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CIA OF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE: FELAH GROUP (1920-1923)

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ABSTRACT

The meaning of the word "enquiry" is generally perceived as negative in Turkish society like "rat" or "communicant". On the other hand, the word "enquiry" means "intelligence" in England. This word is used in the sense of intelligence, reason, knowledge. In German, the word "Nachrichten" is used meaning "the news". As it is understood, the intelligence-conscious society sees "enquiry" as a product of intelligence rather than an organized gossip mechanism that needs to be avoided and avoided.

In Istanbul and Anatolia, the activities of the British Intelligence Service (IIS) were dominant compared to other countries. Relying on its corporate experience, Britain had found close collaborators. As the most powerful intelligence actor in Istanbul, he was constantly in competition with Turkish secret organizations. One of these secret organizations was the Felah Group. However, far away from its own geography, IIS has been doomed to fail in this struggle.

The Felah Group became an organization that laid the foundations of the next MIT. The Felah Group has been able to uncover the enemy's intentions, the most important value of human intelligence. In the National Struggle, Felah Group dominated the gathering of intelligence in one hand. While there were many secret organizations ahead, the Felah Group soon took over the indisputable leadership.

The aim of this study is to examine the intelligence activities of the Felah Group and to discuss the relations and struggles of the group with its competitors, namely the Occupied States and other secret groups operating at the same time. First and second hand sources were tried to be used in explaining the subject. These, articles and books referring to this subject are taken as reference. The lack of detailed studies on the subject allowed us to use more archive documents when explaining the subject. I hope that this study will serve as a resource for the people working on the history of the Republic.

Key Words: Atatürk, Felah Group, Intelligence, History, Teskilat-ı Mahsusa

1. INTRODUCTION

In the period of Union Progress, an attempt was made to establish an institutional intelligence structure with the Organization, but the studies in this direction could not prevent the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. At this turn, we should say that there were some problems in the establishment and maintenance of intelligence at the beginning of the National Struggle.

All states in the world want to know in advance about the existing or potential dangers that are directed internally and externally to national security and the existence of the state. For this purpose they need the presence of intelligence at national and international level. (Çeliktepe, 2002: 9)

The intelligence is not the essential element in war, but the auxiliary force. The wars are won by humans, weapons, brains and will while the intelligence serves them. In this context, the intelligence activities of Felah Group, which is the subject of the study, have been tried to be addressed. In addition, it has been tried to reveal to what extent this group contributed to the National Struggle.

2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE FELAH GROUP

One of the organizations established to help the Anatolian movement in the National Struggle is the Felah Group. It was founded by the patriots in Anatolia after the Armistice of Mondros, the occupation of Istanbul and the Treaty of Sevres. The first secret group that was established with the approval of Ankara was the Felâh Group, which was established in accordance with the Erkân-ı Harbiye-i Umümiye Riyâsesi to send officers, arms, ammunition and supplies to Anatolia and to provide intelligence. (Avşar, 2010: 172)

“The Felah Group started its establishment with the name of “Moltke” with a few people. The attic of Hüseyin Hüsnü Pharmacy, at the corner returning to Eminönü Fish Market, was determined as the place where the group gathered. Engineer İhsan Bey's house in Selimiye and Neşet Bey's Hazım Paşa Mansion in Beylerbeyi are other places where activities are carried out.” (Kayabaşı, 2019)

The first name of the Felah Group was Hamza Group and it started its operations on 23 September 1920. The founder of the group is Captain Neşet Bey. Neşet Bey went to Ankara and met with Mustafa Kemal Pasha and started his activities with the directives he received from him. There are various allegations regarding the establishment of Hamza Group. For example, this group is established without any directive. Another claim comes from Mr. Ekrem Baydar. According to him, Mustafa Kemal Pasha told him that Istanbul would soon be occupied and that he should stay in Istanbul and continue his activities. (www.theNationalStrugglePeriodbytheGovernmentofthesecretgroupsandactivitiesestablishedbytheBosphorus.tr, 2019)

During the period of approximately three activities, Hamza group sent the tags of the members of the harmful communities to Ankara. He introduced his informants to the Greek army and informed Ankara about the activities of the Greek army and did useful work.

In the establishment of Hamza Group, the initial aims and activities were determined as “Giving the group a secret name and making a seal, determining a safe working place and working time, safe transfer of the personnel to be requested and sent to Ankara, smuggling materials from military warehouses in Istanbul and providing vehicles for sending this material to Anatolia safely, The dissemination of news about the Anatolian operation in Istanbul, the provision of communications between Anatolian personnel and their families in Istanbul, the provision of a radio contact to receive direct orders from Ankara and the use of the Turkish liaison officers in these headquarters.” (Aksoley, 1969)

During the establishment of the group, problems with other groups in Istanbul, exposing their actions, deciphering their members and having to flee to Anatolia to avoid being arrested, made it necessary to establish another group, Hamza Group. (Keskin, 1969) With the establishment of Hamza Group, Istanbul has definitely taken over the authority of underground activities in Istanbul.

During this period, the Ankara government's greatest need was to provide weapons, ammunition and military personnel. So the Government needed his own controlled organizations to provide them. Ankara, which had learned lessons from the Patrol Society trial, had established the Hamza Group. (Yurtsever, 2015: 130) The staff working under the influence of Hamza Group were trained with military discipline. So they knew the chain of command. But the other groups were more independent, undisciplined people. The fact that the members of the Group are made up of well-informed personalities, that they do not pursue their interests, that they are regular employees and that they comply with orders, have brought success in their activities.

When Hamza Group is named, the reason of using the name “Hamza” first is Hz. Hamza's strength and courage. Although there is no definite information on this subject, when we consider the structure of the Turkish people at that time, it comes to mind that this name was used to give some kind of morale. In particular, given the group's later name, it is believed that these were the product of the same thought. (Yurtsever, 2015: 132)

The names the group took, with the examples given by Serdar Yurtsever, changed several times due to the compulsory reasons: (Yurtsever, 2013: 61)

“As a result of the capture of Şakir Muzaffer Bey, one of the members of the Hamza Group by the British, and the transfer of the group passwords to the British, the group changed its name to “Mujahid” on 15 December 1920. The Mujahid Group also continued its correspondence and activities until February 23, 1921, after which it became the “Combatant Group”. While the preparations for the Sakarya War were continuing, the message from the Combat Group to the General Staff stated that the engine that brought



illegal flares and military equipment to Izmit was stopped and searched by a British patrol engine on 9 August 1921 on the way back to Istanbul. It was reported that the receipt of illegal flares and equipment was received by the British, the group name and seal were deciphered, and the captain and crew were arrested. Upon this development, the group whose password and seal was changed by Ankara became the Felah Group on 31 August 1921."

The Felah Group has completed its mission as an organization that has provided all kinds of assistance to Ankara during the National Struggle from 1920 to 1923. Ankara has linked this group's constant change of name to its need to camouflage against the British. (Avşar, 2015: 61)

3. PASSING OF TURKISH SOLDIERS TO ANATOLIA WITH THE HELP OF HAMZA GROUP DURING NATIONAL STRUGGLE

In a letter sent from EHUR to MMV on January 1, 1921, the need for every Turkish son who would run for the service of the homeland was stated as follows: (Ataşe Arş., Klas. 622, Dos. 18, Fih. 1; Aydın 1989)

"... Since then, it has opened its palms to its sincere siblings who will be wounded by running to the service of homeland as it is written to both the capital Istanbul and various authorities as deemed necessary and is in need of assistance and waiting for help. Our government has made possible aid and aid attempts to loyal homeland children who will run to the service of the homeland, as well as to warn some officers who cannot fully comprehend the situation when necessary. The gates of Anatolia are always open to the real and reliable children of the country. We will not invite anyone by name and in person. It is natural that those who will see the necessity of service will be understood as more patriotic than those who will participate with special requests. With the thought of saving a part of the homeland lands under enemy boots, it was always appropriate and necessary for those who no longer suffered from living under enemy rule to live in the self, not only today, but even more than before, to seek help and homeland service.."

During this period, the Karakol Association carelessly selected the officers he had sent to Ankara and the Karakol Association was discredited because of the spies. Ankara made a decision and gave the job of finding and sending officers to Hamza Group only. (Ataşe A1ş., Klas. 622, Dos. 18, Fih. 150; Aydın, 1990))

In Hamza Group, a branch named Muâmelât-ı Zâtîye was established and the officers who were identified from the registry books in the Muâmelât-ı Zâtîye Branch in Ministry of War Department were sent to Anatolia. (Ataşe Arş., Klas. 1533, Dos. 2., Fih. 1 / 9, Klas. 1534, Dos. 8, Fih. 1 /123; Aydın 1989; 276))

As it is known, while the British and the French identified the names of their officers who helped them during the First World War and erected statues on their memoirs, we could not be sensitive although we had a deep and grand history. We will now include some of the names of the people Hamza Group sent to Anatolia. (Aydın, 2017)

4. OFFICERS AND OTHER MILITARY STAFF SENT TO ANATOLIA AT VARIOUS DATES BY RECEP DÜNDAR FELAH GROUP

A. General Staff Colonels

Ali Hikmet Bey Asım Bey Naci Bey Şefik Bey

Mehmed Emin Bey

Mustafa Nuri Bey Registration number 314-16 316-2 309-17 314-20 318-1 313-13

B. General Staff Lieutenant Colonels

Kadri Bey Registration number 318-2

Adem Vasfi Bey 314-22

Sedat Bey 318-1



Hüseyin Hüsnü Bey 320-5

Kerimüddin Bey 320-2

Şakir Bey 319-19

Hüseyin Hüsnü Bey 319-2

Hasan Basri Bey 321-8

Abdi Bey 317-13

Hıdır Bey 316-5

Osman Nuri Bey 317-13

C. General Staff Commanders

Burhaneddin Bey 317-9

Mehmed Cemil 322-1

Mümtaz Bey 315-25

Vasfi Bey 324-10

İbrahim Bey 324-16

Yusuf Ziya Bey 321-13

Ali Galib Bey 318-27

Nuri Bey 320-13

Bekir Bey 320-19

Mehmed Ruhi Bey 318-10

Hidayet Bey 319-15

D. Officers In The National Struggle Period

İsmail Hakkı Bey — Hüseyin Avni Bey 321-330

Rüştü Bey 322 15

Şefik Bey 322-4

Mehmed Nihad Bey 321-6

E. General Staff Liutenants

Recep Efendi 324-10

Ahmed Nuri " 321-3

Mehmed " 322-3

Mustafa Kadri " 324-9

Mehmed Ali "

Ali Rıza " 324-1

Tahsin . " 321-26

Ahmed Seyfeddin " 320-122

Salih "

Mehmed Kemal " 322-31

Ahmed Fikret " 320-4

Ali Hamdi " 323-1

Rüşdü " 323-9

İbrahim " 323-19

Mustafa Şevket " 323-15

Cevad " 321-169

Zihni " 321-255

F. Infantrycolonels

Kazım Bey 311-5

Abdürrezzâk Bey 311-218

Rüşdü Bey 311-70

Nazif Bey 306-29

Cemil Bey 308-18

Ali Necib Bey 311-18

Mehmed Ali Bey (M. Ali Pasha) 309-10

4.1. Organization Structure of Felah Group



According to a report in the Cumhuriyet newspaper;

"... Since then, it has opened its palms to its sincere sibilings who will be wounded by running to the service of homeland as it is written to both the capital Istanbul and various authorities as deemed necessary and is in need of assistance and waiting for help. Our government has made possible aid and aid attempts to loyal homeland children who will run to the service of the homeland, as well as to warn some officers who cannot fully comprehend the situation when necessary. The gates of Anatolia are always open to the real and reliable children of the country. We will not invite anyone by name and in person. It is natural that those who will see the necessity of service will be understood as more patriotic than those who will participate with special requests. With the thought of saving a part of the homeland lands under enemy boots, it was always appropriate and necessary for those who no longer suffered from living under enemy rule to live in the self, not only today, but even more than before, to seek help and homeland service..."
(Cumhuriyet, 1970)

The information provided by Mr. Ekrem Baydar contradicts the course of events since Ekrem Baydar claims that he founded the Felah Group himself. If the organizational staff and the document submitted by him are examined thoroughly, it is clearly seen that it is dated 12 December 1921. The document dated 12 December 1921 belongs to Felâh Group. In addition, events related to the establishment of the group took place about seven months after the occupation, not before the occupation of Istanbul. Ekrem Bey is not involved in the first organizational staff.

The first organization of Hamza Group was determined as follows: (Ataşe Arş., Klas. 1533, Dos. 2, Fih. 1; Aydın 1989)

FIRST BRANCH

- 1 – Intelligence
- 2 - Press
- 3- Propaganda

SECOND BRANCH

- 1 - Officer Supply
- 2 - Transfer of officers, soldiers and military personnel
- 3 - Courier supply

THIRD BRANCH

- 1 - Supply of ammunition
- 2 - Supply of artists
- 3 - Ammunition Shipment

4.2. The Contact of the Group with Anatolia

The group knew that no matter how successful it was, it would fail if it did business on its own. Therefore, it was their main mission to work in liaison with Ankara.

İhsan Pere, the Director of the Istanbul Telegraph Center, and Edip and Mümtaz Bey, the communications officers, found a communication code that the British could not understand and so they were able to contact Ankara easily. (Besen, 1959) İhsan Pere adopted a wise method and established a communication center in the basement of the big post office. After a while, the British suspected and made inquiries about the officers. When the news of a raid on the basement of the post office was heard, the center was moved to İhsan Pere's house and this was notified to Ankara and a new password was set. (Borak, 1952) The news came true and on March 14, 1920, the British raided. At one end of the incident, the center was relocated to another location on the grounds that it would



extend to İhsan Pere due to his official title.

When Hamza Group started its operations, a new center was established in İnebolu and Captain Şevki Bey (Partal Şevki was assigned as manager. (Aksoley, 1969) The communication network in İnebolu has stabilized to some extent.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha used printing and telegraph as much as possible to influence public opinion. At that time, Afyonkarahisar telegraph center became the communication center of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Mustafa Kemal Pasha realized the directives he gave to Felah Group through telegraph.

The Group's communications over İnebolu initially faced some disruptions. Some measures had to be taken due to the fact that the intelligence officers of İnebolu remained passive and the secret news spread to the region. It is ensured that those who do not know the password do not penetrate the report content. After EHUR (Ministry of War) attracted the attention of İnebolu intelligence officers, relations decreased to normal level.

Communication from one source prevented the deciphering of the groups in Istanbul. While the Zabitan group working in Istanbul wanted to act autonomously, Felah Group had taken over the intelligence task in Istanbul.

We see that the Felah Group prevailed over other groups in political and military intelligence. During this period, taking into consideration the delays and disruptions from time to time in telegraph services, he emphasized on radio communication. In particular, the group wanted to send the military intelligence of the Greek army quickly by this means and to be transmitted by telegraph at the same time. (Yurtsever, 2013: 169)

At the beginning of the National Struggle, there were serious problems in communication. Mustafa Kemal Pasha took effective measures to overcome this deficiency. After the developments on this subject, Mustafa Kemal Pasha said "We won the National Struggle with telegraph wires". (Yurtsever, 2013)

4.3. Termination of Felah Group

Kübra Kayabaşı stated the process of termination of Felah Group as follows:

"Felah Group continued its duty independently until November 8, 1922 and it was stated that after this date the Istanbul Command would be assisted in all matters. In the letter of 8 November 1922, it was emphasized that the independent activities of the group should not be prevented with the aid to be provided. However, a letter from Ankara dated 1 January 1923 determined the fate of the group. In the order no. 1 signed by Hüsameddin coming from the Second Branch of Erkân-ı Harbiye-i Umümiye Riyâseti, the group was asked to inform the Istanbul Command of its activities. Thus, Felah Group came under the control of Istanbul Command. In an order dated February 3, 1923, which was signed by Erkân-ı Harbiye-i Umümiye Riyâseti, it was stated that Felah Group's activities such as arms, ammunition, supplies and shipments were terminated. It was indicated that the officers in the group would now provide the communication network between Thrace and Istanbul. In these activities, the group was directly linked to the Erkân-ı Harbiye-i Umümiye Riyâseti. It was reported that the group would take part in the evacuation of Istanbul by the Occupation Forces and that a separate instruction would be clarified. The ongoing existence of the Felah Group ended after about nine months." (Yurtsever, 2015)

5. RESULT

At the beginning of the National Struggle, the biggest problem was the supply of sufficient officers and ammunition. In order to meet these needs, firstly the İttihatçı Karakol Association, then Yavuz Group, Zabitan Group and the Müdafaa-i Milliye Association served.

Felah Group started to serve in this process with the support of Ankara. This group started its activities on 23 September 1920 and completed its duties on 4 October 1923. In addition to its intelligence and propaganda activities, the Group supported the National Struggle in Anatolia by distributing



newspapers such as “Yenigün” and “Hakimiyet-i Milliye” to the people of Istanbul.

“The Felah Group has sent basic supplies such as combat vehicles, engines, aircraft equipment, trays, pots, spoons and blankets to Anatolia on various dates. In addition, one of the most important activities of the Group towards the Anatolian movement is to contribute to the struggle by transferring reliable officers and officers from Istanbul to Anatolia. In this context, the total number of officers and civil servants sent by the Felah Group to Anatolia is 3,307. However, until the end of the National Struggle, the Felah Group sent civil servants, craftsmen and officers to Anatolia and carried out important tasks in the delivery of ammunition from occupied warehouses.” (Kayabaşı, 2015)

It is seen that the group responds to EHUR's research requests quickly and sends the information that is not related to any request and which is obtained within the framework of the general news gathering plan on the same day or the following day. It is understood from the group activities that this rapidity in news gathering is also accelerated in terms of means of sending. The Group sent its intelligence information to Ankara objectively. They only provided estimates of the actions of the spies.

As a result, to the extent we examine, we can only speak of a lack of accessibility in terms of the characteristics of intelligence. The Felah Group has made remarkable contributions to the National Struggle during the years it operates, and we can say that it contributed to the establishment of the National Security Services (today's MIT) which will be established in 1926.

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