a new ethnic ideal replacing the Hamidian Pan-Islamism and Ottomanism, like Turkish replaced Arabic, even

⁹ *Ibid.* 6.2.1922.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 31.3.1922.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 25.4.1922.

¹² *Pravda*, 1.12.1923.

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS
REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF
YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939

in religious ceremonies. Ankara is aiming to become the center of the Turkish world, so following the Greek-Turkish population exchange, Turkey invited all Turks from the Balkans to come and settle in allegedly 200.000 empty Greek and Armenian houses to be distributed among the Balkan refugees. The text concludes with unconfirmed reports that the Caliph is to be removed, citing his reluctant and conditional congratulation message upon the inauguration of Kemal Pasha.¹³

On the whole, the news concerning Turkey had not occupied prominent place in the Yugoslavian press until October of 1933, and the unofficial visit of the King Alexander and Queen Marija to Istanbul. By 1933 all doubts and prejudices regarding Atatürk's alleged Bolshevik agenda were over, and the meeting of the two statesmen was expected to pass in an atmosphere of friendship and mutual respect. Aleksandar's refusal to participate in Allied military operations against Ottomans in the aftermath of the Great War, despite the territorial promises ("We settled all accounts with Turks in 1912, and have nothing more to give or to take from them") was well known in European diplomatic circles, and it would be very unlikely to remain unknown to Atatürk himself. Moreover, although the visit had an unofficial character, the press was expecting concrete talks about Turkey's joining the Balkan Pact, known also as the Balkan Entente, a treaty aimed at maintaining the geopolitical status quo in the Balkan region after the Great War, ie. to suspend all disputed territorial claims against one another.¹⁴ On the day of the visit, the all three daily newspapers from the capital, brought the extensive reports, *Vreme* and *Politika* covering the whole first pages, illustrated with pictures of both statesmen. The headline in *Politika* read: "Turkish political circles expect that Istanbul meeting will strenghten politics of peace, understanding and cooperation in the Balkans"¹⁵ The title of another article on the second page elaborates further: "Turkish political circles expect the Balkan agreement." *Pravda* and *Vrema* were more abstained announcing the visit simply as "Meeting between His Majesty King and the Turkish president Kemal Pasha."¹⁶ The long article in *Politika*, signed by a prominent Serbian foreign and war correspondent Mihajlo Petrović (d. 1949) was fairly enthusiastic and detailed. *Vreme* similarly alloted the covering of the royal visit the whole first, and the half of the

¹³ *Ibid.* 1.12.1923.

¹⁴ The treaty was indeed signed on 9.2.1934 in Athens, by Greece, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia.

¹⁵ *Politika*, 5.10.1933.

¹⁶ *Politika*, 5.10.1933; *Vreme*, 5.10.1933.

second page. The long article was written by a certain Đ. Bukulica. On the same page *Vreme* also brings a short excerpt from the book on Atatürk written by French author Paul Gentizon. Pravda also published the news as the first headline on the cover page, with pictures of both heads of state, and the long article with no sign of author. The text was obviously sent earlier because there were no details on dinner in Dolma Bahçe, but offers some more details on the morning visit. The elite Yugoslav ship, destroyer "Dubrovnik", with the royal couple on board, dropped anchor in Bosphorus, near the Dolma Bahçe Palace, after being escorted by two Turkish small military ships, "Tinaztepe" and "Zafer" Given that the text was dictated by phone, it is understandable that the names of the vessels were misspelled (Jihaztepe, Zefer). After "Dubrovnik" and Turkish elite frigate "Yavuz" exchanged the traditional 21 gunshot salute, the King and his suite were ushered by a small yacht "Ankara" ("Istanbul", according to *Politika*) to the docks of Dolma Bahçe. The arrival was expected at 8:30, however the guests were on shore not earlier than 9:45. Atatürk, wearing top hat and black suit, after an exchange of pleasantries in French, led Aleksandar to his private salon where they remained, according to *Pravda*, not more than 20 minutes. The Queen Maria was regularly accompanying her husband during the official visits, however out of respect for the Ottoman Turkish traditions, and knowing that Atatürk had no spouse, it was decided that the Queen remain on board during the reception, together with the wife of the Yugoslavian envoy in Ankara, and court ladies. Very probably understanding the intention, and eager to demonstrate to the guests exactly the opposite ie. that the Ottoman ways are gone forever, and that in his, new Turkey men and women belong together, at the end of the meeting Atatürk suddenly expressed the wish to greet the Queen, so the two statesmen, accompanied by two ministers of foreign affairs Dr. Janković and Rüşdi Bey, the general secretary of the Turkish Government Hikmet Bey, Turkish envoy to Belgrade Haydar Bey, the governor of Istanbul Muhiddin Bey, and Atatürk's adjutant Celil Bey embarked "Dubrovnik" where, after the military greetings, a small cocktail was organized. According to *Politika*, two leaders remained in an unofficial conversation for several hours. However, given that the King's visit to Hagia Sofia was scheduled for 13:00, the wording "several hours" seems to be much exaggerated. The same evening Atatürk organized a private dinner for his guests at Dolma Bahçe, and made sure that Ismet Pasha was accompanied by his spouse. On the same page *Politika* published another short news received from Anatolian Agency that the dinner lasted until midnight, and that "Dubrovnik" almost immediately sailed

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS
REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF
YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939

for Greece, after the Queen received flowers both from Kemal Pasha and the governor of Istanbul. Both statesmen expressed a sincere wish for a new meeting. However, destiny had a different design. Aleksandar, the king of Yugoslavia, was assassinated on 9 October 1934 in Marseille by a member of a Bulgarian terrorist organization.

Only four years later, the Yugoslav press was focused on another devastating loss, the illness and the eventual death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Actually, although probably unrelated to the immediate causes of Atatürk's death, the first mentioning of the deterioration of Mustafa Kemal's health in the Yugoslavian press was dated with 2.12.1923 when *Politika* published a short news that a special medical expert was requested from Berlin to Ankara to take control on Kemal Pasha's treatment, concluding that the health of Kemal Pasha still causes concern.¹⁷

In the first days of November 1938, headlines with news from Turkey reflected both unfounded hopes, and the bitter reality. On 10.11.1938 *Vreme* and *Pravda* informed shortly that the condition of Atatürk's health was critical. The official Turkish bulletin of 9th and 10th of November with the detailed medical report including temperature, heart beat and breath, came after fifteen days during which Atatürk's health had been allegedly stabilized. The rapid deterioration of the health was the reason that Celal Bayar, the president of the government was summoned to Ankara.¹⁸ *Politika* offered a bit more extensive information, conveying the last medical report in extenso, including the names of the members of the medical committee, also depicting the atmosphere of utmost anxiety among the common people in Turkey, as well as political and diplomatic traffic in Istanbul and Ankara prepared for bad news.

And the bad news finally came. All capital's newspapers brought them on the first pages. *Politika* on the whole first page, illustrated with the big picture of Atatürk, published a text signed by M. Marković under the headline "Gazi Kemal Atatürk, the creator of the modern Turkey, died yesterday in Dolma Bahçe Palace." The article summarizes the last two days in the life of Atatürk, informs on the atmosphere of sorrow in Turkish capital, and the importance of Atatürk, as well as his political and diplomatic legacy. The author adds that the whole Balkans was mourning after the death of the great statesman who was "committed to peace between nations,

¹⁷ *Politika*, 2.12.1923.

¹⁸ *Vreme*, 10.11.1938; *Pravda*, 10.11.1938.

particularly in the Balkans.“ On the same page is also the whole text of the telegraph of condolence to the president of the General Assembly of the Turkish Republic, written by the Yugoslavian regent Duke Pavle, and Milan Stojadinović, the minister of foreign affairs. Next to the preliminary program of the funeral ceremonies in Ankara is also a short news on a suicide attempt of Salih Bozok, a member of the parliament and a personal friend of Atatürk.¹⁹

Pravda was obviously better informed, following the last two days' communiques, and conveying them in full details. The last one, from 10 November, under the headline: "The Great Leader of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk, died this morning at 9:08" with a big picture. The extended report on the second page covers the first reactions to the news in Belgrade diplomatic circles. The medical reports from Istanbul were followed in Belgrade with an immense interest and apprehension. The September news about the improvement of Atatürk's health were received both with joy and caution, until the last bulletin of yesterday which made clear that Atatürk can not live longer than couple of days. It seems that the news on Atatürk's death had reached the press of the Yugoslav capital earlier than the Turkish embassy, which received the official confirmation about 11:00 (Belgrade time), ie. two hours later. Before that time a huge crowd of people gathered before the Turkish Embassy in Belgrade waiting for the confirmation in a futile hope that the news were wrong. Finally, the confirmation came, and the flag on the Embassy was lowered. The first to visit the Embassy offering condolences were Hungarian, Greek, Chilean, German, and Romanian diplomats, probably because their embassies were nearby. *Pravda* on the first and second pages brings also two extended unsigned articles on Atatürk, the one entitled "The national struggle of Kemal Atatürk," the other "The life of Kemal Atatürk". The first one offers a chronological testimonial of Atatürk's life and reforms, in particular his struggle against the representatives of the old elite, quoting, among others, his response to the embittered members of the conservative ulema that "progress will not be obstructed, and the only possible difference is that heads of some of them will not be on their shoulders." *Vreme* also brings on the first page a picture of Atatürk with the main headline of the day: "Death of Kamal Ataturk". It is worth mentioning that *Vreme* was the only Yugoslav paper which regularly spelled Atatürk's name as "Kamal" instead of "Kemal". The news on Atatürk's death share the first page of *Vreme* with the news on the birth of

¹⁹ *Politika*, 11.11.1938.

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS
REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF
YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939

the Greek princess, healing of the Yugoslavian queen, and the Nazi destruction of the Jewish properties and synagogues. At the foot of the same page there is a short text conveying sorrow following Atatürk's death illustrated with the picture of King Aleksandar and Atatürk during the King's visit to Istanbul in 1933, entitled "The Republic is legacy (the author used Turkish word 'amanet' having the same meaning in Serbo-Croatian) of Kamal Atatürk". On the second page *Vreme* also brings the news on the condolence visit of the minister of foreign affairs Milan Stojadinović to Turkish envoy in Belgrade Ali Haydar Aktay. Another short text on the same page, authored by Đ. Bukilica sees Atatürk's achievements as miracles and him as a lucky man for living long enough to witness the realization of his great project, the immortal institution of Turkish Republic.²⁰ *Politika* of 12.11.1938 had on its first page a picture of İsmet İnönü, and a long article about him, stressing his words that Turkey will continue on the path laid out by Atatürk. The text also includes some Atatürk's words on the late King Aleksandar and the president of the Yugoslavian parliament Nikola Pašić.²¹ The preparation for the funeral were also closely covered by the press reports. *Politika* in its 15 November issue informed that the funeral ceremonies would take place in seven days and that all hotels in Ankara were taken under state control for accomodation of the foreign guests. *Politika* also conveys the related news from the Turkish press allotting the prominent place to an article from *Cumhuriyet*, written by Salahuddin Cönker (?) on friendship between the King Aleksandar and Kemal Atatürk: "only one eye contact was sufficient to create a sincere friendship." *Pravda* of 13.11 dedicated the whole first page to the death of Atatürk, brings news on the program of the funeral, congratulations of the Yugoslav Regent to İsmet İnönü, and an three pages long unsigned article entitled "On the way of salvation and rebirth of Turkey" in which the author brings generally known details from Atatürk's biography.²² The same day *Politika* also dedicates the whole first page to the long unsigned article entitled "Turkey is crying over the body of its creator Kemal Atatürk" depicting Istanbul in sorrow with empty streets, closed tavernas and cinema theaters, local radio broadcasting Atatürk's message to the Turkish youth, and people on the streets reading newspapers and crying loudly. The article finishes with quotations from speeches on Atatürk offered by the rector of Istanbul

²⁰ *Vreme*, 11.11.1938.

²¹ *Politika*, 12.11.1938.

²² *Pravda*, 13.11.1938.

University Cemil Bilsel, army general Tondemir, and journalist Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. In another short article the readers were informed that Atatürk's mortal remains will be carried from the European to the Asian side of the Bosphorus on the frigate "Yavuz," escorted by a defile of foreign military vessels. The first arrived Soviet destroyer "Moskva," next day followed British Mediterranean fleet leader "Malaya," Greek frigate "Hydra," "French cruiser Émile Bertin," Romanian frigate "Regina Maria," and German school cruiser "Emden." An elite unit of Yugoslav army will travel by train to Ankara to participate in the ceremony.²³

Among the longer articles published on the Atatürk in the contemporary press of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia three of them distinguish themselves either by their sincerity, or by the personality of their authors. The first among them was entitled "The New Istanbul," published in *Pravda* on occasion of the visit of King Aleksandar to Istanbul in 1933, and written by a prominent Serbian poet Rade Drainac (1899-1943), who worked also as a journalist for several magazines, and a reporter for *Pravda*. After a romantic introduction on history and geography of the old Istanbul, Drainac enthusiastically praises the new Istanbul, and the new Turkey, attributing the merit to the genius of Kemal Atatürk. "Turkey was reformed by the president of the Republic Gazi Kemal Pasha, so profoundly that no trace remained from the old one. A country which used to be a stage of the feudal bigotry, both in political and cultural fields, today, like only few others in Europe, succeeded to get rid of ballast of the past, which was obstructing the life of the people, and making Turkey a land of unthinkable idleness and slackness (the author uses the word "yavaşluk" having roughly the same meaning in Turkish and Serbo-Croatian). Atatürk implemented the reforms resolutely and thoroughly, from the political system to the smallest daily customs of the common people. This could be done only by great men, who could not be discouraged when they work in behalf of advancement of the people and survival of the homeland. Someone could call it a dictatorship, but the dictatorship of Kemal Pasha is a positive one, with all elements of utilitarianism, and Kemal Pasha is the biggest reformer remembered in history of our neighbor. Some people are deafening our ears with fanciful and horrifying stories about Turkey, but all of them are ridiculous and with no ties to reality. What is today on the agenda in Turkey, at least as much as I could see with my own eyes, from human rights to agrarian reforms, and administration, I must confess, makes me delighted. Today Istanbul raised its

²³ *Politika* 13.11.1938.

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS
REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF
YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939

head, and makes us reflect on the passed centuries and inevitability of change as a leverage of life and creativity."²⁴

The second article, published in *Politika* 13.11.1938, was written by the famous Serbian historian Vasilj Popović (1887-1941). Vasilj Popović studied in Graz and Vienna before being appointed as professor of early modern history at the University of Belgrade. He published mostly on Serbian history and the Eastern Question. Between 1921 and 1922 he was also a member of parliament of the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (after 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia). After German occupation of Yugoslavia, committed suicide in imprisonment at the age of 54. In his page long and well written article entitled "Kemal Atatürk as a historical figure" Popović follows Atatürk's life, from the early childhood until the very end, along the generally known facts, but enhanced with witty remarks and clever conclusions. The author exhibits a profound admiration for Atatürk's military achievements, and political reforms. In addition, knowing that Atatürk himself was of Balkan origin, Popović added some, if not scientifically founded, in any case interesting anthropological observations. "As the first characteristic of his appearance catching one's eye is vigor and determination articulated in a naturally sharp gaze and a deep wrinkle between his eyes, being the first and basic feature of revolutionary reformers and natural born leaders of the people. All his corporal and spiritual constitution reveals the violent type of a Balkan highlander, in which the poetical zest and the creative fantasy of Turkish and Balkanic atavism meet the genuine organizational practicality of a modern soldier and revolutionary. This type of noble authoritative look is not encountered only among the Muslims of his birthplace Thessaloniki, but in all cities of the Balkans, as result of the Ottoman selection of the most capable boys and prettiest girls from Balkan ethnic background. The external appearance completely matched his inner attributes, virtues, and abilities: diligent, competent and eager for power. Persistent and stubborn. Revolutionary, reformer, and creator. Audacity and ambition in service of high revolutionary, progressive national ideals."²⁵

The last article was a rather personal account of author's first encounter with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, written by Yugoslav Air Force colonel Novica Rakočević (1894-1941). Novica Rakočević entered Military Academy in

²⁴ *Pravda*, 5.10.1933.

²⁵ *Politika*, 13.11.1938.

1913, and was among the first ten Yugoslavian air force pilots who received training in France 1915. In later years he was teaching in Military schools, and authored more books on military strategy and tactics. He was killed during the German air attack on Belgrade 6.4.1941. The author recollects his first conversation with Mustafa Kemal Pasha, after being dispatched to Ankara as a military attaché in 1935. It was published by *Politika* on 17.11.1938. Several days upon his arrival to Ankara Rakočević met the first adjutant of Atatürk, major Cemal Bey, and expressed his wish to meet the Turkish president. Cemal Bey informed him that Mustafa Kemal Pasha never received military envoys, but promised to make an exception on any occasion. On 18 April 1935 Rakočević attended a ball in Ankara where, around midnight appeared Atatürk himself. Atatürk, being on the other side of the hall, beckoned to him. The distance was rather long, and many other people were between the two, so the young military attaché was unsure if Kemal Pasha was addressing exactly him, so he remained on his place. Then Atatürk's adjutant came, saying that the President wanted to see him. Rakočević approached, introduced himself and the two shook hands. In a pleasant conversation, Atatürk explained that he himself used to be military envoy in Sofia, so he knew that there is much to do, and promised to instruct his subordinates to help Rakočević. I found interesting that Mustafa Kemal started conversation not by offering Rakočević a cigarette, but asking him if he had one. Rakočević did not have, and Atatürk said: "No problem, I do", and offered him a cigarette from his pocket case, take another for himself, and lighted the both. The conversation continued in another room with champagne, and company of some diplomats. Rakočević who was later meeting Atatürk in many other occasions, recollects that Atatürk always behaved very sincere and affable, addressing him as "my dear friend." To be sure, they communicated in French, and the expression "mon chere ami" is in French much less intimate than its Serbo-Croatian or Turkish equivalents. Probably the only close Serbian friend of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the late King Aleksandar, what Atatürk confirms in his words related by Colonel Rakočević: "My dear friend, you have lost your king, and I have lost my great friend. Nobody knows, my dear friend, how much I cried when I heard for his death, and how big is my pain when I think on him. When I sent that dispatch I wanted to show to the whole world that I have made a commitment with him. I gave him my word, and my word is a commitment

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK AND THE TURKISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AS
REFLECTED IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF
YUGOSLAVIA 1919-1939

for me, and I guarantee to keep my word, and I am sure that you will keep his word.”²⁶

Newspapers are doomed for their value which lasts for only one sole day. The truth of yesterday is not the truth of today. Only extraordinary men and women are blessed with the eternal truth, so the news about them published a whole century ago are valid as if they were published today. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is undoubtedly one of the greatest among them.

²⁶ **Politika**, 17.11.1938.

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