Outline of Opposition
A Comparative Analysis of Turkish Newspaper Cartoons After the Free Party Collapse in 1930

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Abstract This chapter consists of an in-depth analysis of the political cartoons from a selection of Turkish newspapers printed around the time of the republic's first experiment with a multi-party parliamentary system in 1930, as well as a comparison of these cartoons with those of the revolutionary period of 1908–1911. It argues that the cartoons in the newspapers closest to the ruling CHP party were used to defend that party from the upstart SCF, while at the same time showing that cartoons printed in more oppositional periodicals were used to defend the SCF as well as criticize the government. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates that the papers close to the government more or less stopped printing cartoons when the opposition party became defunct, presumably no longer seeing a use for them, while papers such as *Son Posta* kept printing cartoons on the front page, using the SCF as a symbol of resistance and opposition even after the party's dissolution. The cartoons analysed stem mainly from the immediate period of the party's dissolution, as well as the following months. This selection is then compared to cartoons from the revolutionary period of 1908–1911, a period of unusual press freedom under the Ottoman Empire, and probably the period most similar to 1930 up to that point in Turkish press history. This comparison puts the struggles of 1930 into perspective, demonstrating that even though the cartoons of that year were quite vicious, both sides of the political establishment were behind reform efforts, and mainly squabbled over details. Not so during the revolution, when the satirical drawings directed against the Abdülhamid government were outright bloodthirsty. The chapter concludes with a summary of these findings, as well as providing a list of three tactics used by cartoonists at the time to circumvent censorship.

Introduction

For 99 days in 1930, the recently established Turkish Republic tried to transcend the one-party political system it had created for itself. Through these days, the *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (SCF, the Free Republican Party)

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functioned as opposition party to the ruling *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası* (CHP,[1] Republican People's Party), sanctioned by President Mustafa Kemal himself. The experiment would not last long, however, and after the president lost confidence in the new party, it lost high-ranking members and was soundly defeated in the municipal elections; it would abolish itself a mere three months after it was established. This event—the abolition of the opposition party—was seized on by the nation's caricaturists and cartoon artists, almost to the point of becoming an obsession, and was used to criticise the one-party regime and the ruling party.

In analysing these cartoons, I seek to explain how they were used to criticise authority during this episode in Turkish history, what tools were available to the artists, and how they applied these tools to avoid external or self-imposed censorship. This is accomplished through a thorough analysis of every front-page cartoon in four major newspapers over a period of two months, encompassing the dissolution and aftermath of the SCF. In the second part of the article, I compare the results of my analysis with cartoons from the Ottoman Empire in 1908–1911, with a particular focus on the relationship between the cartoon industry and the government. I do this in order to investigate what tools are more specific to Turkey in 1930 and what tools are held in common across time and space. In addition, this will help contextualise the set of cartoons studied here, instead of treating them as isolated instances of the art. Before I can do that though, there is an elephant in the room that must be addressed.

There does not to my knowledge exist any flawless, all-encompassing definition of the term 'cartoon'. I have been in the habit of defining the term quite broadly, and it has been more important to me to not leave sources out, more than creating some strict boundary. I keep to this principle also here. If I were to attempt a definition, it would be something like 'a single or multi-panel drawing featuring persons or types recognisable from real life, often meant to evoke mirth.' There is also the adjacent problem of defining 'caricature', since these terms are often used interchangeably. In my research, I use the term to mean not any particular kind of image, but rather an artistic technique, where the features of real persons are exaggerated and their most prominent characteristics are emphasised. As such, I stick more closely to the original Italian definition of the term. The reason for cartoons being an interesting and worthwhile area of study for the historian is perhaps best summarised by Professor Frank Palmeri: "Because of

1 With time, the word "fırka" would be exchanged for the word "parti". The CHF is today thus known as the CHP, and seeing as the party still exists, I will use the modern abbreviation for the sake of clarity.

their close connection to contemporary social or political issues, cartoons can offer an important resource for the historical investigator, and they have sometimes been used as evidence of how a wide spectrum of society lived."[2] This is where the main usefulness of cartoons is evident, not as accurate sources for historical events, but as an image of popular opinion—or what the papers wanted to be popular opinion—in any given situation. They are commentaries on events and people at the very moment in time those events occurred and those people acted.

Two factors make cartoons particularly useful for the study of this episode in Turkish history. Firstly, the early 1930s saw a loosening of censorship with the repealing of the Law for the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i sükûn*) in 1929, creating a freer speech environment than had been seen in years.[3] This led cartoon artists to take greater liberties with their subjects, letting them be both harsher and more honest. Secondly, the SCF episode took place right in the middle of the language reform, or language revolution to use the Turkish term, which temporarily reduced literacy rates in the country to around 0%. All papers were prohibited from writing anything in the Arabic alphabet, which had been abolished in favour of Latin script.[4] Most of them went out of business as a result, and those who did survive only did so with government subsidies. Many of them also pivoted to more graphic media, such as photographs, drawings, and cartoons, making this kind of media much more important than at any other time in Turkish history.[5]

Very little has been written on cartoons in this general period of Turkish history, much less on the SCF period in particular. Only one substantial piece of research seems to have been written, and that is Gökçen Başaran İnce's article 'The Free Republican Party in the Political Cartoons of the 1930s'.[6] It goes into great detail about the cartoons printed during the SCF period, from the party's birth until it was nearing its end. However, the study does not go into any amount of detail concerning the death of the party, and none

2 Frank Palmeri, The Cartoon. The Image as Critique, in: Sarah Barber / Corinna Peniston-Bird (eds.), History Beyond the Text. A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources, London 2009, 32–48, here 32.

3 Carter Vaughn Findley, Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity. A History, London 2010, 253.

4 Geoffrey Lewis, The Turkish Language Reform. A Catastrophic Success, Oxford 1999, 34.

5 Ayhan Akman, From Cultural Schizophrenia to Modernist Binarism. Cartoons and Identities in Turkey (1930–1975), in: Fatma Müge Göçek (ed.), Political Cartoons in the Middle East, Princeton 1998, 83–132, here 88.

6 Gökçen Başaran İnce, The Free Republican Party in the Political Cartoons of the 1930s, in: New Perspectives on Turkey 53 (2015), 93–136.

at all on its aftermath. Furthermore, it also does not contain a comparison to any other period, thereby not situating the cartoons analysed in any sort of context, making it hard to assess the peculiarities of the time. For all its excellence, this article leaves some things to be desired, which I intend to rectify in this work. I first give a detailed overview of my sources, followed by a broad historical contextualisation. Part three contains the analysis, and I end with a comparison with an earlier period of Turkish history.

The Papers

The cartoons used in this study are mainly gathered from the two newspapers *Cumhuriyet* ("Republic") and *Son Posta* ("Last mail"), accessed at the wonderfully complete archives of Istanbul University,[7] as well as the online resource Gaste Arşivi.[8] *Cumhuriyet* was at the time the Republic's largest newspaper and was steadfastly on the side of the CHP. Still, it seems the paper tried its best to appear even-handed in its treatment of the party. *Son Posta*, on the other hand, became steadily more supportive. Hedging its bets early on, it sided decisively with the SCF when the party's public support started to increase. The focus is mainly on *Son Posta* since their cartoons during the SCF period have not yet been studied. These two main papers are supplemented by two smaller ones, namely *Milliyet* and *Vakit*, since they seem to have been less restrained in their ridicule of the SCF than *Cumhuriyet*.

The period under study, 1 November through 31 December of 1930, can be subdivided into three shorter periods: 1–17 November, approximately the two weeks before the dissolution of the party; 18–30 November, the two weeks immediately following the dissolution; and 1–31 December. The month of December is included in order to examine the memory of the SCF in news media while it was still fresh in everyone's minds and still politically potent.

Historical Context

After a political revolution, a world war, a war of independence, and another political revolution, the new Turkish nation at the end of the 1920s was finally beginning to stabilise. True, the economy was in bad shape and

7 İstanbul Üniversitesi Gazeteden Tarihe Bakış Projesi, https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/GAZETE/index.php (8.7.2025).

8 Gaste Arşivi, https://www.gastearsivi.com/ (8.7.2025).

responded poorly to the economic crises of 1927 and 1929, but could this perhaps be an opportunity for the nation rather than just another disaster? Mustafa Kemal certainly seemed to have thought so when he encouraged the formation of an opposition party in the autumn of 1930.

The Economic Situation

In 1930, the Turkish economy was in turmoil. During the First World War and the subsequent War of Independence, the geographical area of what would become the Turkish Republic had been devastated, resulting in income per capita dropping by as much as 40%. Turkey did not reach pre-war income levels until the very end of the 1920s.[9] On top of this came two consecutive economic crises. The first came in 1927 and was agricultural in nature, stemming from a global drop in food prices, hitting Turkey's largest exports and resulting in major economic problems for Turkish farmers who still made up the vast majority of the population.[10] The second crisis was of a monetary nature and resulted from major importers increasing imports as a response to signals from the government that it was about to increase tariffs. It was further exacerbated by preparations to pay the first instalment of the Ottoman debt in 1929. Both of these crises were then also worsened by the global depression starting in 1929.[11] The response to the economic crisis would be the main point of contention between the CHP and the SCF.

Walter Weiker persuasively identifies the economic situation as one of the two chief reasons for the new party's creation, the other being that Mustafa Kemal simply reasoned that the country was ready for this step. The most important clue that this was so was Kemal's choice of Fethi (Okyar) Bey to lead the party, a man who had long taken an interest in economic matters and had been a vocal critic of the government's economic policies. It seems that the president wanted to use this opportunity to both address the increasingly serious economic situation and carefully introduce the nation to multi-party politics.[12]

9 Şevket Pamuk, Uneven Centuries. Economic Development of Turkey since 1820, Princeton 2018, 185.

10 Cem Emrence, Turkey in Economic Crisis (1927–1930). A Panaromic Vision, in: Middle Eastern Studies 39/4 (October 2003), 67–80, here 67–68.

11 Findley 2010, 272.

12 Walter F. Weiker, Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey. The Free Party and Its Aftermath (Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East 8), Leiden 1973, 55–59.

The SCF and Its Leaders

With the backdrop of this crisis, the Free Republican Party was formed on 7 August 1930, and the formation was announced in vague terms late at night at a ball held at Mustafa Kemal's residence at Yalova. Three days later the official proclamation was printed in the newspapers by way of prepared statements by both Fethi and prime minister İsmet (İnönü) (1884–1973). The SCF was the first proper opposition party in Turkey since the *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Progressive Republican Party, TCF) had been closed by the government in 1925, accused of provoking religious opposition. This would also be a central accusation against the SCF.[13] The party was meant to be a loyal opposition, offering opposing views without threatening the main tenets of the Kemalist state, such as secularism, republicanism, and nationalism. However, it would soon turn out that the CHP government was not at all ready for even such an incremental increase in political freedom.

Ali Fethi was chosen as leader of the new organisation on direct encouragement of, and in agreement with, Mustafa Kemal. The two had known each other since their days at the Istanbul Military Academy where Fethi graduated in 1904 and had been close personal friends since (a friendship that would survive the SCF episode). During his first period in the army (1904–1908) he became a member of the Committee of Union and Progress. Later, he served both as ambassador to various countries and as prime minister for a short period in 1924–1925. He was thus a seasoned statesman, known for being level-headed and knowledgeable.[14]

Another party member of note—particularly in the context of caricatures, an art form in which he figured frequently as target of ridicule during the SCF period—was Ahmet Ağaoğlu (1869–1939). Ağaoğlu was an Azerbaijani Turk born in 1869, and in the caricatures of him he is often portrayed as a man out of touch, old, and hard to understand on account of his heavy accent. He was also one of the party's most colourful characters, and he never shied away from a fight, which contributed to making him an easy target. This did not dissuade him, however, as he was much experienced in politics and writing. He had a solid Western education from St. Petersburg and Paris, had written for the most influential Turkish publications (such as *Türk Yurdu, Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, and *Le Jeune Turc*), and had his first seat in parliament in 1912.[15]

13 Findley 2010, 250.

14 Abdülhamit Avşar, Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası. Bir Partinin Kapanmasında Basının Rolü, Istanbul 1998, 53–58.

15 Avşar 1998, 58–60.

Other than the two most prominent members, there are of course also others that from time to time are portrayed in the newspapers' caricatures, such as Mehmet Nuri (Conker) (1882–1937) and some of the party's female members. These will be introduced when and where necessary.

Dissolution

On Monday, 17 November 1930, the papers announced the official dissolution of the Free Republican Party.[16] Though the event in itself might seem dramatic (following, as it did, one of the most contentious parliamentary sessions in years, which saw members of both parties hurl insults and accusations of various degrees of plausibility at each other), it had been anticipated for some time by the main actors of this story. Certainly, disenchantment among the leadership had set in weeks earlier.

In his book 'Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey', where he traces the rise and fall of the SCF, Walter Weiker argues that the beginning of the end for the party came with Fethi's visit to Izmir as part of his election tour in the very early days of September 1930. Though Fethi had argued against it, with the support of several other high-ranking members, Atatürk and İsmet insisted that they participate in the municipal elections of 1930 with only months to prepare.[17] As part of their election campaign, Fethi, along with much of the leadership, toured the western provinces to hold speeches to gin up support for the new party. To everyone's surprise, especially İsmet and the CHP leaders, this went quite well, and Fethi was met with large crowds of supporters wherever he went. The one that greeted his arrival in Izmir apparently numbered around 30,000–40,000. The visit resulted in general unrest and clashes between CHP and SCF supporters, ultimately leaving several injured and one dead. Equally disturbing for Atatürk and others in the revolutionary leadership was the appearance of Islamic symbols among the SCF supporters such as green flags. It was also reported that the CHP did not have much influence left on the people of the Izmir, giving rise to fears that the SCF might actually win an election there. The debacle on the whole worried government members extremely and in the end resulted in Kemal publicly siding with the CHP.[18] This was the first, and perhaps the most serious blow to the new party.

Mustafa Kemal's indirect rebuke of the opposition was not the end of the Izmir episode, however. First, three days later, came the resignation

16 Serbes fırka dağıldı!, *Cumhuriyet*, 17.11.1930, front page.
17 Weiker 1973, 90–91.
18 Gazi Hz.nin Nadi Beye cevabı, *Cumhuriyet*, 10.9.1930, front page.

from the SCF of Dr. Reşit Galip (1893–1934), a prominent member and personal friend of Mustafa Kemal. Second came the arrest of four newspaper editors on 14 September, the heads of *Son Posta, Yeni Asır* ("New Era"), *Hizmet* ("Duty"), and *Halkın Sesi* ("Voice of the People"). All of these papers supported the new party to some degree. Although the charges resulted in mild sentences (which were later overturned and dropped) and the minister of justice was forced to resign, it had become clear that complete freedom of politics and the press was still far from being realised.

Following the Izmir debacle, a special session of the Grand National Assembly (the first special session ever) was called; officially meant to deal with the dire economic situation, it was clear to everyone that the session would also be an opportunity for the CHP and SCF to directly confront one another. And so they would. During the session, from 22 October onward, the two parties presented their vision of the Turkish economy, in a debate that was often heated and even outright hostile. Both sides saw this debate as of vital importance to the survival of the SCF, and even though Fethi made a strong showing with his speech on the economic situation, it was generally agreed that his party had not proven itself as a real political alternative to the CHP.

After the stormy special session, the regular session of the Grand National Assembly was called on 1 November and turned out to be equally contentious. There were two reasons for this; firstly, İsmet had fired the four ministers that had been drawing the most criticism from the SCF and constituted a new government. Secondly, Fethi attacked the CHP directly, calling it complacent, saying it rested on the laurels of past victories, and claimed that the ruling party was unable or unwilling to fix national issues that they were clearly aware of. He also accused the party of electioneering, of using their state power to skew the election results in their favour. This seems to have led to a general increase in the hostility between the two parties that further contributed to the demise of the SCF.

The elections, the integrity of which Fethi was complaining about, were the municipal elections held at the beginning of October. Starting on the 5th, the elections lasted for two weeks, but in spite of the generous voting period less than half of the eligible population cast their ballot. Though the first few days went by without much trouble, reports of unrest soon became widespread, and so also did complaints of election irregularities. Examples include voter intimidation and outright buying of votes. One of the few places a free election seems to have been held was Samsun, where the SCF won its greatest victory. The party did also win some smaller cities and districts, probably about thirty of them, but it was all for nought. The elections turned out to be a major defeat for the fledgling party, and members started

to resign. Only one more confrontation with the CHP remained, and it would mark the end for this period of multi-party experimentation.

The formal closure of the Free Republican Party came on 17 November 1930, but in practice it died with the last debate in the assembly it participated in, on 15 November. Fethi had issued a motion some days earlier that the interior minister explain what Fethi himself presented as widespread election irregularities, and this was now up for debate. Following a speech by Fethi outlining the allegations, several CHP members—including the interior minister Şükrü (Kaya)—presented their responses, absolving themselves and the ruling party of any sin, and blaming all that had happened on the SCF. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. Only two days later the party leadership officially decided to disband, seeing no future for their organisation.[19]

An Enthusiastic Reception

With the Turkish language reform of 1928, which changed the alphabet from Arabic to Latin, along with purging a large number of Arabic and Persian words from the vocabulary, the already low literacy rate was temporarily reduced to near zero, and as a consequence, most newspapers, despite some government compensation, were forced to close following a massive drop in circulation.[20] As Akman writes, this led newspapers to turn "toward graphic material in general, and cartoons in particular, to keep their readership from shrinking even further." He also notes that "[t]he reaction of the readers to the introduction of daily cartoons and comic strips was very enthusiastic."[21] Cartoons thus became part of the papers' tools, tools they needed to reach new readers and retain old ones. Reaching the SCF period, the language reform was very much still ongoing, and many newspapers continued to feature cartoons prominently in the lower right-hand corner of their front page.

Cartooning was at this point in a transitory state; it had started to become a respected, full-time profession, but was not quite there yet. Because of this (and possibly because of fear of legal action) most cartoons were still unsigned, and many papers still printed cartoons only sporadically, apparently without having their own staff artist, and sometimes copied cartoons

19 The narrative of the decline and fall of the SCF is largely taken from Weiker 1973, 90–135.

20 Akman 1998, 88.

21 Akman 1998, 88.

wholesale from other publications.[22] In fact, the only signed images studied in this article are those by Ramiz Gökçe—the second most famous cartoon artist of the early republic—who drew for *Cumhuriyet* during the SCF experiment. Furthermore, Turkey was entering the period of civic cartoons (cartoons focusing less on politics, important figures, etc., and more on people's everyday experiences), which started with Cemal Nadir (Güler), the most famous artist of the era. The newspaper cartoons of the time, though, still followed the old recipe of focusing almost exclusively on political issues.[23] When the SCF appeared on the national scene, it thus became an immediate and obvious target of the caricaturists.

Another aspect worth pointing out concerning the press in the SCF period is that it laboured under somewhat looser constraints than it had just a year before. Following the Şeyh Said rebellion of 1925, the government had passed the Law for the Maintenance of Order and set up independence tribunals to prosecute those responsible which, by their closure in 1927, had passed the death sentence on 660 people and led to the arrest of over seven thousand others. Importantly, under cover of this law the government closed several major Istanbul publications and prosecuted journalists by way of the new tribunals. This crackdown ramped up significantly after the assassination attempt on Mustafa Kemal in 1926 and turned into a general prosecution of all dissenters. This included the Progressive Republican Party, the earlier experiment in multi-party politics before the SCF. The Law for the Maintenance of Order remained in force until 1929, two years longer than the tribunals.[24] During this time, the press clearly worked under tight constraints, forced to toe the party line. This (combined with the havoc wrought by the language reform) is likely also the main reason that more oppositional newspapers, such as *Son Posta*, were only founded after the law was abolished.

A Selection of Newspapers

For the analysis of the fall and aftermath of the SCF in newspaper cartoons, I have selected the papers *Cumhuriyet*, *Vakit*, *Milliyet*, and *Son Posta*. The first three must be classified as pro-CHP, though to a varying extent, while the last was pro-SCF. *Son Posta*, being the only opposition paper in this study, necessarily receives disproportionate attention and is mostly compared to

22 Bugünkü Akbabadan, *Cumhuriyet*, 20.11.1930, front page.
23 Akman 1998, 88–90.
24 Findley 2010, 250–253.

Cumhuriyet, it being the largest paper at the time. The two others, *Milliyet* and *Vakit*, are mostly supplemental.

Cumhuriyet, the most important newspaper in Turkey both then and now, was initially highly positive towards the new party. This was likely due to the fact that the paper's owner, Yunus Nadi (Abalıoğlu) (1879–1945), was a personal friend of Mustafa Kemal, and he was aware that Kemal had been involved in the party's formation. Nadi was also known for being independent and not afraid to criticise the government's policies when he saw fit, such as when he lambasted the İsmet administration for its agricultural policy.[25] As time went by, Nadi's and *Cumhuriyet*'s attitude towards the SCF changed very much for the worse, especially after the Izmir incident. Though the paper might not have become an outright enemy of the party, it was certainly not its friend.[26]

Son Posta for its part was much more friendly toward the new party and is the only one on this list that can be characterised as pro-SCF. The paper was founded just a few months before the party, in the summer of 1930, and was initially hesitant to support it, seeing as in the paper's view it was too right-wing. Later, especially after the Izmir incident described above, the paper came to support the SCF, seeing the popular enthusiasm for the party and its vocal opposition to unpopular CHP policies. Eventually it gained the reputation of being something of an unofficial party newspaper, and readers could often find a column written by Ahmet Ağaoğlu on its pages.[27] For his efforts, the paper's editor was arrested on 14 September, in the ultimately failed raid on the opposition press. It is important to point out that even though the party and paper were very close, they were not always on the same page. Though Mehmet Zekeriya (Sertel) (1890–1980), the editor of *Son Posta*, supported the SCF, he supported them for his own reasons, mainly because he thought it strengthened the republic as a whole and that étatism and a one-party state would eventually lead to fascism, to which he was violently opposed. He was decidedly to the left of Fethi, who was a staunch supporter of Mustafa Kemal and his vision.[28]

Vakit was an Istanbul newspaper owned by three brothers, two of which were assembly members for the CHP. It was a staunch defender of the İsmet government.[29] *Milliyet* was also owned by a CHP assembly member which

25 This apparent bravery was likely facilitated in large part by his friendship with the president, and whether the leniency afforded him personally extended to the whole paper is uncertain.

26 Avşar 1998, 32–33.

27 Avşar 1998, 33–35.

28 Weiker 1973, 109.

29 Weiker 1973, 82.

it proudly displayed in its header as *Başmuharriri: Siirt Mebusu Mahmut*, i.e. "Chief editor: parliament member from Siirt Mahmut".[30] These papers did not rely on cartoons to any great extent, but the ones they did print are a much-needed supplement to *Cumhuriyet*'s, since, as will be shown, that paper reduced its frequency of printed cartoons significantly as events progressed.

Analysis

During the fall and dissolution of the SCF, the party was heavily ridiculed in the papers and their cartoons for challenging the CHP and the government. This concerted attack on the faltering party, in addition to giving important clues as to what sort of tools the cartoonists had available, offers a stark contrast to the behaviour of the pro-SCF media, here represented by the newspaper *Son Posta*. By contrasting these different approaches to criticism in general, it is possible to draw lessons on the critique of authority more specifically.

The Writing on the Wall

By the beginning of November 1930, it was clear to most observers that the SCF's days were numbered; members had started leaving, the party had lost in the municipal elections, and, most importantly of all, it had lost the support of President Mustafa Kemal. This crisis was reflected in the cartoons of the time and in the reporting that surrounded them.

One example of something the SCF was lampooned for several times in the cartoons was its apparent inability to retain its ranking members. On 2 November, *Vakit* published an image titled "13 members, 15 portfolios", featuring the SCF parliament members walking in a line, carrying their portfolios on their shoulder (Fig. 1). In addition, Fethi is dragging two more with him by a rope, and in the comment beneath the images he is shown complaining about the situation and saying how much easier it would be if only they had had two more deputies with them. This refers to the departure of two of the party's parliament members, the most important of whom was Dr. Reşit Galip, a deputy from Aydın and close friend of Mustafa Kemal.[31] Two days later, the same paper could report the apparent departure of two more members (though somewhat lower ranking), namely İsmail Hakkı

30 See for instance the header of *Milliyet*, 1.9.1930.

31 Weiker 1973, 96.

Figure 1. "13 members, 15 portfolios". Vakit, 2.11.1930.

(Baltacıoğlu) and Şekip Bey. This was also depicted in a cartoon the following day, showing both men as young boys being held by the hand by a paternal figure labelled "Father Science" (Fig. 2). He gently chastises them for running away from school and leads them back with him. The joke stems from both men being connected to the Darülfünun, the university in Istanbul, to which they will both now presumably return. Another layer is added

Figure 2. "Professor İsmail Hakkı and Şekip Bey resign from the Free Party." *Vakit*, 5.11.1930.

when one considers that İsmail both held the important position of chairman of the Istanbul section of the party and had joined in order "to bring scientific thinking into politics."[32] Apparently, he had found the party unreceptive to his ideas.

Somewhat contradictory to the trajectory of events, both *Cumhuriyet* and *Son Posta* seem to change their focus from the SCF to other matters in their cartoons in early November, and *Cumhuriyet* already starts publishing fewer cartoons than it had in the previous months. The decrease of cartoons in pro-CHP papers is discussed further below. *Son Posta* only prints four cartoons related to the SCF and its situation from the 1st of November to the 17th, in contrast to ten of the 12 images they publish after the party's dissolution, from the 18th to the 30th. When it comes to *Son Posta*, the main reason for this change in focus is most likely the concurrent feud between Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), chief of the *Türkocağı* organisation, and *Son Posta* editor Zekeriya over *Türkocağı*'s intentions and philosophy.[33] This topic is frequently present in the cartoons they publish and seems to briefly have taken priority over other affairs.

The cartoons that are published, related to the SCF, both in *Son Posta* and *Cumhuriyet*, mostly centre on the opening of the parliament on 1 November. On 2 November for instance, *Cumhuriyet* publishes a cartoon in which Emin Bey, a high-ranking member of the SCF, is lampooned for being soundly defeated in his bid for president of the parliament against incumbent Kazım Pasha (Fig. 3). This was probably not much of a defeat for the opposition though, since they could hardly have expected to win against the CHP on that front. *Son Posta* also references the opening of the parliament. In a cartoon from 2 November, they seem to gently criticise Fethi for his soft-spoken nature, while at the same time showing him support. In the drawing, titled "During the opening of the parliament", a man talking to his mother-in-law says: "Ah, mother-in-law… If Fethi Bey had had a mouth like yours, do you think İsmet Pasha would have gotten a word in edgewise?" (Fig. 4). Fethi is here both complimented for his civility and lightly criticised for perhaps being too civil. In addition, İsmet is indirectly criticised for not letting Fethi speak and defend himself, making İsmet partially responsible for the SCF's troubles.

Another cartoon, this one in *Cumhuriyet* on 14 November, portrays the clash between the two parties in the parliament as a wrestling match (Fig. 5). It is interesting, as it portrays the parties as equal, making only the vague statement that "all of Turkey's wrestlers, famous and unknown" will fight.

32 Weiker 1973, 118.
33 Weiker 1973, 128.

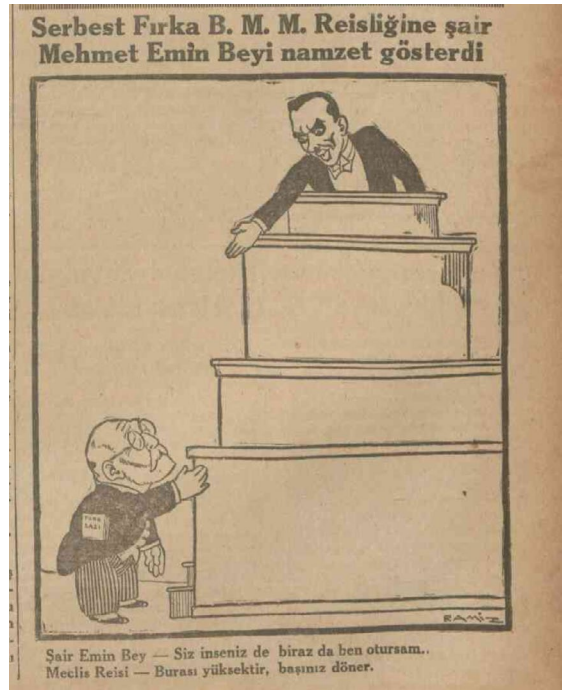

Figure 3. "The poet Mehmet Emin Bey was nominated to be president of the parliament." *Cumhuriyet*, 2.11.1930.

Figure 4. "During the opening of the parliament". *Son Posta*, 2.11.1930.

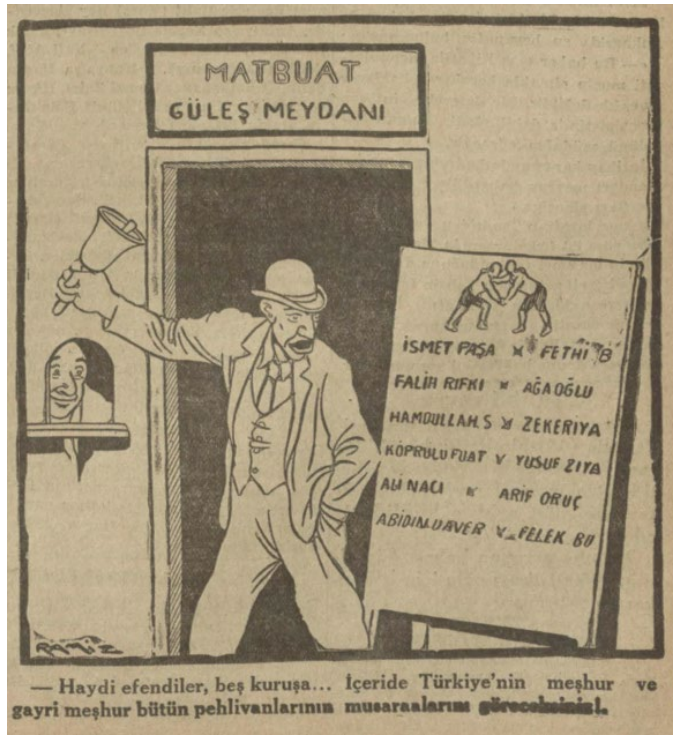

Figure 5. Untitled. *Cumhuriyet*, 14.11.1930.

It also includes a list of which "wrestlers" will fight each other, apparently according to how central they are in their respective parties. At the top, for instance, we had Fethi versus İsmet, immediately followed by Ağaoğlu versus Falih Rıfkı (Atay). This tells us a lot about who people saw as important in the parties, to some extent disregarding their formal position. Zekeriya for instance, in third place for the SCF on the list, was not a ranking member, but rather the editor of *Son Posta*. His inclusion on the list might have something to do with media bias—*Cumhuriyet* seeing him as more important than he really was because they were in the same business—but it is also indicative of the close relationship between *Son Posta* and the SCF, both actual and as perceived by *Cumhuriyet*. The fighting arena is also labelled "Press" (*Matbuat*), suggesting that the clash between the parties for the most part took place in that arena.

Initial lessons

Seeing the two weeks before the dissolution as a whole, it seems fair to say that the caricaturing community did not entirely expect such a dramatic turn of events for the nascent opposition party. They were mostly concerned with other things, such as intra-paper feuds,[34] and any sense of foreboding is absent, until the days immediately preceding the event. Some histories of the party, such as Walter Weiker's otherwise outstanding account 'Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey: The Free Party and its Aftermath', tend to portray the party's collapse as inevitable, while this was not necessarily the popular opinion at the time.[35]

Further, the contrast between the portrayal of the two feuding parties in the various papers is already evident and will become more so after the SCF's dissolution. *Vakit* had no qualms about attacking the SCF where it hurt, ridiculing the party outright for losing important members. It shows the parliament members remaining as tired, especially Fethi who is visibly sweating, and, as usual, Ağaoğlu is depicted as old and mildly crazy-looking. The message is not hard to get: The party is doing poorly, and this is a good thing.

In contrast, *Son Posta* just seems mildly exasperated and makes more light-hearted fun of Fethi for being too decent. It is clearly not critiquing the party's existence, just the lacklustre way it is pushing its agenda. *Cumhuriyet*, as the closest we get to an unofficial "paper of record", is trying to be more even-handed and simply shows the parties as equals fighting in the arena of the press.

Dissolution

On the day of the party's dissolution, 17 November 1930, the headlines of *Vakit*, *Milliyet*, and *Cumhuriyet* all announced the news in bold type on the top of the front page. All of them have also managed to get a few short comments on the event from Fethi Bey and Ahmet Ağaoğlu, as well as one from one Süreyya (İlmen) Pasha (only in *Milliyet*). Ironically, the only paper missing from this list is *Son Posta*, the only paper in favour of the party, who could merely report rumours of a possible forthcoming dissolution.

34 Other concerns of the caricaturists during this time include the visit to Turkey by Greek prime minister Venizelos, the general economic crisis, trouble with the water system in Istanbul, and arms limitation agreements.

35 Weiker 1973, 77–78.

Figure 6. "The sick baby". *Son Posta*, 17.11.1930.

On the day itself, none of the newspapers printed a cartoon concerning the dissolution, and only *Son Posta* printed one related to the party at all. That cartoon was an image of Fethi Bey in bed dressed like a woman, while a doctor by the bedside is holding a baby labelled 'SF', telling the party leader that "the baby's life is in danger… The National Block vaccine will spoil its blood" (Fig. 6). This indicates that even a paper supportive of the party had already given up on the idea of forming a national block to save it and had perhaps given up on the party entirely. It also tells us that even if a block had been formed, it would have been a sort of poisoned pill, ruining the party anyway. *Milliyet* had also commented on the block idea in a cartoon from 14 November, in which they ridiculed Fethi for even imagining it as a possibility to consider his and his party's status far inferior to that of İsmet and the CHP (Fig. 7). Though the block idea was never even considered by the CHP, and was only carefully sounded out by the SCF, it was ridiculed to a surprising degree in the news media.[36]

36 See, for example, the cartoon in *Vakit*, 14.11.1930.

On 18 November, the day after the party's dissolution, all four newspapers included in this study printed a cartoon on their front page, all of them unsurprisingly concerning the SCF, which are useful to compare. Firstly, *Cumhuriyet* printed a rather innocuous image depicting the burial of the party (Fig. 8). It is a cartoon made up of two panels, the first depicting Fethi holding a baby marked S.C. (*Serbest Cumhuriyet*) in the air, surrounded by three other leading members of the party. I have identified them as Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul) (1869–1944), Ahmet Ağaoğlu, and one other. It is clearly a cause for celebration judging from the smiles of the participants. The second panel shows the same men, now crying and carrying a coffin. Presiding over the scene in the first panel, and walking beside the coffin in the second, is a fourth figure that might be either İsmail Hakkı (Baltacıoğlu) or Mustafa Kemal. It is hard to tell, seeing as they are drawn with very similar lines as caricatures. Considering that İsmail Hakkı Bey left the party some weeks prior (a scene incidentally depicted in a cartoon in *Vakit* on 5 November, as mentioned above), it is almost certain that the figure is supposed to be

Figure 7. "The block affair". *Milliyet*, 14.11.1930.

Figure 8. Untitled. *Cumhuriyet*, 18.11.1930.

Mustafa Kemal. This is highly unusual for the time, since, as Başaran İnce shows, during this period "he is treated as a kind of demigod or distant monarch, standing as a holy figure aloof from daily politics", as opposed to earlier in the life of the Republic when he was depicted frequently.[37]

Son Posta took a different approach, and under the header "The big baby" printed an image of Fethi Bey as a young girl being physically torn between two older boys named *Halk* ("The people") and H.F. (*Halk Fırkası*, i.e. the CHP). Underneath the image is a caption reading: "The free leader of the free party" (Fig. 9). The two older children have no identifying features, and the focus is squarely on Fethi as the symbol of his party, this being very common during the SCF period.[38] It indicates that Fethi, and by extension the party, was helpless in the face of competing goals and values, and that the CHP did not allow the people to control the party, but in fact fought against the people for control of what should have been an independent opposition party. This helplessness is further emphasised by portraying the leader as a girl, playing on stereotypes of women as the "weaker sex". This is thus an indirect criticism of the lack of democratic choice for the

37 Başaran İnce 2015, 104–105.
38 Başaran İnce 2015, 106.

Figure 9. "The big baby". *Son Posta*, 18.11.1930.

electorate, a situation brought about by the CHP. Compared with the cartoon in *Cumhuriyet*, which seems to indicate that the party's dissolution was an occasion for sincere grief, the one in *Son Posta* has a more critical message concerning the status of Turkish democracy.

Milliyet is far less diplomatic than the other two, and following its typical modus operandi chose to make light of the event, mostly by making fun of Ahmet Ağaoğlu. Ağaoğlu was easier to attack than Fethi, since he was not popular in the CHP establishment, even despised, and had been so for quite a while. In addition, the fact that Fethi was a personal friend of Mustafa Kemal made it much riskier to criticise or ridicule him.[39] *Milliyet*'s cartoon depicted Ağaoğlu as a small child looking at a somewhat larger Fethi, who is blowing soap bubbles with a straw (Fig. 10). The bubble he has just made, marked 'S.C.F.', is bursting, and the whole scene is captioned "Ağaoğlu – 'You blow so strongly that the bubble burst, brother.'" This indicates that the artist blames the party itself for its failure, perhaps because it took its mandate too seriously and overstepped its bounds. The cartoon seems to make more fun of Ağaoğlu than of Fethi, in that Fethi is portrayed more or less as a regular man, while his partner is drawn in proper exaggerated caricature

39 Başaran İnce 2015, 107.

Figure 10. Untitled. *Milliyet*, 18.11.1930.

fashion. The cartoon's conclusion deviates predictably from *Son Posta*'s assessment, putting the blame more on the establishment.

Oddly, *Vakit* has no cartoons pertaining to the dissolution on the 18th, like the three others, instead featuring an image of Ağaoğlu slapping Fazıl Ahmet Bey for calling him an old man. The dissolution is not referenced in *Vakit*'s cartoons until 20 November, when, in an image titled "A picture of the pasha's mouth, once again locked up", Süreyya Pasha is portrayed with a lock on his mouth (Fig. 11). This is a reference to an earlier cartoon from the party's founding, on 6 September in the same paper, where Ağaoğlu opens the lock on the pasha's mouth, thereby giving him free reign. (Incidentally, this is the only cartoon I have been able to find that explicitly references another cartoon in a continuous manner). Süreyya Pasha, the leader of the SCF in the Anatolian part of Istanbul, was well known as a

Figure 11. "At the closing of the Free Party". *Vakit*, 20.11.1930.

critic of the CHP and was once even rebuked by Mustafa Kemal personally.[40] This image is arguably quite telling, because it implies that now that the opposition party has been closed it will be much harder for Süreyya, and by extension everyone else, to criticise the CHP. The lack of any official venue for criticising the CHP regime was thus seemingly interpreted to mean a dampening of criticism overall. However, since the image is printed in *Vakit*, a pro-CHP newspaper, it is perhaps more likely that it is nothing more than gloating over the silencing of someone the paper apparently harboured a particular antipathy towards.

Fear and Gloating

As we can see, the trends from the pre-dissolution period carry over into the days of the actual event. *Son Posta* portrays the party as sickly, with Fethi trying to save it with the "National Block vaccine", thus showing its concern for the two-party project without necessarily attacking anyone in particular. The next day, though, they show the party being torn between the people and the CHP, probably intending it to be a victim of the latter. Here as well, the party is depicted as a child, though this child has Fethi's face, thereby merging him and the party into one and using him as a symbol for his party. This image, then, is a glimpse into the trend for *Son Posta* over the next month, using the party and its leader as a symbol they can use to criticise the CHP and the one-party system.

As for the other papers, *Cumhuriyet* once again tries to strike a more balanced tone and simply shows the party's death. *Milliyet* and *Vakit*, often more overt in their ridicule, follow their regular pattern, and gleefully revel in the SCF's demise. After this, they rarely mention the party in their cartoons again and would in fact print significantly fewer cartoons overall, something I will come back to below.

Aftermath and Continued Struggle

Mourning the Party

Though the papers printed fewer cartoons following the immediate aftermath of the dissolution, they did not stop entirely, and some of the images published after the fact might give some valuable insight into their retrospective views of this political experiment. As is the case with political

40 Başaran İnce 2015, 115–116.

cartoons, they rarely tell us an objective truth, whatever that might mean, but instead give some clues as to how this challenge to the authority of the CHP was interpreted.

Looking at the long-term presence of the SCF in newspaper cartoons, it naturally transpires that the party becomes less of a focus after it loses its immediate political relevance. That is, this is the case for all the CHP-aligned papers: the story is rather different with *Son Posta*. This paper, with its close connection to the defunct opposition party, continued to print cartoons in which the main topic being lampooned, mourned, and celebrated was the SCF.

Figure 12. "On the coffin rest". *Son Posta*, 19.11.1930.

In the three days immediately following the paper's admission that the party was indeed dissolved, it printed three cartoons that represented a sort of obituary over the party. On the first day, 19 November, the party is portrayed as being buried in the Islamic fashion, complete with an imam leading the congregation in prayer over the dead (Fig. 12). This is quite interesting, as one of the principal accusations against the party during its lifetime was that it was—or at least attracted people who were—staunchly reactionary, meaning among other things wanting to give Islam a greater place in

Figure 13. "Who's free?" *Son Posta*, 20.11.1930.

society and politics.[41] Though this might seem significant, it is more than likely that this is just how a funeral would naturally be portrayed, considering that Turkey is a country where the vast majority was, and still is, Muslim, and despite Mustafa Kemal's secularising reforms these kinds of popular rituals never disappeared. As it is always a danger to overlook certain hidden layers when picking apart a cartoon, it is similarly possible to read too much into it. In this case, I would conclude that this cartoon simply represents the death of the party in an obvious manner for a public that was still learning to read their own language.

The cartoon the second day is a little more interesting, in that it also points veiled criticism at the CHP government, taken to be the reason for the SCF's downfall. The cartoon is titled "Who's free?" and centres on two men walking down the street, while Fethi himself is locking up the SCF party headquarters in the background (Fig. 13). One of the men comments to the other: "The SCF was closed, and now our party is free." The man is most likely referring to the CHP. By his comment, he means that the ruling party is now free to do what it wishes without the SCF being in the way. The humour of the image stems from a play on the word *serbes*, or *serbest* in modern Turkish, which can mean free, but also liberated or unshackled. The defunct opposition party used to be free, but the CHP is "free". The

41 Weiker 1973, 142–143.

Figure 14. "In the seventh heaven". *Son Posta*, 21.11.1930.

image represents a subtle yet potent criticism of a government that refuses to accept criticism, be it through a political party or through the media.

The last of these three cartoons, as the first, is mostly mourning the death of the party. It pictures the SCF as an angel in the seventh heaven, which, as is usual when symbolising the party, has Fethi's face (Fig. 14). The angel comments: "Thus I have now gained my freedom." Again, the word *serbest* is used to make a play on words with the party's name. It plays on traditional religious symbolism to show the party as really free only after its demise, the joke being premised on its name. Both this cartoon and the one two days earlier seem rather benign, mourning the end of the party more than making some explicit political commentary. This is in stark opposition to the second one, which also concerns the death of the party but is much more of an explicit criticism of the CHP and the İsmet government.

Continued Opposition

After this eulogising, *Son Posta* are more or less done mourning the party as such, but they are not done criticising the one-party state or the CHP. In a cartoon from 23 November, the cartoonist scrutinises the general state of affairs now that the CHP is once again the only party (Fig. 15). In this image,

titled “The political orchestra”, an orchestra playing the “Political March” abruptly stops playing because the violinist’s left arm “had a stroke”. The violinist, pictured prominently, has his left and right arm labelled “S.F.” and “H.F.”, respectively. The implication is obvious; now that the SCF is dead, the country no longer has a political left, and the political apparatus therefore does not function properly.

With time, *Son Posta* focused less on the SCF per se and more on the lack of an opposition party in the republic generally. However, they kept using the SCF as a symbol of that absence. A good example of this is a cartoon from 29 November simply titled “Pregnant” (Fig. 16). A woman is holding a dead baby with Fethi’s face, labelled “S.F.”, while people are standing around her and crying. The text bellow the image gives voice to the woman, identifying her as the Motherland: “Motherland – ‘But why do you cry? If the baby is dead, I will give birth again; this time I will give birth to a lion cub.’” The cartoonist has distanced himself from the valorisation of the party that was evident when it was still in existence and shortly after, instead implying that the party was too weak to survive. The next opposition party will certainly be stronger though, for the people of the motherland is not going to give up so easily. By way of the symbolism of Fethi and the SCF, this image

Figure 15. “The political orchestra”. *Son Posta*, 23.11.1930.

Figure 16. "Pregnant". *Son Posta*, 29.11.1930.

delivers a veiled warning, even a threat, to the CHP, making it clear that those opposed to their vision of Turkey would not give up quite so easily.

A bit later on we also see some images pointing out the lack of an opposition party without referring explicitly to the SCF, such as on 3 December. The cartoon is titled "Invalids" and pictures a man with only one leg walking down the street on crutches (Fig. 17). Two men in the foreground comment on the scene: "Man 1 – 'That poor man, he walks so laboriously on his one leg!'" "Man 2 – 'Just like a country with one party.'" The cartoon refers to recent events without labelling any of the participants with the usual S.F., H.F., or other markers. It also shows evidence of a growing acceptance that the SCF is in fact dead and gone, and that it might be time to criticise the one-party state on its own merits rather than relying on the crutch of the defunct opposition party.

In the end, the SCF naturally stops being a focus of the caricaturists as it fades form the nation's eye. Some of its lustre, however, seems to be preserved in the person of Fethi Bey. On 16 December *Son Posta* printed a cartoon titled "The new style of opposition", showing two men talking in

Figure 17. "Invalids". *Son Posta*, 3.12.1930.

Figure 18. "The new style of opposition". *Son Posta*, 16.12.1930.

front of a group of camels laden with paper (Fig. 18). One of the men asks the other why on earth there are five camels carrying documents in front of the parliament. The other answers: "These are Fethi Bey's proposals for the coming year!" It seems to suggest that just because Fethi is no longer head of his own party, this will not stop him from fighting for what he believes in by other means.

There is little more to say about the other papers in this study that supported the CHP. After the dissolution of the SCF, in addition to printing fewer cartoons in general, they also lost interest in the party in general. Those that do reference it mostly make fun of individual members, without having any deeper political message.

The Party as Symbol

During December, when *Son Posta* was done mourning the collapse of the SCF, the paper's cartoon artists soon transitioned to using the party as a symbol of opposition to the CHP and the one-party state, while other papers quickly blamed the party for its own failures and moved on. Along with the image of Fethi himself they use this symbol as a sign of hope that a new party will come soon which will be stronger, and as a cudgel against the enemies of a more inclusive political system.

Decline in Cartoons

Following the first few days after the dissolution, the number of cartoons referencing the party drops off sharply in the three pro-CHP papers. In fact, the number of cartoons in general decreases. This is particularly visible in *Cumhuriyet*, which almost completely stops printing cartoons at all, and this phenomenon did not pass unnoticed, certainly not by the cartoonists themselves.

In a revealing cartoon of 23 November, Ramiz Gökçe—who had been drawing for *Cumhuriyet* for the entire duration of the SCF's life—pointed this out in a rather autobiographical fashion (Fig. 19). A tired man sits by a table with his head in his hand holding a pen. Another man stands beside the table, and the two have a conversation. The conversation implies that the caricaturist has been fired because the SCF has been disbanded and that he is therefore no longer needed. And indeed, Ramiz (as he was known, since he always signed his drawings with his first name) turned out to be entirely correct.

From the date of printing this image until the end of the year, *Cumhuriyet* published a grand total of two cartoons, a frankly staggering drop from the

Figure 19. Untitled. *Cumhuriyet*, 23.11.1930.

SCF period when a majority of the editions of the paper included a cartoon by Ramiz. Looking more closely at the statistics, we see that in October, 15 of the papers included a cartoon on the front page. In September, that number was a full 22 of the numbers issued. Though this abrupt reduction is most visible in *Cumhuriyet*, it is also detectable in the others: *Vakit* goes from a total of 22 in November to ten in December, and *Milliyet* goes from eight to two.[42] The sudden drop-off in the number of cartoons is stark enough to warrant a closer look at possible explanations.

One possible explanation is that as the population learned to read, the need for large amounts of visual media gradually disappeared, giving the papers more room for news articles and such. In my view, this explanation is unsatisfactory. While this is probably true in the long term and might

42 This trend does not apply to *Son Posta*. I will come back to this below.

have influenced this phenomenon in 1930 to some small extent, the fall in publication of cartoons shortly before and after the dissolution of the SCF is far too abrupt. If a statistic were to be made of the number of cartoons in a selection of papers from the language reform to the end of the SCF period, I would expect to see a spike in numbers during the time of the opposition party, especially in the early days. To prove this definitively is, however, outside the scope of this article.

The most likely explanation, in my view, which would also explain the difference between the pro-CHP papers and *Son Posta*, is that for the pro-regime papers the cartoons were simply just another propaganda tool against the SCF. When the opposition party ceased to exist, there was no longer as much of a need for that kind of hard-hitting visual aids. By contrast, *Son Posta* had tied their fate closely to the SCF early on; it published articles by the party's leaders, criticised the government, and became something of an unofficial party newspaper. Without the party as a catalyst for discontent, it would be harder for *Son Posta* to justify their outspokenness in the face of the CHP and their censorship apparatus, even in the somewhat freer period of 1929–1930. The paper would stand completely on its own against the CHP without the crutch of the SCF, which was after all officially sanctioned by Mustafa Kemal himself. After the SCF dissolved itself, it became useful for the paper, or at least its caricaturists, to tie its opinions to the defunct party. They could then purport to simply refer to events that had already happened instead of making their own explicit criticisms.

From Sultan Abdülhamid to Fethi Bey

One period in Turkish history to which a comparison in cartoon style and usage can fruitfully be made is the revolutionary period of 1908–1911, which followed the reinstitution of the Ottoman constitution and the limitations on the sultan's powers. During at least the first part of these years, the press was under looser restrictions than it had been previously due to the end of the Hamidian police state, and general upheaval which made state functions more difficult than usual to execute.[43] In addition to being created during a media environment similar to that of 1930 (which followed the abolition of the Law for the Maintenance of Order), the cartoons of the revolutionary period are also the subject of an extensive study by Palmira Brummett,[44] making it one of the few instances of serious research into

43 Findley 2010, 194–195.

44 Palmira Brummett, Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911, Albany 2000.

political cartoons in the Middle East, thus making that period highly accessible for comparison.

In this chapter I am not discussing the themes of the cartoons to any great extent, since these are predicated upon the specific events that occurred during the respective time periods. Rather, I look at the tools the artists used to criticise authority in their specific situation and the development and continuities of these from 1908–1911 to 1930.

Critique under Abdülhamid II

During the first year of the revolutionary period, and for some time after, the great authoritarian boogieman was of course Sultan Abdülhamid II. He is portrayed most often as a blood-thirsty tyrant, often in foreign cartoons but also occasionally in Turkish ones, and generally as the source of the empire's ills.[45] Occasionally, after his loss of power, he is also portrayed as wistful and as a symbol of past imperial glory, particularly in Turkish cartoons, but this is more of an exception.[46] This seems to differ significantly from the criticism of authority in 1930, which is more muted and circumspect. Criticism of both the CHP and SCF in cartoons relies on targeting minor members of the respective parties instead of their actual leaders. Even Fethi was rarely pictured in anything other than a neutral or positive way, even by the most hard-line CHP paper.

This might be because the sultan had had his power severely curtailed by the re-established national assembly. The press could thus attack him without fear of retribution, or at least with substantially less fear than previous to 1908. This argument is somewhat undercut by the very fact that there are cartoons targeting the sultan. If he had *no* power, there would be little reason in lampooning him in the first place, except for pure comedic effect, and the periodicals' preoccupation with him seems to be too great for this to be the entire explanation.

I would argue that this is most likely the result of two other factors, namely the loosening of censorship laws and newfound enthusiasm for the medium of cartoons. During the reign of Abdülhamid, the production of political cartoons decreased enormously, to the point where they were barely a relevant factor in print media. When suddenly the oppressive laws prohibiting such expressions were abolished, the artists once again set to their work with enthusiasm and gusto.[47]

45 Brummett 2000, 128.
46 Brummett 2000, 129–130.
47 Brummett 2000, 3–4.

Another partial explanation can be rooted in the political leanings of newspaper editors in 1930 as opposed to 1908. It seems that by the time the CHP had consolidated its power and gotten its grand reform projects going, the intellectual class mostly supported them in their efforts. In support of this theory is the fact that the editors of the largest papers were connected to the CHP (as was the case with all the pro-CHP papers analysed in this article) or the SCF (as was the case with *Son Posta* and *Yarın*, another opposition paper not analysed in this article for lack of available source material). Considering that the opposition party was sanctioned by the president and that Fethi Bey was a personal friend of Mustafa Kemal, it was not politically fortuitous to attack him and the SCF too harshly. The project of building the Turkish Republic according to the schematics of Mustafa Kemal was broadly supported (though details could certainly be criticised and discussed), and the SCF was a part of that project, at least initially.

Central to all this is that by 1930, Mustafa Kemal had achieved something of a semi-divine status, a status he retains to some degree even to this day.[48] He was *Hazretleri Gazi*, "the Honourable Warrior", as the papers consistently called him, and though he was not completely untouchable, he was not far from it, at least openly on the pages of the large papers.

Lastly, it must be mentioned that this discrepancy between the treatment of authority in 1908–1911 and 1930 may be somewhat influenced by the difference in choice of primary sources between this study and Brummett's. Brummett in large part focuses on humour magazines, while I have focused on cartoons in newspapers. It might be the case that political actors are treated more irreverently in such magazines than in the ostensibly serious papers, though I would be surprised to see too much of a difference in the depictions of Mustafa Kemal considering his exalted status.

After Abdülhamid's Deposition

After his deposition in early 1909, Abdülhamid naturally became progressively less of a focus for the caricaturists, and the new ministers and the reconstituted national assembly took his place. However, this critique seems to have been a lot more benevolent, and the men then in power were often portrayed as lazy or stupid rather than evil.[49] This also contrasts with 1930, as most of the characters in those cartoons, perhaps with the exception of Ağaoğlu, were portrayed as more or less intelligent, though not without malevolent intent.

48 Başaran İnce 2015, 104.
49 Brummett 2000, 133–144.

In general, though ministers and the parliament were often the targets of ridicule, it seems that a sort of pessimism had set in among the artists. Nothing was really going to change; the people in power were either powerless or indifferent. At least the sultan had been powerful enough to get something done without bothering himself with the incessant squabbling of parliament. This is changed when we look at 1930, when people seem much more optimistic about the future: The great reform projects of Mustafa Kemal seem to be going well, the nation has been consolidated and saved from the foreign powers that would see it divided, and so forth. Perhaps this is where some of the anger at the SCF stemmed from. The people in charge of the newspapers in 1930 remembered the turbulent time of the empire's collapse and would do almost anything not to go back to that time. If they viewed Mustafa Kemal and his project as the only thing that had saved the nation and could keep it together in the future, and if they saw the SCF as a threat to that project, their attacks on the opposition party make a lot of sense.

Conclusion

When SCF, the Free Republican Party, was fighting for its political life at the end of those tumultuous three months in 1930, the cartoonists were literally front and centre in the newspapers. They used their pens to both criticise and defend the opposition party in the most circulated periodicals of the day, but also to attack the ruling CHP and the one-party political system.

During the raucous parliamentary debates right before the party's collapse, the pro-SCF *Son Posta* showed signs of worry, but also criticised the CHP for its incivility by portraying the debates as a boxing match and gently mocking the SCF leader Fethi Bey for his soft-spoken manner. As the news spread that the party had indeed collapsed, *Son Posta* took the opportunity to mourn the party in several cartoon images, a way of showing that the end of the multi-party experiment was not universally welcomed by all (such as in the pro-CHP *Milliyet* and *Vakit*) but was in fact a tragedy. It was a simple yet effective way to chastise the CHP for letting this great project fail.

At the same time, all the pro-CHP papers analysed here decided to markedly decrease their production of cartoons, an indication that their work was now done, that they had served their purpose. This indicates that these papers and their editors saw cartoons mostly as some kind of propaganda tool against a perceived enemy of themselves and the CHP. Not so for *Son Posta*, which kept their almost daily cartoons in place, many of which continued to focus on the now defunct party. Through December, the paper

transitioned to using the party itself as a symbol they could use to attack the CHP and the one-party state.

By comparing these trends to another—at least somewhat—similar period in Turkish history, I have identified some key themes. Firstly, even though *Son Posta* did indeed criticise the government, they seem to have been generally on board with the reform programme and the reinvention of the Turkish nation. The attacks are far from as vicious as those on Abdülhamid just 20 years prior.

Secondly, in order to circumvent the censors, *Son Posta* often avoided depicting political leaders of the CHP, instead implying their existence by referring to the whole party or just passers-by with the same outlook as the party.

In conclusion, three tactics of the cartoon artists used to circumvent censorship can be identified: (1) speaking positively about the opposition party instead of negatively about the government, (2) using the defunct opposition party itself, and its leader, as symbols, thereby putting their own opinions in the mouth of someone else, and (3) when criticising them, referring to the people in power by their absence.

By using these three techniques the artists of the political cartoons of the early Turkish republican era were able to express their critical views of the CHP and the one-party system, and their hopes that the political situation would soon improve.

Unfortunately, the field of cartoon studies is fragmented and without any unifying framework of theory or methodology due to it being located in a grey area between several different fields, such as humour studies, linguistics, and political science.[50] Researchers are thus often forced to build their own frameworks of analysis according to their own background. This article has not endeavoured to do something so ambitious and only draws from the theoretical and methodological repertoire of other researchers, but the issue is important to note as it severely hampers any sustained effort to outline cartoon studies as a field.

50 Khin Wee Chen / Robert Phiddian / Ronald Stewart, Towards a Discipline of Political Cartoons Studies. Mapping the Field, in: Jessica Milner Davis (ed.), Satire and Politics. The Interplay of Heritage and Practice (Palgrave Studies in Comedy), Cham 2017, 125–162, here 144–145.

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