

**THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE GREAT ISLAMIC POET MEHMET  
AKIF ERSOY AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO POLITICAL  
COMMUNICATION IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this study, the political opinions and active political life of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and his contribution to the political communication of the War of Independence are explored. The people and incidents having influence on shaping the political approach of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, the content of his Islamic thought and politics, his liberal approach, his opposition to the Abdulhamid II Administration, his relations with the Committee of Union and Progress and his contribution to intellectual and cultural life in the studies after the Second Constitutional Monarchy are emphasized. In addition, his role and position in the War of Independence are also discussed. This article also reviews a rich literature, many studies and resources about the life of Mehmet Akif are used and cited; moreover, as a first-hand document the official records of the First Period of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and personal files of Mehmet Akif Ersoy in the Grand National Assembly are examined.

**Keywords:** Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Islamic Poet, Political Communication, Political Life, War of Independence.

## INTRODUCTION

Mehmet Akif Ersoy lived through and witnessed important developments and events such as the reign of Abdulhamit I and II, the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, the collapse of the Turkish empire, the Balkan wars, the First World War, the signing of the Treaty of Sevres, the Armistice of Mudros, the National Struggle, the proclamation of the Republic, and efforts of westernization and modernization. Erisirgil, who knew Akif well and wrote one of the best biographical works about him, conveys the metaphor about Akif's transition from Safahat poetry to political poetry. After reading the books of Muhammad Abduh, Akif recounts that he often repeated the following words: "I seek refuge in Allah from the roots of the word 'politics' and all the affiliates that come from these roots or anyone who teaches or distorts his mind with politics" (Erisirgil, 1986: 133). Certainly, these words of Akif stem from the deep contradiction between the pragmatism practically evoked by the word "politics" and its idealist and moral stance. As a matter of fact, Fatin Hodja, who had taken him to the Committee of Union and Progress in Istanbul after being elected as a deputy in the First Parliament, in answer to the question "What are you going to do now?" said in Arabic "Probably not politics" (Erisirgil, 1986: 133). Given the negative meaning Akif has imposed on the word politics, it is clear that it would be much more meaningful to see his political life as a life of thought and struggle. Obviously, Akif lived through periods when he accepted politics and political tasks. Five months before his death, he summarized his political life in his own autobiography notes, which he had written in bed at his home in the Beyoglu Misir apartment building. In short, it is not easy to separate his "political" life from his ideas, struggles and art because it would be a proper and appropriate approach to evaluate Mehmet Akif Ersoy in terms of the reasons that led him to undertake such political duties and to deal with his political life within this framework.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy's presence in the world of ideas, politics, culture and literature began in 1908. Like many scholars at that time, Mehmet Akif was opposed to the Abdulhamid II administration. Until the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, his literary side and talent were not known yet. However, he was known as a great and powerful representative of the Islamist movement, which was one of the important intellectual currents at that period (Parlatir, 2009). Akif's Islamism is not an one that stems from tradition but a modernist Islamism. In today's terms it could be addressed by taking the inspiration from the Qur'an and the Asr-i saadet and by re-revealing Islam with its basic and essential features, and cleansing it of superstitions. This vision aimed to do this without the need for reform and change. With this idea, Akif set out an approach unlike any other of the time. This view did not coincide with the opinion of anyone in communities that displayed a religious attitude. In addition, Akif's criticism of the religious scholars of the era and his views that "the works written seven hundred years ago could not meet today's needs," led some intellectuals to accuse him of "reformism" (Seker, 2009).

Akif's understanding of Islamism was influenced by two important figures, Cemalettin Afghani and Muhammad Abduh (Idben, 2009). The principles of the Islamic Union in Abduh, which Akif described and praised as the "great master of Egypt," are as follows: a reform in the Islamic religion, the renewal of the Arabic language, the determination of the rights of the people against the gov-

ernment, the unification of the Islamic countries against the realm of Western civilization (Tansel, 1991).

Mehmet Akif's desire to return to the classical age of Islam suggests not to return to the conditions of that time, but to grasp the spirit of that time. This spirit manifests itself as the mainstream of Islam, to comprehend the scientific realities of the age and to carry that Islamic inspiration into the modern age. In other words, we should be inspired by the Qur'an to make us understand our own century. Akif's understanding of bringing the civilization face of Islam to the forefront of one's soul and combining it with the scientific achievements of Western civilization is a type of discourse frequently encountered in Islamic modernism (Aydin, 2009). Akif's understanding of Islamism aimed to ensure that Islam is learned correctly from its source and that it is implemented quickly. Likewise, according to Akif, Islam was the essence of Ottoman Muslim society. Other points of view, like Turkism and Westernism, were not Western ideas. The decline of the Ottoman state and the reason why the Ottoman society could not keep up with the age that emerged when both the people and the intellectuals turned out to be separated from the sources and failed to explain the religion correctly.

As is well known, the period in which Mehmet Akif was born and raised was when Abdulhamid II was on the throne and the most important state policy of that period was Islamism (Seker, 2009). According to Banarli, Akif was working for a large Muslim community, and this was a great help for the Muslim world (Banarli, 1979).

## **DECLARATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY AND MEHMET AKIF**

The Committee of Union and Progress, working as a secret revolutionary organization against the Istibdad administration, was founded in 1908. After the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, it began to openly register members. This society would bring a Hurriyet-i Mesrua (liberty in accordance with the clandestine) to the country and save the homeland from disaster; it promised to reform the army, the administration, the education and the madrasas. In the face of a very bad situation of the country, although the power and ability is not yet known, almost all the intellectuals, religious scholars and sheikhs supported the committee. When the Constitutional Monarchy was proclaimed, Akif was the Deputy Director of the Department of Umur-i Baytariye. Shortly after the declaration of the constitutional monarchy, (four days later), the director of the observatory Fatin Hoca (Gokmen) made Akif a member of the Committee of Union and Progress with his eleven friends. The oath of Union and Progress was changed for Akif (Kuntay, 1986). However, Akif's relationship with the Union and Progress Society did not last long. There is a general consensus among the researchers on this subject and nobody sees Akif as a Unionist (Arslanbenzer, 2007). Akif, a member of the Association, did not enter the Party of Union and Progress.

According to Sezai Karakoc, the period between 1908 and 1918 was Akif's "Thankful Akif" period (Karakoc, 1968). First in *Sirat-i Mustakim* and then in

the journal *Sebilurresad*, he published poems and articles, including translations from the great modernist Islamists, concentrating on efforts to raise awareness of the nation, especially intellectuals. When *Sirat-i Mustakim* first appeared, it attracted great attention and the magazine was distributed throughout the entire Islamic world. From Crimea to Kazan, all Muslims from the Balkans to India were able to read and become aware of what was happening in Istanbul. According to Esref Edip, Mehmet Akif was against political struggles and political rumors. Such movements were considered as disruptive for society. Therefore, political disputes and gossip were not included in *Sirat-i Mustakim*.

When the 31 March Incident took place, the situation that Akif feared occurred. The *Sirat-i Mustakim* magazine, which started to be published immediately after the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, was destroyed by the rebels who printed the newspaper's printing press and the articles of the newspaper were distributed around by the rebels. With March 31, freedom was also in danger. Akif was very affected by this situation and when things settled down, *Sirat-i Mustakim* published a long article where he explained the facts of what had happened to counter the misconceptions found in the Egyptian and Indian press (Karaer, 2009). Mehmet Akif Ersoy also had translations published in *Sirat-i Mustakim*. Among these were the works of Cemaleddin Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. He also translated and published translations of contemporary Islamic thinkers such as Sheikh Sibli, Ferid Vecdi and Abdulaziz Cavis. In addition to his translations from Afghani and Abduh and others, Akif also translated the book *Islamization*, written by Said Halim Pasha in French and published it in *Sebilurresad* (Cifciguzeli, 2009).

In this period, Akif traveled to Berlin and Nejd for the purpose of organizing on behalf of the Organization. These duties were understood by him as "political life." Germany, which was an ally of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, behaved well in relation to Muslim prisoners, opening schools and mosques and bringing orators, preachers and teachers. Upon this invitation, the Organization of Harbiye Ministry sent Mehmet Akif to Berlin in 1914 (Tansel, 1991). He gave very exciting sermons in the mosque built by the Germans for Muslim prisoners in Wundsdorf. The sermons recorded on the gramophones were repeatedly played with loudspeakers in front of Muslim soldiers. Among the soldiers who listened to these sermons, there were people who changed sides in the war. Some of Akif's speeches were translated into German and published in German newspapers (Yildirim, 2007). Some of the soldiers captured from the Russian army, the so-called Asian Battalion, were sent to the Iraqi Front to fight against the British (Kutlu, 2004).

Another important "political duty" Mehmet Akif did on behalf of the Organization was the trip to Najid, on which he was accompanied by Tunisian Sheikh Salih, Esref Sencer, the Chief of the Special Organization, and Mumtaz, the master of Enver Pasha (TBMM, 2004). For Akif, who lived with the ideal of the Islamic Union in his heart, this journey was highly important and served as a starting point for some of his tremendous achievements.

Mehmet Akif was a nationalist, like many other intellectuals of that period (Kara, 2007). There are several important reasons for his sensitivity about homeland and nation. One of them was that the only Islamic community and country that was not in captivity under the circumstances of that day was the Ottoman Em-

pire, while other Islamic societies were either colonies or were oppressed. Kabaklı (1975) draws attention to the idealization of the nation and the ideal of Islam, which forms the basis of Akif's views. Because Akif believed that he was the pioneer and savior of the Turkish nation and if Turkishness were destroyed, Islam would be extinguished. He does not find Akif to be called ummah and states that he had an understanding of nationalism attached to religion and stood against racism. His close friend Hasan Basri Cantay also touched upon this issue, saying that Akif knew that there was no nation other than the Turkish nation that had served the Islamic World for a thousand years (Cantay, 1966). Akif differentiated between nationalism and tribalism and always defended the Islamic country and nation of the Turks. He was harshly criticized by the judges who thought that he and his supporters were promoting separatist movements.

During Akif Bey's trip to Nejd, he received a special invitation from the Emir of Mecca, Sharif Hussein Pasha. He stayed in Lebanon for two months. During this trip, Mehmet Akif was appointed as the first secretary to the Dar'ul Hikmet-il Islamic Society, which was established by the separation of the newly established Sharia courts from Bab-i Mesihat and started his duties when he returned to Istanbul.

By sending a letter to Ziya Gokalp, who signed the writers of *Sebilurreschad*, sent a letter stating that the discussions of nationality and civilization were harmful. Akif, who had opened the discussion with Ziya Gokalp (Arslanbenzer, 2007), asked for the parties to come together in a big hall to talk and put an end to this dispute, but did not get an answer to the letter (Edip, 1938). His close friend Mithat Cemal Kuntay reports the following anecdote: "Akif has had a last and small contact with the Committee of Union and Progress: Talat Pasha invited Akif to the Porte for one day to secure his agreement with Ziya Gokalp. I don't know what the grand vizier and the poet were talking about. Only when this interview was over, Talat Pasha was astonished by Akif: He hasn't changed a bit" (Kuntay, 1990: 71-72). The friendship of Mehmet Akif and Talat Pasha dated back to the period in which Akif worked as a government leader in Edirne. Talat Pasha was a Turkish teacher at a school in the city at the time. Arslanbenzer stated that Talat Pasha asked Akif to reconcile with Ziya Gokalp in this speech; Akif notes the following answer to this request: "Did you call us for this? What does an agreement mean? Do we have a personal goal, ambition? You think we're brokers? I regret it" (Arslanbenzer, 2007: 14). Although Mehmet Akif's disagreed with the Committee of Union and Progress and regretted that he did not agree with the ideological line adopted by the Society, there was a further dimension of moral dissolution that Akif could never tolerate, such as poverty and burdens of war. During the war, he said to one of the officials from the Internal Affairs Ministry who came to the magazine administration with a friend and asked him not to go so far in his writings, "Tell your minister to correct themselves and they cannot silence us as they are trying to" (Duzdag, 1991: 35). Although the Committee of Union and Progress could not silence Akif with threat, indoctrination and persuasion, it did interrupt *Sebilurreschad's* publication using methods that showed the effects of political, economic and financial power.

After the sixth part of the *Berlin Memories* published on the return of Mehmet Akif from his trip to Nejd, the 352<sup>nd</sup> issue dated November 25, 1915, the mag-

azine stopped publication for six months until May 11, 1916 because of the scarcity and cost of paper. However, after the 360<sup>th</sup> issue on 26 October 1916, it stopped again and stopped publication until July 4, 1918. When it came out again, it did not explain the reason for this interruption (Duzdag, 1991: 33). When Esref Edip wrote about this closure in the journal on October 30, 1924, he noted that, “We had already heard of the decisions after some intellectuals among the Unionists were pursuing reforms in religion, talking about those reform in their meetings and not yet revealing them. But was it possible to talk about them? At that time, in the twentieth century, there was an inability to speak of religion (Duzdag, 1991: 35). This situation was of great importance in terms of showing the attitude of Akif and the Committee of Union and Progress. It is strange that Akif, who did not hesitate to act together with the Committee of Union and Progress on the way to freedom against the administration of the Union, was confronted with a restriction on his freedom of writing and speech.

Mehmet Akif, who was upset that the Committee of Union and Progress, as a hope after the period of *Istibdad*, was disappointed and opposed to the repressive measures and the administration. He accepted the official duty of the Organization to Berlin as an Officer of the Special Organization. Going to Nejd should be seen as a patriotic duty.

## MEHMET AKIF AFTER THE MUDROS ARMISTICE AGREEMENT

The Armistice of Mudros was signed on board HMS *Agamemnon* in the port of Mudros on the island of Lemnos on the evening of October 30, 1918. The agreement was between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente states at the end of World War I after the meeting between the delegations under the presidency of Admiral Calthrope, the representative of Great Britain, and Huseyin Rauf, the naval minister of the Ottoman Empire.

The provisions of Mudros destroyed the Ottoman Empire; it was an unconditional surrender rather than a ceasefire. After nearly eight years of war, the Ottoman Empire was defeated, their armies had disintegrated, morale had collapsed, the Empire had suffered great human losses and run out of resources. With the Treaty, the Army was completely dismantled. Arms, ammunition and transportation routes, and all means of communication, ports and shipyards were left under the control of the Entente States. According to Article 7, the Entente states were given the right to occupy any part of the country when they decided it was necessary and the establishment of an Armenian State in Eastern Anatolia was planned. The Entente states, particularly Britain, did not follow the policy of sharing the Ottoman Empire with Germany, Austria and Bulgaria, which had succumbed to the war. In Great Britain, it was believed that the Turkish Nation would be enslaved when Istanbul was occupied after the signing of Mudros. Lloyd George's plan was to strengthen Greece sufficiently and to assist the governments in the South Caucasus between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, invading and suppressing the Ottoman Empire from the East and West. Europe's sick man had died and it was up to Britain and then France and others to share his legacy. As Russia withdrew from the war with the Bolshevik Revolution, Great Britain and France could solve the Eastern Problem as they wished. The Entente powers, which divided Europe, regardless of national borders, taking

over the territory of the Ottoman Empire in a way that could spoil it. Great Britain had the opportunity to implement its own policy at the end of the First World War to create a powerful Greece dominating the Aegean Sea, including Western Anatolia and even Cyprus, to deal with the Russian danger in the Balkans, and to use these states as a buffer against Russia to support Britain. Therefore, it wanted to secure the colonial routes. The Mudros Armistice was the product of this policy, dictated by the British representative, Admiral Calthrope.

The weaknesses created by the war, the great losses of land and human lives created a heavy atmosphere for Mehmet Akif, who thought of his country every breath he took. We had to do something, to get out of this terrible atmosphere, he thought. At that time, there was a number of ideas about the liberation of the country, and in particular, the mandate, patronizing insights spoke aloud, trying to organize and persuade the public.

After the armistice, a new era of friendship with the British began, and Hurriyet and Itilaf supporters were in a destructive publication. Meanwhile, the pro-Itihat and Terakki newspapers of Istanbul defended the American Mandate during this period. Moreover, with the occupation of Izmir on May 15, 1919, the debate over the mandate continued. Although Mehmet Akif did not allow the possibility of discussions of the mandate and patronage, he was worried that it would harm the national resistance movement that started in Anatolia. History also shows that the Turks could not live without independence (Akandere, 2009).

Likewise, steps have been taken to justify Mehmet Akif in Istanbul, and some of the Allied newspapers began to promote the national movement, which started in Anatolia, to the public as a Unionist initiative. Once, during a conversation in the *Sebilurresad* administration, one of the people there reacted strongly, saying that, "The National Struggle movement was a Unionism project, but it can no longer be called Unionism. This is a matter of the country. Everyone should embrace this together" (Fergan, 1938: 675). For Mehmet Akif, this movement was not in any way attempted Unionists. He believed that everyone should support the struggle that had started in Anatolia.

Enginun conveys Mehmet Akif's love of homeland and nation in the following words: "For example, freedom and independence are among the highest and most sacred values of the Turkish Nation. These values bring along other values such as homeland and flag. Homeland is a part of a holy land where a nation lives and inherits from our ancestors at the expense of blood and life. For this reason, the country can never be considered separate from the nation. Homeland is a geography, nation is a community of people. What makes a nation a nation is freedom and independence, rights, law, language and religion. As soon as the homeland which is at the beginning of these eternal values is in danger, every person who has reached the consciousness of being a nation and who loves his homeland should be ready to sacrifice his life, even his most precious being, to save his country" (Enginun, 1987: 2).

In 1919, like all Muslim Turks living in Istanbul, Mehmet Akif was in great sorrow and he was suffering. With all the writings of *Sebilurresad* on the invasions that started in various parts of the country, citing the Mudros Armistice Agreement, the public had tried to instill patience, hope and courage in the public. In fact, it was noted that some of the articles of the journal appeared to be

half-empty due to the censorship of the occupation forces (Duzdag, 1991).

Many former ministers, statesmen, officers, including Said Halim Pasha, whom Akif loved so much, were arrested as “criminals of war and deportation.” While watching the events that took place on March 16, 1920 and the days when Istanbul was officially occupied by the Entente states, Mehmet Akif could not tolerate the attacks of the National Struggle which started in Anatolia and he had serious reactions to those who were in this opinion. It is possible to see Akif’s grief that the Turkish homeland is in the hands of the invaders in the following verses: “Ah! Here lies a cemetery on behalf of my homeland now!” (Kisikli, 2009: 203).

Mehmet Akif believed that a spark would be enough to escape the country’s bad situation and make it independent. This spark that Akif has been waiting has been put forward by the Defense of Rights and Protection Associations established against invasions and annexations all over the country. In Western Thrace, Western Anatolia, the Eastern Black Sea region and Eastern Anatolia, national struggle organizations started to be established. When Kemal Pasha went to Anatolia, these sparks turned into a fire. A national awakening and consciousness of freedom all over Turkey caused much excitement.

As a patriotic Muslim, Akif saw it imperative for everyone to do his part to fight the oppressor. He criticized the pessimism felt by the public in those days, saying that hopelessness has no place in Islam. The first obstacle for a person to overcome is hopelessness. In this respect, the first and most important element for a successful life is hope. So, the believer should not fall into despair.

Mehmet Akif was also worried that despair would lead to an unrecoverable dissolution of society. “Cowards die in shame,” Mehmet Akif said. “You should know that being a coward in the fight against enemies and accepting surrender means dying in shame. The life of the attacker who succeeds in protecting himself from the attack is cherished and precious. For this reason, never fail to protect your national and religious unity.” The only way out was the liberation of the country. Mehmet Akif, who saw that he was getting rid of despair and turning towards the National Struggle, said, “Muslims! How long will you tolerate this humiliation? That humiliating life makes its owner miserable in the world and disgrace in the Hereafter. Faith is not to tolerate offensive, rape, insult, and to submit to the overwhelming pressure of enemies of religion. Faith means living with dignity and dying with dignity. It clearly shows that he supported the National Struggle movement led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Anatolia (Kisikli, 2009: 204-205).

Mehmet Akif came to Balikesir, one of the cities where the National Struggle started, in January 1920, on the invitation of his close friend Hasan Basri Cantay, where he gave his well-known sermon at Zaganos Pasha Mosque on Friday January 23, 1920 and asked the nation to support the National Struggle. Mehmet Akif’s visit to Balikesir appeared as a short report in the January 26, 1920 edition of the weekly official newspaper of the Karesi province (Yigit, 2009). In the same days, the Dogru newspaper in Izmir devoted a lot of space to the visit and gave details of Akif’s arrival, speech and contacts. Hasan Basri Cantay, who invited Akif to Balikesir, also published a newspaper called *Ses* in the region. However, at the time of Akif’s arrival, this newspaper was closed down



on March 13, 1919 by the Istanbul Government under pressure from Britain.

Cantay describes those days as follows: “Following the invasion of Izmir by the Greeks, we found Akif with us in the national movements that started in Balikesir. At that time, Akif was from the Darulhikme branch of the Istanbul government. As soon as he heard the national movement, he ran to Balikesir, and in his celestial address to the Pasha Mosque (Zagnos Mehmed), he said, Balikesir people, don’t violate your beautiful country, your defense is legitimate, persist...” At the time, Akif had been exiled from the Ottoman Empire by the Istanbul government (Cantay, 1966: 23). Erisirgil recounted this visit: “One day he came to the administration of *Sebilurresad*. It was exciting. Esref Edip came to him: Come on, prepare, he said, we are going (Erisirgil, 1986: 335). Esref Edip explains that Balikesir people who saw the master among them were very happy, people gathered in the Mosque of Zaganos Pasha. The congregation was so full that there was no place to stand. Everyone wanted to listen to the master... (Edip, 1938: 51-53) Most of the people began to cry, after Mehmet Akif, started his speech with a poem on October 30, 1918. After this sermon, Mehmet Akif stayed in Balikesir for a few more days and was the guest of Hasan Basri and visited the schools in Balikesir the supporters of the National Struggle and the notable places of the city. The date of his return from Balikesir could not be determined. Because he did not get permission from Daru’l Hikmeti’l-Is-lamiye to go to Balikesir, he was dismissed from his position on May 3, 1920 (Yigit, 2009: 837).

## **NATIONAL STRUGGLE PERIOD: MEHMET AKIF AS DEPUTY FOR BURDUR**

After Mustafa Kemal Pasha went to Samsun on May 19, 1919, he issued the Amasya Circular on June 21-22, 1919, stating that the country and the nation were in danger, that the Istanbul Government and the sultan’s hands were tied, that the threat and danger could only be averted by the determination of the nation. He convened the Erzurum Congress on July 23, 1919 and held the Sivas Congress on September 4, 1919. Mustafa Kemal and his friends were arrested and the Congresses were banned. On March 16, 1920, the last Ottoman Parliament in Istanbul was dissolved; Life has become almost impossible for National Struggle supporters in Istanbul.

At the same time, in order to break the support of the National Struggle in Anatolia, to detach Mustafa Kemal and his friends from the people, accusations of *ittihad* (Islamic Unionism) and irreligion continued. On April 11, 1920, the government in Istanbul issued a fatwa signed by Seyhulislam Durri Zade, and it was announced to the public that Mustafa Kemal and his friends were in rebellion against the caliph-sultan.

Due to various allegations against the national revolt initiated in Anatolia, the oaths of the delegates who participated in the opening of the Sivas Congress were also a problem; the delegates had to swear that they would not support “Unionism / fraternity, but only work for the liberation of the country and the nation” (Igdemir, 1969: 5-22).

Mustafa Kemal Pasha opened the Grand National Assembly on April 23, 1920

with the participation of the members of the last parliament who came to Ankara together with the deputies from 66 provinces.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy's decision to move from Istanbul to Ankara was undoubtedly a result of his visit to Balıkesir and of his sermon in Zaganos Pasha Mosque. His freedom was under threat and he was influenced by the national unity of the opening declaration of the Grand National Assembly. The emphasis on the spirit of togetherness also had an effect. However, there was also an invitation from Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Anatolia to join Akif in the National Struggle (Edip, 1938). Akif was in favor of the National Struggle in Anatolia with all its existence (Ucman, 1986: 51).

After Sheikh Ata accompanied Mehmet Akif to the village of Cal, Akif returned to him and said, "Happy Sheikh, this great service to the fighters of Independence will never be forgotten and the name of the nation will always be remembered with respect. I envy the honorable future waiting for you" (Kisikli, 2009: 206). Mehmet Akif's son Emin Ersoy, whom he took with him to Anatolia, wrote about this journey years later (Kisikli, 2009: 207). Mehmet Akif's arrival in Ankara created great happiness among the leaders of the National Struggle, especially Mustafa Kemal Pasha. In particular, by emphasizing the Islamist aspect of Akif, it was decided to publicize the fact that he was involved in the National Struggle.

After Mehmet Akif came to Ankara, he was elected as the deputy for the city of Burdur. Mehmet Akif's Burdur term as a deputy ended on June 5, 1920. At the session of the Assembly on July 3, 1920, he was elected as a Member of Parliament in Burdur, and Biga also elected him as an MP. On July 14, 1920, who wrote a letter to the President of the Assembly, Mehmet Akif, and asked him to choose one of the Burdur or Biga deputies. Mehmet Akif was sworn in the parliament on July 15, 1920 together with other MPs without receiving the result of the reply he sent to the Presidency of the Assembly about his preference for Burdur. Mehmet Akif's letter on the choice of the constituency of Burdur was sent on July 18 after this oath was accepted by the Presidency of the Assembly. Considering Akif's National Struggle period, Cevik states that he was invited to Anatolia to join the Grand National Assembly in a encrypted telegram of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Cevik, 2009).

When Mehmet Akif set foot in Ankara, the government there, which had not yet entered the regular army stage, was busy suppressing internal uprisings aimed at eliminating its existence and destroying the national movement. Mehmet Akif made his first visit to Eskisehir. Then, at the invitation of the people, passed to the electoral district of Burdur. After a week in Burdur he went to Afyon-Sandikli, where he stayed for three days before going to Antalya. After returning to Ankara, he went to Konya on May 25, 1920. The newspaper *Aciksoz* published in Kastamonu at that time announced his arrival at Kastamonu in its 21<sup>st</sup> edition in 1920.

The best known of Mehmet Akif's sermons was given in the Nasrullah Mosque in Kastamonu. Akif Bey's sermons often mentioned the importance of religious fraternity, unity and solidarity, the avoidance of duality, the concepts of homeland and nation, the importance of the struggle for the salvation of the homeland and nation, the necessity of the combination of faith and deeds, the importance

of science, the struggle against ignorance, educational issues, modernization, cleanliness issues, etc. It is clear that Akif, who had had a good Islamic education and training system from a very young age, had a great role preaching and that the sermons that he gave helped keep national and spiritual emotions alive.

On the other hand, Mehmet Akif Bey's speeches and explanations as a deputy for Burdur in the assembly were few in number. He spoke once in secret sessions and several times on trivial matters in other sessions. His longest speech was during the debate on the meetings held with the Grand Vizier Tevfik Pasha on the occasion of the London Conference and the final response to the Istanbul government. According to the parliamentary records, Mehmet Akif did not vote 132 of the total number of 232 votes and polls of the first parliament in open sessions. The 100 votes he participated included 81 votes of approval, 11 rejections and eight abstentions. When he was in Ankara as MP for Burdur, he participated in the meetings of the Assembly on a regular basis. As Cetin said, Mehmet Akif's character determined his own preferences, his personality that cannot fit in or even tolerate group behaviors, his way of life woven with spiritual values, led him to be characterized as a member of the II. Group in the assembly (Cetin, 2003: 108). During his term as an MP, he served on the National Education and Advisory Commissions. He resigned from his post in the National Education Commission (Education Council) on December 9, 1922, due to health issues.

**Table 1.** Brief Information about Mehmet Akif Ersoy, MP for Burdur in the First Term of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

Name	Mehmet Akif Ersoy	Works	Seven volumes of Safahat, from the deserts of Najd to Medina, Elvabi Nature and National Anthem and many poems in magazines
Parents	Mehmet Tahir (from Buhara), his mother was from Buhara	Science title	
Birthplace	Istanbul	Professional work before election	Chief Editor of <i>Sebilurresad</i>
Birth date	1873	Whether he was married at the time of his time as an MP and how many children he had	Married with one child (His son-in-law was Omer Riza Dogrul)
Education	Madrasah, property administration	If he is a deputy in the Ottoman Parliament	
Languages	Arabic, Persian, French	Date of death	He passed away on December 29, 1936 in Istanbul.
Expertise	Literature		

**Complementary information on various changes in his life:**

He was educated by Mehmet Tahir Efendi, father of Fatih Muderrisler. He completed his education at the School of Fine Arts.

He was interested in literature and started to publish works in *Servet-i Funun*, *Sirat-i Mustakim* (*Sebilurresad*) and other magazines. He was appointed as the chief clerk and sent to Arabia and Germany.

After the Great War, while he was the Chief Editor of *Sebilurresad*, he went to Anatolia and joined the First Assembly as MP for Burdur.

Mehmet Akif believed in the success of National Liberation and in the leader of that movement, Mustafa Kemal. We see this clearly from the statements of the people who knew him best. Undoubtedly, one of the greatest services of Mehmet Akif during the National Liberation period was the National Anthem. Although it was not a political duty to write this, the purpose of writing the National Anthem was to address the issue of unity and solidarity of the nation and to express the common excitement.

Among the events which disturbed Mehmet Akif and cooled his enthusiasm for politics was the assassination of Ali Sukru Bey, a traveling companion on his journey to Trabzon and Anatolia, on March 27, 1923 by the Commander of the Guard Battalion, Topal Osman (Yildirim, 2007: 291-292). On April 1, 1923 Mehmet Akif was elected by the first Assembly. The last meeting of the Assembly was held on May 21. Mehmet Akif did not wish to be elected as a deputy again. When he saw that the administration did not expect anything from him, he and his family moved to Istanbul in May. There are two souvenirs from the National Struggle on his way to Istanbul: the medal of independence and the rifle given to deputies. The National Anthem, which he wrote for our sacred nation, is dedicated to our heroic army.

Mehmet Akif was placed in a hospital in Nisantasi, where he stayed for about a month. However, due to the impossibility of treatment, he was taken home on doctor's advice. He passed away on the night of December 27, 1936. Tens of thousands of people gathered at the funeral of this great patriot, one of the heroes of the National Struggle, who had made a great contribution to Turkish literature and intellectual life and had been loyal to the Islamic Union in his life. Akif's body was carried to Edirnekapi martyrdom, being placed on the shoulders of tens of thousands. He was wrapped with the Turkish flag and the Independence Anthem that he wrote was sung by the crowd (Tevetoglu, 1986: 6-8).

## CONCLUSION

Although he was a person who did not like the idea of politics, Mehmet Akif Ersoy's became known more as a politician. However, his political life was such that it could not lead to developments and acts that will consciously disturb him. Although he was an advocate of the idea of the Islamic Union, he opposed one of the important practitioners of this idea, Abdulhamid II. Akif also fought for freedom and thought that there would be nothing without freedom and that even Islam would not exist. His determined character led to the closure of the *Sebilurreshad* magazine from lack of funding and through censorship. Mehmet Akif, a man of high morality, was never a man who could be tempted by material interests. He even hated those who considered the improvement of their material status. He was not a coward when fighting with the powerful and he was able to express his thoughts and opinions on every platform, under all conditions and in the necessary tone.

Ideologically, as an Islamist, morally, as a Muslim, his principle was to live in a simple and clean manner and to work with excitement and enthusiasm. As a person who used his time well, he had always worked in the field of ideas, art, science and politics. *Sirat-i Mustakim* was one of the most important products

of Turkish political thought, and then *Sebilurreshad* was the ultimate manifestation of Akif's works and intellectual achievements. He believed in Islamic Union and the ideal of an independent Islamic country and that freedom would be manifested by Ottoman Turkey. In this regard, he did not behave like many other intellectuals of his age rejecting all pessimistic ideas. His ideas were often set out during his sermons.

He believed in the movement initiated by Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Anatolia from the first moment and he worked with great enthusiasm for its development. He acted firmly for the success of the National Liberation and maintained this belief constantly.

It was Akif's motto to oppose all kinds of discord and separatism in political understandings. He acted with the awareness that the first reason for being in the parliament in Anatolia was to move the country from bad conditions to days of freedom and independence. For this reason, instead of being a party to political conflicts, he adopted a style that produced continuous benefits. People's love and work for their homeland was the most important thing for Akif.

As an Islamist studying positive sciences, he believed that Muslims should get rid of all kinds of superstition and propagate scientific thought. He knew Arabic and Persian very well and he was also able to follow French and Western trends. A person who was able to follow the West closely, of course, could not have been blindly anti-Western. Indeed, *Berlin Memories* show how Akif saw, understood and reported many aspects of the West. He definitely wanted the best for human beings. However, everything that doesn't have humanity in it must be criticized and questioned with suspicion. In short, Mehmet Akif Ersoy was a man who beat his heart for his country and for his nation and saw freedom and independence as indispensable. He lived as a man of high morality, hardworking, knowledgeable, the man of science, culture and art, carrying these superior features to political life.

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