

**MEMORY AND POLITICAL SYMBOLISM IN POST-SEPTEMBER 12
TURKEY**

A History of the May 27th Debate

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the manner in which published representations of the May 27, 1960 military takeover in Turkey changed after the military takeover of September 12, 1980 and subsequent political rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes. It aims to provide a better understanding of changing attitudes regarding democratization and military rule in post-1980 Turkey through a close reading and analysis of published representations of the May 27 takeover during the period 1960-2000.

Sources used in this study are drawn mainly from newspapers and books published on the May 27 takeover. Newspaper sources include news articles and opinion columns from the newspapers *Cumhuriyet*, *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*. To provide a comparative scale for changing attitudes in these newspapers regarding the May 27 takeover, the May 27 and May 28 editions of all three of these newspapers have been studied on a yearly basis throughout the period 1960-2000. Books used in this study represent the entirety of Turkish publications on the subjects of Adnan Menderes and the May 27 takeover during the years 1960-2000.

Representations of the May 27 takeover are then analyzed against the background of several political developments occurring in Turkey during the period under review. Among these, particular attention is paid to the military interventions of 1971 and 1980 and the political rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes in the late 1980's. Conclusions are then drawn which link changing attitudes towards the May 27 takeover to intellectual reaction against the interventions of 1971 and 1980.

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NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

The following guidance may be of use to readers unacquainted with Turkish.

c, C—*j* as in *jam*.

ç, Ç—*ch* as in *church*.

ğ, Ğ—soft *g* is silent, but lengthens the preceding vowel.

ı, İ—French *e* as in *le* or *de*.

i, İ—like *ea* as in *bean* or *ee* as in *green*.

ö, Ö—French *eu* as in *deux* or *monsieur*.

ü, Ü—French *u* as in *lumière* or *université*.

ş, Ş—*sh* as in *shut*.

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INTRODUCTION

1-Start with Hungary.
On May 27, 1960 the government of Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes was overthrown in a military takeover. This military takeover, the first in the history of the Turkish Republic, came on the heels of a month of student protests in Ankara and Istanbul. Menderes' government, which had been first elected in 1950 and had most recently been returned to power with a parliamentary majority in the elections of 1957, had already found itself the subject of criticism by many Turkish academicians and journalists for what they considered the Demokrat Party's exploitation of religious issues for political benefit.

Anti-Demokrat Party sentiment among Turkey's academic and intellectual circles reached unprecedented heights, however, on April 18, 1960. It was on this date that the Demokrat Party announced, against a backdrop^{of} heightened political bitterness between itself and the opposition Republican People's Party, that it would use its parliamentary majority to create an 'Investigation Commission' ('*Tahkikat Komisyonu*') to study the political activities of the parliamentary opposition. During the three-month period in which this commission would carry out its study, political activity would be banned outside of parliament and newspaper reporting of parliamentary debates would be forbidden.

Law professors at universities in Ankara and Istanbul denounced these developments as unconstitutional, leading to their suspension. In response to this, protests erupted on university campuses in Istanbul and Ankara on April 26. When the government decided to use the Army to suppress these demonstrations, one student was accidentally, and fatally, crushed by a tank.¹ After a month of

¹ Zürcher, Erik J., *Turkey: A Modern History*, New York, 1993, pp. 251-252. This single death would constitute the entirety of the fatalities incurred during the month of protests prior to May 27.

increasingly widespread protests, a collection of 39 (mostly junior) officers, headed by General Cemal Gürsel², seized power on May 27, 1960.

The May 27 takeover was warmly greeted by the student protesters who had been dominating the streets of Turkey's two largest cities for the previous four weeks. Many other Turks, drawn largely from urban, educated and professional circles, also supported the takeover. One year after the takeover, when the National Unity Committee³ announced that a new constitution had been drafted for Turkey, the prestige of May 27 among the *aydın*⁴, or social-democratic intellectual set of Turkey, increased still further. The constitution of 1961, which was approved in a referendum in July of that year and which would stay in force until September 12 1980, constitutionally guaranteed for the first time in Turkey a variety of social rights and freedoms. According to the new constitution a Constitutional Court was created, which would have the power to overturn legislation it ruled unconstitutional. Moreover, full autonomy was granted to universities, the state-controlled media and the judiciary. Various civil rights, including the unfettered right to expression and the right to form labor unions, were also guaranteed.

Throughout the 1960's and 1970's, the prestige afforded to the May 27 takeover by most of Turkey's bureaucratic, military and educational elite—the articulate opinion-makers of Turkish society—thus rested chiefly upon two points. The first concerned the policies of the Menderes government itself. At its inception, Adnan Menderes' Demokrat Party had been supported by all who had felt themselves

² Although General Gürsel was nominally the head of the takeover, he was brought in only the latest stages of the takeover's planning and had not been involved in its preparation.

³ The *Millî Birlik Komitesi*, the collective name of the officers behind the takeover.

at one time or another opposed to the policies and one-party rule of the Republican People's Party, which had been in power from the creation of the Republic until the elections of 1950. After ten years of Demokrat Party rule, widespread disaffection with the Menderes government was manifest in the country's military, its civil service and its universities.

At risk of oversimplification, it can thus be said that by the late 1950's Menderes' support lay largely with rural agricultural and small-town merchant classes, while urban, educated elites formed much of the opposition to his government. The events of April-May 1960 therefore led to an increasingly polarized political environment in which Menderes was reviled on the streets of Istanbul and Ankara but showered with applause and genuine affection whenever he traveled outside the city limits of Turkey's two chief metropolitan areas. The very removal of Menderes was therefore a cause for celebration among urban, educated circles in Turkey. As a great proportion of these people held social-democratic, statist political views, the creation of the 1961 constitution further strengthened their conviction that May 27 was a great step forward in the history of the Turkish Republic.⁵

Among many other Turks, however, May 27 was held in considerably lower esteem. Certainly, a large number of the Turkish majority that had voted for Menderes' Demokrat Party just three years earlier found little cause for celebration in the Prime Minister's ouster or in the execution of Menderes, Foreign Minister Fatin Ruştü Zorlu and Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan in September of 1961. Furthermore, many people would blame the 1961 constitution for much of the civil

⁴ The word *aydın*, meaning 'light', is the word given to intellectuals, generally of left-wing or social democratic views, in Turkey.

unrest that would plague Turkey in the late 1960's and 1970's—the 'chaos' and 'anarchy' of which would form the pretext of the military intervention of 1971 and the takeover of 1980.



Figure 1

Adnan Menderes

This study and its methodology

This study focuses upon the changing manner in which May 27 and Adnan Menderes are represented in newspapers and books published in Turkey during the years 1960-2000. The aim of this work is not to provide an exhaustive and complete

⁵ Zürcher, pp. 243-245.

account of all of the ideas regarding May 27 and Adnan Menderes that were in public circulation during this period, but rather to provide the reader with a feeling for the manner in which published opinion regarding these issues has changed over the past four decades.

Chapters 2-4 of this study are devoted to discussing the way in which May 27 has been represented on the pages of three nationwide Turkish daily newspapers: *Cumhuriyet*, *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*. These papers have been selected for three reasons. Firstly, all three of these papers were in print in a daily format during the entirety of the period under review. Secondly, all three papers are of large circulation and are distributed nationally. Thirdly, each of these papers approaches the question of May 27 from a unique perspective. The basis for the study of these three newspapers was a complete reading of all news articles and opinion columns regarding May 27 appearing in the May 27 and May 28 editions of these papers during the years 1960-2000. On occasion, such as when reactions to the March 12, 1971 intervention are discussed, other issues of these newspapers are also used as a basis for discussion. Unless otherwise indicated, however, all news articles and opinion columns regarding May 27 have been taken from the May 27 and May 28 editions of these papers. The rationale for this approach lies in the conviction that, short of studying every edition of these newspapers over the entire period under review, the best manner of establishing a representative sample measuring the level of interest in May 27 on year-by-year basis is to limit the study's research sample to a careful study of issues published on the anniversary of the takeover.⁶

⁶ In the chapter devoted to *Cumhuriyet*, a separate section is included based upon data taken from all editions published during the years 1998-2000, for which searchable archives exist.

The first newspaper to be discussed in this study, *Cumhuriyet*, unwaveringly supported May 27 throughout the period 1960-2000. In all of the opinion columns devoted to May 27 in *Cumhuriyet*, not a single one in a period of forty years has challenged the legitimacy of May 27 or criticized either the military takeover or the constitution of 1961. With regard to May 27 and the constitution that was created in its wake, the only words of regret to appear in *Cumhuriyet* during the period 1960 to 1980 are found in the argument (made frequently in the years immediately following the intervention of March 12, 1971) that the 'reforms' of May 27 were not sufficiently or properly implemented. After 1980, the replacement of the 1961 constitution and the official rehabilitation of Menderes are met on the pages of *Cumhuriyet* with unmitigated regret.

Thus, as a newspaper, *Cumhuriyet* can be said to hold a consistently supportive editorial stance with regard to May 27. Yet even while support for May 27 is constant, the manner in which May 27 is remembered and the reasons given for its necessity change as the years pass. Thus, the focus of this study's chapter on *Cumhuriyet* will be the changing manner in which May 27 is remembered and defended during the period under review.

The second newspaper investigated in this study, *Milliyet*, was also an enthusiastic supporter of May 27 during the 1960's. As time passed, however, various doubts regarding May 27 began to find their way into *Milliyet*'s opinion columns. Unlike *Cumhuriyet*, the columnists of which have adopted a consistent line of support for May 27 over a period of four decades, a variety of editorial comment can be found on the pages of *Milliyet* with regard to May 27. At times, an interesting breach

regarding May 27 appears between the stance of *Milliyet* Newspaper as an *institution*, and that adopted by most of its regularly appearing opinion columnists. Whereas *Milliyet* Newspaper as an institution continues to enthusiastically support May 27—through the printing of the symbol and slogan of May 27 on the newspaper's masthead, the inclusion in the newspaper of ardently pro-May 27 guest columnists, and the printing of staged photography casting May 27 in a heroic light—until the mid-1970's, individual columnists in *Milliyet* become at times cautiously critical, at other times conspicuously silent regarding May 27 from the middle to late 1960's onwards.

From the mid-1970's onwards, support for May 27 in all facets of *Milliyet*'s portrayal of the holiday becomes far less visible. After 1980, *Milliyet* columnists tend to criticize May 27, although on occasion a column appears which represents the takeover more positively. Nevertheless, while some columnists in the late 1980's and 1990's continue to argue the benefits of the 1961 constitution and make other arguments in defense of May 27, from this period onwards few columnists fail to mention that May 27's role as 'Turkey's first coup' is a historical fact deserving regret.

In the third newspaper studied here, *Hürriyet*, enthusiastic support for May 27 ceases shortly after the end of direct military rule. Prior to 1980, very few opinion columns appear in *Hürriyet*, leaving only the presence (or absence) of 'collateral' commentary (commentary that is expressed through means other than opinion columns, such as artwork, photography or the wording of a newspaper headline) regarding May 27 to serve as a basis for judging the way in which the military

takeover is represented. As is the case in *Milliyet* until the mid-1970's, in *Hürriyet* editions of the 1960's May 27 is treated with special symbolism. The symbol and slogan of the 'revolution' are printed on its masthead, specially staged photographs of soldiers and civilians marching arm-in-arm are published on its front page, and images of Atatürk are frequently positioned alongside those of May 27. From the mid-1960's onwards, however, May 27 is represented in a distinctly more pedestrian light. Photographs and cartoons of earnest-looking soldiers and students linking arms under the banner of May 27 are replaced by photographs of real soldiers, marching in the May 27 parade, while the slogan and symbol of May 27 gradually disappear from the newspaper's masthead. By the late 1960's May 27 had become, in *Hürriyet*, just another state holiday—a transformation which would occur in *Milliyet* approximately five years later. As is the case in *Milliyet*, the post-1980 opinion columns of *Hürriyet* are usually anti-May 27, although some voices of support for Turkey's first military intervention remain. Like *Milliyet* columnists, even those few *Hürriyet* columnists in the 1980's and 1990's who continue to defend May 27 tend to write that, while May 27 may have brought certain social and constitutional freedoms through its constitution, its introduction of the 'chain of coups' into Turkish political life is something which cannot be celebrated.

Thus, in studying these three newspapers, an attempt has been made to include as large a swath of mainstream political opinion as possible. In the case of *Cumhuriyet*, support for May 27 is constant, but the arguments used to support May 27 change according to the prism of contemporary political events through which May 27 is viewed. In *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet* (newspapers which have considerably

larger circulation figures than Cumhuriyet)⁷ what appears to be genuinely enthusiastic support for May 27 fades within the span of approximately of 10-15 years. After public criticism of May 27 becomes more possible in the wake of the September 12, 1980 military intervention, most columnists in *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*⁸ conclude that May 27 was a mistake. But in the cases of *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*, too, contemporary political events—the military intervention of September 12, 1980 in particular—seem to have had an enormous impact upon the formulation of opinion regarding May 27.

In addition to studying these three newspapers, this study also includes a discussion and analysis of all of the books published between the years 1960 and 2000 which are concerned with these issues. At this point, however, methodological questions become slightly more complicated. Whereas the section of this study dealing with newspapers relates information from the entirety of a statistical sample (all newspaper articles and columns printed on May 27 and May 28 during the years 1960-2000), in order to research the manner in which May 27 was represented in books published in Turkey it becomes necessary to make certain choices regarding which aspects of May 27 most deserve historiographical investigation.

Books included in this study were those found through three separate 'keyword' computer catalogue searches at the four libraries⁹ in the United States and Turkey holding the most extensive collections of Turkish-language material. The keywords used in these searches were 'Menderes', 'Demokrat', and 'Mayıs' ('May', for 'May 27'). After those books turning up in these searches which were unrelated to

⁷ Poulton, Hugh. *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic*. London, 1997, p. 203.

⁸ Who are not, in most cases, the same columnists from the pre-September 12 era.

the subjects of Adnan Menderes and May 27 were discounted, the entirety of the remaining publications were used in this study. Unless otherwise indicated, all books referred to in chapters 5 and 6 of this study are drawn from these searches.

Given the great increase in the publication of books specifically about Adnan Menderes that takes place during the years of Menderes' political rehabilitation (1987-1990), the figure of Adnan Menderes himself has necessarily been included as a key element within the study of May 27-related books published in Turkey. Thus, in this study's chapter on books related to May 27, the issue of May 27 is often broken down into the issues of both May 27 and Adnan Menderes himself. In other words, discussions relating to the figure of Adnan Menderes is treated as a sub-issue of the broader question of May 27 throughout the course of this study, but holds nearly equal status to the issue of May 27 in this study's chapter on books.

When their inclusion seems connected to or useful to the understanding of changes in the way May 27 is presented, political events taking place in Turkey—in particular the military intervention of 1971, the military takeover of 1980, and Menderes' political rehabilitation after 1987—are discussed alongside the material researched for this study. Otherwise, this study does not attempt to discuss the merits of May 27 or of the arguments used to defend or attack it. Rather, it is concerned with the meaningfulness of the way in which May 27 has been presented in a large and largely representative portion of the written opinion that has been devoted to it in Turkey between the years 1960 and 2000.

⁹ Firestone Library (Princeton University), Widener Library (Harvard University), the US Library of Congress and the National Library (*Millî Kütüphane*) in Ankara, Turkey.

There is much that is admittedly problematic in this methodological approach. A study which limits itself to three newspapers and book publication cannot claim to be representative of all published political opinion. Certainly, there is a wide body of journal literature, for example, that could be used to supplement this study in addition to the study of more marginal and fringe-targeted publications. This being said, the aim of this study is primarily to give an indication of the extent to which *mainstream* written opinion regarding May 27 has changed in Turkey since 1980. Representations of May 27 appearing on television, radio, or in film have not been included in this study, with the exception of an eleven-part documentary film included in chapter 6.

Additionally, it should also be stressed that no attempt is being made in this study to portray the printed word as it appeared in newspapers and books in Turkey as a necessarily faithful representation of public opinion in general. The purpose of this study is neither to be completely representative of public opinion nor to be thorough to the extent of including every word ever published about May 27 in Turkey. Rather, the methodological aim here is to study a very large and statistically significant body of work over a number of years and measure the extent to which change occurs. The form and degree of this change is then analyzed with the interest of linking it to various contemporary political events taking place in Turkey.

May 27 and the state

Between the years 1960 and 1980, public criticism of May 27 was in many ways an act tantamount to calling into question the constitutional legitimacy of the contemporary Turkish state. After all, if May 27 was not a legitimate change of

power, what implications did this hold for the constitution and institutions that had been created in its immediate aftermath? For this reason, there is a certain 'underground' nature to pre-1980 publications by opponents of May 27. The term 'coup' ('*darbe*') in reference to May 27 is generally used in these publications as a code-word which demonstrates opposition to the takeover, while supporters of May 27—following the lead of the May 27 authorities themselves—tend to refer to the takeover as a 'revolution' ('*ihtilâl*', '*devrim*', or '*inkılap*'). The employment of this sort of semantic code by opponents of May 27 was necessary for much of the 1960's and 1970's as a new state order, based upon a military takeover, sought to protect its shaky claims to legitimacy by restricting criticism of May 27 and banning the publication of works which praised those who were ousted by the takeover.¹⁰

The period of total repression of the publication of anti-May 27 works came to an end, however, before the end of the 1960's. After this time, revisionist views of May 27 were much more widely tolerated both in print and in the wider political arena. By the late 1960's, almost all of the former Demokrat Party officials had had their full political rights restored and in 1970 ~~the~~ a party calling itself the Demokratik Party was established in a self-conscious effort at restoring the party of Menderes and Bayar.¹¹ Moreover, with the military intervention of March 12, 1971 and the subsequent restrictions added to the constitution of 1961, critics of May 27—linked as it was by so many to the constitution of 1961—were emboldened. Supporters of May 27, meanwhile, adopted an increasingly defensive tone.

¹⁰ In 1963, Professor Fuad Başgil would be put on trial in Turkey for 'committing a crime against the security of the Turkish State while in a foreign country' after the publication of his book, *27 Mayıs İhtilâli ve Sebepleri* ('The May 27 Revolution and its Causes'). See chapter 5 of this work.

¹¹ The adoption of the name 'Demokrat Party' remained a violation of the election law until after 1980.

In the aftermath of the military takeover of September 12, 1980 the role of May 27 as part of the legitimizing structure of the Turkish State came to an end. Both the 1961 constitution and the status of May 27 as a national holiday were rescinded, acts which formally severed the connection between the May 27 takeover and constitutional and legal framework of the state. From this point forward, criticism of May 27 would be more commonly seen, and one reason for this was that doing so would no longer be construed as an act which implicitly questioned the legitimacy of the state and its constitutional order.

In 1987, the Turkish parliament adopted legislation mandating the transfer of the remains of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan to a mausoleum to be constructed in their honor. Moreover, parliament voted in favor of naming an airport and a major boulevard in Istanbul after Adnan Menderes, a move which has since been duplicated by many local municipalities.

Three years after the decision to re-inter the three executed politicians was made, a state funeral attended by Turkey's President and Prime Minister was held in honor of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan. As hard as it would have been to believe in the 1970's, just ten years after the occurrence of a military takeover which brought to an end the era in which Menderes was portrayed by official Turkey as a 'traitor' to his country, the memory of the formerly disgraced politician had been drawn into the very heart of Turkey's civilian leadership.

The period 1980-1990 was thus not just revisionist with regard to May 27, but was in fact nothing short of revolutionary. While many supporters of May 27 fumed over what they called the 'counter-revolution' of the 1980's, others used the

opportunity of the post-1980 separation of May 27 and the Turkish state to criticize the occurrence of military interventions in general.

May 27 in print

Post-1980 arguments against May 27 follow two principal tendencies. The first is manifested in arguments made by those who endorsed September 12 precisely because it put an end to the May 27 era in Turkey. The second tendency is one of principled opposition to all military intervention in Turkey, regardless of the results they bring. It is worth noting, however, that the vocabulary of democratic, civilian government is now employed by almost all critics of May 27.

Regardless of whether one's criticism of May 27 stems from purely political interests or a genuine opposition to military interventions in general, the fact that September 12 has made military takeovers so highly unpopular in Turkey today has enabled all critics of May 27 to seize the moral high ground in attacking May 27, calling it republican Turkey's first 'coup'. Defenders of May 27, on the other hand, are left with the increasingly unpopular argument that every development in Turkey must be judged by the results it brings, rather than be opposed purely on the basis of its being a military intervention. The inherent premise in this argument—that military takeovers are sometimes acceptable—is proving, however, an increasingly untenable one in public discourse in Turkey.

September 12 and May 27

Much has been written about the various reasons leading up to the military takeover of May 27. What this study sets out to present, however, is the manner in which May 27 has been remembered in print since 1960 and how arguments pertaining to May 27 have changed in Turkey over the past four decades. Specifically, but not exclusively, much attention in this study is paid to the enormous role that the military takeover of September 12, 1980 has played in instigating change in the way May 27 has been represented.

September 12 has had a tremendous impact upon the public perception in Turkey of May 27 in three ways. First, the official renunciation of May 27 which occurred in the aftermath of September 12 permitted for the first time in Turkey the publication of all and any ideas regarding May 27—including those which defended May 27 and bitterly criticized September 12. Secondly, the very manifestation of September 12 as a brutal military takeover which resulted in the imprisonment and torture of thousands of people led many Turks—even those who otherwise supported the political and constitutional values which had long been associated with May 27—to reconsider their ideas regarding Turkey's first military takeover. Finally, September 12 forced those who continued to support May 27 to further develop their arguments in order to explain why one military takeover was legitimate and the other not.

Ultimately, however, the study of how May 27 has been remembered in Turkey is predominantly a study of the manner in which attitudes concerning the necessity of civilian rule have changed in Turkish public opinion fora since 1960, and

especially since the mid-1980's. Using discussions regarding May 27 as a point of departure, it is hoped that one way in which this study will prove itself useful to the field is by providing an example of the manner in which broader intellectual and political trends in a country can be measured by a close reading, over time, of a particular socio-political issue.

Exactly what sort of state should the Turkish Republic be? What is the proper relationship between the 'national will' and the core principles of the Turkish Republic? A frequently made argument by supporters of May 27 is that Menderes' chief mistake was that he confused 'the national will' ('*millî irade*', a term that was frequently invoked by the Demokrat Party) with a license to do whatever his parliamentary majority wanted. Indeed, the Demokrat Party did behave at times in a highly authoritarian manner, albeit one that was hardly less abusive of its position than that of the Republican People's Party during the years of the Demokrat Party opposition from 1946 to 1950.

But beyond the issues which surround the actual seizure of power itself in 1960, the focus of so many pro-May 27 arguments upon Menderes' abuse of 'the national will' touches upon one of the most perplexing conundrums facing the Turkish state. How far can a socio-political program like Kemalism, for which there was arguably less than a majority of public opinion support at the time of its enactment, be reworked without calling into question the desirability of that program's existence? What, precisely, are the 'ground rules'—the essential laws of the land which cannot be compromised—in the Turkish Republic? To what degree can Kemalist principles and practices falling outside these 'ground rules' be re-

negotiated? With specific regard to May 27, the following questions can also be asked: what is the responsibility of the military in defending the 'ground rules' of the Republic and at what point does military intervention become justified?

The May 27 debate and Turkey

That Turkey has been undergoing, since the mid-1980's, a process of intense re-negotiation of its 'ground rules' is hardly a brand new conception.¹² The ouster in 1997 of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and the emergence of the so-called 'February 28 Process' in Turkey are only the most recent manifestations of shifts in these negotiations—negotiations which are as old as the Republic itself but which, nonetheless, experience periods of particular intensity. What this study wishes to ultimately engender is the notion that publications devoted to May 27 had, especially in the late 1980's and early 1990's, a highly intimate and metaphorical relationship with this negotiating process. This is clear not only in pro-May 27 arguments which invoke Menderes' supposed exploitation of 'majoritarian democracy' ('çoğulcu demokrasi'), but is a current that pervades the great majority of arguments both for and against May 27 in the post-September 12 period.

Only since the mid-1980's has May 27 been freely and publicly debated in Turkey. During the years 1960-1980, this debate existed, of course, but in a more muted fashion. Part of the work of this study has been to trace the development of these debates from the period in which anti-May 27 arguments were by necessity circumspective to the time in which May 27 was put into official disrepute—opening

¹² See, for example, Yavuz, Hakan. "Search For a New Social Contract in Turkey: Fethullah Gülen, the Virtue Party and the Kurds", *SAIS Review*, Winter-Spring 1999. Volume XIX, Number 1.

the way for a public dialogue. A considerable portion of this study is thus concerned with identifying and discussing the issues of May 27 as they appeared prior to 1980.

Additionally, a more ambitious aim of this project has been to cast some light upon an issue that cuts into one of the core issues facing republican Turkey in the last quarter of the twentieth century: military intervention in the defense of Kemalist principles and its relation to 'the national will'. 'National Will' ('*Millî İrade*') one of the most well-known slogans of Menderes' Demokrat Party, has long been a focus of discussion for both supporters and detractors of May 27.

Indeed, it is perhaps not coincidental that the first party to find itself ousted from power in Turkey would be a populist party calling itself 'Demokrat', one which overtly courted what it called the 'national will' ('*millî irade*') and which employed slogans which vowed to return national sovereignty to the people. Four times in Republican Turkish history (1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997) freely elected governments in Turkey have been ousted by the country's military. Twice this has resulted in a full-scale military takeover, and on two occasions (1971 and 1997), a civilian government more pleasing to the country's military was established under the threat of a military takeover. Thus another contribution that this study hopes to make to the field is through its examination of the manner in which arguments regarding the desirability of civilian government are expressed in books and opinion columns devoted to May 27.

Finally, it is hoped that this study can remind the reader of the ephemeral nature of historiography and of our tendency to revise our understanding of historical issues according to events occurring well after the event that is studied. Regardless of

how one feels about May 27, September 12 appears to be an event that now has to be taken into account whenever May 27 is discussed. There is something in this fact that should remind us that history is not static, and that May 27 is an event that still, forty years later, is malleable and dependent upon events that are yet to occur. Today, as the September 12 era in Turkey approaches its twenty-first birthday—just one birthday more than that celebrated by the May 27 era—the extent to which the future interfaces with the past among these issues should not stray far from our memories.

CHAPTER 1:

SETTING THE STAGE

The Political Rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes

On May 22, 1987, five days before the 27th anniversary of the 1960 military takeover that ousted Adnan Menderes, a bill was passed in the Turkish Parliament mandating the following:

1. That the remains of Menderes, former Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and former Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan be transferred, in a funeral ceremony, from their graves on İmralı Island to a site deemed suitable by the Prime Minister and which would be constructed in their honor.
2. That Vatan Caddesi (Avenue) in Istanbul be renamed “Adnan Menderes Caddesi”, that the tramway to be opened in Istanbul be named “Adnan Menderes Tramway”, that İzmir Cumaovası airport be renamed “Adnan Menderes Airport”, that an iron and steel mill in the town of Ereğli be renamed after Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and that a dam in Sarıyar be renamed after Hasan Polatkan.¹

Political symbol-making and rehabilitation

Two important changes were made to the above legislation on March 11, 1990—only months after Turgut Özal had succeeded Kenan Evren as President of Turkey. Firstly, the 1961 convictions of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan were officially reversed in an act of parliament. Secondly, the words ‘*törenle nakledilir*’ (‘transferred in a funeral ceremony’) were replaced with the words ‘*devlet töreni ile nakledilir*’ (‘transferred in a state funeral’), paving the way for an official ceremony marking the transfer of Menderes’ remains.

¹ *Resmi Gazete İle Yayımlı*: June 6, 1987, number 19479. Law Number 3374. Cited in *Yassıada’dan Anıtmezar’a*, Demokratlar Kulübü Yayınları, Ankara, 1991, p. 43.

On September 16, 1990 President Turgut Özal appeared on television to offer his observations on the reburial, which his party had initiated through its parliamentary majority. Included in Özal's comments were the following statements:

From the history of the country.

In the years that have come in its wake, much has been written about May 27 and many views regarding it have been put forth. To study this phase of our history in a broad manner is certainly a worthwhile pursuit. I, however, do not intend to get involved in the analysis of these events here. It's best to leave the cause and consequences of May 27 to the historians. The duty that falls upon us, as a nation, is for the deep wounds opened by these events to be bandaged, and for the pain left upon people's consciences to be erased. With all of us having lived together with this pain for so many years, the September 12th administration² will always be remembered with appreciation for having taken the first step in the process of easing this pain. By ending the status of May 27 as a public holiday and removing the constitution that included passages denouncing the Demokrat Party era, a long-desired first step towards a revival of genuine brotherhood, unity and togetherness was taken.³

The next day—the twenty-ninth anniversary of Menderes' execution on October 17, 1961⁴—the remains of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan were transferred to

² The military administration which took power on September 12, 1980.

³ *Yassıada'dan Anıtmezar'a*, p. 18. "27 Mayıs hakkında müteakip yıllarda çok yazılar yazıldı, düşünceler serdedildi. Gerçekten tarihimizin bu safhası geniş bir şekilde incelenmeye değer niteliktedir. Ancak, ben burada, bunların/tahliline girmek niyetinde değilim. Bunun sebep ve sonuçlarının incelenip değerlendirilmesinin tarihçilere bırakılması en doğru yol olacaktır. Bize, milletçe düşen görev, bu hadiselerin açtığı derin yaraların sarılması, yaşanan acıların vicdanlarda bıraktığı izlerin silinmesidir. Bu acılarla yıllarca birlikte yaşadıktan sonra, bu uğurdaki ilk adımın 12 Eylül yönetiminin atılmış olması daima takdirle anılacaktır. 27 Mayıs'ın bayram olmaktan çıkarılması ve 1961 Anayasası'nın dibacesinde Demokrat Parti dönemini itham eden ibarelerin 1982 Anayasa'sıyla ortadan kaldırılması ülkemizde arzulanan tam bir kardeşlik, birlik ve beraberlik ruhunun ihyasının da başlangıcı olmuştur".

⁴ Zorlu and Polatkan were hanged one day before Menderes, on September 16, 1961.

Anıtmezar⁵, the mausoleum constructed in their honor, and re-buried in a state ceremony attended by President Özal, Prime Minister Yıldırım Akbulut, True Path Party Leader Süleyman Demirel and Motherland Party leadership candidate Mesut Yılmaz⁶. Also attending the services were current and former members of the Demokrat Party, Justice Party, Motherland Party and True Path Party. Representatives of the armed forces did not attend the funeral.⁷

Arriving by ferryboat at noon in the Istanbul district of Sarayburnu, the remains of Menderes, Polatkan and Zorlu were taken first to Muratpaşa Mosque in Aksaray, where a religious ceremony was held. After the ceremony, a ninety-minute funeral procession followed by tens of thousands of onlookers escorted the remains of the three politicians to Anıtmezar, in the district of Topkapı, where they were then reburied.

In the years immediately following Parliament's passage of the Menderes bill in 1987, local governments in several Turkish cities followed the national government's example by naming schools, parks, and streets after Menderes.⁸ In 1992 Adnan Menderes University was opened in the city of Aydın and on May 27, 1999

⁵ 'Anıt' is Turkish for 'memorial', while 'mezar' means 'grave' or 'tomb'. The name 'Anıtmezar', it should be noted, bears a certain resemblance to the name of Atatürk's mausoleum in Ankara, which is called 'Anıtkabir'.

⁶ Yılmaz would soon defeat Akbulut in a party leadership contest and replace him as Prime Minister.

⁷ Whether or not representatives of the armed forces had been invited seems less clear. The newspaper *Cumhuriyet* reported that "It was seen that no place had been set aside in the protocol for the armed forces", ("*Silahlı Kuvvetler adına protokolde yer ayrılmadığı görüldü*"), implying that members of the armed forces had not been invited into the protocol (*Cumhuriyet*, September 17, 1992, p. 1). However, Hüseyin Avni Güler, the leader of the May 27 National Revolution Society ('*27 Mayıs Millî Devrim Derneği*')—an organization devoted to the principles of the 1960 coup--was quoted as saying: "We thank the armed forces by behaving correctly and not taking part in the state funeral" ("*Devlet töreninde yer almayarak doğru davranan TSK'ya şükran duyuyoruz*"), implying that it was the military that chose not to attend. In an interview with the author, Adnan Menderes' youngest son Aydın Menderes stated that the military had not been invited to the state funeral.

⁸ Indeed, Menderes' state funeral was preceded by a state funeral held in the honor of Demokrat Party co-founder Celal Bayar, who died at age 104 in 1986.

the Adnan Menderes museum was opened—also in Menderes' hometown of Aydın. Atop this pyramid-shaped museum stands today a sight that, prior to 1980, would have been unthinkable in Turkey: a twenty-five foot statue of Adnan Menderes, waving to motorists on the newly-constructed highway linking Aydın to the port city of İzmir.

The politics of remembering.

Although it was Özal who was to take the ultimate steps in securing the political rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes, Turkey's first civilian president was a relative latecomer to the Menderes bandwagon. Indeed, the political figure most frequently associated with efforts to redeem Menderes' reputation was Justice Party leader (and after 1987, True Path Party leader) Süleyman Demirel. It had been Demirel who, during one of his seven terms as Prime Minister, was instrumental in ending in 1967 the ban on publishing works that 'praised' Menderes. Moreover, Demirel had, throughout the 1970's, criticized the existence of the May 27 holiday as 'insulting' to the memory of Menderes⁹, and had called for its removal. Özal, on the other hand, had never previously been known as a champion of the Menderes cause. Indeed, in an apparent response to Demokrat Party co-founder and former President Celal Bayar's support of the True Path Party¹⁰ in the local elections of March 1984, Özal had even said that Menderes had been guilty of 'state treason' (*'vatan ihaneti'*).¹¹

⁹ While not, it should be added, succeeding in actually rescinding the status of May 27 as a holiday during his numerous premierships.

¹⁰ Which already was shaping itself to be a rival to Özal's Motherland (or 'ANAP') Party.

¹¹ *Cumhuriyet*, March 6 1984, p. 7.

By the mid-1980's, however, Özal had apparently embraced the idea of making some sort of state-sponsored gesture aimed at 'healing the wounds' regarding May 27.¹² Electoral interests probably played a significant role in the decision to honor Menderes, as Süleyman Demirel, who had been the *eminence grise* behind the True Path Party since its inception in 1983, was due to return to active politics in 1987 after a nationwide referendum put an end to his post-September 12 political ban. Thus, it seems likely that the decision to put the force of the Turkish state behind the redemption of the man Özal had once termed a traitor was at least partly an effort to upstage Demirel's return to politics with a large-scale gesture that would, at the same time, attract the support of the numerous and influential former Demokrat Party supporters who had once supported Demirel.

But in addition to the political capital that Özal stood to gain from his role in Menderes' rehabilitation, the state funeral that Özal secured for Menderes in parliament should also be seen as fitting into a pattern of gestures made by Özal which had the effect of opening up for discussion political questions previously considered taboo in Turkey. Debates on issues such as the role of Islam in Turkish

¹² In an interview with the author, Aydın Menderes, Adnan Menderes' son, stated that immediately after Menderes' execution his family had applied for Menderes' remains to be restored to the family, but until 1967 had received no reply. From that point forward, the state bureaucracy had apparently agreed in principle that Menderes' remains could be removed from Yassıada, but ever-changing governments and disputes over the location of the new grave prevented any action from being taken. After the military takeover of 1980, the National Security Council contacted the Menderes family and informed them that Menderes could be reburied in Istanbul (the location that the Menderes family had been lobbying for previously but to which the state bureaucracy had not agreed to), but at this point, according to Aydın Menderes' account, the Menderes family changed tack and, perhaps seeing the writing on the wall, insisted upon a state funeral. In a meeting with Aydın Menderes in 1984, Özal reportedly agreed to the state funeral but insisted it could only be concluded after President Kenan Evren had finished his term of office in 1989. This would seem to be supported by the fact that it was only after Evren was succeeded in the presidency by Turgut Özal in 1989 that the 'ceremony' marking the transfer of the remains of the politicians to Anıttezar was upgraded to the status of 'state funeral'.

society and the existence of Turkey's Kurdish population, for example, were often prompted by comments and gestures made by Özal himself.¹³

But no matter what the reasons behind Özal's decision to adopt the Menderes cause as his own, the official rehabilitation of Menderes and the transfer of his remains to a mausoleum constructed by the state in his honor—coming on the heels, moreover, of the post-September 12 revocation of the status of May 27 as a state holiday—invited revision of many of the previously held truths of the post-1960 era. As has been pointed out already, this revision occurred for two principle reasons. The first of these was that, for the first time since 1960 criticism of May 27 did not entail the risk of running afoul of the state authorities. Secondly, the occurrence of September 12 itself convinced many that all military interventions—no matter what their political aims—were destructive and imperiled the greater good of establishing a stable and just political order. 8

Menderes' physical transfer from the island of İmralı to the mausoleum in Istanbul was at the same time a metaphorical transfer from the disgrace of exile to the embrace of Turkish officialdom.¹⁴ The move confirmed the fears of supporters of May 27 that a 'counter-revolution' had indeed taken place and gave the green light to those who wished to publish works that were critical of Turkey's first military 8

¹³ Such as Özal's use of a state limousine to take him to Friday prayers, his practice of inviting the foreign diplomatic corps to celebrate the fast-ending *iftar* meal during Ramadan, and his disclosure that his mother was Kurdish.

¹⁴ Indeed, when Özal himself died in 1993 he was buried in a mausoleum constructed next to Anıtköyü.

intervention. Interestingly enough, however, there was relatively little suppression of anti-September 12 publications in the years following the takeover of 1980.¹⁵

An unprecedented number of books about Adnan Menderes, the Demokrat Party and May 27 have been published in Turkey since 1980. During the years 1987-1999, for example, thirty such books were published, compared with just nineteen books published during the years 1961-1986. Moreover, during the years 1987-1997, 64% (17 out of 25) of all books ever published in Turkey on Adnan Menderes, his trial and execution were brought to press¹⁶. During the years 1991-1999, nine books were written specifically about May 27, compared with just five published during the years 1961-1990¹⁷. Moreover, from 1960 to 1987 just four books about the Demokrat Party were published, while between the years 1987 and 2000 eleven such books came to press and an additional five books were devoted to either the 'Demokrat Party era' or the 'May 27 era'.

The increase in the number of books about Adnan Menderes and May 27 are a reflection, of course, of the fact that after 1980 the legitimacy of May 27 was no longer a pillar upon which the legitimacy of state authority rested. As criticism of May 27 during the period 1960-1980 could be seen as tantamount to calling into question the entire constitutional order of Turkey, the replacement of the 1961 constitution in 1982 and the revocation of May 27 as an official state holiday that

¹⁵ By the mid-1980's, with coup leader Kenan Evren still the Turkish head of state in his capacity as president, *Cumhuriyet* newspaper and other publications were calling September 12 a 'fascist' and 'anti-democratic' coup.

¹⁶ Four books had been published in the 1960's, four published in the 1970's and two during the years 1980-1986.

¹⁷ In 1960, a series of books explaining the necessity of the military takeover was published by the government. These books are discussed briefly in chapter five but are not included in the statistics listed on this page because they reflect an immediate desire by the May 27 authorities to legitimize their takeover rather than independent scholarly interest.

followed played, without a doubt, a central role in the increase in books about these subjects from the mid-1980's onwards. Moreover, as 'official' history had for two decades held that May 27 had been a great step forward in Turkish history, it is perhaps only natural that a revisionist line of reasoning would develop as soon as it was allowed to do so. This revision, in turn, led to the appearance of counter-arguments in support of May 27 which themselves contributed to the increase in the number of books about Menderes and May 27 published during this period.

May 27 and September 12

The military takeover of September 12, 1980 not only put an end to May 27 as a political era in Turkish history, but also impacted substantially the manner in which May 27 was remembered in Turkey after 1980. One reason behind this was the post-September 12 renunciation by the Turkish government of May 27 and the constitution of 1961, which permitted for the first time in Turkey the free exchange of published ideas regarding May 27.

More importantly, however, was the brutality of September 12 itself. The level of violence committed by the state after the military interventions of both 1971 and 1980 and the considerable restrictions in constitutional liberty which took place when the constitution of 1961 was replaced by that of 1982 played an extremely important role in lowering the prestige of military interventions in the eyes of many Turkish writers and intellectuals. Thus, while many post-1980 articles and books critical of May 27 were written by individuals who had been opposed to May 27 even before September 12, many other post-1980 critics of May 27 were directly

influenced by their negative impressions of September 12. Indeed, the fact that the concept of military intervention into politics had come to be associated with such negative images in Turkey led even those writers whose antipathy for May 27 had preceded September 12 to couch their arguments against May 27 in terms of 'civilian administration' and 'democracy' in opposition to 'coups' and 'military rule'.

Meanwhile, those writers still arguing in support of May 27 find themselves in an increasingly awkward intellectual position after 1971 and, to an even greater extent, after 1980. Many of these writers had, during the period 1960-1980, expended considerable effort in arguing that May 27 was a 'revolution' which had enjoyed the widespread support of the people, who had walked 'hand in hand' with the military. For them, September 12 has continued to pose a bedeviling challenge to their views in defense of May 27, leading them into ever more complicated explanations of why one military intervention is acceptable while others are not. Furthermore, another, more damning question remains largely unanswered by pro-May 27 writers: to what extent did intellectual support for Turkey's first military intervention facilitate the occurrence of those that have followed it?

Setting the stage

Turgut Özal's decision to take up the cause of Adnan Menderes' rehabilitation marked a significant development in the acquisition of political symbols of post-September 12 Turkey. The military leaders who had seized power in 1980 had already divested Turkey of May 27 as a legitimizing basis of its power when it replaced the 1961 constitution and rescinded the status of May 27 as a national

holiday. By choosing to rehabilitate the principal victims of May 27, Turgut Özal was, in effect, taking sides in a dispute which had been brewing for more than two decades. What is more, Özal's capacity as president placed the imprimatur of the Turkish state upon Menderes' rehabilitation and, by extension, upon arguments made in opposition to May 27.

Is it no coincidence that it is only in the late 1980's, and after the full force of the Turkish state has been implemented in the rehabilitation of Menderes, that September 12 comes to be known to its detractors as a 'counter-revolution' ('*karşı-devrim*'). Certainly, it was already clear before 1987 that pro-May 27 writers such as those appearing in *Cumhuriyet* were passionately against September 12. At the same time, however, it seems equally clear that the adoption by the Turkish state, as represented by President Özal, of the single most potent anti-May 27 symbol—the figure of Adnan Menderes himself—irrevocably placed post-September 12 Turkey on the side of Menderes and the Demokrat Party, at least in the eyes of those who had supported May 27.

Özal's gesture can arguably be said to have achieved his stated goal of 'bandaging' the 'deep wounds' opened by the events of May 27. By the year 2000, May 27 seems to have become a far less compelling source of debate in Turkish newspapers and books. By the late 1990's the tendency to discuss the 'Demokrat Party era' or the 'May 27 era' as historical periods, rather than subjects for debate and judgement in and of themselves, becomes well established in Turkey. As for newspapers, the mainstream and popular *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet* have, by the end of the century, largely forgotten about May 27. Even the fortieth anniversary of the takeover

Period of
Repression
1950-1960

on May 27, 2000 passes without any recognition whatsoever in *Milliyet*, while in *Hürriyet* only a single column stands between May 27 and its complete oblivion. Indeed, the only newspaper which continues to mark May 27 is *Cumhuriyet*, which celebrates the former holiday as a day of protest against contemporary Turkey amid its own steadily falling circulation. This, then, is what constitutes the slowly fading half-life of a day which once mobilized millions of Turkish citizens as the national holiday upon which much of the state's constitutional legitimacy depended.

But before May 27 was forgotten, it was remembered. After two decades of official celebrations and carefully circumscribed criticism, the role of May 27 in Turkish history was argued about as it never had been before. After a period of intense review in the late 1980's and early 1990's, May 27 has only now become a largely expired symbol of political debate.

This does not mean, however, that the issues packaged within the arguments concerning May 27 have become any less important for those who read and write about politics in Turkey. Rather, it seems that debate concerning 'ground rules' and 'the national will' in the Turkish Republic has shifted its focus upon other, more recently minted symbols. In recent years, this has been seen most explicitly in debates concerning the appropriate status of secularism and laicism in Turkey, while the term 'democracy' has largely become a word as loaded with political meaning for anti-laicist writers in Turkey as 'national will' once was for those who opposed May 27.

The decision to unearth the political issues buried on İmralı did indeed set the stage for the intense period of revision and debate regarding Adnan Menderes and May 27 that was to follow. The following chapters therefore mark an attempt to

outline the history of that debate and raise questions regarding the significance that it held for Turkey.

CHAPTER 2:
MEMORY, *CUMHURİYET* AND THE 27TH OF MAY
The Eternal Revolution

Cumhuriyet holds a unique place in this study in that it has steadfastly supported May 27 throughout the period under review. Thus, while writers in *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*, which will be studied in the next chapter, supported May 27 in the 1960's and 1970's and then tended to criticize May 27 in the 1980's and 1990's, *Cumhuriyet* holds firm to the principles of 1960. And yet it would be incorrect to say that *Cumhuriyet* has not changed--over the course of the past four decades--the manner in which it has represented May 27. Indeed, precisely because of its unchanging ideology, *Cumhuriyet* has been forced to frequently adapt its arguments to an ever-changing political environment in Turkey. Thus, while *Cumhuriyet*'s support for May 27 has remained constant, the manner in which *Cumhuriyet* writers remember May 27 has evolved considerably.

***Cumhuriyet* and its Kemalism**

What is 'Kemalism'? Any Turkish schoolchild can explain that Kemalism derives from six basic principles: revolution, nationalism, populism, laicism, statism, and republicanism.¹ But during the period 1960-80, the term 'Kemalism' adopted, for some, a particularly social-democratic political tendency of the sort supported by columnists at *Cumhuriyet*. This was largely a result of the social-democratic tendencies evident in the constitution of 1961, the constitutional by-product of the May 27 military takeover. The post-1960 conflation of social-democratic political views with Kemalism—while not altogether lacking a pre-1960 theoretical basis—was to a great extent due to the conflation of a post-1960 social democratic political platform forwarded by the National Unity Committee and the simultaneous endeavors

of the committee to wrap around their takeover as much as possible the legitimizing mantle of Atatürk.

Since 1960 *Cumhuriyet* has thus portrayed itself not merely as a social-democratic newspaper but also as the ‘conscience’ of Kemalism—with the term ‘Kemalism’ defined particularly in the May 27 social-democratic use of the term. Keeping this in mind, then, *Cumhuriyet*’s editorial slant could probably best be described as ‘Kemalist’, in that columnists in *Cumhuriyet* tend to write from the perspective of ‘Kemalism’ in its social-democratic variant.

As the May 27 order is first knocked off balance by the September 12 takeover, and then as the social-democratic state structure that May 27 had developed is gradually eroded by a succession of center-right governments, *Cumhuriyet*’s columns marking May 27 become increasingly defensive in tone. As far as Turkey’s two military takeovers are concerned, there could not be more difference in the manner in which they are portrayed in *Cumhuriyet*: whereas the May 27 takeover is remembered on the pages of *Cumhuriyet* as a great step forward in Turkish history, September 12 is seen as a ‘counter-revolution’ in favor of the forces of reaction.

This chapter has three principal interests. First of all, it will compare *Cumhuriyet* opinion columns written during the 1960’s, 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s to see if there has been any change in the manner in which May 27 and the reason for its occurrence are portrayed, or in the arguments employed in defending the legitimacy of May 27. Secondly, the approach of *Cumhuriyet* columnists to the military intervention of March 12, 1971 and the takeover September 12, 1980 will be analyzed in contrast to that displayed towards May 27. Thirdly, a general summary and

¹ Devrimcilik, milliyetçilik, halkçılık, laiklik, devletçilik, cumhuriyetçilik.

analysis of all columns written on Menderes in *Cumhuriyet* during the years 1998-2000, for which searchable electronic archives exist, will be presented.

In order to establish a consistent method of evaluating not only the content of *Cumhuriyet* columns, but also measuring their quantity, I have limited myself to inspecting only those columns appearing in the May 27 and May 28² editions of *Cumhuriyet* between the years 1960 and 2000.

For the years 1998-2000,³ all articles appearing under the keyword 'Menderes' were inspected for editorial content. A total of 52 columns (59 columns found minus 7 appearing on May 27-28, which are already included in the comparative section of the study), representing the entirety of *Cumhuriyet* columns discussing Menderes during the years 1998-2000, were used in this part of the study.

1960-1969: Under the revolutionary regime

From the columns

During the years 1960-1969, a total of 20 columns devoted to the May 27 takeover appeared in the May 27 and 28 editions of *Cumhuriyet*. The year-by-year breakdown of these columns is as follows: one in 1961, one in 1962, three in 1963, three in 1964, three in 1965, two in 1966, two in 1967, four in 1968 and one in 1969.

One of the most common subjects discussed in the May 27 columns of this decade was the constitution of 1961 and the institutions it created. In columns appearing in 1961, 1962 (two), 1963 (three), 1964 (three), 1965 (two), 1966 (two), 1967 (one), 1968 (three) and 1969—in short, in all but two columns discussing May

² Columns from both May 27 and May 28 will be termed 'May 27 Columns' in this paper.

³ Until April 20, 2000.

27 which appear in *Cumhuriyet* during the 1960's—the constitution of 1961 is mentioned as one of the primary benefits of the May 27 takeover.

In more than half of these columns—those appearing in 1962, 1963 (two), 1964 (three), 1965 (two), and 1967--specific attention is paid to the importance of the 'institutions' ('müesseseler') provided by the 1961 constitution. These institutions, such as a constitutional court, a Senate, and autonomous universities and media outlets, were treated with special consideration by *Cumhuriyet* columnists in the first decade after the takeover. The attention paid to these institutions during these years deserves some attention as it would all but disappear in the 1970's even while the constitution of 1961 continued to be frequently invoked as a major benefit of the takeover.

In 1963, for example, Burhan Felek writes:

The most noble aspect of the action of May 27 is the fact that for the sake of bringing to power a civil administration a military revolution transpired. Contrary to the classical and essential features of military revolutions throughout the world and in history, the fact that it aimed for the establishment, in the western sense and through all of its institutions, a democratic constitutional administration places it in all respects upon the summit of honor.

In 1964, Ecvet Güresin writes in a front page column:

May 27...brought a constitution, it established fundamental institutions, in short it left--with the

⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1963. "27 Mayıs hareketinin en büyük asaleti demokratik sivil bir idareyi iktidara getirmek için askerî bir ihtilâl şeklinde belirmesidir. Dünyanın ve tarihin her yerindeki askerî ihtilâllerin mütadları, mahiyetlerinin aksine olarak Batı mânasıyle ve bütün müessesesiyle demokratik bir anayasa idaresi tesisini hedef tutması onu her bakımdan şeref zirvesine çıkarmıştır".

elections of 1961--a political order for the nation that conforms to the democratic model.⁵

Three years later, Güresin again writes:

In fact the constitution of 1961 did not only establish a modern legal state and a modern constitutional order in the form of concrete structures, but did so through its institutions.⁶

In addition to the institutions and the constitution in general, an increased level of freedom ('özgürlük', 'hürriyet') was cited as one of the principal benefits of May 27 in columns appearing in 1961, 1962, 1963 (in two columns), 1964 (in two columns), 1965 (in two columns), 1966, 1967 (in two columns), and 1968 (in three columns) and 1969. Furthermore, saving the country from creeping or impending dictatorship ('dikta', 'zorbalık') was cited as either a reason for or benefit of May 27 in columns appearing in 1964, 1965, and 1967 (in two columns) while preventing 'fratricide' ('kardeş kavgası') is listed as a reason for May 27 in columns appearing in 1963, 1966 and 1968.

War, Peace, Atatürk

In addition to that which is expressed through opinion columns published in *Cumhuriyet*, support for May 27 is also frequently expressed through the manner in which the 'revolution' is portrayed in the newspaper's headlines, artwork and photographs.

⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1963. "27 Mayıs...Anayasayı getirmiş, temel müesseseleri kurmuş, kısacası demokratik modele uygun bir siyasal düzeni 1961 seçimleriyle millete bırakmıştır".

⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1967. "Gerçekten 1961 Anayasası yalnız somut maddeler şeklinde değil, müesseseleriyle de modern hukuk devleti, modern Anayasa düzenini kurmuştur".

This type of support can be seen first in *Cumhuriyet*'s headline of May 27, 1960:

The heroic Turkish Army last night took power just before morning.⁷

Just below the headline is printed the announcement that the action had been carried out "in order to put an end to the current crisis and to prevent fratricide".⁸ To the right is a portrait of Atatürk, the first of countless incidences in *Cumhuriyet* of the juxtaposition of May 27 with images of the founder of the Republic. Immediately below Atatürk's portrait is an olive branch, an image of peace that would also be repeated in subsequent years.

In 1961, when there was no May 27 edition of *Cumhuriyet* due to the arrival of the *Kurban Bayramı*, or 'Sacrifice Holiday', the appearance of 'collateral'—editorializing that is manifested through means other than opinion columns—commentary continues with *Cumhuriyet*'s May 29 edition. Here, the headline seems to be implying the existence of a closing of ranks or national consensus with regard to May 27, writing: "The first anniversary of May 27 has been celebrated hand-in-hand and shoulder-to-shoulder".⁹

⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1960. "Kahrman Türk Ordusu dün gece sabaha karşı idareyi ele aldı".

⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1960. "Memleketin bugünkü buhranına ve kardeş kavagasına mani olmak üzere".

⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, May 29, 1961. "27 Mayıs'ın ilk yıldönümü el ele, omuz omuza kutlandı".



Figure 2

The heroic Turkish Army takes control

In 1962, the May 27 headline of *Cumhuriyet* shows a large rifle with flowers attached to its bayonet, under which is written “We are celebrating the second anniversary of May 27” (*‘27 Mayısın 2. yıl dönümünü kutluyoruz’*).



Figure 3

Bayonet and Flowers: The second anniversary of the revolution

The front-page column of the paper, entitled ‘Revolution, Constitution, Democracy’ (*‘İhtilâl, Anayasa, Demokrasi’*) sings the praises of May 27 as a

revolutionary act carried out in the name of the Turkish people against anti-democratic forces. Halfway down the front page, a sub-headline announces that “all of the Turkish nation, filled with happiness over its freedom, relived with enthusiasm the excitement of the day of the ‘white’ (*ak*) Revolution”.¹⁰

In the May 27, 1963 paper the themes of militarism and democracy are conflated with May 27. In a cartoon at the bottom of the newspaper’s front page, a rifle is depicted as the stake supporting the young sapling of ‘Turkish democracy’ (*‘Türk Demokrasisi’*).

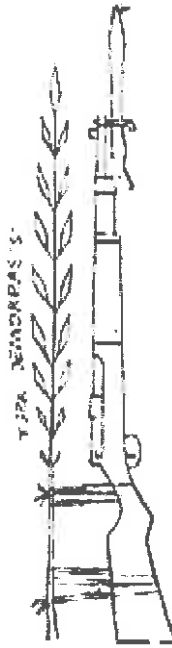


Figure 4

Protecting the sapling of Turkish democracy

¹⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, May 28, 1961. “Bütün Türk Milleti özgür olmanın mutluluğu içinde ak devrim gününün heyecanını coşkunlukla bir defa daha yaşadı”.

Symbol

In 1965, the symbol of May 27, four hands clasping one another's wrists to form a square, graces the front page of *Cumhuriyet*'s May 27 edition for the first time. This symbol will re-appear in *Cumhuriyet*'s May 27 editions in 1966 and 1968, as well as in editions from the early 1970's.



Figure 5

The symbol of the revolution

1970-1980: Correction, and prelude to 'counter-revolution'

Until 1980, May 27 was a public holiday in Turkey known as 'Constitution and Freedom Day' ('*Anayasa ve Hürriyet Bayramı*'). News stories appearing on the 27th and 28th of May were therefore generally devoted to summarizing speeches made by politicians and generals and detailing the route of the holiday's parade. One lead editorial, on the front page of the newspaper, was always devoted to the subject of May 27, and within the newspaper one, occasionally two, opinion columns concerned with the events of 1960 would appear.

Out of a total of thirty-three¹¹ *Cumhuriyet* editorials and opinion columns about May 27 appearing during the years 1970-1980, four were published in 1970, one in 1971, three in 1972, three in 1973, four in 1974, four in 1975, three in 1976, three in 1977, three in 1978, one in 1979, and four in 1980. A total of nineteen different columnists wrote these columns, with the number in this total of columns per columnist ranging from one to six. A total of nine of the thirty-three May 27 columns written during these years carried the by-line of a guest columnist not on the permanent *Cumhuriyet* staff.

In very broad terms, there are five themes that surface repeatedly in the columns of the 1970's: a) the creation of a 'more free' and 'democratic' Turkey after the events of 1960-61; b) the 'unfulfilled promise' of 1960-61; c) the 'dictatorial' tendencies of the Menderes government; d) the potential for bloodshed and anarchy that was averted by May 27; and e) the distinction between a 'coup' (*'darbe'*) and a 'revolution' (*'ihtilâl'* or *'devrim'*), with the classification of May 27 as an example of the latter.

Commentary invoking the development of 'freedom' and 'democracy' after May 27 tends to have a triumphant tone until 1980 (after which time it assumes a tone of protest). In the 1970's, the creation of a more 'democratic', 'free' and 'constitutional' state in Turkey was cited as a benefit of May 27 in thirteen columns, while an additional five columns were devoted wholly or almost wholly to describing the expansion of social rights that came in the wake of the takeover and the new constitution.

¹¹ As most columns contained more than one of the themes outlined here, the sum of the columns listed in this section exceeds the total number of columns (33) included in the study.

A second common theme (appearing in 10 columns) during these years was the 'unfulfilled promise' of May 27, containing an implicit lament regarding the contemporary state of political affairs. Representative of this type of argument is a 1970 column by Oktay Akbal:

We experienced a revolution ten years ago...So here is the 27th of May of 1970! Come and get to know the revolution of May 27, 1960! Look for and find its traces!...Everything stayed as it was.¹²

A third theme commonly seen (on ten occasions) in the columns of the period was the argument that the Menderes government had lost its legitimacy, was dictatorial, or had been 'on the road' to dictatorship at the time of the takeover. In 1970, for example, *Cumhuriyet* Editor Nadir Nadi wrote:

We accept and made as our own the idea that May 27 was a revolution made in the name of the Turkish nation "against a government that had lost its legitimacy which displayed anti-constitutional behavior". Today....we still feel the same way...May 27 was the counterattack of Atatürk's principles which the conservative forces had sought to dismantle.¹³

Similarly, in 1972 guest columnist Hasan Özbek wrote:

In a moment we, as a nation, emerged into the light from a foggy darkness of being destroyed without blood being shed, of unconstitutional behavior that was becoming a little more horrific with each passing day.¹⁴

¹² *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1970. "On yıl önce bir devrim yaşamışız...İşte 1970'in 27 Mayıs'ı!...Gelin de taniyin 27 Mayıs 1960 devrimini! Arayın bulun izlerini!...Herşey olduğu gibi kalmış."

¹³ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1970, p. 1. The quotation within this passage is taken from the preamble to the 1961 Constitution. "Biz 27 Mayıs'ı 'Anayasa dışı davranışları ile meşruluğunu kaybetmiş bir iktidara karşı' Türk milleti adına başarılı bir devrim hareketi olarak bulduk ve benimsedik. Bugün...gene aynı düşünceliyiz...27 Mayıs, tutucu güçlerin yok etmeye çalıştığı Atatürk ilkelerine bir dönüş hamlesi idi."

¹⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1972.. "Her gün biraz daha korkunçlaşan bir anayasa dışı davranış, kan dökülmeden yıkılmış, milletçe dumanlı bir loşluktan bir anda gün ışığına çıkıvermiştik."

Additionally, five columns written during the period 1970-80 mention either 'anarchy', 'danger of bloodshed', or 'lack of authority' in citing reasons for why the takeover took place. On May 27 1980, for example, the last day that May 27 would be a public holiday in Turkey, guest columnist Haydar Tunçkanat wrote:

Events took place in Istanbul and Ankara, the police fought with youth and students, there were deaths and injuries...By now the government had lost all of its authority...In this manner a dark period in the history of the Turkish nation came to an end, and a happy and enlightened period began.¹⁵

An editorial summing up most of the typical lines of this type of argument was one written by Nadir Nadi in 1973:

The university events that burst upon Istanbul on April 28, 1960 and which spread to Ankara one day later made increasingly tense the nervous atmosphere in our country. The army that took power on May 27...acted in order to put an end to this danger, to save Atatürk's principles from their destruction, and to provide a democratic order that would respect human rights.¹⁶

Thus, according to this interpretation, a government devoted to dismantling Atatürk's republic came under attack by an unhappy populace. This anti-democratic government was then overthrown by the military, putting an end to the 'growing tension' that had resulted from the general dissatisfaction among the populace with its rule. A new, democratic order—even better than that which had existed before the Menderes regime—was then put into place.

¹⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1980. "İstanbul ve Ankara'da olaylar çıkmış, gençlik ve Üniversite öğrencileri polisle çatışmış, ölen ve yaralananlar olmuştur...Artık hükümetin hiç bir otoritesi kalmamış...Böylece Türk ulusunun tarihinde karanlık bir dönem kapanmış, mutlu ve aydınlık bir devir başlamıştır."

¹⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1973. "28 Nisan 1960 günü İstanbul'da patlak veren, bir gün sonra da Ankara'ya sıçrayan Üniversite olayları ülkemizdeki sinirli havayı gerdikçe geri yordu. 27 Mayıs'ta yönetime elkoyan ordu...bu tehlikeli gerilime son vermek, Atatürk ilkelerini yıkıntıdan kurtarmak,

A few columns printed in the period 1970-1980 were also concerned with the definition of May 27 as either an '*ihtilâl*' or a '*devrim*' (both words meaning 'revolution'), and distinguishing it from a '*darbe*' ('coup'). Indeed, as much of the legitimacy of May 27 rested upon the myth that the military takeover had been carried out in response to a call from the Turkish nation (the very same myth upon which the 1980 takeover would use as a pretext), the choice of terminology regarding May 27 was of particular importance. May 27 is thus almost always referred to as a 'revolution' by its supporters.

The self-conscious efforts of *Cumhuriyet* columnists to establish the revolutionary credentials of May 27 can be seen, for example, in this 1973 column by Nadir Nadi:

We can describe the era in which we live as a 'military age' from the perspective of undeveloped societies. Really, since the end of the Second World War from South America to Africa, from the Middle East to the Far East in many undeveloped countries there have been innumerable coups, the number of which even political experts would have trouble counting, following one another in a chain of changes in power accomplished through force of arms. Let's not mistake May 27 for any of these.¹⁷

May 27 was not a coup, writes Nadi, because:

This event took place not in order to bring just any junta to power, but instead to put an end to this dangerous tension, to save Atatürk's principles from their destruction, and to provide the possibility for the

yurdumuzda insan hak ve özgürlüklerine saygılı demokratik bir düzen kurulmasına olanak sağlamak amacıyla harekete geçti."

¹⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1973.. "Az gelişmiş toplumlar açısından yaşadığımız dönemi "askerî çağı" olarak niteleyebiliriz. Gerçekten, İkinci Cihan Savaşı biteli beri Güney Amerika'dan Afrika'ya Ortadoğu'dan Uzakdoğu'ya kadar birçok az gelişmiş ülkede politika uzmanlarının bile kolay hesaplayamacağı sayısız "askerî darbe" olmuş, silâh zoru ile başarılan zincirleme iktidar değişimleri birbirini kovalayıp durmuştur. 27 Mayıs'ı bunlardan hiçbirine benzetemeyiz".

establishment in our country of a democratic order that would be respectful of human rights and freedoms.¹⁸

Thus, according to this column May 27 should not be regarded as a 'coup' because it was conducted in the name of Atatürk's principles and because it resulted in an expansion of personal rights and freedoms.

In the 1970's, several (ten) columns were to adopt this line of reasoning. In 1972, for example, Kemal Aydar wrote in a front-page editorial that while May 27 was a 'military revolution' ('*askeri ihtilâl*'), the March 12, 1971 intervention was a 'military intervention' ('*askeri müdahale*').

Almost all of the columnists writing for *Cumhuriyet* at this time use words meaning 'revolution'—either '*ihtilâl*' or '*devrim*'—to refer to the events of 1960. Clearly, the public's willingness to remember May 27 as a 'revolutionary' act—one that enjoyed widespread public support—is of particular importance to the defenders of the takeover. Moreover, the importance of remembering May 27 as a 'revolution' takes on increased significance after the military takeover of September 12, 1980. From 1980 onwards, the word 'coup', or '*darbe*'—which had, on three occasions in the late 1960's and early 1970's been used to describe May 27 in pro-May 27 columns in *Cumhuriyet*—is never again employed by *Cumhuriyet* in reference to May 27. Rather, the terms '*ihtilâl*' or '*devrim*' are always used, while the term '*darbe*', when used after 1980, is always used in reference to September 12.

In two other cases, the distinction between 'coup' ('*darbe*') and 'revolution' ('*devrim*' or '*ihtilâl*') often seems to be dependent upon whether or not a new

¹⁸ "Herhangi bir cuntayı işbaşına getirmek değil, işte bu tehlikeli gerilime son vermek, Atatürk ilkelerini yıkıntıdan kurtarmak, yurdumuzda insan hak ve özgürlüklerine saygılı demokratik bir düzen kurulmasına olanak sağlamak amacıyla harekete geçti".

constitutional order is brought in after intervention. Writing a column in 1974, for example, the historian Şevket Süreyya Aydemir writes that, while the takeover of 1960 began as a 'coup', it ended as a 'revolution'. The difference between these two terms, according to Aydemir, lies in the fact that after taking power, the leaders of the May 27 takeover collected "famous lawyers from famous organizations...and made a new constitution". Making a similar point in a 1977 column, İlhan Selçuk notes that the 'beginning' ('*geliş*') of the takeover of 1960 was a 'coup' ('*darbe*'), but that the end result (the constitution of 1961) was a 'revolution' ('*ihtilâl*').

March 12

With regard to the military intervention of 1971, the commentary among *Cumhuriyet*'s columns is at first optimistic, but then becomes more subdued as the military-imposed March 12 government takes steps to restrict some of the rights granted in the 1961 constitution.

Many columns written immediately after March 12 compare May 27 with March 12. Interestingly enough—given the near-unanimous interpretation in the *Cumhuriyet* of the 1990's of March 12 as a 'fascist' operation--the March 12 intervention was, in its immediate aftermath, warmly received on the pages of *Cumhuriyet*. Nadi's lead editorial on March 13, 1971, for example, was entitled 'The Voice of the Revolutionary Army' ('*Devrimci Ordunun Sesi*'), with the term 'revolutionary' ('*devrimci*') undoubtedly intended to be complimentary. Using language not entirely dissimilar from that often used to describe the political conditions leading up to May 27, Nadi writes that before March 12:

Demirel, a product of 'showpiece' democracy, from the day he first entered politics paid no attention to Atatürk's revolutions, did not value the basic principles of the secular republic, interpreted the constitution as he liked, and unfortunately paid no attention to all of the warnings that the road that he had chosen was a dead-end.¹⁹

Likewise, İlhan Selçuk, writing two days after the March 12 intervention, argues that "the March 12 memorandum is a positive step on the revolutionary path" ("*12 Mart bildirisi devrimci çizgide olumlu bir adımdır*") because the parliament had become 'degenerated' ('*yozlaşmış*'), the government was 'stained' ('*lekeli*'), and Atatürk's principles had not been properly applied.²⁰

With the passage of time and, more importantly, with the restrictions on personal and political freedom starting in late April 1971 and culminating in the passage of amendments limiting some of the rights given in the 1961 constitution, *Cumhuriyet's* ardor for March 12 cooled considerably. Kemal Aydar's 1972 column, for example, simply laments the need for military interventions in Turkey 'every ten years'. In doing so, a distinction is made between the 1960 'revolution' ('*ihtilâl*') and the 1971 'intervention' ('*müdahale*'), but still March 12 is viewed as something far from the 'fascist' event that it would be depicted as being after 1980. Rather than blaming the military for March 12, Aydar blames the 'bad habits' ('*kötü alışkanlıklar*') of Turkish politicians—such as partisanship and self-interest—for creating the need for these interventions in the first place. This, it might be noted, is

¹⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, March 13, 1971. "Göstermelik demokrasinin bir ürünü olan Demirel, işbaşına geldiği günden beri Atatürk devrimlerine boş vermiş, lâik Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin temel ilkelerini hiçe saymış, Anayasayı dilediği gibi yorumlamış ve ne yazık ki tuttuğu yolun çıkmaz bir yol olduğu hakkındaki bütün uyarılara kulak asmamıştır".

²⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, March 14, 1971.

the very same tone that *Cumhuriyet* would adopt in the immediate aftermath of the September 12 takeover.

Worth noting, however, is the degree to which writers in *Cumhuriyet* focus upon the ends, rather than the means, when evaluating the relative merits of May 27 and March 12. May 27, a full-scale military takeover, is applauded for its results, and March 12 is cheered in anticipation of its results. When the military authorities that had ousted the elected government of Süleyman Demirel unexpectedly attempt ease political instability through the imposition of restrictions upon the constitution of 1961, however, March 12 quickly becomes an unfortunate development.

Perhaps unexpectedly for a column appearing in a social-democratic newspaper, a March 12-oriented 1972 column by Cihad Baban argues that because Prime Minister Demirel had not been able to show the courage (*'cesaretini gösteremedi'*) to send soldiers into the campuses when it was necessary, he had facilitated the creation of an atmosphere in which a coup would be undertaken. Writes Baban:

How did we come to March 12? Demirel, after having seen how Menderes ended up, did nothing against agitators looking for civil war. Even when facing people who had committed crimes, Demirel was not able to show the courage to enter the universities...When (Demirel) formed governments, the stability of his party and not the state took priority. Thus the mediocrity of the economy dragged us through inflation and devaluation and at the end a non-party government was formed. March 12 occurred.²¹

²¹ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1972, p. 2. "...Neden 12 Marta geldik? Demirel, Menderes'in akıbetini gördükten sonra, iç savaş kundakçıları karşısında durgun kaldı. Suç karşısında bile, üniversitelere girmek cesaretini gösteremedi....(Demirel) hükümetleri kurarken, devleti değil parti dengesini öne

March 12 is therefore seen here to have been the result of mistakes made by the government, in this case by a politician (Süleyman Demirel) generally despised by the columnists at *Cumhuriyet*.

In a column written in 1974, Ahmet Yıldız, like Baban, similarly blames Demirel and his inaction in the face of anarchy for the intervention of 1971. Writes Yıldız:

An atmosphere in which a miracle was expected came to the point of the highest tension—to the point of explosion. An atmosphere which led people to say ‘There’s no state, everyone should look after themselves, do as you please’ was put an end to by March 12.²²

March 12 was of limited interest to *Cumhuriyet* columnists in the late 1970’s. After their immediate enthusiasm for it had waned, it is referred to on occasion as an ‘expected’ but still reactionary event. From 1976 onwards, however, it disappears altogether from the May 27 columns. Only after 1980 does March 12 resurface on the pages of *Cumhuriyet*. Whereas it had once been seen as a possible follow-up to May 27, after 1980 March 12 comes to be seen as the precursor to September 12. It thus becomes in the 1980’s an object of vilification in a manner much more severe than had been the case in the 1970’s.

alıyordu. Oysa ekonomik vasat bizi enflasyona ve arkasından devalüsyona sürükledi ve sonunda sosyo-politik genel kanun hükmünü icra etti. 12 Mart oldu”.

²² *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1974.. “Bir mucize bekleyen ortam, en yüksek gerilim noktasına—patlama noktasına—gelmişti. ‘Devlet yok, herkes başının çaresine baksın, yapanın yanında kalır’ dedirten anarşik ortama 12 Mart’ta son verildi”.

The execution

The question of the manner in which the takeover of 1960 ended—namely, with the execution of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan—is rarely seen in the columns of the 1970's. Indeed on only one occasion is any regret expressed for the executions.²³ In general, the events of 1960-61 appear to have included nothing other than a bloodless takeover followed by the adoption of a new constitution, as only once during the 1970's does Menderes' name even appear in the *Cumhuriyet* columns of May 27 and 28.

In a 1977 column, İlhan Selçuk compares the execution of Menderes to that of Louis XVI—a comparison that is to appear in the columns of both Selçuk and Uğur Mumcu in the 1980's. Selçuk writes that, although it is not difficult to understand the feelings of pain that some people feel regarding the executions, "History does not judge events with feelings" ("*Tarih, olayları duygularla değerlendirmez*"). As a means of comparison, Selçuk argues that the French Revolution cannot be measured by the fact that Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were executed.

*

May 27 *Cumhuriyet* columns in the 1970's could thus be described as focusing primarily upon the themes of protecting Atatürk's principles, preserving democracy, and staving off Menderes' wishes for dictatorship. To a lesser extent, the potential for chaos and bloodshed in the protests against Menderes in 1960 are also cited as a reason for why the takeover took place. At the very least, the supposed

²³ In an article by Altan Öymen, printed on May 27, 1975, in which Öymen writes "The follow-up to May 27 also has its sad memories. Certainly, this revolution's (*devrim*) last curtain should not have closed with something so outdated (*çağı dışı*), like executions." ("*Elbette ki, bu devrimin son perdesi idam gibi çağ dışı bir uygulamayla kapanmamalıydı*").

'tension' ('*gerginlik*') surrounding the events leading up to May 27 is evoked in an effort to characterize the Menderes government as isolated from the Turkish citizenry.

Finally, it can be said that a distinction is generally drawn between the terms for 'revolution' ('*ihtilâl*' and '*devrim*') and the term for 'coup' ('*darbe*'), with May 27 almost always being referred to as the former when such distinctions are made. In the years immediately following the 1971 intervention, some effort is made to contrast May 27 with March 12.

March 12 itself was initially seen as a positive development, the intervention into politics of the 'revolutionary' ('*devrimci*') army in response to a Demirel government that *Cumhuriyet* considered anti-Kemalist, incompetent, and lacking rigor in its application of the 1961 constitution. By the mid-1970's, however, the 'coup' or 'intervention' of March 12 is compared in only unfavorable terms to the 'revolution' of May 27, while in the late 1970's March 12 ceases to be a subject of discussion of at all.

1981-1990: A new era

The beginning of the 1980's saw the third intervention into politics by the Turkish military in 20 years with the September 12 takeover of 1980. In the aftermath of September 12 the status of May 27 as a national holiday was revoked, as was the constitution of 1961. This did not, however, prevent *Cumhuriyet* from continuing to print columns on the takeover of 1960 every May 27. During the years 1981-1990, a total of thirty-one columns about May 27 appeared in the May 27-28 editions of *Cumhuriyet*—a yearly average slightly higher than that of the 1970's, when May 27

was a legal holiday. The breakdown into years of these columns is as follows: four in 1981, four in 1982, two in 1983, one in 1984, two in 1985, four in 1986, five in 1987, two in 1988, two in 1989, and five in 1990.

In the September 12 era in Turkey, celebrations of May 27 cease to mark the arrival of a public holiday and no longer celebrate the victory of May 27. Instead, May 27 opinion columns of the 1980's and 1990's celebrate a day of purely symbolic value and assume an extra role as a locus of protest against the new political order. Furthermore, the symbolism surrounding May 27 is now no longer limited to issues concerning 1960 and 1961, but also to issues concerning 1980 and 1982.²⁴

May 27 and the Demokrat Party era are remembered differently in *Cumhuriyet* after 1980. Whereas in the previous decade preventing fratricide ('*kardeş kavgası önlemek*') and ending anarchy had been frequently cited as justifications for May 27, the fact that September 12 was carried out for precisely these reasons effectively ends *Cumhuriyet*'s use of these rationales as acceptable justifications for May 27. Instead, the vanished constitution of 1961 and its superiority over the constitution of 1982 become frequent topics of discussion. In short May 27 becomes, after September 12, a potent symbol of ^{regret}remorse and nostalgia.

Although the 1961 constitution is invoked on several occasions in the columns of the 1970's, in the 1980's this constitution becomes a much more poignant and consistent feature of editorial discourse. While the 1961 constitution was not once mentioned in *Cumhuriyet* columns in either 1980 or 1981, in 1982—once plans for a new constitution limiting social freedoms had been made public—the subject of the constitution of 1961 becomes a more commonly seen element of these columns.

Thus, whereas columns in the 1970's tend to espouse general themes of May 27 like 'freedom' and 'democracy', post-September 12 columns now focus more specifically on the issue of the country's constitution: a total of twenty out of thirty-one May 27 columns written during the 1981-1990 period specifically mention the 1961 constitution as a benefit of May 27. Five of these columns were printed in the first five years (1981-1985) of the decade, with fifteen being published in the latter half (1986-1990). The symbolic value of the 1961 constitution as a rallying cry for *Cumhuriyet* columnists seems to have increased exponentially as the years in which the 1961 constitution was in force faded further into the past—a trend that was to continue in the 1990's.

Another common feature of the columns of the 1980's, particularly in the final years of the decade, was the distinction—already seen in the columns of the 1970's—between the terms 'revolution' ('*devrim*', '*ihtilâl*') and 'coup' ('*darbe*'). One difference after 1980 in this regard is that whereas in the 1970's, the term '*darbe*' was generally used in the abstract (for example, in the case of Nadi's 1973 column about anonymous 'undeveloped societies', '*az gelişmiş toplumlar*'), the word for 'coup' now came to be used more frequently to describe September 12 in particular. Consequently, when the takeover of September 12 is referred to by any name, it is most often referred to as a '*darbe*' and is never called a 'revolution'.

September 12

Perhaps mindful of the enthusiastic manner in which they had greeted a March 12 that they would later find reactionary, the response of *Cumhuriyet*

²⁴ 1982 was the year in which Turkey's new constitution was approved in a referendum.

columnists to the September 12 takeover was subdued. Writing on September 13,

Oktay Akbal wrote:

A parliament which cannot choose a president in six months...a minority government unsure of what to do in an impasse...a political leader who has been tried several times, who is clearly ineffective and unsuccessful...every day the death count rising...We were going somewhere. That place is the place where we ended up today. There was no other place to go.²⁵

Echoing Akbal's line, Uğur Mumcu wrote:

This result was no surprise, it was expected. From this turmoil, from this lake of blood what else could have happened, what else was expected? If a parliament supposed to choose a president within fifteen days is, out of incomprehensible stubbornness, unable to choose one after six months, what are people supposed to say to one another? In an atmosphere in which on average twenty people are getting killed every day, who can talk about a state of law, about the constitution, about democracy? In this environment of inflation, of devaluation, in this lake of blood, of course it is going to stop somewhere. And it stopped.²⁶

İlhan Selçuk, too, writes that 12 September was inevitable:

The old regime had heated up the water so much that even if it hadn't occurred on September 12, it is natural that it would have boiled over on some other day. In cities and in villages most people couldn't leave their homes. When they left them they lived in fear for their lives...Demirel set up a sound barrier. Ecevit's warnings always went unheeded.²⁷

²⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, September 13, 1980. "Altı aydır Cumhurbaşkanı seçemeyen bir Parlamento...Çıkmazlarda bocalayan bir azınlık iktidarı...Kaç kez denenmiş, yararsız, başarısız, olduğu anlaşılmamış bir siyasi lider...Her gün artan ölü sayısı...bir yerlere gidiyoruduk. Bu gittiğimiz yer, bugünkü yeri. Başka yer yoktu".

²⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, September 13, 1980. "Bu sonuç sürpriz değildi, bekleniyordu. Bu çalkantıda bu kan gölünde başka ne olabilirdi, ne beklenirdi? Bir parlamento, onbeş gün içinde seçilmesi gereken Cumhurbaşkanı, akılalmaz vurdumduymazlıklarla altı aydır seçmezse, kim kime ne söyleyebilir? Günde ortalama yirmi yurttaşımızın can verdiği bir ortamda, kim kukuk devletinden, Anayasadan, demokrasiden söz edebilirdi? Bu enflasyonlu, devalüasyonlu düzen, bu kan gölü, elbette bir yerde noktalanacaktı. Ve noktalandı".

²⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, September 14, 1980. "Eski rejim suyu öylesine ısınmıştı ki 12 Eylülde olmasa bile bir başka günde kaynaması doğaldı. Kentte ve köyde çoğu kişi evinin kapısından dışarı çıkamıyor; çıktığı

Given the fact that September 12 was, unlike March 12, a full-scale military takeover, it is safe to assume that no highly critical response to September 12 was going to find its way into the mainstream press no matter what the beliefs of a newspaper's columnists. Thus, although it is possible to measure *Cumhuriyet*'s lack of an enthusiasm comparable to that which was demonstrated after March 12, it is harder to determine the extent to which the passages listed above represent any antipathy *Cumhuriyet* columnists may have felt towards September 12. Before long, however, *Cumhuriyet* columnists, incensed by the policies of the September 12 regime and of the center-right governments that followed it, took to attacking the September 12 takeover regularly.

What to call a coup?

As time passed and the September 12 regime developed into the antithesis of the social democratic order that *Cumhuriyet* advocated, the discussions from the 1970's regarding the difference between a 'coup' and a 'revolution' become ever more loaded with anti-September 12 meaning.

At the same time, however, September 12 forced *Cumhuriyet* columnists into increasingly complicated arguments. Prior to September 12 columns in *Cumhuriyet* had frequently argued that May 27 was a 'revolution' and not a 'coup' by virtue of the fact that it had created a new constitutional order. Given that the term 'revolution' had a specifically positive connotation among *Cumhuriyet* writers and

zaman öldürüleceği korkusuyla yaşıyordu...Sayın Demirel ses duvanını aşmıştı. Ecevit'in çağrıları sürekli karşılıksız kalıyordu”.

readers, these columnists were now obliged to re-define their definition of 'revolution' to exclude September 12--despite the fact that it, too, had introduced a new constitutional order. Some columnists simply concluded that a 'coup' was a right-wing military intervention, while a 'revolution' was a left-wing military intervention, while others took to calling September 12 a 'counter-revolution'. Needless to say, 'coups' are still portrayed as negative developments, whereas 'revolutions' are considered to be positive developments (in that they are carried out 'for the people')--thus creating the need to call September 12 something other than a 'revolution'.

Moreover, many *Cumhuriyet* columns during this period are written in response to the argument that all military interventions, regardless of their political tendencies, are damaging to Turkish democracy.²⁸ Instead, *Cumhuriyet* columnists argue that each military intervention had to be judged according to what it has brought, rather than be opposed in principle.

In a column written in 1987, İlhan Selçuk writes that he wishes to respond to those who say "all military interventions are bad. May 27 was a military intervention. May 27 is bad".

mentioned
We must weigh every event in history with an objective and emotionless sociological scale. Such hackneyed words as 'good' or 'bad' have to be left behind, as to words such as 'military' or 'civil', and instead it is necessary to look at what each event brought with it.²⁹

²⁸ See Ahmad, Ferhöz, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London, 1987. The movement of more politically mainstream supporters of May 27 away from supporting military intervention is particularly clear in chapters 3 and 4 of this study.

²⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1987. "Tarihteki her olayı toplumbilimin yansız ve duygusuz terazisinde tartmak zorundayız. 'İyi' ya da 'kötü' gibi alacalı sözcükleri bir yana bırakarak 'askeri' ya da 'sivil', her olayın ne getirip ne götürdüğüne bakmak gerekiyor".

Selçuk goes on to write that May 27 “can be called something other than a classic and ordinary coup”. The fact that the 1961 constitution brought “a social state, rights for trade unions and independent judges”, writes Selçuk, is what made May 27 good for Turkey.

One year later, Selçuk devoted his May 27 column to making a distinction between May 27 and September 12. Writing that while May 27 brought many social rights to Turkey, September 12 was a “fascist, anti-democratic, reactionary” movement.

Uğur Mumcu, writing in 1989, makes a similar argument:

The 1961 constitution and the rights and freedoms that it brought is the record of the May 27 Revolution. The '61 constitution brought rights to the working class, it brought autonomous universities and an autonomous TRT; it brought judicial independence. The '61 constitution brought Turkey a step closer to pluralistic democracy in the Western sense, it brought the sort of civil society organizations that make democracy work. From this perspective May 27 was a revolution...12 September, far from being a revolution, was carried out against the opposition; it brought a constitution in which basic rights and freedoms were restricted and brought an 'economic militarization' model.³⁰

Thus, according to Mumcu and Selçuk, whether or not a military intervention into politics is to be called a ‘coup’ or a ‘revolution’ depends upon the political changes to follow. Notably, however, neither columnist responds to charges that moral support for May 27 among so many intellectuals and other opinion-makers in Turkey had facilitated the undertaking of March 12 and September 12.

³⁰*Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1989. “1961 Anayasası, 27 Mayıs ihtilâlin getirdiği hak ve özgürlüklerin tutanağıdır. 61 Anayasası, işçi sınıfına grev hakkı getirmiştir; özerk üniversite ve özerk TRT getirmiştir; yargı bağımsızlığı getirmiştir...61 Anayasası ile Türkiye Batılı anlamda çoğulcu demokrasiye adım atmış, demokrasiyi yaşatacak olan sivil kurumları getirmiştir. Bu açıdan 27 Mayıs

The words used to describe May 27, March 12 and September 12 indeed vary in the May 27 columns of the 1980's. In the fifteen columns devoted to comparing May 27 with September 12 (nine of which grouped March 12 and September 12 together), only two were written during the years 1981-1985, with the other thirteen written in the second half of the decade. On several occasions, no specific name is given to March 12 and September 12, but May 27 is almost always referred to as a 'revolution' and is never referred to as a 'coup'.³¹ In 1984, September 12 is called an 'operation' ('*harekât*'), while in one column in 1986 both March 12 and September 12 are called 'interventions' ('*müdahale*') by one columnist and 'operations' ('*eylem*') by another. In 1987, the term 'coup' ('*darbe*') is used for the first time to describe both September 12 and March 12, a term which appears again in another column (written by a different columnist) in 1989 to describe both March 12 and September 12. In 1988, the term 'intervention' ('*müdahale*') was again used for September 12, while in two columns in 1990 both March 12 and September 12 are referred to as 'coups' ('*darbe*')--as always, in contradistinction to the 'revolution' of 1960. In the 1990's, the frequency with which September 12 is called a 'coup' would continue to increase.

1991-2000: The second decade of the new regime

During the years 1991-2000, a total of thirty-one May 27 columns were printed, with the year-by-year breakdown as follows: two in 1991, four in 1992, two in 1993, three in 1994, four in 1995, two in 1996, four in 1997, four in 1998 three in

³¹ 'devrim'...12 Eylül'de ihtilâl, iktidardan çok, muhalefete karşı yapılmış; temel hak ve özgürlükleri kısıtlayan bir anayasa ve "ekonomilerin militarizasyonu modeli"ni getirmiştir".

1999 and three in 2000. In the 1990's, May 27 columns continued largely in the vein of the columns from the 1980's. The remembered benefits of the 1961 constitution, particularly when compared to the constitution of 1982, are thus frequently highlighted. Indeed, this topic is seen in three-quarters of the May 27 columns—twenty-one out of twenty-eight—during the 1990's. Contrasting May 27 from September 12 and, to a lesser extent, from March 12, also continues to be a prominent feature of the May 27 columns during this decade. Nineteen columns discuss the differences between May 27 and September 12, with five of these also discussing March 12.

As had been the case in earlier decades, the terms for 'revolution' (*'devrim'* and *'ihtilâl'*) were almost always used to describe May 27, with a variety of terms—but to an increasingly frequent extent the word 'coup' (*'darbe'*)—being used to refer to March 12 and September 12. In 1991, both March 12 and September 12 are called 'interventions' (*müdahale*), while in 1992 they are both called 'coups' (*'darbe'*). In another column in 1992, September 12 is called an 'operation' (*'eylem'*). In a column from 1993, March 12 is called a 'coup' (*'darbe'*) while September 12 is called a 'counter-revolution' (*'karşı-devrim'*)—which brings some consistency to the terminology if writing a new constitution is to be used as the standard for distinguishing between a 'coup' and a 'revolution'. In a column from 1997, September 12 is again referred to once as a 'coup' (*'darbe'*) and once as a 'counter-revolution' (by the same writer as before) and it is again called a 'coup' by two other columnists in 1998 and 1999. Out of a total of nineteen columns which discuss September 12 in the 1990's, four columns (three written by different authors, the

³¹ On three occasions, it is simply referred to as 'May 27'.

fourth published under the general editorial title '*Cumhuriyet* Newspaper') refer to September 12 as a 'coup'. Twice it is called an 'operation' (by different writers) and twice it is called a 'counter-revolution' (by the same writer on both occasions). On the remaining occasions, it is referred to simply as 'September 12'. Among the wider selection of columns searched electronically for the years 1998-2000, fourteen columns were concerned with the question of the status of September 12, seven referred to it as a 'coup' ('*darbe*') and seven call it 'September 12'.

In six of the May 27 columns (by four different writers), the question of whether or not May 27 is a 'coup' like March 12 and September 12 is met head-on.

In 1999, Toktamış Ateş writes:

Certain writers and politicians of exceptional intelligence put May 27 in the same category as March 12 and September 12. This is a great injustice. For May 27 was a 'revolution' in every sense of the word. March 12 was a 'coup' and September 12 was a 'counter-revolution'. If seen as an operation which put into power a junta that was organized in the armed forces against a parliament that had been elected by peoples' votes and against a government born of that parliament, May 27 cannot be supported. In fact, in this manner it could even be compared to September 12. The key to this issue, however, is hidden in the answer to this question: 'Was there democracy in Turkey on May 26, or on the morning of May 27'? The only answer to this question is 'no'.³²

³² *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1999. "Super zekâlı kimi yazarlar ve siyasetçiler, 27 Mayıs'ı 12 Mart ve 12 Eylül'le aynı kefeye koyarlar. Büyük bir haksızlıktır bu. Zira 27 Mayıs, tam anlamıyla bir 'devrim'; 12 Mart, bir 'hükümet darbesi' ve 12 Eylül bir 'karşı devrim'dir...27 Mayıs, halkın oylarıyla oluşan bir parlamentoya ve o parlamentodan doğan hükümete karşı, silahlı kuvvetler içinde oluşan bir cuntanın giriştiği bir harekettir ve işin bu yanına baktığınız zaman, olumlanması mümkün değildir. Ve hatta bu yönüyle 12 Eylül 1980 hareketine de benzetilebilir. Fakat işin anahtarı, şu sorunun yanıtında gizlidir: "Acaba 26 Mayıs güne ve 27 Mayıs sabahı Türkiye'de demokrasi var mıydı?". Bu sorunun tek ve kısa bir yanıtı vardır: 'Hayır'."

Another columnist, Alev Coşkun, makes a similar argument:

Some writers put May 27 in the same category as March 12 and September 12 merely because all three of them were realized through a military operation. May 27 can never be put into the same category as March 12 or September 12. I wish the Demokrat Party had in the 1950's developed the democratic structures through which it had come to power, rather than limiting rights and freedoms. I wish they had widened them, and within a democratic framework had left power through elections and the people's votes.³³

Thus, according to these writers what makes May 27 a revolution is that it was carried out against an 'anti-democratic' regime. According to Ateş, there was no democracy in Turkey during the Menderes era, therefore May 27 was a revolution, and not a coup. According to Coşkun, May 27 was a 'revolution' because the Demokrat Party had limited democratic freedoms and there was thus no other way of removing Menderes from power. As always, the term 'revolution' is jealously guarded as a figure of speech that can have only positive connotations and which therefore must be used, among Turkish military takeovers, only in reference to May 27.

Menderes and Islam

One topic not seen in the May 27 columns of the 1970's and 1980's but which is frequently mentioned in the later years of the 1990's is Islam. As concerns in Turkey about political Islam rose, so too did the frequency of arguments that the

³³ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1998. "Kimi yazarlar salt askerin yönetime el koyması yönünden yaklaşarak 27 Mayıs—12 Mart ve 12 Eylül'ü aynı kefeye koyarlar. 27 Mayıs hiçbir zaman 12 Mart'la ve 12 Eylül'le terainin aynı kefesine konulamaz. Keşke DP, 1950'lerde aldığı siyasal iktidarda demokrasiyi geliştirseydi, demokrasiyi ve özgürlükleri kısıtlayacağı yerde, onları genişletseydi, demokratik oluşumlar içinde halkın oylarıyla ve seçimle iktidardan gitseydi."

Menderes government had been anti-se writes in a May 27 column that “all of t Islam in Turkey could be traced to the meanwhile, notes that ‘laicism’ (*‘laiklik* the 1961 constitution (without also noti one of the founding principles of the pr principles of the 1982 constitution). In with the 1982 constitution, Coşkun organizations devoted to laicism--imp. secularism, while that of 1982 does a direct connection between political Isla

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Menderes, September 12 and j single tradition of anti-Kemalist ‘remembered’ in the late 1990’s jus *Cumhuriyet* as a reactionary force in a of a solution.

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³⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1998. “12 Eylül’de tutucu ve gerici güçlerin işbirliğine dönüştü

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³² *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1999. “Super zekâlı k Eylül’le aynı kefeyle koyarlar. Büyük bir haksız Mart, bir ‘hükümet darbesi’ ve 12 Eylül bir ‘k parlamentoya ve o parlamentodan doğan hüküm giriştiği bir harekettir ve işin bu yanına baktığı yönüyle 12 Eylül 1980 hareketine de benzetilel “Acaba 26 Mayıs güne ve 27 Mayıs sabahı Tür. bir yanıtı vardır: ‘Hayır’.”

1997, the so-called 'February 28 Process' began, in which Turkey's military leaders began pressuring Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to make concrete steps to limit the influence of Islam in government and society. In May of 1997, Erbakan was forced to resign amid open discussion of a possible military takeover. As was the case in 1971, the military had intervened without completely taking power.

1998-2000: The computer archives

For practical reasons, this study has thus far limited itself to columns written on May 27 and May 28. For the years 1998-2000, however, searchable electronic archives of *Cumhuriyet* do exist. In these archives, a search using the keyword 'Menderes' was conducted, resulting in a total of 59 columns about either Adnan Menderes or the May 27 coup. Seven of these appeared on either May 27 or May 28, and had thus already been counted in the study above and are not included here. The discussion below summarizes the findings from the remaining 52.

Among these columns, one of the most commonly seen themes is the connection made between the Menderes government and anti-secularism—a defense of the 1960 takeover not previously seen in May 27 columns. In a total of twenty-two columns, the allegedly anti-secularist policies of the Menderes government become an increasingly frequent theme in justifying May 27. Indeed, in nine columns by six different columnists the phrase "*Siz, isterseniz hilafeti bile getirebilirsiniz*" ("if you want, you can even bring back the caliphate"), is attributed to Menderes—a phrase which appears not once in May 27 columns before 1997. The connection between this

cumhuriyete' karşı 'Türk-İslam Sentezini' devletin resmi görüşüne dönüştürürken Kemalistler kan ağlıyordu".

and the attitude of the *Cumhuriyet* column staff to Menderes' concept of 'national will' is clear in a column by Toktamış Ateş:

The most important point of the May 27 Revolution in Turkey was that the Demokrat Party's understanding of democracy was flawed. They believed that in a pluralistic democracy, the 'majority will' can do whatever it wants. Adnan Menderes' statement that if the people wanted it, they could even bring back the Caliphate and the empty flattery by the Demokrat Party of the parliament was a clear indication of what kind of democratic vision they had...in no democracy does the majority will have the right to destroy freedom.³⁵

Another example of this belief in the danger of the 'national will' can be found in another column by Ateş from April 2, 1999, which states:

The concept of Menderes that 'whatever the majority wants is democracy' has accelerated in Turkey ever since Özal. You know that in Germany Hitler came to power that way. Today in Turkey Islamic fundamentalists are using this same twisted logic in an effort to take the regime off of its rails.³⁶

The question of the caliphate and the alleged statement by Menderes about bringing it back—repeated so many times by several different columnists only after the coming to power of Erbakan's Islamically-oriented Refah Party in 1996—cuts to the heart of what the debate concerning military interventions in Turkey is all about. In every democracy, there are certain ground rules within which all political parties

³⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1998. "Türkiye'yi 27 Mayıs 1960 Devrimi'ne getiren en önemli husus, Demokrat Parti'nin demokrasi anlayışının 'sakatlığı' olmuştu. Bir demokrasideki 'çoğunluk iradesinin' canın istediği her şeyi yapabileceğini sanmışlardı. Adnan Menderes'in 'Sizler isterseniz hilafeti bile geri getirebilirsiniz' diyerek, Demokrat Partisi TBMM Grubu'nu 'pohpohlaması', nasıl bir demokrasi anlayışına sahip olduklarını net bir biçimde göstermekteydi. Çoğunluk iradesinin,...hiçbir demokraside 'demokrasiyi yok etme özgürlüğü' bulunamazdı".

³⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, April 22, 1999. "Özal'dan beri, Türkiye'de, Menderes ile başlayan "Çoğunluğun istediği şey demokratiktir" saptırması ivme kazandı. Biliyorsunuz, Almanya'da Hitler de böyle iktidara geldi. Bugün Türkiye'de şeriatçılar da aynı çarpık mantığı kullanarak rejimi rayından çıkarmaya çalışıyorlar".

are expected to play, and in this regard Turkey is no exception. The debate here concerns the extent of these constrictions. The phrase “*Siz isterseniz hilafeti bile getirebilirsiniz*” (‘if you want, you can even bring back the caliphate’) neatly summarizes attitude of *Cumhuriyet* columnists to what they see as the ‘majoritarian democracy’ (‘*çoğulcu demokrasi*’ or ‘*çoğunluk iradesi*’) of not only Menderes, but also Özal and the Islamist parties of the 1990’s. If the ‘national will’ (‘*millî irade*’) of the sort Menderes advocated is to be pursued, what can be the implications for a state fundamentally based upon the principles of Kemalism?

In these columns as well as in the May 27 columns of the late 1990’s, the rise of Islamist political parties in Turkey has had a clear influence on the way in which the Menderes government is remembered. A dialogue is thus established between the crisis of 1960 and the crises of the late 1990’s: Menderes’ purported paternity of a contemporary crisis further justifies the takeover of May 27, while May 27 is used as a precedent which legitimizes the military-bureaucratic crackdown on ‘political’ Islam from 1997 onwards.

Conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from the reading of *Cumhuriyet* columns over a period of forty years? First of all, it seems clear that arguments used to defend May27 are malleable, changing in response to political events as the decades pass.

Secondly, references to ‘tension’ and ‘danger of bloodshed’—used in the 1970’s to help justify May 27—fall out of use gradually as mayhem and bloodshed become increasingly recurrent features on Turkish streets and campuses in the middle

to late-1970's. These references then disappear entirely once the September 12 takeover is undertaken specifically in the name of stopping this bloodshed.

Another noteworthy feature of *Cumhuriyet*'s May 27 columns is the discovery in the late 1990's that Adnan Menderes was responsible for the rise of political Islam in Turkey. Columns written under the influence of the crises of 1997-onwards use political Islam to transform May 27 into a contemporary issue and use May 27 to legitimize a contemporary crackdown on political Islam, the so-called 'February 28 Process'.

A more expected development in May 27 editorials from 1982 onwards is the increasing frequency with which the 1961 constitution is invoked. Whereas prior to 1980, May 27 is hailed for having brought 'democracy' and 'freedom' to Turkey, after September 12 the 1961 constitution assumes considerable potency as a symbol of protest and martyrdom in opposition to the post-September 12 constitutional and political order.

Complementing the heightened—because martyred—status of the 1961 constitution after 1982 is the simultaneous disappearance of one of the most common features of May 27 columns from the 1970's: the lament that May 27 had not 'lived up to its promise'. In these columns, the fact that Turkey had not evolved into the civil society that had been envisioned and hoped-for in the early sixties had been discussed regularly in the decade before September 12. With its passing, the May 27 era becomes idealized and its previously discussed shortcomings regarding its implementation and feasibility are forgotten.

Another interesting feature from May 27 columns of the 1970's and 1980's is seen in the varying representations of March 12 during this period. First seen as a sequel to May 27, then derided as reactionary, March 12 seems to have been largely forgotten by 1980. Then, with the development of the September 12 order, March 12 is resurrected as the 'fascist' prelude to the 'counter-revolution'. As is the case with May 27, March 12 remains ever malleable, with interpretations of it changing according to the direction of political events taking place decades later.

Finally, *Cumhuriyet* editorials over the course of the four decades following May 27 reveal an interesting pattern in shifts in vocabulary regarding the three military interventions. Although May 27 is usually called a 'revolution' in the 1970's, it is also occasionally (on three occasions) called a 'coup' ('*darbe*'), indicating that this term did not universally have among *Cumhuriyet* columnists the negative connotations it was to assume after 1980. September 12 is originally called by several different names, but in the late 1980's and 1990's is called with increasing frequency a 'coup' ('*darbe*'). March 12, on the other hand, is first called an 'intervention' ('*müdahale*') in the 1970's, but then comes to be referred to most often as a 'coup' ('*darbe*') once it has been decided that March 12 was nothing but the dress-rehearsal for September 12.

By studying the arguments made by *Cumhuriyet* writers in support of May 27 during the period 1960-2000, the extent to which September 12 and post-September 12 Turkey are viewed as a direct attack upon the values of May 27 is obvious. Equally clear is the understanding among *Cumhuriyet* writers that packaged within the values of May 27 and September 12 are questions concerning the 'ground rules'

of the Turkish Republic and the danger that an uncontrolled 'national will' could pose for the future of *Cumhuriyet*'s brand of Kemalism.

In one sense, it is easy to explain why Adnan Menderes and May 27 became dramatically more commonly seen subjects of intellectual and political interest in post-September 12 Turkey: May 27 and Menderes were long past due for revision, and until 1980 the extent to which these subjects could be revised was considerably limited.

But what do we find when we unpack these revisions? In *Cumhuriyet*'s objections to September 12 we see dismay at the rightward political direction of post-1980 Turkey but also tremendous anger at what is seen as the annihilation of May 27. September 12 is called a 'fascist, anti-democratic' event, a 'counter-revolution' which destroyed the constitutional order that came in the wake of the 'revolution' of May 27. One military takeover is endowed with the positive (in the eyes of *Cumhuriyet* columnists, at least) moniker 'revolution', while the other is saddled with the epithet of 'coup' or 'counter-revolution'. Depictions of both military interventions, however, are imbued with considerable significance regarding what kind of state *Cumhuriyet* columnists think the Republic of Turkey ought to be.

As we shall see in the next two chapters, post-1980 arguments against May 27 often take the form of arguments against military intervention in general. Indeed, the responses made to this argument by several columnists in *Cumhuriyet* have already been discussed in this chapter. The columns studied in this chapter, whether remembering May 27 as an event which prevented a fratricide or else seeing it as an intervention in defense of laicism, ultimately see May 27 as legitimate because the

Menderes government broke certain rules (although exactly which rules were broken is a subject which is remembered differently over time) and because the constitutional order was improved afterwards—thus transforming the ‘coup’ (as Aydemir and others have argued) into a real ‘revolution’.

March 12, on the other hand, was initially welcomed by *Cumhuriyet* writers, who believed they were experiencing a second May 27. When the March 12 intervention ended with constitutional changes not to the liking of *Cumhuriyet* columnists, however, it was derided as a ‘coup’, and later as a ‘fascist’ precedent to September 12, the most infamous date of all on *Cumhuriyet*’s calendar.

Because September 12 culminated in the replacement of the 1961 constitution with one that was held to be its ideological antithesis, the 1980 military takeover is represented in starkly negative terms in *Cumhuriyet*. It is, moreover, an element of the May 27 discussion which cannot be ignored after 1980. This is because the half-life of May 27 as a vision of Turkish political society continues throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s. It is ever defined in contradistinction to the political and constitutional values of September 12 Turkey--which *Cumhuriyet* writers, in turn, see as a revival of the political vision of Menderes.

In *Cumhuriyet*, May 27 constitutes an eternal revolution. Unlike *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*, where May 27 was first revised and then forgotten, May 27 has not lost any of its potency in *Cumhuriyet* since 1980. Indeed, rather than diminishing, the symbolic power of May 27 has simply changed form. Whereas during the years 1960-1980 the shaky legitimacy of May 27 was celebrated in *Cumhuriyet* with a mixture of triumphalism and defensiveness, since 1980—and particularly since the late 1980’s—

the date of the former national holiday has been celebrated as a symbol of protest against what has come to be known as ‘the counter-revolution’. For as long as that ‘counter-revolution’ is understood to form the basis of government in Turkey, May 27 will continue to be celebrated in opposition to that basis—whatever it may be.

CHAPTER 3:

***MİLLİYET* NEWSPAPER**

Revolution and Revision

In the immediate aftermath of May 27, *Milliyet* newspaper adopted an editorial line strikingly similar to that of *Cumhuriyet*. As the 1960's progressed, however, there were occasions when individual columnists writing in *Milliyet* expressed doubts regarding—if not the wisdom of the military takeover itself—the extent to which it had effected real change in Turkish society. Be that as it may, for the most part *Milliyet* in the 1960's tended to be clearly supportive of May 27 both in the opinion columns that it published and in the manner that the announcement of the holiday on May 27 and the news coverage of the previous day's parade on May 28 were represented in the paper. Thus, both institutionally in the form of the newspaper itself and individually among the newspaper's opinion columnists themselves, May 27 is represented during this period in generally positive and enthusiastic terms.

The military intervention of March 12, 1971 had a decided impact upon the May 27 columns of one columnist, Abdi İpekçi, but otherwise seems to have had little resonance on the rest of *Milliyet* columnists in the 1970's. It was in this decade, however, that May 27 came to be portrayed in the newspaper as just one more national holiday, rather than as a day of particularly *revolutionary* importance. By the middle of the 1970's, the overtly political and staged May 27 photographs and pictures that were common in the 1960's had disappeared, and had been largely replaced by actual pictures from the May 27 parade in Ankara.

Yet despite the fact that both in word and in image there is a discernible waning of *revolutionary* enthusiasm for May 27 in the 1970's, it should be stressed that no columns openly criticizing May 27 were printed in the 1970's. Indeed, enough positive columns were printed during this period to indicate a genuinely favorably

attitude towards the intervention continuing—albeit in a relatively diminished form—until the September 12 military takeover in 1980.

After 1980, the effect of both the official renunciation of May 27 that took place at the state level following the September 12 takeover, and the political rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes that occurred throughout the 1980's is evident in the pages of *Milliyet*. This reflection of political events generally in Turkey is seen first in *Milliyet*'s more 'news' oriented articles through the increasing tendency to discuss the May 27 from the perspective of the Demokrat Party (through the serialization of the memoirs of former Demokrat Party deputies, for example), and then is seen in *Milliyet*'s opinion columns as well. By the late 1980's, the great majority of May 27-related columns appearing in *Milliyet* criticize some element of May 27. In particular, the role of May 27 in initiating the 'chain of coups' that would result in March 12 and September 12 often is found at the forefront of criticism of May 27.

Although the quantity and diversity of arguments related to May 27 reach unprecedented levels in *Milliyet* in the 1980's and early 1990's, this interest is to prove relatively short-lived. Between 1995 and 2000 only a handful of articles pertaining to May 27 are printed. Even on May 27 2000, the fortieth anniversary of the takeover, not a single news article or opinion column concerned with May 27 appears in *Milliyet*. May 27, with its fall from official grace in the early 1980's and the 'healing of wounds' with Menderes' re-burial in 1987, has by now largely faded into history, no longer an issue of the present. Whereas in *Cumhuriyet* the issues of May 27 and September 12 continue to have contemporary importance and meaning (principally in the form of continued protest against September 12 and the free-

market liberal politics that have dominated Turkey since then), on the pages of *Milliyet* the May 27 takeover is first championed, then revised and ultimately forgotten. Thus, in *Milliyet*, the symbolic potency of May 27 evaporates within ten years of Menderes' political rehabilitation. The increased interest in the subjects of Adnan Menderes and May 27 exhibited by Turkish writers reaches its peak in the late 1980's and early 1990's but then fades¹ as questions that had once held intense political and symbolic meaning lose their power as greater consensus is reached on May 27's mixed legacy.

In discussing the manner in which May 27 is represented in *Milliyet* there are some differences from the manner in which *Cumhuriyet* was discussed. As a newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*'s editorial policy is very pro-May 27. Both *Cumhuriyet*, as a newspaper and all of its individual columnists, whether they are permanent staff writers or guest columnists, support May 27 and its principles. Whereas in *Cumhuriyet* all that changes in the decades under review are the arguments defending May 27—and not its essential approach to May 27 itself—in *Milliyet* a palpable waning of enthusiasm for May 27 is discernible during the period 1960-1980. After 1980, May 27 is represented in a very different, and much more negative, light.

This being said, among columnists in *Milliyet* there is much more variety of opinion than among their counterparts at *Cumhuriyet*. Indeed, at times there also seems to be some difference between the manner in which May 27 is represented by *Milliyet* Newspaper as an institution, and the views of the newspaper's various opinion columnists themselves. For this reason, not only have columns in *Milliyet* been studied, but also the newspaper's headlines, political cartoons, non-cartoon

¹ Precisely this pattern can also be seen in the publication of Menderes-oriented books—see chapter 6.

drawings and photographs. In distinguishing the editorial representations of the newspaper from the editorial views of opinion columnists, I use the term 'collateral' editorial comment to describe editorial viewpoints of May 27 that are found outside of opinion columns and editorials. 'Collateral' editorial comment is comment expressed through editorial decisions such as the type of photographs and cartoons to appear on the newspaper's May 27 masthead, whether or not to print the motto and symbol of May 27 on the newspaper's masthead, and which guest columnists to publish on May 27. While no attempt is being made here to neatly divide all editorial comment into 'columnist' comment and 'collateral' comment (after all, the newspaper's opinion columnists are ultimately responsible to the same editorial staff which determines the quantity and form of the aforementioned 'collateral' comment), there do seem to be times—particularly in the early 1970's—when the manner in which May 27 is represented by the corporate body of *Milliyet* Newspaper does not correspond neatly with the editorial tone of the columns being written by the newspaper's full-time columnists. In the early 1960's, collateral comment and opinion columns alike celebrate May 27 enthusiastically. But in the late 1960's and early 1970's, May 27 ceases to be a subject of heatedly enthusiastic discussion among *Milliyet* columnists while it continues to be represented in a very positive and revolutionary light by the newspaper in general. Similarly, in a country in which published criticism of May 27 during the period 1960-1980 was subject to formal and informal censorship, the fact that even collateral support for May 27 decreases sharply after the mid-1970's (while still not being criticized, of course), deserves comment. The discussion of collateral commentary in this chapter is therefore an

effort to address the fact that not all of *Milliyet*'s views of May 27 can be found within the newspaper's opinion columns.

1960-1970

In the immediate aftermath of the military takeover, *Milliyet* supported May 27—an editorial stance which was to continue in large part until the end of the decade. Throughout most of the 1960's, *Milliyet*'s columns praised May 27 while the newspaper brandished the revolution's logo (four hands clasping one another's wrists to form a square) and slogan ('The nation, army and youth hand in hand')². At the end of the decade, however, this enthusiasm began to wane, although the 'spirit of May 27' was still generally lauded in both the newspaper's opinion columns and its collateral comment.

During the years 1960-1970, there appeared in the May 27-28 editions in *Milliyet* a total of eight editorial columns regarding May 27. The yearly breakdown of these columns is as follows: 1960 (2), 1961 (0), 1962 (1), 1963 (1), 1964 (1), 1965 (0), 1966 (0), 1967 (1), 1968 (0), 1969 (2), and 1970 (0). One of these columns was written by Ulu Nay (1960), two were written by Çetin Altan (1960, 1962) two were written by Abdi İpekci (both in 1969), and three of these columns were anonymous front-page editorials (1962, 1963, 1964).

² 'Millet, Ordu, Gençlik Elele'. Sometimes the slogan changed to 'The people, army and youth hand in hand' ('Halk, Ordu, Gençlik Elele').

The great revolution

In the days following May 27, expressions of enthusiasm for the takeover can be seen in both the opinion columns and the collateral editorializing of *Milliyet*. It must be remembered, of course, that no newspaper could have attacked the takeover and remained open, and that the extent to which this enthusiasm is accepted at face value should thus be taken with some caution. Given the fact, however, that this enthusiasm was to continue with a considerable intensity for much of the decade to follow, at the very least one can state that the manner in which the military takeover was seen and represented did not change considerably during the 1960's.

On May 27, 1960, *Milliyet* columnist Çetin Altan wrote:

Thanks are due to the Turkish Armed Forces. In the same dignified manner in which it prevented the shedding of blood between brothers, the establishment of the foundation of real democracy is expected to take place [and] we are happy and take pride in this.³

In a similar vein, columnist Ulu Nay wrote:

The age in which we live is the age of freedom. The Army, which understood that it is not possible for nations to live without freedom, protected freedom and defended the future of the nation. The glory of this revolution lies in the fact that it was carried out without one drop of blood being shed.⁴

Another example of support for May 27 on the pages of *Milliyet* can be found in the cartoons and photographs depicting May 27 that appear in the newspaper. In 1960, for example, a cartoon published on the front page of the May 28 edition of

³ *Milliyet*, May 28, 1960. "Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri sağolsunlar. Kardeş kanı dökülmeden yapılan bu hareketin aynı vakar içinde gerçek demokrasinin temellerini atmasını bekliyor, seviniyor, övünüyor, övünüyor seviniyoruz."

⁴ *Milliyet*, May 29, 1960. "Yaşadığımız asır, hürriyet asrıdır. Milletlerin hürriyetsiz yaşamalarına imkân olmadığını anlayan ordu, hürriyeti müdafaa etmek suretiyle milletin istikbalini müdafaa etmiş oldu. Bu inkilâbin ihtisamı, bir damla kan dökülmeden yapılmış olmasıdır."

Milliyet depicts a young, clean-cut man in a suit standing at attention in front of the Turkish Flag. On the flag are written the words 'May 27'. Clearly, all supporters of progress and modernity support May 27.

Some skepticism

As Turkey returned to free elections and direct military control of the country came to an end, the enthusiasm for May 27 displayed by *Milliyet* columnists becomes slightly more tempered. From 1962 until 1980, *Milliyet*'s permanent columnists would never write anti-May 27 columns, but they would frequently write columns which criticized the failure of successive Turkish government to fully implement the reforms of May 27. Thus, while the 'spirit' of May 27 tends to go unchallenged in *Milliyet*, the reality of May 27 is frequently characterized as something less than ideal. More significantly, perhaps, the purple prose of the immediate post-May 27 period is replaced by supportive yet somewhat more balanced discussions of May 27 in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Moreover, this decrease in enthusiasm for May 27 becomes even more evident from the mid-1970's onwards, when May 27 is more often than not met with nothing more than a ghostly silence.

Starting in 1962, opinion columns expressing doubts about the success of May 27 begin finding their way onto the pages of *Milliyet*. These columns, which did not attack May 27 but rather questioned the extent to which it had made any difference in Turkey, were generally written by columnists on *Milliyet*'s permanent staff. Alongside these columns would appear guest columnists bearing the usual arguments in favor of May 27, such as the 'restoration of a democratic order', 'prevention of bloodshed', 'creation of social rights and freedoms in the constitution',

and 'creation of a more just economic order'. Non-written commentary, moreover, such as photographs, the use of symbols and cartoons, continued to appear in *Milliyet* in strong support of May 27. From 1962 onwards, there thus develops an interesting divergence between the columns of the permanent column-writing staff and the collateral editorial comment of guest columns and non-written editorializing.

An example of the more sober analyses of May 27 that began to appear in *Milliyet* is a 1962 column by Çetin Altan:

I remember [the events of] two years ago and feel strange inside. We kissed our radios. We called each other up to congratulate one another. We shouted from balcony to balcony. The meaning was out there, it was neither flying away nor escaping. Then, within one year, it just disappeared. Where did it go, that meaning?⁵

One year later an unsigned front-page editorial in *Milliyet* expressed similarly mixed feelings about May 27:

All the country greeted May 27 with great excitement and happiness...what a pity it is that we are not in a position to say that these hopes have been realized. In the wake of the changes that have taken place after May 27, not only has the desired establishment of fraternity among citizens not taken place, but on the contrary our society has divided itself into groups pitted against one another in all of our institutions.⁶

⁵ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1962. "İki yıl öncesini hatırlıyorum da içim bir tuhaf oluyor. Radyoları öptüyorduk. Birbirimize tebrik telefonları açıyorduk. Balkonlardan balkonlara bağırıyorduk. Mana ortaydı, ne uçuyor, ne kaçıyor. Sonra bir yıl içinde kayboluverdi mana...nereye gitti bu mana?"

⁶ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1963. "Bütün millet 27 Mayısı büyük bir heyecan ve sevinçle karşılamıştı...ne yazık ki bu ümitlerin gerçekleştiğini söylemeye bugün imkân bulamamaktayız. 27 Mayıs'tan sonra yapılan icraat sonunda vatandaşlar arasında kurulması istenen kardeşlik sağlanmamış aksine bütün müesseselerimize kadar toplumumuz birbirine karşı gruplara bölünmüştür."

In 1964, this sentiment was again expressed in the very first line of yet another unsigned front-page editorial:

It can be claimed that May 27 is a revolution that has not reached its goals.⁷

On one occasion an editorial cartoon also expresses these doubts. On May 27, 1966, an unsigned drawing would appear which depicts an overweight balding man wearing a bow tie. Across the man's large stomach is written the word "exploiter" ("sömürücü"). The cartoon is divided into three frames. In the first, the man is shown smiling in front of a calendar which reads 'May 26'. In the second he is frowning, and in the background the calendar shows that the date is May 27. In the third frame, it is May 28, and the man is again smiling—no doubt at the fact that the revolutionary change of May 27 has proven to be ephemeral.

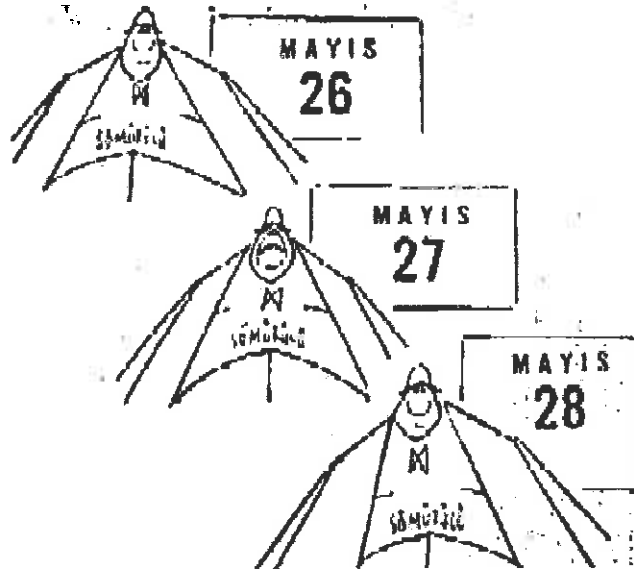


Figure 6

Time passes but little changes: Disappointment in the aftermath of May 27

⁷ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1964. "27 Mayısın hedefine ulaşmamış bir devrim olduğu iddia edilebilir".

Collateral support

As we have seen, a certain amount of skepticism regarding the success of May 27 as a social revolution is already visible in the opinion columns published in *Milliyet* from the mid-1960's onwards. Attention is paid to this point not so much in the interest of discerning the 'roots' of post-1980 opposition to May 27 in *Milliyet*—these opinion columns are, after all, without exception quite favorable in their treatment of May 27—but rather to indicate the more critical stance towards May 27 adopted by *Milliyet* columnists compared to that assumed by columnists at *Cumhuriyet*. Moreover, the manner in which May 27 is discussed by *Milliyet*'s regularly appearing columnists is in a likewise manner considerably more critical than that exhibited in the columns written by guest contributors to *Milliyet*.

The fact that *Milliyet* newspaper, as an institution, would make the editorial decision to run enthusiastically pro-May 27 columns written by guest contributors strengthens the case for discussing the collateral support for May 27 found in *Milliyet* alongside the editorial approach taken by the newspaper's regularly appearing columnists. Unlike *Cumhuriyet*, where support for May 27 is a universal feature of the newspaper, with *Milliyet* some distinction should be made between the level of enthusiasm for May 27 found in the columns written by the newspaper's columnists and that which can be termed 'collateral' comment.

Guest columnists

In *Milliyet* in the 1960's a discernible gap appears between the level of enthusiasm for May 27 that is exhibited by regularly appearing columnists and that

which is shown by guest columnists. What makes this gap all the more significant is that it would grow even larger in the final years of the 1970's.

Three guest columns regarding May 27 were published in *Milliyet* during the period 1960-1970. In 1964 Dr. Halûk Nur Bâki, president of the May 27 Revolution Association (*27 Mayıs Devrim Derneği*), contributed an article in which he argues that May 27 was carried out in order to protect Atatürk's principles, usher in an administration based upon freedom, and create new freedom-protecting institutions. Likewise, in 1966 Professor İsmet Giritli writes that the constitution and the social and economic rights it helped establish constituted the greatest gains from May 27. In 1967, Professor Sıddık Sami Onar writes that the greatest benefits of May 27 were the creation of the 1961 constitution and its institutions and the protection of Atatürk's principles.

Thus, whereas by the late 1960's *Milliyet's* regularly appearing columnists had already written several columns which appear to call into question the success—if not the ideals—of May 27, *Milliyet* at the same time was publishing guest columns that expressed unmitigated support for May 27. The opinion columns regarding May 27 that appear in *Milliyet* therefore form one element of the collateral support for May 27 that is manifested in the newspaper generally.

May 27 and Atatürk

Another common feature of the collateral support offered to May 27 on the pages of *Milliyet* is the extent to which the legitimizing images of Atatürk are conflated with May 27 in the artwork published in the newspaper with regard to May 27. This can first be seen in on the front page of *Milliyet*'s May 28, 1960 edition, where the following cartoon was printed: Atatürk is shown curled up under his greatcoat, preparing to sleep on a snow bank—a famous photograph from the Turkish war of Independence. Behind him is a calendar with the date 'May 27' written upon it. The caption of the cartoon reads: 'Now I can sleep peacefully'. Clearly, May 27 is a 'revolution' of which Atatürk, too, would have approved.



Figure 7

Atatürk: "Now I can sleep peacefully"

The following day, May 27 is again celebrated through artwork, this time in a series of photographs placed clockwise around a cartoon published on the back page of the newspaper. In this display, May 27 is conflated not only with Atatürk, but also with images of modernity and progress personified by the cartoon-character students depicted therein. The title of this display (“Our Struggle for Freedom: April 27-May 27”)⁸, moreover, leaves no doubt as to where *Milliyet* is placing its support.

To the immediate left of the title is a small cartoon depicting several students attending an anti-government rally in the weeks prior to the takeover. The students are drawn with intelligent, earnest expressions on their faces—square jawed, physically attractive, and alert-looking. They are all wearing suits, their appearance is generally tidy, and three of the six students immediately visible in the cartoon are women. Clearly these progressive, intelligent and educated youth are representative of the essential intelligence and progressiveness—perhaps one could even say high level of culture—with which support for May 27 has been associated by its supporters. The students are carrying Turkish flags and portraits of Atatürk, and in case anyone fails to get this message drawn in this cartoon, the caption of this cartoon reads “Progressive youth meeting on the grounds of the university”.⁹

⁸ “*Hürriyet Mücadelemiz: 27 Nisan-27 Mayıs*”

⁹ “*Üniversite bahçesinde toplanan aydın gençlik*”



Figure 8

**“Our Struggle for Freedom”: Protesting students in cartoon from
May 29, 1960**

Above the cartoon and title two photographs are printed, and three more photographs are exhibited to its right and below it. All of the photographs are of the student demonstrators. At times they are carrying portraits of Atatürk, at times carrying Turkish flags, and at times carrying students who had been wounded in fights with the police. Under the two photographs at the top of the page is the caption, which approvingly reads: “Hit on the forehead...his face covered with blood...behind him the flag and Atatürk...here is a university student fighting for freedom”.¹⁰

¹⁰ Direct quotation. Ellipsis in original. “Alnından vurulmuş...yüzü kan içinde...arkasında bayrak ve ata...işte hürriyet mücahidi üniversite talebesi”.

Another example of the conflation of May 27 with the name and images of Atatürk can be found in the May 27-28 editions of *Milliyet* in 1962. The May 27 headline for this year, reads: “May 27, which was earned by the victory in the struggle for freedom, will today be celebrated all across the country”.¹¹ On the front page of the following day’s paper, moreover, the caption under a picture showing the laying of a wreath upon Atatürk’s tomb in Anıt Kabir reads:

A great ceremony was organized at Anıt Kabir for the purpose of paying respects to Ata (Atatürk), the beacon of the May 27 Revolution.¹²

Milliyet’s juxtaposition of the symbols of May 27 with those of Atatürk continues in 1963, the first year in which May 27 was an official state holiday. On the May 27 edition of *Milliyet* of this year, the front page is dominated by a large cartoon depicting Atatürk flanked on one side by a soldier and on the other by a torch-bearing depiction of ‘liberty’. All three stand in front of a large crowd of enthusiastic supporters. To the left of this scene the read the words “Happy May 27 Holiday” (“27 Mayıs Bayramı Kutlu Olsun”) written in bold. This artwork would reappear in 1965.

In 1964, the symbol of the revolution, four hand clasping one another’s wrists to form a square appeared on the masthead of *Milliyet* for the first time. The symbol, which evokes the pro-May 27 argument that the military takeover was in reality a ‘revolution’ supported by all elements of society working ‘hand-in-hand’, reappears in 1967 and 1969, and would be seen on several occasions in *Milliyet* in the 1970’s as well.

¹¹ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1962. “Hürriyet mücadelesinde zaferin sağlandığı 27 Mayıs bütün yurttta törenlerle kutlanacak.”

¹² *Milliyet*, May 29, 1961. “27 Mayıs Devrimine ışık tutun Ata’ya saygı duruşunda bulunmak üzere Anıt Kabir’de büyük bir tören tertiplenmiştir.”



Figure 9

“Hand-in-hand as a nation”

The slogan of May 27, ‘The Army, youth and the people hand-in-hand’¹³ appears for the first time in *Milliyet* in 1966. It would re-appear in 1969 and 1970, as well as on several occasions in the 1970’s. As is the case with the preoccupation of supporters of May 27 with its status as a ‘revolution’, rather than a ‘coup’, the symbol and slogan of May 27 are—like the very name ‘National Unity Committee’—manifestations of a conscious effort to portray May 27 as the result of a widespread social *revolution*, rather than a mere military takeover commanded by a few dozen officers.

¹³ ‘*Ordu, Genç, Halk Elele*’.

This tendency of *Milliyet* to portray May 27 with images that reinforce its reputation as a populist measure carrying out the will of the nation can be seen again



Figure 10

The Army and people hand-in-hand

in the carefully staged May 27 photographs printed on the front page of the newspaper in celebration of the holiday. In 1966, 1969 and 1970, May 27 photographs of officers marching arm-in-arm with civilians are printed in prominent positions on the newspaper's front page. This photographs would also be frequently seen in the May 27 editions of the early 1970's.

*

Thus, in the *Milliyet* of the 1970's, May 27 is generally represented in a positive light. In the immediate aftermath of the takeover, the portrayal of May 27 in both the writings of *Milliyet*'s columnists and the newspaper's photography and artwork is overwhelmingly positive. By the middle of the decade, however, some

doubts regarding the practicality of May 27 have begun to emerge in the newspaper's opinion columns. In the manner in which May 27 is portrayed in the rest of the newspaper, however, little has changed. Indeed, as the decade progresses, *Milliyet*'s collateral portrayal of May 27 seems more enthusiastic as ever as the revolutionary spirit of the date acquires the trappings of an institutionalized holiday. An official holiday is declared, a slogan and symbol are settled upon, and conventions are adopted to convey the day's special meaning.

In the early to mid-1970's, however, a considerable change is to take place in the manner in which May 27 is portrayed in *Milliyet*. Whereas in the early years of the decade the portrayal of May 27 in the newspaper's headlines and artwork is little different from that of the late 1960's, issues surrounding the military intervention of 1971 only serve to dampen enthusiasm for May 27 among the newspaper's regularly appearing columnists. In the 1970's, absence of commentary must also be recognized as a development in the question of *Milliyet*'s portrayal of May 27, for in all respects May 27 is celebrated in a much more subdued manner from the mid-1970's onwards.

1971-1980

During the period 1971-1980 there were six columns on May 27 written by *Milliyet* columnists, with the year-by-year breakdown of these columns as follows: 1971 (one, İpekçi), 1972 (one, İpekçi), 1973 (one, Toker), 1975 (one, Soysal), 1976 (one, Felek), and 1977 (one, İpekçi). There were also seven columns written by guest writers (1974 through 1980). The symbol of May 27 (four hands clasping) is displayed in 1971, 1972, and 1973, but afterwards is never used again.

Regularly appearing columnists

Milliyet columnists in the 1970's, while maintaining their generally supportive approach to May 27, continue to bemoan the path taken by Turkey since the early 1960's. Different writers, however, have different approaches to discussing what they consider to be the gap between the promise and the reality of May 27. While Abdi İpekçi and Burhan Felek devote considerable energy to analyzing what they see as the shortfalls of May 27 Turkey, Metin Toker and Mumtaz Soysal emphasize what they consider to be the more positive elements of May 27.

Abdi İpekçi was the *Milliyet* columnist who devoted the most intellectual attention to the problems of May 27. Although a supporter of the freedoms provided by the constitution which was so closely associated with May 27, İpekçi provided a clear-eyed analysis of the troubled history of that constitution. İpekçi's concerns are made in a particularly forthright manner in the aftermath of the March 12, 1971 military intervention.

In a front-page editorial entitled "The state holiday we ~~could~~ not enjoy" (*"Tadına Varmadığımız Bayram"*), published on May 27, 1971, Abdi İpekçi writes:

May 27 blazed a brand new trail in Turkey...The revolution's constitution guaranteed the social rights that it brought. It envisaged reforms regarding the establishment of social justice. For the first time, workers could organize in a serious manner. Press and broadcasting organs had their taste of freedom, every viewpoint could be openly discussed...But gradually something came to be forgotten: The new constitution did not bring only rights, but also responsibilities. But while everybody tried to expand the rights in the constitution, they neglected the responsibilities corresponding with those rights. The responsibility for

today's situation lies chiefly with these people. And isn't it a pity that altering the constitution that we should be celebrating today is now a topic of discussion.¹⁴

This same sentiment is expressed in İpekçi's column "From May 27 to March 12" ("*27 Mayıs'tan 12 Mart'a*"), published on May 28, 1971:

The constitution of May 27 has not been implemented as it should have been. This is because it has not been considered that the rights that this constitution brought to people and institutions at the same time conferred responsibilities. Everybody neglected the responsibilities, and only the rights were wanted. This gradually led to an anarchic situation in which the wheels would not turn.¹⁵

In a front-page editorial written printed in 1977, İpekçi writes again on the necessity of rights being understood as arriving only with responsibilities, and adds that "The democratic dynamism that came alongside May 27 is now overshadowed by violence".¹⁶

Two editorials voicing strong support for May 27 were written by Metin Toker and Mumtaz Soysal. Metin Toker's sole May 27 editorial of the 1970's appeared in 1974. Entitled "What was May 27? What wasn't it?" ("*27 Mayıs neydi,*

¹⁴ *Milliyet*, May 27 1971. "27 Mayıs yepyeni bir çağır açmıştı Türkiye'de...Devrim Anayasası, getirdiği sosyal hakları güvence altında alıyordu. Sosyal adaletin gerçekleştirilmesine dönük reformların yapılmasını öngörüyordu...İşçiler ilk kez ciddi biçimde örgütlenebiliyordu. Basın-yayın organları özgürlüğün tadını çıkarıyor, her görüş serbestçe açıklanabiliyordu...Ama giderek bir şey unutulmaya başlandı: Yeni Anayasa sadece "hak"lar değil, aynı zamanda sorumluluklar getirmişti. Oysa herkes Anayasadaki hakkını ileri sürmeye o hakkın karşılığındaki sorumluluğu ihmal etmeye başlamıştı...Bugünkü durumun başlıca sorumluları onlardır. Ve ne yazık ki bugün bayramını kutlamamız gereken Anayasanın değiştirilmesi sözkonusudur."

¹⁵ *Milliyet*, May 28, 1971. "27 Mayıs Anayasası, gereğince uygulanmamıştır. Çünkü o Anayasanın kişilere ve kuruluşlara getirdiği getirdiği hakların, aynı zamanda sorumluluklar yüklediği düşünülmemiştir. Sorumluluk tarafını herkes ihmal etmiş, sadece "hak" talep edilmiştir. Bu da giderek, çarkların işlemez hale gelmesine ve anarşik bir ortama düşülmesine yol açmıştır."

¹⁶ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1977. "27 Mayıs ile birlikte Türkiye'ye gelen demokratik dinamizm, şimdi şiddet eylemlerinin gölgesindedir."

ne değildi?"), Toker's column summarizes some of the criticism made of May 27 from both the left and the right. Ultimately, however, Toker's article dismisses criticism of May 27, and repeats such standard pro-May 27 arguments as the restoration of 'freedom' and 'democracy' that it represents and the value of its constitution. Mumtaz Soysal takes a similar approach in 1975. After first describing commonly made arguments against May 27, Soysal refutes them--arguing that May 27 was an important step forward for democracy and freedom in Turkey.

In a 1976 column, Burhan Felek describes May 27 in terms more critical than anything previously seen in *Milliyet*:

May 27's greatest flaw was making a revolution through government means and making a government through revolutionary means. The preponderance of youthful elements (within the National Unity Committee) led the way to mistakes made from inexperience. But in the forty-seventh year of the Turkish Republic a constitutional assembly was assembled. [May 27] introduced the concept of a social state...but did it help?¹⁷.

At the end of his column, Felek recalls the original promise of May 27, and writes:

If you ask me this is not the ideal conclusion for those whose reasonable and resonant voices were heard on the Friday morning of the beautiful and 'white' revolution of May 27.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Milliyet*, May 28, 1976. "27 Mayıs'ın en büyük zaafı, hükümet usulleriyle ihtilal yapmak, ihtilal usulleriyle hükümet yürütmek idi. Genç unsurların çokluğu acemiliklere yol açtı. Ama, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin 47'nci senesinde bir Kurucu Meclisi topladı. Sosyal devlet mefhumunu getirdi...Faydası oldu mu? Bugünkü manzarası karşısında bu sorunun cevabını henüz katî şekilde veremiyoruz."

In his column, Felek also refers to restrictions placed upon criticizing May 27:

For some of us several points (of discussion) are still taboo. For all of us they are legally forbidden. Thus to be frank, events that have not yet passed into history cannot be properly criticized. May 27 is an example of this.¹⁹

Collateral comment

It was in the 1970's that May 27 evolved—insofar as it was represented in *Milliyet*--from a day of celebrating the ideals of the revolution to a regular state holiday, celebrated in a manner that differed little from the celebrations of other state holidays. Whereas the symbol of May 27--four arms clasped together--appears prominently on the masthead of the May 27 editions appearing in 1971, 1972 and 1973, after 1973 the symbol is to never appear in the May 27 editions of *Milliyet* again.

From the mid-1970's onwards, May 27 seems to be represented in an increasingly routine fashion. As regularly appearing columnists lose interest in May 27, responsibility for discussing May 27 increasingly falls upon the shoulders of guest columnists. These columns, printed every year between 1974 and 1980, are little more than cookie-cutter exercises in May 27 hagiography, extolling the virtues of the constitution, the 'return to a democratic order' and the rights that May 27 had brought.

¹⁸ *Milliyet*, May 28, 1976. "Bana sorarsanız bu o güzel ve beyaz ihtilalin 27 Mayıs cuma sabahı radyolardan duyulan o gür sesli, mantıklı, duygulu ihtilalin yapıcıları için ideal bir sonuç değildir".

¹⁹ *Milliyet*, May 28, 1976. "Bir çok noktalar bazılarımız için hala tabudur. Hepimiz için kanunen yasaktır. Yani açıkçası, tarihe malolmamış hadiselerin layiklikle eleştirisi yapılamaz. 27 Mayıs da böyledir."

1981-2000

The big change in *Milliyet* regarding May 27 comes after the September 12 takeover and the subsequent revocation of the status of May 27 as an official state holiday. For five years, no May 27 columns appear in *Milliyet*. When such columns reappear, however, they become a forum for May 27 revisionism.

As was the case with *Cumhuriyet*, in *Milliyet* the impact of September 12 is palpable in its May 27 columns. Whereas *Cumhuriyet* consistently supports May 27 and changes its arguments in defense of May 27 in response to the challenge posed by September 12, *Milliyet* columnists for the most part cease to support May 27 after 1980. At first this takes the form of the content of news articles, but within a few years it can be found in the newspaper's editorial columns as well.

Between 1981 and 1984, no articles or editorial columns appear in *Milliyet* on May 27 or May 28. In 1985, however, the twenty-fifth anniversary of May 27, several news articles and one editorial concerning May 27 are published. In his front-page editorial, Mehmet Barlas writes:

Today is the twenty-fifth anniversary of May 27...We don't want to either criticize or deify the military intervention of May 27 1960. This event has had various effects, both good and bad, upon the life of our society. In the end, May 27 was the first real intervention by the Armed Forces into civil politics in Republican history. We lived those days as eighteen year old university students. We too were there on Beyazit Square, in the battles of April 28. And in that atmosphere we encountered May 27 in a state of excitement and holiday. In the wake of the years that have passed and after living through much experience, if we could keep what we have learned and return to May 27 1960, our behavior would probably be

different...In short, how can we celebrate May 27 as a happy anniversary as the first military intervention into civil democracy? But how can we deny the developments which began with May 27 and which meant for Turkey a kind of renaissance? I wish that an anniversary like May 27 had never taken place in our political lifetime...I wish that in the Republican era a prime minister and government ministers had not been executed...but it happened. May 27 is there. March 12 and September 12 are there, too. The thing that must be done from this point forward is to not always bring the country to the point where it has to be 'rescued' and to maintain an environment in which civil authorities can agree among themselves and govern the country in a tranquil environment. If we don't want any more anniversaries, we all have to be careful.²⁰

Inside the May 27, 1985 issue of *Milliyet* there are no fewer than six articles devoted to May 27. Two of the articles are memoirs of the intervention by military figures involved in the takeover, Suphi Karaman and Alparslan Türkeş. The other four articles are memoirs of May 27 written by people who had been against the takeover: Celal Bayar, president of Turkey from 1950 to 1960, Bayar's daughter Nilüfer Gürsoy, Bayar's son-in-law Ahmet Gürsoy, and Celal Yardımcı, a former Demokrat Party minister. Among Bayar's comments was that May 27 was a 'black day' ('*kara gündür*') and that 'May 27 was an event for political usurpers' ('27

²⁰ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1985. "Bugün '27 Mayıs'ın 25 yıl dönümü...Biz, 27 Mayıs 1960'taki askeri müdahaleyi, kutsamak ya da yermek istermiyoruz...Bu olayın, toplumsal yaşamımız üzerinde iyi ve kötü, çeşitli etkileri olmuştur. Neticede '27 Mayıs', siivil siyasete, Silahlı Kuvvetler'in Cumhuriyet dönemindeki ilk doğrudan müdahalesidir. O günleri, 18 yaşında bir üniversite öğrencisi olarak biz de olayların içinde yaşamıştık. 28 Nisan'daki çatışmalarda, Beyazıt Meydanı'nda biz de vardık...Ve o ortamda '27 Mayıs'ı bir bayram ve kurtuluş havası içinde karşılaşmıştık. Aradan geçen yılların ertesinde ve tanık olduğumuz bunca deneyin sonunda, şimdiki bilincimizi koruyarak 27 Mayıs 1960'a dönebilseydik, herhalde tutumumuz farklı olurdu...Özetle, sivil demokrasiye yapılan ilk askeri müdahale olarak, bugün '27 Mayıs'ı mutlu yıldönümü şeklinde nasıl kutlayabiliriz? Ama, '27 Mayıs'la başlayan ve Türkiye için bir çeşit rönesans sayılması gereken gelişmeleri de, nasıl inkar edebiliriz?...27 Mayıs gibi bir yıldönümü, siyasi hayatımızda keşke hiç yer almamış olsaydı...Keşke Cumhuriyet döneminimizde, idam edilmiş başkanlar, bakanlar bulunmasaydı. Geniş politik tasfiyesi, keşke hiç bilmediğimiz konular arasında yer alsaydı. Ama olmuştur işte...Bir 27 Mayıs vardır. Ayrıca, 12 Mart ve 12 Eylül de vardır. Bundan sonra yapılacak şey, memleketi sürekli 'kurtarılmak' noktasına

Mayıs, siyasi gaspçıların olayıdır). Echoing these sentiments, former Demokrat Party minister Celal Yardımcı writes:

May 27 made a mess of the state's parliamentary regime and hurt Turkey's place in the democratic world both internally and externally. It was responsible for leaving the Turkish people, the Turkish nation exposed to all kinds of disasters and calamities, and shook the foundations of the state by destroying its power.²¹

The following year, 1986, brought still more articles. In a front-page editorial entitled 'It was a pity' (*Yazık oldu*), Mehmet Barlas writes:

The first military intervention of the Republican era took place on May 27 1960. We looked upon the execution of Menderes and his friends from a different perspective. Our generation was inexperienced. It was a pity...If Menderes and İnönü had been able to come together and make an agreement on early elections, perhaps May 27 would not have taken place...the belief that only voters determine who comes to power would have taken root.²²

Other features of the May 27 and May 28 issues of *Milliyet* in 1986 include the conclusion of a thirteen-part series of memoirs by Celal Yardımcı, the first of a ten-part series relating what had happened on May 27, an interview with National Unity Committee member Kamil Karavelioğlu, and a column about May 27 by Örsan Öymen, who writes:

getirmemek ve kavgasız bir ortamda, sivilerin ülkeyi uzlaşarak yöneteceği ortamı kurup, gözetmektir...Yeni yıldönümleri istemiyorsak, hepimiz dikkatli olmalıyız."

²¹ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1985. "27 Mayıs devletin parlamenter rejimini allak-bullak etmiş ve Türkiye'nin demokrasi dünyasında hem içteki, hem dıştaki yerini zedelemiştir. Bir iktidarı yıkmakla kalmamış, devleti temelinden sarsmış ve Türk milletini, Türk vatanını her türlü zararlara, felaketlere ve musibetlere maruz bırakan hadiselerin meydana gelmesinde etkili olmuştur."

²² *Milliyet*, May 27, 1986. "Cumhuriyet dönemindeki ilk askeri müdahalenin yapıldığı 27 Mayıs 1960 günü...Menderes ve arkadaşlarının idam edilmelerine de farklı açıdan baktık...dramatik sonuçları düşünmedik. Bizim kuşak tecrübesizdi. Yazık oldu...Eğer Menderes ve İnönü uzlaşıp, erken seçim konusunda anlaşabilseydi, 27 Mayıs olmayabilirdi...iktidarları ancak seçmenin edeceği inancı yerleşmiş olurdu."

Yesterday May 27 turned twenty-six. The first coup ('*hükümet darbesi*') in Republican Turkish history is twenty-six years old. At that time we called it an '*inkılap*'²³, we called it a '*devrim*', we called it an '*ihtilal*', we called it this, we called it that...But we didn't call it by its actual name: it was absolutely a 'coup' ('*hükümet darbesi*'). And the others that got in through the door that May 27 opened? They are the same...Let's not have anyone kid anybody around...From May 27 to March 12, from March 12 to September 12, protecting, watching out for, rescuing the Republic. All of them have just one name across the globe: *coup d'etat*!²⁴

In 1987, an important feature of *Milliyet*'s May 27-28 news stories was its focus on the pathetic state of the remains of the three executed politicians—a subject of discussion no doubt influenced by parliament's approval just five days earlier of a law to transfer the remains of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan to a more suitable resting place. Other May 27-related material in the 1987 edition of *Milliyet* includes the first of an eleven-part series on May 27 written by former Justice Minister Amil Artus, while a column by Melih Aşık discusses the pathetic state of the graves of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan on İmralı.

Not all opinion columns published in *Milliyet* after 1980 focused on Adnan Menderes or recently remembered injustices of May 27. In a front page column printed on May 27, 1988, Altan Öymen writes:

We have to see May 27 as it was. Sympathize either with the Demokrat Party of the time, or sympathize with the Republican People's Party. Twenty-eight years have passed. A lot has been forgotten...there is a three-

²³ Which means 'revolution', as do the words '*devrim*' and '*ihtilal*'.

²⁴ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1986. "27 Mayıs dün 26 yaşına bastı. Cumhuriyet döneminin ilk hükümet darbesi, 26 yaşında. O zaman adına 'inkılap' dedik, 'devrim' dedik, 'ihtilal' dedik, şu dedik, bu dedik...Gerçek adını bir türlü söyleyemedik: Oysa, düpedüz 'hükümet darbesi!'. Ya, 27 Mayıs'ın açtığı kapıdan giren ötekiler? Onlar da öyle...Kimse kimseyi aldatmasın...Cumhuriyeti koruma, kollama, kurtama, v.s v.s. 27 Mayıs'tan 12 Mart'a, 12 Mart'tan, 12 Eylül'e. Her birinin uluslararası sözlüklerde bir tek adı vardır: hükümet darbesi!"

sentence summary for that day: on May 27 1960, there was a military coup. The government in power was overthrown. The parliament was dissolved...If you look at the subject from within these three sentences, it is natural to come to this judgement: That day, a coup took place against a democratic regime, democracy was destroyed. But this is incorrect.²⁵

Instead, writes Öymen, it is necessary to take into consideration the circumstances leading up to May 27, the authoritarianism of the Demokrat Party government, and the benefits brought by May 27.

One year later, Mümtaz Soysal echoes Öymen's arguments that May 27 cannot be equated with March 12 and September 12. At the same time, however, Soysal's argument is tempered by the growing conviction in the Turkey of the 1980's that the success of Turkey's first military intervention in 1960 facilitated the undertaking of those which followed it :

Yes, because it was a subject of discord, maybe it was right to remove May 27 as a state holiday--but May 27 is one day that ought to be thought about and discussed. It shouldn't be completely forgotten. Yes, several new and progressive concepts came along with May 27, but it is also a truth that must not be forgotten that only long after May 27 was it learned that everything that was new and progressive would not be accepted on its own, could not last, could not be protected in the end. Yes, May 27 was the beginning of the chain of military coups, but there can be no greater wrong than equating ~~the first link~~ in this chain with the last. The results, the constitutions that were produced (by these coups) and the values that were set forth are clear and straightforward.²⁶

²⁵ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1988. "27 Mayıs'ı olduğu gibi görmeliyiz. İster, zamanın Demokrat Partisi'ne sempamız olsun, ister Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'ne. Aradan 28 yıl geçti. Pek çok şey unutuluyor...o günün üç cümlelik bir özeti var: 27 Mayıs 1960 günü, bir askeri darbe yapıldı. İktidardaki hükümet düşürüldü. Meclis feshedildi...Konuya bu üç cümle içinde bakılırsa, şu yargıya varması normaldir: Demek ki o gün, demokratik rejime darbe indirilmiş, demokrasi yok edilmiştir. Ama bu yanlış olur".

²⁶ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1989. "Evet, tartışmalı olduğu için 27 Mayıs'ı 'bayram' olmaktan çıkarmak belki doğrudur ama, 27 Mayıs, anılması ve üzerinde düşünülmesi gereken günlerden biridir. Bütünü unutturulamaz. Evet, yeni ve ileri birçok kavramın tadı 27 Mayıs'la birlikte gelmiştir ama, yeni ve ileri

In 1990, both Süleyman Demirel and Bülent Ecevit gave interviews to *Milliyet* in which they criticized May 27. That Demirel, who throughout the 1970's criticized the status of May 27 as a holiday, would criticize May 27 in the 1980's is hardly surprising. That his views regarding May 27 would be seconded by Bülent Ecevit, however, is more noteworthy and is an indication of the extent to which opinion regarding May 27 had shifted in the 1980's.

Ecevit, who in the 1970's had lauded May 27, now states in an interview with *Milliyet* that "May 27, March 12, September 12 are all the same" ("27 Mayıs, 12 Mart, 12 Eylül hep aynı"). Ecevit also says in this interview that the National Unity Committee had had 'dictatorial ambitions' which 'had not even been seen in Nazi Germany'. Significantly, the title of this news article is "Coups in the eyes of the leaders" ("*Liderlerin gözüyle darbeler*"). Other May 27 columns from 1990 included an interview with Celal Bayar's daughter, who called May 27 a 'dictatorship' ("27 Mayıs zorbalıktır"), an interview with İnönü son-in-law Metin Toker, who defended May 27, and an interview with some of the former officers who supported May 27.

After 1990, the interest in May 27 of *Milliyet* writers seems to decline. For several years, no articles regarding May 27 or Adnan Menderes are published on May 27 or May 28, not even in 1995, the thirty-fifth anniversary of the intervention. In 1996, there is one news article entitled 'The Shadow of the Revolution' ("*İhtilâlin Gölgesi*"), which focuses upon the executions, rather than the takeover itself.

olan her şeyin tek başına benimsenemeyeceği, ayakta kalamayacağı, sonuna kadar korunamayacağı da 27 Mayıs'tan çok sonra öğrenilen ve unutulmaması gereken bir doğrudur...Evet, 27 Mayıs yeni bir darbeler zincirinin başlangıcı olmuştur ama, zincirin son halkasını ilk halkasıyla bir saymak kadar büyük bir yanlış olamaz. Sonuçlar, ortaya çıkan anayasalarla ve yüceltilmek istenen değerlerle, açıkça meydandadır."

Those May 27 columns which do appear in the late 1990's see May 27 as either having a mixed or negative legacy. In 1998, Milliyet columnist Taha Akyol writes:

6 The most damaging aspect about May 27 was that in the name of 'revolution' it led the way for the distorted idea that, in the name of 'revolution', a revolt was legitimate: May 27 is at the root of military coups, armed activities by students, illegal organizations and the coups of the future—all of these use May 27 as a model!²⁷

In the same issue, columnist Talat Halman writes:

One question which must never be forgotten is: Was it really so necessary for May 27, March 12 and September 12, after military authority had been established in all of the country, to behave so harshly towards certain ideological groups, the press, and parts of the intellectual community?²⁸

In 1999, Güneri Cıvaoglu writes a column which in many ways summarizes the feelings about May 27 held by many Turkish opinion makers. Turkey, writes Cıvaoglu, is 'neither within nor without' May 27 ('*ne içinde ne dışında*'). In other words, it is a day which can neither be fully accepted or rejected by the Turkey of the late twentieth century.

²⁷ *Milliyet*, May 28, 1998. "27 Mayıs'ın en büyük zararı, 'devrim' adına ayaklanmanın meşru olacağı şeklinde çarpık bir siyasi anlayışa yol açmasıdır: "27 Mayıs modeli" diye ordu içinde 'Baasçı' cuntalar, darbe girişimleri, gençlik arasında silahlı eylemlere varacak illegal örgütlerin ve gelecek darbelerin kökeninde 27 Mayıs vardır!"

²⁸ *Milliyet*, May 27, 1998. "Hiç unutulmaması gereken bir soru da: 27 Mayıs, 12 Mart ve 12 Eylül, askeri otoriteyi bütün ülkede kurduktan sonra, bazı ideolojik topluluklara, basına ve aydınlar kesimine karşı o kadar haşın davranmak zorunda mıydı? İnsan şimdi düşünüyor da, bazı yeni durumlar karşısında (geçen yıl bir müdahalenin eşiğine geldiği gibi) bir eylem olsa, 27 Mayıs'ın ve sonra 12 Mart ile 12 Eylül'ün işlediği hatalardan sakınılır mı acaba?"

Conclusions

Of the three newspapers included in this study, *Milliyet* changed the most in the manner it portrayed May 27 over the period 1960-2000. From enthusiastic support in the early 1960's, regularly appearing *Milliyet* columnists from the mid-1960's onwards begin to write about May 27 from the perspective of critical supporters. Specifically, the argument that May 27 has changed little about Turkey is frequently seen in *Milliyet*—a point of view that is reminiscent of the argument that May 27 'had not lived up to its potential', which was commonly seen in *Cumhuriyet* in the 1970's.

While *Milliyet*'s regularly appearing columnists begin to question the extent to which Turkey has benefited from May 27, *Milliyet* newspaper as an institution continues to portray May 27 in a uniformly positive light throughout the 1960's and much of the 1970's. The presence of strongly pro-May 27 headlines, the prominence given to the symbol and slogan of May 27, the publication of enthusiastically pro-May 27 guest editorials and the printing of staged pro-May 27 photographs are all indicative of an editorial decision in the newspaper to celebrate, rather than merely acknowledge, the May 27 holiday. From the mid-1970's onwards, however, most of these pro-May 27 trappings have been silently abandoned, while *Milliyet*'s regularly appearing columnists produce fewer and less enthusiastic columns about May 27. During the last several years of the May 27 era, *Milliyet*'s yearly recognition of May 27 is largely limited to a guest editorial and an announcement of the arrival of the holiday. On May 28, little more than a strict reporting of the speeches made in the previous day's ceremonies is published in *Milliyet*, a considerably different state of

affairs from the kind of photographs, cartoons and headlines that had been printed in the May 27 and 28 issues until the early 1970's.

With regard to the manner in which May 27 was presented in the Turkish public forum, then, *Milliyet* is a particularly informative source of information. Whereas *Cumhuriyet* has always maintained its line of ideological support for May 27, *Milliyet* is fettered to no such argumentative stance. Instead *Milliyet*, like *Hürriyet*, is more concerned with selling newspapers than selling an ideology—a fact which makes both newspapers a useful barometer of public sentiment.

CHAPTER 4:

***HÜRRİYET* NEWSPAPER**

From Ambivalence to Rejection

With the exception of the years of direct military rule in 1960-61, *Hürriyet* Newspaper is considerably less supportive of May 27 than either *Cumhuriyet* or *Milliyet*. As *Hürriyet* did not regularly run editorial columns until the 1980's, during the period 1960-1980 portrayal of May 27 in the pages of *Hürriyet* is seen mostly in the form of collateral comment—such as in the type of photographs, pictures and headlines it ran in celebration of the takeover. For the most part, the May 27 message that appears in *Hürriyet* during the years of the May 27 Era is relatively muted. The enthusiasm of *Cumhuriyet* and, to a lesser extent, *Milliyet*, is nowhere to be found in *Hürriyet*.

After 1980, the manner in which May 27 is portrayed in *Hürriyet* changes radically. On one level, the revisionism that would naturally follow a two-decade period during which criticism of May 27 was not generally practiced can be seen clearly through the attention now paid in *Hürriyet* to the view held by supporters of Menderes and the Demokrat Party. As for columns printed in *Hürriyet*, the great majority of editorial comment published in the 1980's and 1990's is critical of May 27.

1960-1970

Of the three newspapers researched in this study, *Hürriyet* devoted the least attention to May 27 during the 1960's. With very few exceptions, no May 27-related columns¹ appear in *Hürriyet* until the 1970's, and even then only two columns devoted to the issues of May 27 were published. Although some support of May 27,

¹ Indeed, few opinion columns or editorials on any subject appear in *Hürriyet* until the 1980's.

such as photographs and cartoons, can be discerned on the pages of *Hürriyet* in the 1960's, for the most part even this is limited to the years of direct military rule.

In the immediate aftermath of May 27, *Hürriyet* was no less fervently pro-May 27 than either *Cumhuriyet* or *Milliyet*. On May 29 1960, for example, on the back page of the newspaper a series of photographs taken on the day after the military takeover is exhibited under the title: "İstanbul under the light of National Unity" ("*Milli Birliğin ışığının altından İstanbul*")--the use of the term 'National Unity' an obvious reference to the 'National Unity Committee' ('*Milli Birliği Komitesi*') that took power on May 27.

One photograph in this series is of a placard hung from an apartment balcony with the words 'Long live our Army' ('*Yaşasın Ordumuz*') written on it. The caption of this photograph reads 'love' ('*sevgi*'), followed by the observation that "The glorious Turkish Army", which had seized power two days before, "had once again overcome ill fortune".²

In 1961, the manner in which *Hürriyet* portrayed May 27 was no less positive. Due to the 'Sacrifice Holiday' ('*Kurban Bayramı*'), no edition of *Hürriyet* was printed on May 27 or 28. On May 29, however, a description of the May 27 festivities was carried in the paper's headline "May 27 is celebrated by the Army, nation and youth hand in hand".³

In the same issue, a photo is printed from a student theatrical production of the day before. The caption to this photo reads: "In the festivities held in May 19 Stadium, bitter memories from the past were also brought to life. Here is one of them:

² *Hürriyet*, May 28, 1960. "Şanlı Türk ordusu, dün büyük milletimizin makus talihini bir kere daha yendi".

a youth injured in the Freedom War, in the arms of his friends...”⁴ The reference in this caption to the student protests that preceded May 27 as the ‘Freedom War’ (*‘Hürriyet savaşı’*), is in itself an editorial comment on the justness of May 27.

In a column from 1961, Vasfi Raşid Sevig writes:

The party in power in the First Republic broke up because it viewed the opposition party as harmful. The attempt of one color to eliminate another color brings the extinguishing of light, the attempt of one vote to eliminate another vote brings the effacing of intelligence, and the worsening of fate. The phrase ‘National Unity’ reveals the mentality that will make the Second Republic last. May 27 brings the good news of this hope.⁵

The ‘party in power’ referred to in this column is the Demokrat Party, as it was the only party from the ‘First Republic’ (in the early years after May 27 it was common to call post-May 27 Turkey the ‘Second Republic’) to have ‘broken up’ (or rather, to have been closed). The contrast made in this column between the respective styles of the ‘First Republic’ and the ‘Second Republic’ with regard to political pluralism may be viewed on the one hand as an endorsement of May 27. It may also be viewed, however, as the announcement of a desire that a return to multiparty democracy be made soon. As Sevig’s columns fail to appear in May 27 editions of the following years, it is difficult to assess what his approach to May 27 might have been once the years of military rule come to an end.

³ *Hürriyet*, May 29, 1961. “27 Mayıs, Ordu, Millet Gençlik elele kutladı”.

⁴ *Hürriyet*, May 28, 1961. “19 Mayıs Stadında yapılan şenlikler sırasında eski günlere ait acı hatıralar da canlandırılmıştır. İşte bunlardan biri: Hürriyet savaşında yaralanan bir genç, arkadaşlarının kolları arasında...”.

⁵ *Hürriyet*, May 28, 1961. “Bir rengin diğer rengi yoketmeğe uğraşması nurun yokedilmesine, bir oyun diğer oyu yoketmeğe uğraşması zekanın silinmesine ve kaderin kötüleşmesine varır. “Milli Birlik” tabiri İkinci Cumhuriyetin dayanacağı zihniyeti gösterir. 27 Mayıs bu büyük ümidi müjdeler”.

In 1962, there are no columns devoted to May 27, but there do appear to be non-written indications of support for May 27, such as the continued conflation of May 27 with images of Atatürk and the country's Armed Forces. Thus, in the early to middle 1960's, although there is little written material devoted to May 27 beyond the reporting of the speeches made by the country's civilian and military rulers, a certain amount of collateral support is offered on the pages of *Hürriyet*.



Figure 11
"Happy May 27th"



By the end of the decade, however, even this support has largely disappeared. In 1967, for example, the announcement of the arrival of May 27 is nothing but a small two-paragraph statement in the upper left-hand corner of the front page. In 1968, the announcement is halved to one paragraph. In 1969, there is a slightly larger article, but the blazing headlines of the early 1960's announcing that May 27 had been 'celebrated hand-in-hand' were clearly over. The tenth anniversary of May 27

revived some of the attention of previous years in *Hürriyet*—including the publication of a three-part series on the memoirs of Colonel Tark Güryay⁶--but this would mark the last of the *Hürriyet* issues that paid more than perfunctory attention to the May 27 holiday. Indeed, it would not be until the 1980's that May 27 would again be the subject of concerted editorial attention in *Hürriyet*. .

Similarly missing throughout most of the late 1960's were references to May 27 as the 'War of Freedom' (*Hürriyet Savaşı*) or the oversized front-paged Atatürk-Army-May 27 montages of the early years of the decade. Although May 27 is without exception referred to as a 'revolution' ('*ihtilal*', '*devrim*' or occasionally '*inkılap*') on the pages of *Hürriyet* in the 1960's, and although no hint is ever made of May 27 having been anything other than a perfectly legal and legitimate expression of the national will, the avidly pro-May 27 written and collateral support found in *Hürriyet* in the early years of the decade (leaving aside the question of whether this support was genuine or not), was gone and would not return.

1971-1980

As was the case in the 1960's, there are very few columns written on any subject in *Hürriyet* in the 1970's. In fact, during the period 1971-1980 only two columns printed on the dates May 27 and May 28 discuss the issues of Turkey's first military intervention.

One of these, a column for children written by 'Yıldırım Ağabey'⁷, appeared in 1972. In this column, it is explained that:

⁶ Commander of Yassıada Island, where Menderes and other Demokrat Party figures were tried.

⁷ Meaning 'Big Brother' Yıldırım, a fictional name.

Our first Constitution was promulgated on January 20, 1921 and our second Constitution was promulgated on April 20, 1924. Laws must be held accountable to the Constitution just like children have to obey their mothers. But in 1960 the government, just like naughty children, did not listen to the Constitution. Young people, with the support of our glorious army, made a revolution. The new government renewed the Constitution and it is for this reason, children, that we celebrate this day as a state holiday.⁸

In 1977 *Hürriyet*'s only other May 27 column from the 1970's was printed. This column appears to have been written in response to demands, mostly by supporters of Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party, that May 27 cease to be celebrated as a public holiday. In a front-page editorial signed simply '*Hürriyet*', the following comments are made:

For whatever reason, some people have from the very beginning been upset by the existence of May 27 as a state holiday. This is because according to them May 27 did not bring 'freedom', but rather 'anarchy'. On that day, "a defeat was wrought upon the people and the national will by the military and civil bureaucracy". Likewise they say that May 27 was committed against a government defending its legitimacy. There is more: May 27 has divided the people into two groups and has created enmity, it has brought tears. The truth is, with every victory there are always some tears. For this reason, there is nothing more natural than for there to be the echo of the tears of victims behind every state holiday. The important question is whether that success rests upon a just reason or not, as is the question of whether it brought more than it took away. The fact that May 27 rests upon a just cause became fixed through the referendum of July 9, 1961. What remains is that, with the exception of some clear mistakes, the things that May 27 brought to Turkey and Turkish democracy

⁸ *Hürriyet*, May 27, 1972. "İlk Anayasamız, 20 Ocak 1921'de, ikincisi ise değiştirilerek 20 Nisan 1924'de tekrar ilan edildi. Nasıl çocuklar, annelerinin sözlerini dinlerlerse, kanunlar da Anayasaya uygun olurlar. Ama 1960 yılında hükümet yöneticileri yaramaz çocuklar gibi Anayasayı dinlemediler. Gençlik, Şanlı Ordumuzun desteği ile bir devrim yaptı. Yeni hükümet Anayasayı yeniledi. İşte bunun için bayram yapıyoruz çocuklar".

are so great that they cannot be compared to those things that May 27 took away. The constitution that is in force today is one of these things—indeed it is first among these things. For this reason, a “Constitution and Freedom Holiday” for May 27 exists and should exist.⁹

The message here is clearly supportive of May 27. However, in an era in which criticism of May 27 could not be freely expressed, editorial silence regarding May 27 must also be taken into account. While *Cumhuriyet* consistently publishes pro-May 27 columns and *Milliyet* columnists—at least until the mid-1970’s—approach May 27 from the perspective of critical support, in *Hürriyet* there is a noticeable paucity of May 27-related comment. This is even more noteworthy when the *Hürriyet* of the 1970’s is compared to that of the 1960’s. At the very least, it would seem that the extent to which May 27 appeared as a vital issue to columnists in *Hürriyet* and to *Hürriyet* Newspaper as an institution had decreased considerably. Compared to the *Hürriyet* of the 1960’s, May 27 was a much less salient political issue in the *Hürriyet* of the 1970’s.

Collateral support for May 27, seen in the photographs and cartoons of the 1960’s, also disappears in the 1970’s. Although every year the occasion of the public holiday is dutifully announced on the pages of *Hürriyet*, there is no indication that May 27 is of any more significance than any other public holiday in Turkey. On May

⁹ *Hürriyet*, May 28, 1977. “Nedense 27 Mayıs bayramı, bazılarını daha ilk gününden beri rahatsız etmektedir. Çünkü onlara göre 27 Mayıs “Hürriyet değil anarşi” getirmiştir. O gün gerçekte “Halk ve milli irade asker-sivil bürokrasiye yenik düşmüştür.” Keza 27 Mayıs meşruiyetini muhafaza etmekte olan bir iktidara karşı yapılmıştır. Dahası vaf: Vatandaş arasına 27 Mayıs ikilik ve düşmanlık sokmuş gözyaşı döktürmüştür. Gerçek şu ki, her zafer, bir miktar gözyaşı pahasına edinilir. O nedenle her bayramın arkasında bir miktar mağdur iniltisinin bulunmasından tabii birşey yoktur. Önemli olan o başarının haklı bir sebebe dayanıp dayanmadığıdır. Keza onun getirdiğinin mi yoksa götürdüğünün mü fazla olduğudur. 27 Mayıs’ın haklı bir nedene dayandığı 9 Temmuz 1961 referandumuyla sabittir. Kaldı ki 27 Mayıs belirli bazı hatalarına rağmen Türkiye’ye ve Türk demokrasisine “Götürdüğü” ile kıyaslanmayacak kadar büyük eserler getirmiştir. Bugün yürürlükte bulunan Anayasa, bunların biri veya birincisidir. O nedenle 27 Mayıs diye bir “Anayasa ve Özgürlük Bayramı” da vardır ve olmalıdır”.

28 the speeches from the previous day of the country's military and civilian leaders are reported, much as they are after every other state holiday in Turkey. The celebratory manner in which May 27 had previously been marked, however, is nowhere to be found. In short, no particular support for May 27 is shown anywhere on the pages of *Hürriyet* in the May 27 columns of the 1970's, save for one editorial in 1977 and another two-paragraph column, written for children, in 1972.

1981-2000

Unlike *Milliyet*, where the manner in which May 27 is presented changes within the first five years after the September 12 takeover, *Hürriyet* does not greatly alter the manner in which it presents May 27 until after the rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes is initiated in 1987. In fact, during the years 1981-1987, no mention of May 27 or Adnan Menderes appears in any of the May 27-28 editions of *Hürriyet*.

Beginning in 1988, considerably more attention to May 27 and Adnan Menderes begins to be exhibited in *Hürriyet*. In 1988, 1989 and 1990, several opinion columns and articles about May 27 are published, with the majority of these exhibiting considerably more sympathy to the pro-Menderes position than anything previously seen in *Hürriyet*.

On May 27, 1988 the headline of *Hürriyet* is a quotation from a report on American diplomatic correspondence made in the immediate aftermath of May 27. The headline, employing a quotation from the American ambassador to Turkey at the time, Fletcher Warren, uses the term 'coup' ('*darbe*') to describe what had occurred

in Turkey. In the lead-in to the report, however, correspondent Sedat Ergin uses the term ‘revolution’ (*ihtilal*) to describe May 27.

In 1989, *Hürriyet*’s May 27 edition featured the May 27 memoirs of Turhan Dilligil, who at the time of the coup had been the director of the pro-Menderes newspaper *Zafer*. Dilligil’s article for *Hürriyet* is more personal than political, although he does refer to the anti-Menderes protests as ‘anarchy brought on by the brainwashing of university students by some university professors’. ¹⁰

The following year, 1990, bring more news articles and editorial opinion reflecting the anti-May 27 position than anything thus far printed in *Hürriyet*. The masthead of the May 27, 1990 issue displays a large drawing of Adnan Menderes with the following quotations written in large letters: “The attack on İnönü drove Menderes crazy” (“*İnönü’ye saldırı Menderes’i çıldırttı*”) and “Adnan was not to blame for what happened in Himmetdede” (“*Himmetdede olayında Adnan Bey’in günahı yoktu*”). These quotations are in reference to a mob attack on then-opposition leader İsmet İnönü in the village of Himmetdede--outside the city of Kayseri—an attack for which Menderes had long been blamed. The story exonerating Menderes from complicity in the attack is taken from the memoirs of Menderes’ personal physician, whose writings are printed in the May 27 edition. In another article in the 1990 edition, three former Demokrat Party deputies discuss their predictably negative memories and opinions regarding May 27.

As for opinion columns in the 1990 issue, Oktay Ekşi writes:

When one looks back thirty years there are some facts which we see very clearly: Because of May 27 a great injury was committed against constitutional government. Because May 27 began the era of “military interventions” in the Turkish Republic. But at the same time May 27 still brought us, from the perspective of constitutional government, more numerous and more modern legal institutions than we had won over the previous thirty to forty years. After May 27 the 1961 Constitution brought us the most freedom-granting and modern legal state model that we have ever had. The Turkish people tasted all the blessings of majoritarian and freedom-granting democracy during the period of this constitution, particularly during the years 1961-71.¹¹

Ekşi concludes, however, that:

As it is known, today May 27 has no supporters. Whoever opens their mouth speaks of ‘the wrongs committed during the May 27 era’.¹²

The years 1988-1990 prove to be the high-water mark for *Hürriyet*’s interest in May 27. While a total of seven May-27 related articles are published in *Hürriyet* during these years (compared with none printed during the years 1981-1987), none are printed during the years 1991-1994. Certainly, Menderes’ rehabilitation was

¹⁰ *Hürriyet*, May 27, 1989. “Başbakan, son bir aydır İstanbul ve Ankara sokaklarını anarşi ortamına dönüştüren olaylara değiniyor; genç üniversitelilerin beyinlerini yıkayarak onları devlet nizamına karşı kısırtan bir kısım üniversite “hoca”sını da kınıyordu”.

¹¹ *Hürriyet*, May 27 1990. “Otuz yılın sonunda geriye bakınca gördüğümüz çok açık bazı gerçekler var: 27 Mayıs yüzünden anayasal rejim büyük bir yara aldı. Çünkü 27 Mayıs, cumhuriyet sonrası siyasi tarihimizde “askeri müdahaleler” dönemini başlattı. Ama aynı 27 yine anayasal rejim açısından ülkemize daha önce 30-40 yılda kazanamadığı kadar çok ve çağdaş hukuk kurumları kazandırdı. Tarihimizin en özgürlükçü ve çağdaş hukuk devleti modelini, 27 sonrasında 1961 tarihli Anayasası getirdi. Türk halkı çoğucu ve özgürlükçü demokrasinin tüm nimetlerini bu Anayasanın özellikle 1961-71 arasındaki on yıllık uygulamasında tattı.”.

¹² “Bilindiği gibi 27 Mayıs’ın şimdi sahibi yok. Kimin ağzı açılrsa, “27 Mayıs döneminde işlenen haksızlıklardan” söz ediyor”.

largely responsible for *Hürriyet*'s increase in interest regarding May 27 and Menderes. With Menderes' reburial in 1990, this interest was diminished.

In 1995, there was once again considerable attention devoted to May 27 on its thirty-fifth anniversary. On one page opposing viewpoints of May 27 were placed in juxtaposition to one another. Writing in opposition to May 27 Hayrettin Erkmen, a former Demokrat Parti minister, writes:

The May 27 operation was presented as either an 'ihtilal' or a 'devrim'¹³ for a long period this characterization was defended and discussed. But May 27 was neither an 'ihtilal' nor a 'devrim'. In short, May 27 was an ordinary coup.¹⁴

Just below this article, Suphi Karaman, a member of the National Unity Committee, writes the following in favor of May 27:

The May 27 administration created a constitution and for the first time a referendum was held. Despite the fact that there was an opposition campaign against it, it received something like sixty-three percent of the vote. Thus May 27 opened a pathway of freedom and democracy that had been exhausted.¹⁵

Elsewhere in the 1995 edition, the first article in a five-part series on May 27 is published. The content of the article is unextraordinary, but one of its features is unprecedented: in this, the last article on May 27 that *Hürriyet* would print in the twentieth century, May 27 is referred to consistently, and exclusively, as a 'coup' ('darbe').

¹³ Both 'ihtilâl' and 'devrim', meaning 'revolution'.

¹⁴ *Hürriyet*, May 27, 1995. "27 Mayıs hareketi, bir ihtilal veya devrim olarak takdim edilmiş, uzun süre bu niteliğiyle savunulmuş ve tartışılmıştır. Ama 27 Mayıs hareketi ne bir ihtilal, ne de bir devrim hareketi sayılabilir. Kısacası, 27 Mayıs hareketi alelade bir hükümet darbesidir".

Conclusions

Of the three newspapers that have been discussed in this study, *Hürriyet* is the newspaper which has devoted the least attention to May 27. In the years immediately following May 27, *Hürriyet* celebrates May 27 to a much greater extent than it would at any other time during the May 27 era. During this time, the newspaper refers to the coup as the 'Freedom War' ('*Hürriyet Savaşı*') and announces the arrival of the military takeover's anniversary with blazing headlines proclaiming that all of the country was celebrating the holiday 'hand-in-hand' ('*el ele*').

By the late 1960's, however, the bold headlines of the decade's earlier years have given way to miniscule one or two-paragraph announcements of a public holiday on May 27. May 28 editions of the paper continue to print excerpts from the speeches of the country's civilian and military leaders, but the large-scale drawings conflating images of May 27 and soldiers vigilantly standing guard over Atatürk's principles May 27 were gone, as were the staged photos of soldiers marching arm-in-arm with students. In the pages of *Hürriyet*, May 27 had come to be treated like any other state holiday—a day of importance and patriotism, but one lacking the revolutionary enthusiasm with which May 27 had initially been celebrated.

With the removal of May 27 as a public holiday in the aftermath of the September 12 coup, for several years *Hürriyet* simply did not refer to the former holiday. In the wake of Menderes' political rehabilitation in 1987, however, more articles began to appear. Thus, in 1988, 1989 and 1990, several articles and columns discussing the events of May 27 are printed. Moreover, in the 30th and 35th

¹⁵ *Hürriyet*, May 27, 1970. "27 Mayıs yönetimi...bir Anayasa çıkarıldı ve ilk kez referanduma sunuldu. Aleyindeki kampanyaya rağmen yüzde 63 gibi bir kabul oyu aldı. Dolayısıyla 27 Mayıs,

anniversary years—1990 and 1995, respectively—several articles and opinion columns concerning May 27 are published. As is the case in *Milliyet*, these articles tend to pay special attention to May 27 from the perspective of its victims, rather than its champions.

CHAPTER 5

Books Printed During the May 27 Era

1960-1980

Books about Adnan Menderes and May 27 have, like newspaper columns, changed considerably since 1960. In 1960 and 1961 there was a flurry of 'instant books' published in defense of the takeover. Then, during the period 1960-1967, when books which 'praised' Adnan Menderes and other Demokrat Party figures were legally forbidden, two books about Menderes that had originally been published in the 1950's were re-issued. In this fashion, Menderes was honored and remembered without the publishers of these books taking the risk of running afoul of the law.

As official sensitivities regarding May 27 and Adnan Menderes mellowed in the late 1960's and early 1970's, several sympathetic biographies on Menderes were published. These books, while not going so far as to openly call into question the legitimacy of May 27, generally portrayed Menderes in a personally favorable light while avoiding any mention of the military intervention that led to his execution.

By the second half of the 1970's, mild criticism of military interventions in general and May 27 in particular begins to be seen in small, disjointed contexts. In the mid-1970's for example, two books appear which include in their forward a letter by officer-turned-politician Alparslan Türkeş in which Türkeş (whose voice Turks awakened to in 1960 to hear of the military takeover) renounces military takeovers as an acceptable means of effecting political change. Meanwhile, another book, Mithat Perin's *15 Yıl Sonra 27 Mayıs Yargılanıyor* (*May 27 is Judged after 15 Years*), sharply criticizes May 27 in terms thus far unseen in Turkish publications.

Among pro-May 27 books, nearly all of those which appear during the period 1960-1980 were published in the immediate aftermath of the military takeover.

Between 1961 and 1980 only a handful of avidly pro-May 27 books were to be published.

As for those books primarily concerned with Menderes, it is necessary to bear in mind the extent to which Menderes as a symbolic figure was conflated with anti-May 27 sentiment in the first decade after the takeover. During the years in which the publication of works ‘praising’ Adnan Menderes was legally forbidden, the re-issue of previously published works on or by Adnan Menderes had been the manner in which the executed Prime Minister had been memorialized by his supporters. In a similar fashion, once laws regulating the publication of books regarding Menderes are liberalized, the act of producing sympathetic biographies of Menderes becomes one more manner in which protest against May 27 can be manifested. After 1971, however, when five years of growing leniency regarding discussion of May 27 and Menderes was punctuated with the March 12 rebuke of the 1961 Constitution—the crown jewel of May 27 as it was then remembered—the packaging of anti-May 27 sentiments within sympathetic biographies of Menderes becomes less common and books concerned directly with stating the May 27 case begin to appear.

The following books on May 27 and Adnan Menderes were published in Turkey between the years 1960 and 1980:

- 1) *27 Mayıs Devrimi Niçin Yapıldı?* (‘Why Was May 27 Carried Out?’), Teoman Zeki, 1960.
- 2) *27 Mayıs İnkılabını Hazırlayan Sebepler* (‘The Reasons Behind May 27’), Tansel Selahattin, 1960.
- 3) *27 Mayıs* (‘May 27’). Erdem Kerim Aydın, 1960.
- 4) *Hürriyet İçin 27 Mayıs 1960 Devrimi* (‘The May 27 1960 Revolution for Freedom’), Eyleli Avni, 1960.

- 5) *Birinci Cumhuriyet Biterken* ('As the First Republic Was Coming to an End'), Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, 1960.
- 6) *Başvekilim Adnan Menderes* ('My Prime Minister Adnan Menderes'), Celal Bayar, 1963 (reprint).
- 7) *Menderes Diyor Ki...* ('Menderes Says That...'), Adnan Menderes, 1967 (reprint).
- 8) *Menderes'i İpe Götürenler*, ('The Ones who Brought Menderes to the Gallows'), Nimet Arzık, 1969.
- 9) *Arkadaşım Menderes* ('My Friend Menderes'), Samet Ağaoğlu, 1969.
- 10) *Menderes'in Dramı* ('Menderes' Drama'), Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, 1969.
- 11) *Menderes Devri* ('The Menderes Era'), 1970. ~~Seti~~, *Funer, Zeki*
- 12) *Benim Gözümde Adnan Menderes* ('Adnan Menderes in my Eyes'), Fazıl Kısakürek, 1970.
- 13) *Yassıada'da İnfazların İç Yüzü* ('The Inner Face of the Executions on Yassıada'), Mithat Perin, 1970.
- 14) *Bir Devre Adını Veren Başbakan: Adnan Menderes* ('Adnan Menderes: A Prime Minister who Gave his Name to an Era'), Orhan Cemal Fersoy, 1971.
- 15) *Demokrat Partisinin Doğuş ve Yükseliş Sebepleri: Bir Soru* ('The Reasons for the Birth and Rise of the Demokrat Party: A Question'), Samet Ağaoğlu, 1972.
- 16) *İhtilâlin Mantığı* ('The Logic of the Revolution'), Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, 1973.
- 17) *Demokrat Parti ve Ötekiler* ('The Demokrat Party and the Others'), İsmet Bozdağ, 1975.
- 18) *15 Yıl Sonra 27 Mayıs Yargılanıyor* ('May 27 is Judged after 15 Years'), Nazlı Ilıcak, 1975.
- 19) *27 Mayıs ve Türkiye* ('May 27 and Türkiye'), Muammer Taylak, 1976.
- 20) *27 Mayıs'tan 12 Mart'a* ('From May 27 to March 12'), Kurtul Altuğ, 1976.
- 21) *27 Mayıs, 13 Kasım, 21 Mayıs ve Gerçekler* ('May 27, November 13, May 21 and the Facts'), Alparslan Türkeş, 1977.
- 22) *Demokrat Parti Neden Çöktü* ('Why the Demokrat Party Broke Up'), Emrullah Nutku, 1979.

1960-1971

In the years immediately following May 27 several books favorable to the military takeover were published. Eager to shore up public support for the ouster and

execution of a Prime Minister who had won a parliamentary majority as recently as 1957, these books repeated the arguments by the National Unity Committee that Menderes had become dictatorial and that a 'revolution' had been necessary in order to restore democracy. Books of this genre include Teoman Zeki's *27 Mayıs Devrimi Niçin Yapıldı?* ('Why Was May 27 Carried Out?'), Tansel Selahattin's *27 Mayıs İnkılabını Hazırlayan Sebepler* ('The Reasons Behind May 27'), Erdem Kerim Aydın's *27 Mayıs* ('May 27'), ELEVli Avni's *Hürriyet İçin 27 Mayıs 1960 Devrimi* ('The May 27 1960 Revolution for Freedom') and *Birinci Cumhuriyet Biterken* (As the First Republic Was Ending), by Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata. Interestingly enough, however, after the publication of this series of 'instant books', not a single avowedly pro-May 27 book was published again in Turkey until the mid-1970's.

As the legitimacy of the 1960-1980 constitutional order in Turkey hinged upon the acceptance of May 27 as a legitimate seizure of power, outright criticism of May 27 as illegitimate or illegal did not become widespread until after the September 12, 1980 military takeover. Moreover, between the years 1960 and 1967, the publication of works that 'praised' Adnan Menderes or the Demokrat Party was legally forbidden in Turkey. It is probably for this reason that the first two post-May 27 books concerned with Adnan Menderes were not works of original scholarship, but rather reprints of previous publications.

The first of these books was the 1963 reprint of *Başvekilim Adnan Menderes* ('My Prime Minister Adnan Menderes') by former Turkish President (and Demokrat Party co-founder) Celal Bayar. In this book, which was originally published in 1957, Bayar describes the establishment of the Demokrat Party and his relationship with

Adnan Menderes. In the book's reissued version, only the preface has been rewritten. Although Bayar—whose death sentence at İmralı was commuted because of his advanced age—understandably refrains from directly criticizing May 27, he also avoids calling it a 'revolution'—the name preferred by its supporters.

Can we call this a 'revolution'? Of course not, because a revolution rests upon the idea that it is changing the existing foundations of the state...So, was it a coup d'état? No, it wasn't a coup d'état either, because a coup d'état, whether committed out of ideological conviction or not, is committed for the purpose of coming to power.¹

Instead, Bayar calls May 27 a 'de facto situation' (*'fiili bir durum'*), which he says is 'an intervention carried down from the traditional governance of Ottoman times, in which the *medrese* and the army would unite in resistance against the passage of a law or the law-passing authority'.² Bayar's term, which has no basis in Ottoman history, appears to be an effort to place May 27 within the context of pre-Republican Turkish history. Although the term does allow Bayar to step around the question of whether May 27 was a 'revolution' (as its supporters called it) or a 'coup' (as it is later called by its detractors), in the context of immediate post-May 27 Turkey—in which considerable emphasis had been laid upon the claim that the military takeover was a specifically *revolutionary* act—calling May 27 by a name other than a 'revolution' was still an employment of terminology which subverted the National Unity Committee's claim to have acted 'hand in hand' with the people.

¹ Bayar, Celal. *Başvekilim Adnan Menderes*. İstanbul, 1963, p.17 . "Buna bir 'ihtilâl' diyebilir miyiz? Tabii, 'Hayır'. Çünkü, ihtilâl, mevcut Devlet statüsünü temelden değiştiren bir fikre dayanır...Peki, bir Hükümet darbesi midir?...Hayır, Hükümet darbesi de değildir. Çünkü, Hükümet darbesi, fikri olasa da olmasa da iktidarda kalmak ve Devleti sürekli olarak yönetmek için yapılır...Bence, 27 Mayıs, bir 'Fiili durum'dur'".

² Bayar, p. 14. "Osmanlıdan kalma geleneksel yönetimimizdeki Ordu-Medrese işbirliğinin, kanun yapma ve yürütme gücüne karşı direnişi, müdahalesidir."

One book from the early 1960's which deserves particular attention is Fuad Başgil's *27 Mayıs İhtilâli ve Sebepleri* ('The May 27 Revolution and Its Causes'). This book, which was published in Switzerland in 1964 (where Başgil, a professor, was teaching at the time), was translated into Turkish and published in Turkey in 1966.

27 Mayıs İhtilâli ve Sebepleri, while not critical of May 27, complicates the mythology of pro-May 27 hagiography by arguing that May 27 itself was a 'coup', rather than a 'revolution'.

The action of May 27 is legally a coup d'état. Calling this a coup d'état does not diminish the essential meaning of this great action, but is simply done for the purpose of specifying its genuine character and giving it a name.³

Upon Başgil's 1966 return to Turkey, however, he was arrested and charged with "praising or defending the Demokrat by arguing that the May 27 Revolution was inappropriate, unjust or illegitimate".⁴ Başgil was eventually acquitted of the charge, which carried a maximum penalty of ten years in prison, but his trial could not have had anything other than a chilling effect upon the publication of revisionist works regarding May 27. Indeed, it would be nearly a decade before another book that treats May 27 in a critical manner would be published in Turkey.

Perhaps mindful of Başgil's legal tribulations following the publication of *27 Mayıs İhtilâli ve Sebepleri*, most authors in the late 1960's and early 1970's who

³ Başgil, Ali Fuad. *27 Mayıs İhtilâli ve Sebepleri*. İstanbul, 1966, pp. 11. "27 Mayıs Hareketi, hukuken bir hükûmet darbesidir. Buna bir hükûmet darbesi demek, bu büyük hareketin asıl manasını küçümsemek değildir, sadece hukukî mahiyetini belirtmek ve adını koymaktır".

⁴ Başgil, p. 207. "27 Mayıs 1960 devrimini yersiz, haksız veya gayri meşru gösterecek şekilde Demokrat İktidarın övülmesini veya müdafaa edilmesini suç haline getirmiştir".

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⁵ Menderes, Adnan (Ed., Şükrü Esirci). *M*
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Now he is on Yassıada, along with that world about which he dreamed. He is there, with every breath, with every ache...It's too bad for all of us, as well as for him. Turkey is the country of 'it's too bad'.⁶

The observation that what happened to Menderes was 'too bad' was, however, the closest that Arzık would come to commenting upon the chain of events beginning on May 27. Rather, *Menderes'i İpe Götürenler* focuses upon Menderes' private life, his family, and his role in the establishment of the Demokrat Party.

In a similar manner, Samet Ağaoğlu's 1969 book *Arkadaşım Menderes* ('My Friend Menderes'), Fazıl Kısakürek's 1970 book *Benim Gözümde Adnan Menderes* ('Adnan Menderes From My Perspective') Mithat Perin's *Yassıada'da İnfazların İç Yüzü* ('The Inner Story of the Executions on Yassıada') of 1970 and Orhan Cemal Fersoy's⁷ *Bir Devre Adını Veren Başbakan: Adnan Menderes* ('Adnan Menderes: A Prime Minister Who Gave His Name to an Era') of 1971 all avoided the subject of May 27. Still, all four of these books present Menderes as an individual in a generally positive light, usually portraying him as a humble, hardworking family man.⁸

Şevket Süreyya Aydemir's 1969 book *Menderes'in Dramı* ('Menderes' Drama'), is distinguished from most that follow it in that it self-consciously prides itself upon being completely subjective in its approach. Aydemir, a respected historian, had previously written biographies of both Atatürk and İsmet İnönü. Although he agrees with Başgil that the military action of May 27 was not a 'revolution', but a 'coup', Aydemir, argues that a 'revolution' did come—with the

⁶ *Menderes'i İpe Götürenler*, p. 7. Artık o Yassıadada, hayal olmuş dünyasıyla. Her nefes alışında, içimin her sızlayışında o var...Hepimize yazık oldu, ona da. "Yazık oldular" memleketi Türkiye

⁷ Fersoy had been Menderes' lawyer on Yassıada.

adoption of the 1961 Constitution. Perhaps in acknowledgement of the trial that followed the publication of Başgil's book, Aydemir, too, writes in the preface to *Menderes'in Dramı* that the work is 'neither one of praise nor of criticism' ('*ne övgü ne yergi bir eser*').

May 27 is a 'revolution' ('*ihtilâl*'), argues Aydemir, because it resulted in major change in Turkey's governing institutions:

A coup d'état is one thing, a revolution is something else. A revolution is an act which is more long-term and which brings new institutions. May 27 is a revolution.⁹

The remainder of Aydemir's book is an account of Menderes' life and political career, told in a straightforward, generally objective manner. Aydemir's account of May 27, for example, begins with his argument about the evolution of May from 'coup' to 'revolution'. The various problems faced by the leaders of May 27 are then discussed, combined with a point-by-point description of the manner in which they seized power, established new institutions for ruling the country, and organized Menderes' trial and execution. Throughout, however, no attempt is made at editorializing upon the fundamental merits of May 27.

A book with a similarly objective approach is Bekir Tünay's *Menderes Devri* ('*The Menderes Era*'), another book which prints the disclaimer that it is written neither in the spirit of praise nor of criticism ('*ne övgü ne de yergi için*'). As is the case with Aydemir, Tünay describes May 27 as a 'revolution' ('*ihtilâl*'), a word with generally positive connotations among those writing about May 27. For the most part,

⁸ See, for example, Feri, pp. 20-23, 25-27, 40-42, 71-72.

⁹ Aydemir, Şevket Süreyya. *Menderes'in Dramı*. İstanbul, 1969, p. 469. "Hükümet darbesi başka, ihtilâl gene başkadır. İhtilâl, daha uzun vadeli ve yeni müesseseler getiren bir harekettir. 27 Mayıs hareketi bir ihtilâldir".

however, Tünay avoids discussing May 27 at any length in this book, which is mostly about Tünay's diplomatic experiences in Iraq.

Once the flurry of books justifying May 27 in its immediate aftermath subsides, few books on May 27 or Adnan Menderes are published in Turkey. Indeed, during the period of particular sensitivity of the 1960's even those works that are devoted to Adnan Menderes strictly avoid discussing May 27 while books devoted to May 27 tend to accept as legitimate the 'revolutionary' character of the takeover and, by implication, its legitimacy.

1971-1980

By the late 1960's, official sensitivity regarding May 27 and the Demokrat Party had subsided considerably.¹⁰ In 1965 the Justice Party, generally seen to be the successor to the Demokrat Party, came to power in national elections with 53% of the vote. Among those elected to parliament as Justice Party candidates was Yüksel Menderes, Adnan Menderes' eldest son. In 1967 the law banning the publication of works 'praising' Demokrat Party figures was repealed, and an amnesty law was passed in parliament returning political rights to most former Demokrat Party figures. In 1970, 41 senators and members of parliament left the Justice Party to form the Demokratik Party, which received 12% of the vote in parliamentary elections in 1972 and elected 45 of its members to parliament. The slogan and symbol¹¹ of the Demokratik Party, in addition to the party's name, recalled the Demokrat Party of Menderes and Bayar.

¹⁰ If not uniformly, as the Kadıköy district prosecutor's case against Fuad Başgil in 1966 demonstrates.

This changed atmosphere regarding issues involving May 27 and the Demokrat Party may be one reason behind the increase during the period 1971-1980 in the number of books about May 27. Compared to books devoted to this subject from the 1960's, moreover, several books from the 1970's treat the subject of military intervention in general and May 27 in particular in a much more critical manner. Prior to 1971, no book published in Turkey—not even Başgil's *27 Mayıs İhtilâli ve Sebepleri*—could be said to have directly criticized May 27. In the 1970's, however, one book (published in 1975) is pointedly critical of May 27, and another book calls May 27 a 'coup' ('*darbe*'). Furthermore, two other books (both about Alparslan Türkeş, published in 1975 and 1977) begin with a letter by former 'revolutionary' Alparslan Türkeş in which the former National Unity Committee member renounces military takeovers as a desirable means of effecting political change. While in only one of these books, Nazlı Ilıcak's *15 Yıl Sonra 27 Mayıs Yargılanıyor* ('May 27 is Judged after 15 Years'), is May 27 openly criticized, its depiction as a 'coup' ('*darbe*'), rather than a 'revolution' in both Ilıcak's book and in a book by Samet Ağaoğlu—combined with the emphasis paid in the two books on Türkeş to Türkeş's effective renunciation of May 2—add up to a significantly more critical approach to May 27 than anything previously seen in Turkey.

This, moreover, may help explain why no books on Adnan Menderes appear during the years 1972-1980. With the lifting in 1967 of the law banning the publication of works 'praising' Adnan Menderes, five biographies of Menderes were published within a period of five years. Four of these—those written by Perin, Fersoy,

¹¹ The symbol of the Demokratik Party, like that of the Demokrat Party, was the palm of a hand held in a manner as if to say 'stop'.

Ağaoğlu and Kısakürek—treat Menderes with sympathy and, in the case of Perin, Fersoy and Ağaoğlu, were written by former associates of Menderes. At the time in which these books were written, the mere act of writing a book portraying Adnan Menderes in a favorable light was a political statement against May 27. It is therefore not surprising that, as the area of permissible commentary regarding May 27 expanded in the early 1970's, the focus of books written by individuals with a revisionist agenda regarding May 27 would shift from Adnan Menderes to the subject of May 27 itself.

There is, of course, room for oversimplification here. As has already been mentioned, not all authors writing books devoted to Adnan Menderes were politically opposed to May 27. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir is the earliest example of a Menderes biographer who was not at the same time a Menderes partisan, and other names were to follow. Nor should one get the impression that, when authors decided to make the decision to publish books on May 27 in the early 1970's, political questions were necessarily predominant over questions involving the marketplace. Several biographies of Menderes had, after all, recently been published in a relatively short time, meaning that the market for Menderes-oriented biographical material was fairly well saturated already. It therefore seems hardly surprising that, following the publication of so many Menderes biographies in such a short period of time, there would be some sort of decrease in their number.

What also seems clear, however, is that the liberalization of official attitudes regarding May 27-oriented revision quite obviously played a role in stimulating the publication of several books in the 1970's. These books question, however gently in

some cases, the wisdom of May 27. In a pattern that would be repeated on a far greater scale in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the increasing liberalization concerning views of May 27 that took place from 1967 onwards resulted in first the publication of several books on Menderes which refrained from making overtly political messages concerning May 27. Then, as the atmosphere was liberalized further, the issue of May 27 itself was discussed in a more direct manner.

The first book to publicly criticize May 27 was *Demokrat Partinin Doğuş ve Yükseliş Sebepleri: Bir Soru* ('The Reasons for the Birth and Rise of the Demokrat Party: A Question'), which was published in 1972 by Samet Ağaoğlu. Referring always to May 27 as a 'coup' ('darbe'), this book criticizes the organizers of the coup for having disrupted democracy. Writes Ağaoğlu:

There is indeed something sincere about the arguments the military entered politics in order to protect democracy. But the first condition of protecting democracy is respecting the national will. The giving—or the continuation of giving-- of ultimatums and warnings to the effect that unless the parliament, which is the representative of the national will, takes this or that measure that there will be a takeover, no matter how sincerely it is carried out, does not protect democracy, but at the very least inflicts damage upon it. Either we are going to believe that the Turkish nation is mature and are not going to interfere with its will, or this nation is ignorant and immature, and claiming that this is the work of the west we are going to establish a (military) regime to put an end to this ignorance.¹²

¹² Ağaoğlu, Samet, *Demokrat Partinin Doğuş ve Yükseliş Sebepleri: Bir Soru*. İstanbul, 1972, p. 235. "Askerin demokrasiyi savunmak için politikaya girdiği yolundaki yorumlarda samimi bir taraf da bulunabilir. Ama demokrasiyi savunmanın ilk şartı millet iradesine saygıdır. Milli iradenin temsilcisi olan Büyük millet Meclisi'ne şu veya bu yolda hareket etmediğiniz, kararlar almadığınız takdirde yönetime el konulacaktır şeklinde muhtıralar veya ultimatolar verilirse ve verilmekte devam edilirse böyle yapılırken ne kadar samimi olunursa olunsun demokrasi korunulmuş değil, en azından zedelenmiş olur. Ya Türk Milletinin olgunluğuna inanacağız ve iradesine karışmayacağız, ya bu millet henüz cahildir, olgun değildir, batılın esiridir diyerek o iddia ettiğimiz cehalet sona ererek olgunlaşınca kadar rejimi buna göre kuracağız".

Regarding May 27, Ağaoğlu writes:

If I have the time and the possibility of publishing them, the view that will become evident on the pages of my memoirs would be that the first and foremost of reasons that brought the Demokrat Party to May 27 was that it was a government that rested upon the national will and sympathy to popular sovereignty. The Demokrat Party was a 100% civil administration, it kept the state powers—the intervention into politics of which have always and everywhere resulted in disaster—out of politics. Thus May 27 was carried out by a class of people made up of state powers which had been kept out of power and was joined by some politicians of various political persuasion--or who had given themselves up to feelings of personal resentment--and as their principle excuse claimed that the people were ignorant, that they had been easily tricked by the Demokrat Party, that the Demokrat Party had won this ignorant people over by exploiting their feelings about religion.¹³

Compare the above passage to Ağaoğlu's previous work, the 1967 book *Arkadaşım Menderes* ('My Friend Menderes'). In that book, Menderes' life is discussed at length, but—as has been discussed already—no direct mention is made of May 27 or its aftermath. Chapter three of *Arkadaşım Menderes*, for example, is entitled '27 Mayıs'a Doğru' ('Towards May 27'), and ends with Menderes discussing with his aides the upcoming elections.¹⁴ The very next chapter, entitled

¹³ Ağaoğlu, 1972, pp. 233-234. "Eğer yayınlamağa imkân ve zaman bulursam hâtıralarımın yapraklarında belirecek manzaralar arasında Demokrat Parti'yi Mayıs'a götüren sebeplerin başında ve temelinde onun milli iradeye, halk hâkimiyetine samimiyetle dayanan bir yönetimi uygulamış bulunması olduğu da görülecektir. Demokrat Parti yüzdeyüz sivil bir iktidar olmuş, politikaya karışmaları dünyanın her yerinde ve her zaman felâketler getiren devlet kuvvetlerini politika dışında tutmuştur. İşte politika dışında tutulmuş devlet kuvvetlerinden bir zümre ve onlara çeşitli ideoloji sahipleri ile şahsi kinlerinin ruhlarındaki etkilerine mağlup bazı politikacılar katılarak 27 Mayıs'ı yapmışlar ve belli başlı bahane olarak da halkın cahil olduğunu, Demokrat Parti tarafından kolaylıkla kandırıldığını, Demokrat Parti'nin bu cahil halkı din hislerini istismar ederek elde ettiğini ileri sürmüşlerdir. 27 Mayıs sabahı Türk Milletine verdikleri söze rağmen bu kuvvetler bu güne kadar politikanın içindedirler, hem de en açık bir şekilde".

¹⁴ Menderes supporters often argue that Menderes was about to call early parliamentary elections in response to the student protests of Ankara and Istanbul. Indeed, speaking in Eskişehir on May 26,

'Üst Koridor' ('The Upper Corridor'), begins with a description of life on Yassıada.

May 27 is a non-event, absent from even these pages of revisionist history.

By 1972, however, the political climate in Turkey has softened to the extent that May 27 as a subject of debate can be met head-on, albeit gingerly. Thus, Ağaoğlu now writes about May 27, rather than Menderes. It is of course entirely possible that Ağaoğlu, genuinely a friend of the executed Premier, would have first chosen to write a book about Menderes even if the political climate had been freer with regard to publications about May 27. But this possibility notwithstanding, it does seem that on one level, at least, within the sympathetic biography of 1967 were packaged sentiments of political protest vis-à-vis May 27 that could only be expressed, however guardedly, several years later with the publication of *Demokrat Partinin Doğuş ve Yükseliş Sebepleri: Bir Soru*.

In 1975, İsmet Bozdağ's *Demokrat Parti ve Ötekiler* ('The Demokrat Party and the Others') was published. The 'ötekiler' ('others') referred to in the book's title are parties such as the Demokratik Party and the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*), which succeeded the Demokrat Party. In many ways, this book is little more than political propaganda for the Demokrat Party's successors. Little is said about May 27, and the only sign that Bozdağ is against it is his reference to it as a 'coup' ('darbe').¹⁵

Menderes did apparently state that elections would occur soon, but stopped short of calling a specific date.

¹⁵ P. 58.

In 1975, Nazlı Ilıcak's *15 Yıl Sonra 27 Mayıs Yargılanıyor* ('May 27 is Judged after 15 Years') was published. In this book, which consists of a series of interviews with anti-May 27 figures, May 27 is criticized in the strongest terms yet seen in a Turkish publication. Writes Ilıcak:

The May 27 coup threw the country into a turmoil from which it has still not recovered. Revolutions always take away more than they bring, and May 27 is no exception.¹⁶

Two books concerning Alparslan Türkeş published in the mid-1970's also discuss May 27. Although both books are more concerned with the former National Unity Committee member than with May 27, the books are revealing in the effort they make to distance Türkeş—now a civilian politician—from his role in the May 27 takeover. Both books--*27 Mayıs, 13 Kasım, 21 Mayıs ve Gerçekler* (May 27, November 13, May 21 and the Facts) by Alparslan Türkeş and *27 Mayıs ve Türkeş* by Muammer Taylak--begin with the following letter, written in Türkeş's own hand:

After my experience with May 27 I came to the conclusion that it is not possible to help a country through revolution. No matter how deficient, how crippled some aspects of it may be, the best means of helping a country are legal means. Revolution destroys authority and breeds anarchy. Putting an end to this anarchy and re-establishing authority and order is a very difficult thing to do, and all of this is damaging to a country. I have experienced all of this from the inside, and have actually lived it. My advice to the intellectuals and patriots of a country is this: "the worst legal order is better than the best revolution".¹⁷

¹⁶ Ilıcak, Nazlı. *15 Yıl Sonra 27 Mayıs Yargılanıyor*. Istanbul, 1975, p.7. "27 Mayıs darbesi, memleketi hâlâ içinden kurtulamadığı bir çalkantıya atmıştır. İhtilaller her zaman getirdiklerinden fazlasını götürürler. 27 Mayıs da buna bir istisna teşkil etmez".

¹⁷ Türkeş, Alparslan. *27 Mayıs, 13 Kasım, 21 Mayıs ve Gerçekler*. Istanbul, 1977, p. 8. "Ben 27 tecrübesini geçirdikten sonra, o kanaate vardım ki, ihtilal yoluyla bir memlekete hizmet etmek mümkün değildir. Ne kadar eksik, ne kadar aksayan taraflar olursa olsun, hukuk yoluyla bir memleket, bir millete hizmet, en iyi yoldur...İhtilal, otoriteyi yıkar, anarşi başlar. Bu anarşiyi durdurmak, yeniden düzeni ve otoriteyi kurmak çok güç bir meseledir. Ve memleket bundan zarar görür. Bunun hem içinde

Adnan Menderes was repealed, the sole publishing outlet for Menderes partisans lay in the re-issue of previously published works. With the lifting of this ban, several sympathetic biographical works on Menderes avoiding any direct comment on May 27 were published. As official attitudes regarding May 27 relaxed even further, books critical of May 27 began to appear in the middle and late 1970's.

Where was Turkey headed at this time? Was May 27 Turkey approaching a point in which the very legitimacy of the May 27 takeover itself could be discussed freely? Perhaps. However, given the great expansion in anti-May 27 literature that took place in the aftermath of official Turkey's renunciation of May 27, it seems clear that Turkey was not yet at that point. Far more May 27 views seem to have been repressed, rather than expressed, during the 1970's.

Anti-May 27 and pro-Adnan Menderes books in the 1960's and 1970's far outnumber pro-May 27 books published during the same period. One reason for this is perhaps that voices which already felt represented by official Turkey felt no need to make themselves heard. With the changes that take place in the wake of the September 12 military takeover, however, both the number and scope of May 27-related books change considerably.

With the military takeover of September 12 1980, the May 27 era would come to an end. It was only with the beginning of the political rehabilitation of Menderes in 1987, however, that a widespread process of revision and debate regarding Adnan Menderes and May 27 began to take place in Turkey. This was first seen in the great number of books regarding Adnan Menderes that were published from 1987 onwards.

Following in their heels was a proliferation of books directly concerned with the issues of May 27.

After a period of five years (1987-1991) which saw the publication of more books on Adnan Menderes than had been seen in all of the previous twenty-seven years combined, the number of publications concerned primarily with Adnan Menderes fell considerably. The number of books focusing upon May 27, however, began to increase considerably at this very moment. As had been the case in the early 1970's, a liberalization (in the case of the 1980's, a revolution) in official attitudes concerning Adnan Menderes preceded the publication of several new books on Adnan Menderes. These, in turn, preceded the publication of several revisionist works concerned with May 27.

While revisionist works of the 1970's had been generally tepid in testing the limits of their ability to criticize May 27, works published in the 1980's suffered from no such restrictions. In the anti-May 27 books published in the 1980's and 1990's, May 27 is consistently criticized as an anti-democratic 'coup'. More often than not, the military interventions of 1971 and 1980 are invoked as consequences of 1960, the first in the 'chain' of interventions.



CHAPTER 6

September 12 Era Publications

(1980-2000)

In the 1980's and 1990's, the number of books about Adnan Menderes and May 27 increased greatly compared with the number of those published in the preceding two decades. Certainly, much of this increase was a reflection of the expansion in the publishing industry that took place in Turkey generally in the 1980's—leading to a greater number of books on all subjects being published compared with earlier decades. There was, however, another important reason for the expansion in the number of May 27-related books in the years following September 12. With the fall of what would later come to be known as the 'May 27 Regime', free discussion of the merits of May 27 and Adnan Menderes was permitted in Turkey for the first time. Nowhere is this more evident than in the number of books published in Turkey about Adnan Menderes in the 1980's and 1990's. During the years 1987-1997, 64% (17 out of a total of 25) of all books ever published in Turkey on Adnan Menderes and/or his trial and execution were brought to press, while during the years 1991-1999, nine books specifically about the May 27 takeover were published (compared with just five published during the years 1961-1990). Moreover, between 1987 and 2000 eleven books about the Demokrat Party were published, compared to just four during the period 1960-1987. All in all, thirty books were published between the years 1987 and 1999 on the topics of Adnan Menderes, May 27, and the Demokrat Party—a figure which comprises more than 61% of all such books to have ever been published in Turkey.

The great post-1980 increase in the number of books published on Adnan Menderes and May 27 took place, however, only after the process of officially rehabilitating Menderes was initiated in 1987. Between the years 1980 and 1987, the

only books published which are directly related to Menderes and May 27 are *Bilinmeyen Menderes* ('The Unknown Menderes', published in 1983), and *Menderes'in Dramı* ('Menderes' Drama', published in 1986).

1980-1986

Former Demokrat Party figure Mükerrerem Şarol's *Bilinmeyen Menderes* is the first book on Adnan Menderes to appear in Turkey after the September 12 military takeover. For the most part, its relatively bland, non-provocative portrayal of Menderes is reminiscent of the biographies that appeared in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Like the books of Fersey, Ağaoğlu and Perin from that period, Şarol's book is devoted almost entirely to personal recollections of Menderes. With the exception of a single reference to May 27 as a 'coup' ('*darbe*'), there is no discussion of May 27 or indication of Şarol's feelings about it.

Rasih Nuri İleri's *Menderes'in Dramı* ('Menderes' Drama') differs considerably from *Bilinmeyen Menderes*. A compendium of the charges and evidence brought against Menderes and Bayar during the trials on Yassıada, İleri's book is notable in that it is the first book published in Turkey to connect the issues of May 27 with those of September 12. In the book's introduction, İleri describes the 'counter-revolution' that he sees as having taken place in Turkey since 1980:

One result of the military coup of September 12, 1980 was of particular importance. While making changes to the order ('*düzen*') in Turkey, three national holidays were cancelled. These were May 1, May 27 and April 23—although April 23 was then brought back. In this fashion the people who carried out September 12 were demonstrating, from the very beginning, that they did not approve of the action of the National Unity

Committee of putting an end to a Demokrat Party government that was bringing the country to the point of dictatorship. The reactions against May 27 of those who carried out September 12 most certainly did not stop at this. Today we are witnessing a dangerous development in this direction, in the direction of a counter-revolution. The rehabilitation of the Demokrat Party and attacks against May 27 have suddenly come to the fore.¹

Thus, the 'counter-revolution', according to Nuri, is not something which occurred simply through the act of September 12 itself. Instead, it is part of a process, the 'direction' and 'development' taken by the Turkish government throughout the 1980's.

1987 and after

The 1987 decision to re-inter the remains of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan appears to have acted as the catalyst for a great increase in publications (and, as we have seen, in newspaper articles and opinion columns as well) concerned with the issues of Menderes and May 27. From the late 1980's onwards, and especially between the years 1987 and 1996, not only did the range of published opinion regarding Adnan Menderes and May 27 expand greatly, but so did the sheer number of books published on these subjects.

¹ İleri, Rasih Nuri, *Menderes'in Dramı*. İstanbul, 1986, p. 5. "12 Eylül 1980 askeri darbesinin bir icraatı son derecede önemlidir. Türkiye'nin düzeninde yapılan değişiklikler sırasında üç Milli Bayram kaldırılmıştır, bunlar 1 Mayıs Bayramı, 27 Mayıs Bayramı ve de 23 Nisan Bayramıdır, sonradan 23 Nisan Bayramı affa uğradı. Böylece 12 Eylül'cüler baştan beri, Milli Birlik Komitesi'nin 27 Mayıs 1960 günü memleketi bir diktaya götüren Demokrat Parti iktidarına dur demesini onaylamadıklarını göstermiş bulundular, 27 Mayıs'a karşı tepkileri şüphesiz bu kadarla kalmadı. Bugün bu doğrultuda, karşı devrim sürecinde, çok tehlikeli bir atılıma tanık oluyoruz, Demokrat Parti'yi aklama ve bunun karşıtı olan 27 Mayıs Devimi'ni suçlama atılımı birden bire ortaya atıldı".

The years 1987-1991 saw the single most intense period of Menderes-related publications in history. During these years no fewer than eleven books on Adnan Menderes were brought to press. This total includes the following titles:

- 1) *Acılı Günler* ('Painful Days'), Muammer Yaşar Bostancı, 1987.
- 2) *Yaptırılamayan Savunmalar* ('The Defenses That Weren't Allowed to be Made'), Turgut Hülusi, 1988. *Depressed*
- 3) *İmralı'da Üç Mezar* ('Three Graves on İmralı'), Turhan Dilligil, 1988.
- 4) *Bitmeyen Hasret* ('Never-ending Longing'), Nazlı Ilıcak, 1989.
- 5) *Menderes'i Zehirlediler!* ('They Poisoned Menderes!'), Nazlı Ilıcak, 1989.
- 6) *Hepiniz Suçlusunuz!* ('You are all Guilty!'), Turhan Dilligil, 1989.
- 7) *Yassıada'dan İmralı'ya* (From Yassıada to İmralı'), Enver Durmuş, 1990.
- 8) *Yassıada Faciası* ('The Yassıada Massacre'), Mithat Perin, 1990.
- 9) *Yassıada'da Millî İrade Nasıl Mahmûm Edildi*, ('How the National Will was put on trial on Yassıada'), Necmettin Önder, (1990).
- 10) *Yassıada'dan Anıtmezar'a* ('From Yassıada to Anıtmezar'), Demokratlar Kulübü (The Democrats' Club), 1991.
- 11) *Menderes'le Anılar* ('Memoirs With Menderes'), Ercüment Yavuzalp, 1991.

Of these books, ten are concerned primarily with the trial on Yassıada or Menderes' execution on İmralı, while only one—Ercüment Yavuzalp's *Menderes'le Anılar*—consists mostly of personal recollections in the style of Şarol and Menderes' earlier biographers. The primary interest of these books in Menderes' legal proceedings and punishment—influenced as they are by the 1987 decision to rebury Menderes—is further demonstrated by the fact that on the cover of seven of them are

images of imprisonment and execution: gallows, a noose, and chains. Moreover, all eleven of these books can be described as being both favorable to Menderes and unfavorable to May 27, which all of these books refer to as a 'coup'.

Three coups

Of the eleven books published in the years 1987-1991 about Menderes and/or his trial and execution, six place May 27, March 12 and September 12 in a single category. Three of these books (*Menderes'i Zehirlediler!*, *Bitmeyen Hasret* and *Yassıada Faciası*) call all three interventions 'coups' ('darbe'), while three others (*Acılı Günler*, *İmralı'da Üç Mezar* and *Menderes ile Anılar*) classify all three as 'interventions' ('müdahale').²

In Nazlı Ilıcak's *Menderes'i Zehirlediler!* ('They Poisoned Menderes!'), for example, the author's preface begins with the following passage:

The Demokrat Party was the name of a white revolution. The flower which opened on May 14, 1950 through the votes of the people wilted under bayonet blows on May 27, 1960. Ever since that date it has proved impossible for our democracy to free itself of military coups.³

Turhan Dilligil, meanwhile, writes in *İmralı'da Üç Mezar* (Three Graves on İmralı):

Today, it should be known by those—including those who perpetuated the interventions—who say "May 27, March 12 and September 12 brought relief to the

² The remaining five books also call May 27 a 'coup', but do not overtly compare it to Turkey's other two military interventions.

³ Ilıcak, Nazlı. *Menderes'i Zehirlediler!*. İstanbul, 1989, p. 7. "Demokrat parti bir beyaz ihtilâlin adıydı. 14 Mayıs 1950'de halkın oylarıyla açan çiçek, 27 Mayıs 1960'da süngü darbeleriyle soldu. O tarihten sonra da demokrasimizi askeri darbelerden kurtarmak bir daha mümkün olmadı".

country, provided comfort, justice and human rights—that they are only fooling themselves.⁴

In *Hepiniz Suçlusunuz* ('You are all Guilty'), Dilligil compares the execution and rehabilitation of Menderes to that of Imre Nagy in Hungary. Writes Dilligil:

Just as the leaders of the Hungarian state, through a law accepted on June 16, 1989, reversed all of the court decisions brought against Imre Nagy for his role in the events of 1956, it was also declared that those who had given their life for the sake of the country were 'National Heroes'. But even this was not enough; In an article published on June 16, 1989 in the liberal Budapest newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*, Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth stated in unequivocal terms that the court which tried those convicted in 1956 was "...an illegal court, a kangaroo court..." and that "Imre Nagy is a political martyr...". This appraisal and the carefully used terms "...illegal court, kangaroo court..." and "...political martyr..." will summon, whether one likes it or not, the words "May 27, Yassiada, İmralı, and national traitor..."; in fact they already have.⁵

Five other books written during the years 1987-1996 discuss, as part of a single grouping, the three military interventions that had taken place in Turkey. In the following books, May 27, March 12 and September 12 are all assigned to a single category, either that of 'coup' ('*darbe*', in two of these books), or that of 'intervention' ('*müdahale*', in three of these books):

⁴ Dilligil, Turhan. *İmralı'da Üç Mezar*. İstanbul, 1988, p. 11. "Bugün, 27 Mayıs, 12 Mart, 12 Eylül müdahalelerini gerçekleştirenler de dahil olmak üzere, her kim çıkar da "yapılan eylemler memleketi huzur getirmiştir, refah sağlamıştır, adaleti ve insan haklarını güvenceye kavuşturmuştur" diyebilirse, bilmelidir ki yalnız kendini aldatmaktadır".

⁵ Dilligil, Turhan. *Hepiniz Suçlusunuz*. İstanbul, 1989, p. 16. "Macar devletinin yöneticileri 16 Haziran 1989 günü kabul ettikleri bir kanunla Imre Nagy ile 1956 yılındaki olaylardan sorumlu tutulanların tümü üzerindeki mahkûmiyet kararını kaldırdığı gibi, ülkeleri uğrunda can veren o günün idam mahkûmlarını da "Milli kahraman" ilan etmiştir. Bununla da yetinilmemiş; Budapeşte'de yayınlanan liberal eğilimli "*Magyar Nemzet*" gazetesinin 16 Haziran 1989 günlü sayısında bir makalesi yayınlanan Başbakan Miklos Nemeth, 1956 sanıklarının mahkûm eden mahkeme için açık ve seçik olarak: "...yasal olmayan, uydurma bir mahkeme..." tanımını yapmış ve başbakan için de "Imre Nagy siyasi bir şehittir..." deyimini kullanmıştır. Bu değerlendirmeler ve özenle kullanılmış olan "...yasal olmayan uydurma bir mahkeme..." ile "...siyasi şehit..." tanımlamaları Türk vatandaşı üzerinde ister istemez bir "27 Mayıs, Yassiada, İmralı ve vatana ihanet..." çağrışımı yapacaktır; nitekim yapmıştır da".

- 1) *Türkiye’de Askerî Müdahaleler* (‘Military Interventions in Turkey’), Yılmaz Öztuna and Ayvaz Gökdemir, 1987.
- 2) *Türkiye’de Askerî Müdahalelerin Düşündürdükleri* (‘Thought-provoking points of Military Interventions in Turkey’), Rifki Salim Burçak, 1988.
- 3) *Türkiye’de Askerî Darbeler ve Sivil Rejime Etkileri* (‘Military Coups in Turkey and Their Effects on Civilian Rule’), Nurşen Mazıcı, 1989.
- 4) *Türkiye’de Askerî Darbeler ve Amerika* (‘America and Military Coups in Turkey’), Çetin Yetkin, 1995.
- 5) *Türkiye’de Askerî Müdahaleler: Bir Açıklama Modeli* (‘Military Interventions in Turkey: An Explanatory Model’), Birsen Örs, 1996.

The significance of these five books lies in the fact that, although they are not directly concerned with the subjects of Adnan Menderes and May 27, they are further evidence of the growing acceptance among Turkish writers, academicians and intellectuals of the concept that all of Turkey’s military interventions, whatever their results, should be seen as belonging to a single historical category.

An example of this can be seen in Öztuna and Gökdemir’s *Türkiye’de Askerî Müdahaleler* (‘Military Interventions in Turkey’):

We have been pursuing democracy for the last 150 years. Using the words ‘freedom’, ‘constitutional monarchy’, and ‘republic’, it’s always been democracy that we have been looking for. Since May 27, 1960 once every ten years a military intervention has been carried out in the name of democracy. In my opinion, it would be a good idea if we were to disabuse ourselves of the habit of writing democracy from the point of a bayonet. Forcing people into compliance and obedience is possible; but, believe me, none of the pretexts for military interventions—which all resemble one another—are believable anymore. Furthermore, in the

future it is going to be even more difficult to find people to believe in them.⁶

The idea that May 27 is essentially similar to March 12 and September 12 thus spread, in the 1980's and 1990's, beyond the circle of those writing specifically about May 27 to include those writing on Turkish military interventions in general—a field the very existence of which lends itself to the argument that the three interventions are essentially alike. The internalization of this argument among even those writers not specifically concerned with May 27 revisionism would prove increasingly frustrating to the dwindling number of May 27 supporters of the late 1980's and 1990's, whose arguments rest upon the idea that May 27 is distinct from March 12 and September 12.⁷

From Menderes to May 27

The remains of Adnan Menderes, Hasan Polatkan and Fatin Ruştü Zorlu were transferred to Anıtmezar on September 17, 1990. With the final laying to rest of Menderes' remains, the laying to rest of his potency as a symbol of state inhumanity also seems to have been initiated. After the appearance of eleven books in a period of just five years (1987-1991), in the ten years after 1991 only five more books concerning Adnan Menderes and his execution would be published. This number includes:

⁶ Öztuna, Yılmaz and Gökdemir, Ayvaz, *Türkiye'de Askerî Müdahaleler*, 1987, p. 189. "150 yıldan beri demokrasinin peşindeyiz. Hürriyet, meşrutiyet, cumhuriyet, diyerek hep onu aradık. 27 Mayıs 1960'dan beri de demokrasi adına her on yılda bir askerî müdahale yapıyor. Öyle zannediyorum ki, artık bu süngü ucu ile demokrasi yazma âdetinden vazgeçsek iyi olacaktır. Zorla baş eğdirmek, itaât ettirmek mümkündür; fakat, inan olsun, artık hepsi birbirine benzeyen müdahale gerekçeleri inandırıcı olmaktan çıkmıştır. Hele bundan sonra bu gerekçelere inanacak kimse bulmak daha da zor olacaktır".

- 1) *Adnan Menderes'in Konuşmaları, Demeçleri, Makaleleri* ('Adnan Menderes' Speeches, Statements, Articles'), Adnan Menderes, 1992.
- 2) *Menderes'i Kim Astırdı?* ('Who Had Menderes Hanged?'), Mithat Perin, 1995.
- 3) *Öteki Menderes* ('The Other Menderes'), Recep Şükrü Apuhan, 1996.
- 4) *Yassıada Kararları ve Tahkikat Komisyonunun Bilinmeyen Gerçekleri* ('Unknown Facts of the Yassıada Decisions and the Investigation Commission'), 1996.
- 5) *Menderes, Menderes*, İsmet Bozdağ, 1997.

Among these books, the first is a collection of Menderes' speeches and articles, while the other four are overwhelmingly favorable in their portrayal of Menderes. In all four of these books, May 27 is derided as an illegitimate 'coup'.

From the early 1990's onwards, however, publications about May 27 far outnumber those on Adnan Menderes. Indeed, almost at the very moment when books primarily concerned with Adnan Menderes begin to trail off, books on May 27 become more common again. As had been the case in the early 1970's, a change in the official attitude towards May 27 was followed by an increase in the number of books devoted to Adnan Menderes. This, in turn, was followed by an increase in the number of books about May 27.

During the 1990's, the following nine books about May 27 were published:

- 1) *Bir Darbenin Anatomisi: 27 Mayıs İhtilâli* ('Anatomy of a Coup: The May 27 Revolution'), İsmet Bozdağ, 1991.

⁷ Although it should be noted that one of these writers, Rifki Salim Burçak, had been a Demokrat Party cabinet minister.

- 2) *Koltuk Değnekli Demokrasi ve 27 Mayıs Darbesi* ('Disabled Democracy and the May 27 Coup'), Fikri Karanis, 1994.
- 3) *27 Mayıs: İlk Aşkımız* ('May 27: Our First Love'), Bedri Baykam, 1994.
- 4) *Sosyalizm, Anarşi, Terör: 27 Mayıs 1960, 20 Aralık 1961, 9 Ocak 1995* ('Socialism, Ararchy, Terror: May 27 1960, December 20 1961, January 9 1995'), Mehmet Arif Demirer, 1995.
- 5) *27 Mayıs Askerî Darbesinde Gerçeği Savunan Yazarlar ve Yazıları* ('Writers and articles defending the truth about the May 27 Military Coup'), Demokratlar Kulübü ('The Democrats' Club'), 1996.
- 6) *27 Mayıs: 27-28 Nisan 1960 Gençlik Eylemi Işığında* ('May 27: In the Light of the Youth Activism of April 27-28'), Memduh Eren, 1996.
- 7) *27 Mayıs 1960 Devrimi: Diktadan Demokrasiye* ('The Revolution of May 27 1960: From Dictatorship to Democracy'), Haydar Tunçkanat, 1996.
- 8) *Örtülü Ödenek: 27 Mayıs Menderes'in Dramı* ('Covered Payments: May 27, Menderes' Drama'), Rasih Nuri İleri, 1996.
- 9) *Bize Özgürlük Verdiler* ('They Gave us Freedom'), Ahmet Kahrman, 1998.

Four of the first five of the May 27-related books listed above are critical of May 27, while the last four to be published are supportive of May 27. Books published in the 1990's which characterize May 27 as a 'coup', 'anti-democratic', 'illegitimate' ('*gayrimeşru*') or contrary to the 'national will' ('*millî irade*') include *Koltuk Değnekli Demokrasi ve 27 Mayıs Darbesi* (written by Fikri Karanis, a former Demokrat Party deputy), Mehmet Arif Demirer's *Sosyalizm, Anarşi, Terör*, and *27 Mayıs Askerî Darbesinde Gerçeği Savunan Yazarlar ve Yazıları*, by the Democrats' Club.⁸

⁸ The Democrats' Club (*Demokratlar Kulübü*) is an association of former Demokrat Party members of parliament. It was founded in 1986 and its activities mostly include publishing books aimed at the rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes.

Books published during this period which are supportive of May 27 include *27 Mayıs: İlk Aşkımız*, *27 Mayıs Devrimi: Diktadan Demokrasiye, Bize Özgürlük Verdiler* and *27 Mayıs: 27-28 Nisan 1960 Gençlik Eylemi Işığında*, and *Örtülü Ödenek: 27 Mayıs Menderes'in Dramı*.

While the May 27 books of the 1990's provide little in the way of new approaches to the issues surrounding May 27, the mere fact of the appearance of so many new books which criticize May 27 as 'illegitimate' or as a 'coup' is indicative of a sea-change in the manner in which May 27 was presented in Turkey in the years after Menderes' political rehabilitation. The response generated by these books in the form of pro-May 27 publications is, furthermore, indicative of the extent to which May 27 had maintained its potency as a subject of political debate in Turkey.

Among those who supported May 27, however, much had changed since 1980. Whereas during the period 1960-1980 the pro-May 27 argument had been a matter of state policy, from 1980 onwards supporters of May 27 have felt themselves to be in opposition to the state—the powers of which they consider 'counter-revolutionary'.

From politics to history

As can also be seen in the part of this study devoted to the newspapers *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*, debate surrounding May 27 involves more than the existence of two static groups squared off against one another. Instead, the dynamic of changing opinion regarding May 27—at least to the extent that it is represented in book publications and in two of Turkey's most widely read newspapers—has since the late

1980's been moving ever further away from the pro-May 27 position. The pro-May 27 argument demands from its supporters opposition to the constitutional order established after September 12, 1980. Those who were against May 27, on the other hand, are typically not critical of Turkey's post-September 12 constitutional status quo. The growing number of books in Turkey which treat the periods 1950-1960 and 1960-1980 as historical eras, rather than points of departure for polemical discussions regarding May 27, are evidence of the extent to which Turkey has finally begun to move beyond May 27—to the dismay of those who seek to keep its memory alive.

During the period 1988-2000, the following books were published which treat May 27 simply as a historical era, without dwelling upon the politics surrounding the takeover:

- 1) *Demokrat Parti Dönemi: Toplumsal Tartışmaları* ('The Demokrat Party Era: Its Sociological Debates'), H. Bayram Kaçmazoğlu, 1988.
- 2) *İnönü-Menderes Kavgası* ('The İnönü-Menderes Argument'), Tekil Füzûzan, 1989.
- 3) *Demokrat Parti Dönemi Dış Politikası* ('Foreign Policy of the Demokrat Party Era'), Hüseyin Bağcı, 1990.
- 4) *Menderes Dönemi* ('The Menderes Era'), Abdurrahman Dilipak, 1990.
- 5) *Demokrat Parti Döneminde Türkiye Ekonomisi* ('The Economy of Turkey in the Demokrat Party Era'), Serdar Turgut, 1991.
- 6) *Demokrat Parti Masalı* ('The Story of the Demokrat Party'), Piraye Bigat Cerrahoğlu, 1996.
- 7) *Demokrat Parti İktidarının Kıbrıs Politikası 1950-1960* ('The Cyprus Policy of the Demokrat Party Administration'), Hüseyin Agun, 1997.
- 8) *Menderes Döneminde Ordu-Siyaset İlişkileri ve 27 Mayıs İhtilâli* ('The May 27 Revolution and Military-Political Relations During the Menderes Era'), Ümit Özdağ, 1997.

9) *27 Mayıs Rejimi: Bir Darbenin Hukuki Anatomisi* ('The May 27 Regime: The Legal Anatomy of a Coup'), Osman Doğru, 1998.

10) *Demokrat Parti ve 27 Mayıs Dönemi Türk Eğitimi* ('Turkish Education During the Demokrat Party and May 27 Periods'), Toper Akbaba, 1998.

One other noteworthy book from this period is *Demirkırat: Bir Demokrasinin Doğuşu* ('Demirkırat: The Birth of a Democracy'), 1991.⁹ This book includes in condensed format many of the interviews that had been presented in the documentary film of the same name that was shown on nationwide television earlier in the year.

The film, an eleven-part series shown over three months on TRT, Turkey's state television network, clearly went out of its way to neither denigrate nor celebrate May 27. As such, it is yet another example of what Güneri Cıvaoğlu of *Milliyet* called 'neither being within nor without' May 27. With nearly perfect consistency, the documentary's narrator, Mehmet Ali Birand, alternates between the terms 'coup' ('*darbe*') and 'revolution' ('*ihtilâl*') when describing the military takeover—an effort at objectivity that is in itself yet another example of the degree to which the public portrayal of May 27 had shifted in Turkey since 1980.

In the documentary episode entitled 'The Coup' ('*darbe*'), the takeover of May 27 is described as "the first time in which a party which had come to power through elections was overthrown by the Turkish Armed Forces". The final episode of the documentary ends with the story of Menderes' final days on İmralı, with the documentary's last scene being the image of Adnan Menderes dangling from the

⁹ The term '*demirkırat*', which was most commonly used by detractors of the Demokrat Party and its successors, is a reference to the manner in which the Demokrat Party's peasant supporters would pronounce the word 'democrat'.

gallows—the first time that this picture had ever been shown on Turkish television.

After this scene fades to black, Mehmet Ali Birand states:

Our generation was also there. We were young, we were filled with excitement...We believed we were doing something for the benefit of the country. But now I turn and look back at the past and I feel uneasy. It shouldn't have ended this way.¹⁰

But precisely what 'shouldn't have ended this way'? Does Birand mean May 27 should not have happened, or simply that Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan should not have been executed?

Some indication that Birand is referring to something more than the politicians' executions comes in his very next sentence.

Because then, a passion for real democracy becomes even stronger.¹¹

The message of *Demirkırat* is clear: May 27 may have had its good points, but it did not assist in the creation of a passion for 'real democracy'. 'Real democracy' does not rely upon military interventions—of which *Demirkırat*'s viewers are reminded May 27 was but the first—but rather upon elections.

Conclusions

As was the case in the newspapers *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet* (the latter failing to even mention the May 27 takeover on the occasion of its fortieth anniversary in 2000), the political edge regarding May 27 seems to have evaporated considerably from the early to mid-1990's onwards. Questions regarding the military takeover, for

¹⁰ "Bizim kuşağımız da vardı. Gençtik, heyecan içindeydik. Ülkenin yararına bir şey yaptığımıza inanıyorduk. Şimdi geriye dönüp bakıyorum. İçimde bir burukluk hissediyorum. Böyle bitmemeliydi.

¹¹ "Çünkü o zaman, gerçek demokrasi olan tutku daha da artıyor".

so long unable to be expressed openly, became lively and popular subjects of debate in Turkish books in the 1980's and 1990's. This occurred in the form of two general developments. First, with the political rehabilitation of Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan, a great number of books focusing on Menderes, the Yassıada trials, and the executions on İmralı were published in the 1980's. Then, in the 1990's, May 27 itself became the subject of considerable revision and counter-revision.

But the increase in the number of books about May 27 also seems to have passed. While eight books on May 27 were published during the years 1995-1996, just one such book has been published since 1996. At the same time, several books published since the early 1990's now discuss the 'Demokrat Party' era without any reference to May 27, a clear sign—seen also in Turkey's most popular newspapers—that this chapter in Turkish history is passing from the field of politics to that of history.

CONCLUSION

“Neither Within Nor Without”

This study has marked an effort to discuss recent Turkish history using as a point of departure something which might be called a historical 'detail': the manner in which May 27 has been remembered in print. Within this detail, however, are packaged many revealing points regarding the development of contemporary political attitudes in Turkey.

What do the changing interpretations of what May 27 meant for Turkey tell us about the Turkish Republic in the era after September 12? First and foremost, the history of what I have termed the 'May 27 debate' is particularly illuminating with regard to Turkish attitudes concerning civilian rule. The military intervention of March 12, 1971, and—to a much greater extent—the military takeover of September 12, 1980 lowered considerably the high level of prestige previously afforded to May 27. This was realized in two ways.

First, by overturning the political and constitutional structure put into place in the aftermath of May 27, the September 12 military and political authorities created a climate in which May 27 could be freely criticized in print for the first time in Turkey. Secondly, the viciousness of the September 12 military takeover itself—in which thousands of people were arrested, tortured, and thrown out of work for political reasons—convinced many that no military intervention, regardless of its political pedigree, is worth the damage that is inevitably inflicted upon the democratic process by such events.

Paradoxically enough, this has led to considerable revision of attitudes regarding May 27—a military intervention which, in many ways, was the antithesis of September 12.

Arguments concerning May 27 cut to the very heart of issues regarding the proper 'ground rules' for the Turkish Republic. What are the proper limits of 'the national will' or 'majoritarian democracy'? The Demokrat Party era was a period of considerable re-negotiation concerning the balance of power between a military-bureaucratic state and a society that was in many ways alienated from that state. May 27 put an end to the Demokrat Party era, but not to this process of negotiation, which has continued unabated.

But though this process of negotiation does not cease, it does not always proceed at the same pace. Since the mid-1980's, Turkey has been undergoing a particularly important and wide-ranging period of re-negotiation of the 'ground rules' governing the relations between state and society, a period that has seen the selection of three successive civilian presidents (the first three in the Republic's history), the creation of vast new areas of non-state space with regard to the economy, education and the media, and unprecedented (in the history of the Republic) levels of religious and cultural freedom.

The increase in frequency of the appearance of May 27-related revisionist ideas in Turkish newspapers and books in the late 1980's and early 1990's coincided with the process of political rehabilitation of Adnan Menderes, which began in earnest in 1987. It also coincided—and became conflated—with the process of state-societal re-negotiation that was also taking place during this period. Moreover, it was during this period that May 27 adopted, among both its supporters and its detractors, a greater depth of symbolism with regard to people's ideas of the kind of state the Republic of Turkey ought to be.

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