

Fate Saw the Jewel: Enver Pasha's Post-War Intrigues, 1918-1922

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In the late Ottoman world, few characters had more personal dynamism than Enver Paşa. Born humbly as Ismail Enver in Constantinople in 1881, Enver advanced through the ranks of the Ottoman military. He helped lead the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in its 1908 Revolution, reaching the heights of power in the Sublime Porte. Enver then went to Libya, fighting Italian troops in the desert heat. Enver rose to Minister of War in 1913. Throughout his meteoric rise to power, Enver displayed a colorful personality. The American ambassador in Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, noted his “audacity” and believed it was Enver’s most notable trait.¹ However, Enver also had a less appealing side. Most prominently, Enver served as the driving force promoting Ottoman involvement in the Great War. Enver personally “had taken the initiative in proposing, negotiating, and executing a secret treaty of alliance with Germany.”² Enver’s collaboration with German officials - for example, he allowed the German ships *Goeben* and *Breslau* into Constantinople without permission of the Grand Vizier - ultimately led Turkey into the Kaiser’s arms.³ He also played a leading role in initiating the genocide of Armenians during the war. Enver’s rule “had a remorselessness, a lack of pity, [and] a cold-blooded determination.”⁴ Enver added more than a touch of egotism to these traits. For example, in his home Enver displayed portraits of his three favorite generals: Frederick the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, and himself.⁵ Even after the Ottoman defeat, Enver did not abandon his thirst for power and excitement.

An in depth analysis of Enver’s post-war activity yields provides insights into the era’s politics. First, his intrigues fundamentally affected interwar relations between the Soviet Union and the British Empire. Collaborating with the nascent Soviet government, Enver plotted to lead an Islamic uprising to conquer India. Secondly, Enver played an important role in the development of the modern Turkish state, even attempting to overthrow Mustafa Kemal and take power for himself. Therefore, Enver’s plots also help us better understand the formation of the modern Turkish state. Although his threat appeared legitimate, Enver ultimately failed due to a lack of tangible

¹ Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Co., 1918), 21.

² David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922*, (New York: H. Holt, 1989), 73.

³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴ Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*

foreign support, the weaknesses of Pan-Islam, and Kemal's skillful counter-intrigues.

"The Second Phase"

As the First World War concluded, Enver Paşa managed to create an apparently potent danger to the interests of the British Empire and to Nationalists within Turkey. Initially, however, Enver found himself in an unenviable position after the armistice. His government had reached an "acute crisis" during the war's final days.⁶ As the Ottoman military retreated headlong through the Levant, Enver and his ruling clique resigned from office. Enver's political and even physical survival stood at risk. Many Ottoman officials found themselves on trial in the months following the war. Contemporary analysts felt that such indictments "foreshadow[ed] the death penalty against . . . Enver."⁷ Fallen from the heights of power, Enver now faced a battle for his life.

Soon enough, the charges came against Enver. In July 1919, a Turkish court martial "condemned to death" Enver and his colleagues.⁸ Triumphant western analysts trumpeted these charges as fitting retribution for Enver's complicity in "joining the war and for Armenian, Greek, and Syrian atrocities and deportations."⁹ Enver's resume had won him few friends among the victorious Entente. Further, the court martial charges demonstrated that the new Turkish military had joined the hostility towards Enver.

However, Enver's grandiose ambitions did not die with the Ottoman cause, and he had taken measures to solidify his post-war position. Following the war, he had no official military or political office. Yet whatever his future held, Enver knew that he would need money. He reportedly managed to steal \$110 million worth of government funds during the war's waning days, sneaking cash out of Swiss bank accounts.¹⁰ In fact, Enver had astutely begun building up a personal "war hoard" as early as 1916.¹¹ He and his cronies had assiduously "stockpiled bread, groceries, cloth, and other comforts free of charge."¹² In fairness, these pro-Entente accounts may have grown exaggerated in the retelling, eager to portray Enver in the most negative light. Nevertheless, Enver had certainly built a formidable fortune for the post-war world.

⁶ "Turkish Crisis," *Times of London*, October 10, 1918.

⁷ "Trial of Turkish Ex-Ministers," *Times of London*, May 3, 1919.

⁸ "Enver Sentenced to Death," *Times of London*, July 14, 1919.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ "Money Stolen by Enver Put at \$110,000,000," *New York Times*, December 2, 1918. In today's dollars, this sum would equal \$1,724,568,887. By comparison, that ranks higher than the GDP of nearly twenty countries, roughly comparable to that of Belize and Central African Republic. (Sources: U.S. Dept. of Labor, World Bank.)

¹¹ "Enver's War Hoard," *Times of London*, February 19, 1919.

¹² *Ibid.*

Finances secured, Enver then addressed the question of his personal safety. In November 1918, even before the official court martial, Enver certainly understood that he could not remain in occupied Constantinople. He would need to leave stealthily and without detection, and he managed to succeed. To this day, it remains unclear exactly when Enver made his escape.¹³

The details that we do know, however, certainly enhance Enver's reputation as a dramatic adventurer. Sometime in early November, he arranged a late night rendezvous on the Bosphorus with his former CUP associates.¹⁴ Whistling in the dark, Enver put on an air of confidence for his defeated comrades. He had recently boasted that the Ottoman setbacks merely represented "the second phase of the war."¹⁵ Enver maintained a similar bravado this evening and made his getaway in style. As the defeated politicians stood hidden by the dock, a German submarine, *U-67*, emerged from the depths.¹⁶ The sub sailed through the Bosphorus and into the wide expanses of the Black Sea, dropping Enver off on the northern coast. Shrouded in mystery, it took nearly two weeks for reports to emerge that Enver had found refuge in Berlin.¹⁷ Western analysts expressed "regret" that Enver had escaped a victor's justice.¹⁸ However, Enver now gained a foothold and could begin plotting his next move.

Enver, Lenin, and Kemal

Once in Berlin, Enver began searching for a Great Power to assist his intrigues. Implausibly, he first placed his hopes upon the British. Enver received a chilly reception from Whitehall. W.S. Edmonds, a Foreign Office staffer, summed up the British position by refusing to "stoop to treating with a man whom we regard as a criminal."¹⁹ Enver opportunistically shifted his attentions towards the Soviet Union. Soon he successfully "coquetted for [his] own political ends with the Moscow government."²⁰ Karl Radek of the Communist International helped to boost Enver's standing with Soviet policy

¹³ Yamauchi and Yilmaz each suggest that Enver left on November 2, whereas Sonyel pegs the departure for the 8th. The exact day does not appear overly crucial. Yet the discrepancy makes clear that Enver managed to leave in complete mystery. Western newspapers carry no account of the escape, reiterating his secrecy.

¹⁴ Şuhnaz Yilmaz, "An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35, no. 4 (1999): 47.

¹⁵ Masayuki Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1991), 9.

¹⁶ Salahi R. Sonyel, "Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25, no. 4 (1989): 506.

¹⁷ "Enver Pasha in Berlin," *Times of London*, November 25, 1918.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Sonyel, "Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922," 507. Direct quote from Edmonds.

²⁰ "Enver's 'Bolshevist Army,'" *Times of London*, March 11, 1919.

makers. Although Radek felt that Enver “had completely lost his [mental] balance,” the two men shared common goals.²¹ They coolly sought to foment a pan-Islamic uprising that, with Soviet assistance, would strike against the British Empire.

Enver’s Russian intrigues became quite worrisome for the British. Mere rumors of the plot led to “increasing obstruction” among Muslim subjects in British domains.²² The challenge appeared quite threatening. Some British analysts projected that “the Lenin-Enver combination . . . stands a considerable chance of success.”²³ Such reports make clear that Enver appeared quite dangerous. At the time, Enver’s plot appeared quite serious.

In order to coordinate with his new partner, Enver sought to personally visit Russia. However, embarking on a trip would prove difficult. He took off from Berlin in spring 1919 embarking on a star-crossed itinerary that included four different plane crashes. It took “a miraculous escape” for Enver to emerge from the wreckage.²⁴ After one crash, Enver’s disguise drew suspicion and he spent some time in a Lithuanian prison under espionage charges.²⁵ Nothing if not determined, Enver remained committed to reaching Moscow. After his fourth flight made an emergency landing in Latvia, he passed himself off as a “German Jewish Communist of no importance.”²⁶ Having evaded another imprisonment, Enver - or Herr Altman as his alias styled himself - finally reached Moscow in the summer of 1920.

During Enver’s odyssey to Russia, the outside world knew little of his whereabouts, creating a mystique of mystery that lent credibility to his threat. Western headlines erroneously announced that Enver had won a crown as the “King of Kurdistan.”²⁷ Other reports placed Enver in “Daghestan and Transcaucasia.”²⁸ Meanwhile, former CUP agents busied themselves “distributing a circular alleging that Enver Pasha is now in India marching on Bombay.”²⁹ While this report appears too outlandish even for Enver, such news gained credence among many Turks.³⁰ The prevalence of Enver rumors during this time lent an additional aura of mystery to his plotting. Further, the false reports underscore the fear with which Western officials regarded Enver. Enver appeared as a dangerous threat capable of striking anywhere at any time.

²¹ Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, 15. Direct quote from Radek.

²² “Enver’s ‘Bolshevist Army.’”

²³ “New Menace to Armenia,” *Times of London*, August 5, 1919.

²⁴ Yamauchi, “An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate,” 16.

²⁵ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 481.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 481. Direct quote from Enver.

²⁷ “Crown Enver Pasha King of Kurdistan,” *New York Times*, December 14, 1919.

²⁸ “Abandonment of Batum,” *Times of London*, February 23, 1920.

²⁹ “Enver Marching on Bombay,” *Times of London*, February 25, 1920.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

In Moscow, Enver became enmeshed in a tangled diplomatic game involving himself, the Bolsheviks, and the Turkish Nationalists. He ostensibly remained committed to creating “uprisings in the Mohammedan world coincident with a Bolshevik thrust on Persia and India.³¹” Such uprisings would weaken the British Empire. The Soviets stood to gain by supporting Enver. Lenin hoped to “exploit [Enver’s] alleged popularity among the Muslims³²” against the British. The perception that Enver could serve as a champion of Islam made him a valuable ally. Meanwhile Enver fostered his own agenda. On the surface, he maintained an impression of comity between himself and the Turkish Nationalists by supporting the Turkish-Russian treaty of friendship.³³ Yet Enver’s primary focus remained opposition to Kemal and the Nationalists. He hoped that the Soviets would eventually abandon Kemal and “support Enver’s bid to assume the leadership of the Turkish rebellion.³⁴” In order to advance this conflict against Kemal, Enver needed tangible Russian aid. However, he struggled to earn such support. Enver requested Russian guns and arms.³⁵ He planned to fully ingratiate himself with his Bolshevik patrons by displaying his ideological purity at the Communist International’s Congress of the Peoples of the East, which met in Baku. Yet Enver’s appearance in Baku during the hot and dry September of 1920 presented numerous risks. First, he sacrificed his anonymity. The publicity generated by the Baku convention spread worldwide, and Enver’s whereabouts became public knowledge.³⁶ Further, many Communist delegates resented Enver’s wartime alliance with Germany and his actions against Armenians.³⁷ Pro-Kemal delegates represented another obstacle to Enver at Baku. Enver would have a difficult time convincing the convention of his Communist credentials.

In fact, the Soviets limited their support for Enver because he had very little ideological affinity for Bolshevism. When he held power, Enver had never stood as a “champion for . . . the formative proletariat.³⁸” Yet he needed to boost his Bolshevik bona fides at Baku in order to win Soviet support against Kemal. Even if Enver did not qualify as a die-hard Marxist, he wanted Russia to believe that “he was much more leftist and progressive than the Mustafa Kemal administration.³⁹” At Baku, Enver’s key goal remained gaining assistance against Kemal.

In his speech to the convention, Enver unsuccessfully tried to portray himself as a legitimate Communist. Due to the opposition, Enver could not

³¹ “Turks Meet Lenin on Invading India,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1920.

³² Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, 30.

³³ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pg. 482.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 482.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 482. Letter written by Enver.

³⁶ “Enver at Baku,” *Times of London*, September 18, 1920

³⁷ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 482.

³⁸ Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, 31.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

personally address the crowd. He instead had to rely on a Comrade Ostrovsky to deliver the remarks. Enver punctuated the speech with Communist catchphrases. He railed against “imperialism” and began nearly every paragraph with an appeal to his “comrades.⁴⁰” He also included other Soviet taglines, professing to advocate the interests of “working people,” “conscious people,” “labour,” and “the alliance of the oppressed.⁴¹” Enver’s heavy use of Communist phraseology reveals his intense desire to win Russian backing. Straight-faced, Enver referred to Lenin and his regime as “the natural ally of all oppressed.⁴²” Overall, Enver’s address dripped with obsequiousness. He sought to create a persona as a Communist ideologue. However, as we have seen, Bolshevik ideals meant very little to Enver. Opposition to Kemal stood as the only reason Enver travelled to Baku preaching Communism. Yet the unconvinced delegates heaped boos upon Ostrovsky’s delivery. Substantive Soviet support against Kemal did not appear forthcoming.

At the same time, Enver’s attempts to foment a pan-Islamic rebellion also came up short. In late 1920 and early 1921, he increased his activity towards a Muslim uprising by establishing a “Pan-Islamic Committee.⁴³” Enver sought to incorporate Muslims in British-dominated countries such as Egypt and India.⁴⁴ His recruitment efforts also took him to less likely locations such as Rome and Switzerland.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the committee expanded into a full-fledged League of Islamic Revolutionary Societies. Enver’s organization gained prominent supporters such as his former CUP colleague Talat Paşa. Religion played a featured role in Enver’s ideology. He professed to strive for the “incite[ment] of the Muslims to struggle against the European beasts which trample upon Islam.⁴⁶” While Enver did not practice Islam observantly, the use of religious rhetoric would help gain members. Enver’s use of religion contrasted sharply with Kemal’s staunch secularism. Recruitment for the League went well, and Enver seemingly held full command of a powerful organization.

In reality, Enver’s League had very little clout. First of all, Enver could hardly control his own coalition. It quickly became clear that “no close ties among [the League’s] center and branches existed.⁴⁷” Enver also came

⁴⁰ Enver, “Speech at Baku” (speech, Communist International Congress of the Peoples of the East, Baku, September 4, 1920). Accessed via <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-asia&month=9503&week=c&msg=Go/hs1DpWLwUM1DN50RIlg&user=&pw=>.

⁴¹ Enver speech at Baku, September 4, 1920.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Sonyel “Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922,” 507.

⁴⁴ Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, 38.

⁴⁵ “Enver Pasha,” *Times of London*, June 9, 1921.

⁴⁶ Yilmaz, “An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate,” 53. Direct quote from Enver.

⁴⁷ Yamauchi, “An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate,” 43.

into conflict with the Arab members of the organization. He impolitely offered higher salaries to Turkish members than their Arab colleagues. Eventually, these tensions came to the surface and “the Arab comrades decided to withdraw from the organization.⁴⁸” Ethnic tensions and a lack of unity derailed Enver’s pretensions of heading a pan-Islamic movement.

In fact, even Enver recognized the slim odds of a mass Muslim uprising. It appears that Enver prioritized his rivalry with Kemal over the success of the Islamic League. By spring of 1921, the League had become only “a dummy for retrieving his lost position [in Turkey] which Mustafa Kemal had usurped.⁴⁹” Within the context of his anti-Kemal intrigues, the salary discrepancies among League members begin to make more sense. Enver rewarded Turkish members of the League because they could help him against Kemal more than the Arab members could. Enver did not really plan to dismember the British Empire. He wanted to defeat Kemal and regain power in Turkey.

Enver’s anti-Nationalist plot reached into Anatolia and appeared to present a substantive danger. Throughout 1920 and 1921 he developed a powerbase by infiltrating pro-Kemal leagues and army garrisons within Turkey.⁵⁰ Similarly, Enver founded sympathetic “paramilitary organizations and . . . a semi-underground organization.⁵¹” More symbolically, Enver’s uncle Halil Paşa managed to enter Turkey so as to “act as a herald of Enver’s entrance into eastern Anatolia.⁵²” Enver’s supporters hoped to weaken Kemalist authority within Turkey. Such intrigues occurred in secret and foreign media published few accounts of this work. Yet Enver held high hopes for a return. He even “sent for his uniform, decorations, and sword . . . in readiness to enter Anatolia.⁵³” Enver hoped that, like his hero Napoleon, he would triumphantly return from exile to take command of his country.

However, Kemal recognized the threat and skillfully worked to abort Enver’s coup attempts. Kemal blocked those who had “former connection with Enver” from entering Turkey.⁵⁴ Similarly the National Assembly banned Enver himself from returning, ostensibly in order to preserve “the internal politics and external relations” of the Turkish Republic.⁵⁵ The Turkish government could not risk allowing Enverists into the combustible country. Further, the Nationalists sought to “cause discord among the Unionists in exile.⁵⁶” These efforts intended to divide Enver’s comrades. Kemal already

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵³ Sonyel, “Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922,” 510.

⁵⁴ “Angora Nationalists Against Enver,” *Times of London*, June 2, 1921.

⁵⁵ Yilmaz, “An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate,” pg.53.

⁵⁶ Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, 48.

felt threatened near his center of power. In spring 1921, Western reports attest that he “discovered and suppressed a movement in favor of Enver Pasha” within the government.⁵⁷ Kemal took Enver’s plot seriously and actively worked to undermine the threat.

It seems clear that some analysts felt that Enver had a chance of unseating Kemal. In August 1920 a British intelligence report claimed that, of the two factions, “the weaker one was that of Kemal . . . [and Enver was] the far more dangerous party,”⁵⁸ yet this assessment eventually proved inaccurate. Still, it illustrates that Enver looked like a viable threat. As flawed as his plan sounds in retrospect, at the time people viewed Enver’s plot with the utmost gravity.

Additionally, Enver’s prospects brightened in the summer of 1921 when Kemal developed a breach with the Soviet government. He “grew sceptical . . . about the possible advantages of an alliance with the Soviet of Moscow.”⁵⁹ Kemal’s concern had two key but contradictory components. First, he feared that the Russians would dominate Turkey the same way that they had overpowered many Central Asian nations. Alternatively, Kemal worried that the Russians might totally abandon Turkey and join with Western powers in support of Greece.⁶⁰ Meanwhile the Soviets grew equally frustrated with Kemal. They felt that Kemal wanted “at heart to make a settlement with the allies [America, France, and Great Britain].”⁶¹ Due to diplomatic concerns, a chasm developed between the Turkish and Russian governments. The antagonism between Lenin and Kemal served Enver’s interests. Previously, Enver had had to conduct his anti-Kemal campaign without formal Soviet aid.⁶² The Kremlin had supported his rebellious plots against Britain, but declined to assist Enver in Turkey. Now, hostile to Kemal, the Soviet government fully embraced Enver. The Russian ambassador at Ankara, M. Natzenus, openly maneuvered in favor of Enver.⁶³ In July 1921 Enver embarked for Batum, in present day Georgia. He hoped to use Batum as a base for an offensive into Anatolia. The “little Napoleon” appeared ready to return from Elba.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ “Internal Troubles at Angora,” *Times of London*, June 8, 1921.

⁵⁸ Sonyel, “Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922,” 510. Direct quote from British Intelligence report on August 12, 1920, entitled “Affairs in Anatolia,” Foreign Office Document 371/5178/E 11702.

⁵⁹ “Internal Troubles at Angora.” Spelling of “sceptical” appeared that way in the document, and is not a typo on my part.

⁶⁰ Sonyel, “Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922,” 509.

⁶¹ Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, pg. 51.

⁶² Russian glitterati stood in awe of Enver’s lavish hats and sought active assistance for the “social lion of Moscow,” but to no avail (Fromkin, pg. 483).

⁶³ Sonyel, “Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922,” 511.

⁶⁴ Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, 21.

However, Kemal's political talents enabled him to resolve his breach with the Soviets. Kemal keenly comprehended the danger of a Russian-backed Enver. In order to repair relations, Kemal opened up secret top-level negotiations with Lenin. Turkey assured the Soviets that it would not move closer to the Western powers. Fears removed, Lenin favored re-alliance with Kemal. As a testament of their restored trust in Kemal, Soviet troops "forcibly detained" Enver in order to prevent him from invading Turkey.⁶⁵ Russian agents also fostered dissent among Enver's camp at Batum, leaving their erstwhile client "thoroughly puzzled."⁶⁶ These displays of faith built confidence between Kemal and Lenin. Kemal vividly told Russian officials that "we shall be bound as tightly together as the hydrogen and oxygen of which water is composed."⁶⁷ The renewed Russo-Turkish friendship had doused the flames of Enver's grand plot.

Kemal's ascent continued as his military success further undermined Enver. In September 1921, Kemalist troops defeated the Greek army on the banks of Anatolia's Sankarya River. This victory gave Kemal enhanced prestige within Turkey. Further, the Battle of Sankarya solidified his alliance with the Soviets. Lenin needed to back a winner, and Kemal clearly filled that role. With Kemal on the rise, "Enver Pasha no longer had utility value" for the Russians.⁶⁸ In fact, their prior support for Enver had now "become an embarrassment to the Soviet leaders."⁶⁹ Lenin withdrew his support for Enver's Batum camp. Inside Turkey, Kemal could now arrest any pro-Enver conspirators without fear of backlash.⁷⁰ Enver's hopes of returning to lead Turkey had become unattainable. He now understood that "his ambitious plan had ended in a fiasco."⁷¹ Enver would never again set foot in his home country.

"The Arrow has Left the Bow"

Despite the setback, Enver still maintained grandiose ambitions. The Russians wanted him out of the picture in Turkey, and sent him off to the hinterlands of Central Asia. Ostensibly, Enver would quell an anti-Soviet uprising among the Muslims of Bokhara.⁷² In reality, Lenin merely sought to remove Enver to a remote location where he could do little harm. Enver played

⁶⁵ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 484.

⁶⁶ Sonyel, "Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922," 513.

⁶⁷ Yilmaz, "An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate," 57. Direct quote from Kemal.

⁶⁸ Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, 61.

⁶⁹ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 484.

⁷⁰ Sonyel, "Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922," 513.

⁷¹ Yamauchi, *The Green Crescent Under the Red Star*, 62.

⁷² In 1920, the Soviet Union had created a Communist government in place of the Emirate of Bokhara. A rebel movement known as the Basmachis emerged, opposing the Soviet puppets and supporting the deposed Emir. These events took place in parts of modern Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 486.

the loyal comrade and obeyed orders. He headed towards Bokhara, seemingly destined for obscurity.

However, Enver abandoned the Soviets and quickly joined the rebellion he had planned to suppress. Under the ruse of a proposed hunting expedition, Enver evaded his Bolshevik handlers and reached the rebel camp. This decision appears not wholly unreasonable from Enver's perspective. The Soviets had not shown any loyalty to Enver in his struggle with Kemal. Further, upon arriving in Bokhara in November 1921, he developed affection for the cause of the Basmachi rebel movement. The beautiful countryside, replete with "fruit trees, melons, grapevines, roses, poppies, and tobacco plants" appealed to Enver's romantic sensibilities.⁷³ He betrayed little hesitation or doubt, proudly boasting to his wife that "the die is cast. The arrow has left its bow."⁷⁴ While Enver's Napoleonic dreams had failed, he could still gain victory on the battlefields of Alexander and Tamerlane. The chance to carve a new kingdom for himself - in the ancestral homeland of the Turkic peoples, no less - looked like a prize worth seeking.

Yet Enver faced high hurdles. He struggled initially to win the support of the Basmachi. These central Asians mistrusted the presumptuous foreigner, even questioning his Islamic credentials. Moved to tears, Enver had to burn a photograph of his wife in order to defend himself against charges of iconography.⁷⁵ Further, the rebel movement had serious internal divisions. British intelligence reports distinguished between the "genuine political Basmachis . . . [and] the purely bandit Basmachis."⁷⁶ Different branches of the movement evidently had divergent agendas. Additionally, ethnic tensions caused divisions within the rebel ranks. Turkmens, Uzbeks, and Kirghiz often fought one another, distracting from the anti-Soviet battle.⁷⁷ The fractious nature of the Basmachi movement made Enver's task quite difficult.

Despite the obstacles, he managed to achieve a degree of success. He had popular support, as the Bokharan people typically favored the Basmachis against the Soviet invaders. Enver also benefitted from foreign backing. Afghanistan's reformist king, Amanullah, sent "money, rifles, and ammunition" to Enver's cause.⁷⁸ At his peak, Enver amassed and led an army of 20,000-30,000 men. This force won some engagements. For example, in early 1922 the Enverian host launched a "daring raid on the city of Bokhara," a strategic urban center.⁷⁹ He also used irregular guerilla tactics in order to

⁷³ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 486.

⁷⁴ Sonyel, Salahi R. "Enver Pasha and the Basmaji Movement in Central Asia." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 26, no. 1 (1990): 54. Direct quote from a letter written by Enver.

⁷⁵ Yilmaz, "An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate," 56. Anecdote comes directly from a letter written by Enver.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 57. Direct quote from British intelligence report.

⁷⁷ Yilmaz, "An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate," 59

⁷⁸ Sonyel, "Enver Pasha and the Basmaji Movement in Central Asia," 56.

⁷⁹ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 487.

gain some “important towns and villages.⁸⁰” In fact, as spring progressed, Enver personally won dominance over the “whole of the eastern part of Bukhara.⁸¹” These successes illustrate that Enver’s army had clout and remained a potential - if farfetched - threat to Kemalist Turkey. Enver had gained power and appeared in his element.

Despite his battlefield wins, Enver failed to acquire foreign supporters. The Soviets actually offered an olive branch to Enver, seeking to reach accommodation. Enver responded haughtily and foolishly. He waited a month to reply, and even then refused to treat with those who “[dis]respect the wishes of the Muslim peoples.⁸²” However, Enver could not convert his breach with the Soviets into British backing. The Viceroy of India advised London “to steer absolutely clear of Bokhara.⁸³” Enver would not gain support of a Great Power.

Enver’s position in Bokhara also began to decline. As the summer of 1922 approached, tensions developed between Enver and the Emir. This conflict erupted for petty personal reasons. Never known for his modesty, Enver styled himself as “Commander in Chief of all the armies of Islam.⁸⁴” Eventually he claimed the title of “Emir of Turkestan.⁸⁵” These needless vanities irritated the actual Emir, Enver’s supposed superior officer. Additionally, Enver had “alienated the other Basmachi leaders” with assorted minor squabbles. Harried at home and friendless abroad, Enver’s position grew precarious.

Enver retreated into the hills of Bokhara for a last stand. The cool mountain air refreshed him after the oppressive lowland July heat. Yet Russian troops harassed Enver’s party. On August 4, the Soviets surrounded him.⁸⁶ The untamed Basmachi cavalry could prove no match for disciplined Soviet machine guns. Enver had foreseen the catastrophe. The previous night, the holiday of *Eid e-Ghorban* or the Feast of Sacrifice, Enver “dreamt that he would die a martyrs death.⁸⁷” Now, he bravely steeled himself for one final charge. Enver sat mounted upon his favorite horse, Dervish.⁸⁸ Fashionable to

⁸⁰ Sonyel, “Enver Pasha and the Basmaji Movement in Central Asia,” 56.

⁸¹ Yilmaz, “An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate,” 58.

⁸² Ibid. Direct quote from cable sent by Enver.

⁸³ Sonyel, “Enver Pasha and the Basmaji Movement in Central Asia,” 57. Direct quote from Viceroy Rufus Isaacs.

⁸⁴ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 487.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 487.

⁸⁶ “Enver Pasha Slain by Soviet Force,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1922.

⁸⁷ Yilmaz, “An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate,” 61. Direct quote from *Ittihad i Islam* (a newspaper in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan), October 1922. This story may have developed or grown embellished after Enver’s death. Even so, it illustrates his use of Islam to gain support. The dramatic nature of the tale sounds like something Enver could have said and adds to his charisma.

⁸⁸ Sonyel, “Enver Pasha and the Basmaji Movement in Central Asia,” 61.

the end, his khaki uniform remained clean and immaculate.⁸⁹ Finally Enver drew his sabre and rode headlong towards the Russian guns.

The Legacy of Enver:

After the battle, many conflicting tales circulated. It took two weeks for reports of Enver's death to reach the West.⁹⁰ Still, many refused to believe that he had perished. He reportedly had formed "a definite alliance" with Kemal.⁹¹ In October, the rumor spread that he had actually defeated the Soviets quite handily.⁹² Alternatively, perhaps the crafty Enver had merely feigned his death as "a ruse to cover his disappearance with a view to a fresh adventure elsewhere."⁹³ Again the prevalence of wide-ranging Enver rumors illustrates the power that his aura held. Further, the Basmachis strategically sought to perpetuate the belief that Enver could return at any moment in support of their cause.⁹⁴ Meanwhile the Russians also spread misinformation. In late October, Soviet mouthpieces such as *The Journal* claimed that Enver still lived but had rejoined the Bolshevik fold. The power of Enver's name and reputation lived on well after his death.

Since his defeat in the Bokharan hills, Enver has held a complicated place in Turkish memory. Initially, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk felt little need to praise the legacy of his defeated rival. Enver's involvement in the failures of the First World War further tarnished his allure. Throughout most of the Twentieth Century, Enver's reputation languished in negativity. Yet the sun shined bright for Enver on August 4, 1996. On that hot, humid summer afternoon, Turkish dignitaries assembled on the green grass of İstanbul's Hürriyet-i Ebediye Tepesi hill to honor the fallen warrior.⁹⁵ The morning's forecast had called for rain, but by the time of the ceremony only blue skies appeared overhead.⁹⁶ Enver received plaudits and admiration at the service. The President of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel, eulogized Enver as "an honest soldier who loved his country."⁹⁷ Abdullah Gül, a future President, lauded Enver's martyrdom.⁹⁸ Tajikistani peasants flown in for the memorial

⁸⁹ "Enver Pasha Reported to be Dead," *Times of London*, August 19, 1922.

⁹⁰ "Enver Pasha Slain by Soviet Force" and "Enver Pasha Reported to be Dead."

⁹¹ "Enver Pasha Reported to be Dead."

⁹² "Soviet Troubles in Turkestan," *Times of London*, October 3, 1922.

⁹³ "Enver's Reported Death," *Times of London*, October 30, 1922

⁹⁴ Yılmaz, "An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate," 60.

⁹⁵ "Ottoman WW I leader Enver Pasha buried in İstanbul," *Hürriyet Daily News*, August 5, 1996

⁹⁶ "Weather History for İstanbul." *Weather Underground*. Accessed February 15, 2015. http://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/LTBA/1996/7/4/DailyHistory.html?req_city=Istanbul&req_state=&req_statename=Turkey&reqdb.zip=00000&reqdb.magic=1&reqdb.wmo=17060&MR=1.

⁹⁷ Anita Sengupta, *Myth and Rhetoric of the Turkish Model*. (New Delhi: Springer, 2014), 51.

⁹⁸ "Ottoman WW I leader Enver Pasha buried in İstanbul."

faithfully retold old tales of the “commander’s” Bokharan glory.⁹⁹ The ceremony did not just praise Enver, but buried him as well. As his grandson tearfully looked on, Enver’s “flag-draped coffin” finally returned to Turkish soil.¹⁰⁰ Enver would reside near familiar faces, as his new tomb stood next to Talat Paşa’s. The old compadres would spend eternity together in the shadow of the Monument of Liberty.¹⁰¹ Those who recall Enver’s activities during the First World War - not to mention his braggadocio, defeats, and disloyalty - may dispute such a rosy portrayal of his life. Either way, Enver remains a controversial figure in the modern world. He still holds the power to unite and to divide, to inspire and to appall.

⁹⁹ “Ottoman WW I leader Enver Pasha buried in Istanbul.”

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*