The period covered by this article (the end of 1959 to the middle of 1961) saw the military overthrow of the government of the Democratic party and the promulgation of a new constitution.

The Democratic party was founded by Celal Bayar, Kemal Atatürk's last prime minister, and Adnan Menderes, a landowner who had been a deputy since 1942. In 1950 it came to power with an overwhelming majority in the first really free and honest elections in Turkey's history, ending 27 years of one-party rule under the Republican People's party (PRP), which had been dominated first by Atatürk and after his death by İsmet İnönü.

The popular enthusiasm for the Democrats resulted from an almost universal discontent with the PRP administration, especially manifest during World War II. Despite the wisdom and moderation of its rule between 1946 and 1950, when it accomplished the transition from a one-party to a multi-party system, the Republican People's party was confronted with an almost solidly hostile public.

As soon as it came to power, the Democratic party embarked on a vast and ambitious economic program, despite criticism from the opposition Republican party and the press and despite the advice of Turkish and foreign experts, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Under the premiership of Menderes, successive Democratic cabinets engaged in large-scale road building, the extension of agricultural credits for mechanization and for the stimulation of internal consumption, and finally industrialization. This expansionism, in the absence of careful planning and skilled administrators, led to a severe inflation. The consequent rapid rise in the cost of living produced serious discontent among the middle classes and white-collar workers with more or less fixed incomes.

Recognizing that the near unanimity of public opinion which had produced his overwhelming majority would soon disappear, Menderes made a bid for the votes of the peasants, the majority of the population. Thus, he sought the support of the large landowners by reducing taxes on income from agriculture and by maintaining artificially high agricultural prices. To win the support of the poor peasants, he made concessions to their traditional religious sentiments, at the expense of the anticlericalism which was an essen-

* For meaning of abbreviations, see p. 497.
tial principle of Kemalism. At the same time, political maneuvers within his own party led Menderes to surround himself increasingly with opportunistic politicians, including some who had been compromised in various scandals.

The Democratic party steadily lost prestige and support, especially in the cities. In the elections of 1957 the 424 seats it won were still more than twice as many as those of all the opposition parties taken together, but the electoral system favored the majority party. Moreover, the government had used intimidation and fraud.

In the last years of their administration, the Democrats enacted a series of overtly antidemocratic laws and decrees. Under one law any professor or judge could be retired after 25 years of service, at the option of the government and without any reason being given. The universities' autonomy was often violated. Penalties for press offenses were increased and newspaper editors were not permitted to defend themselves by proving their criticisms to be well-founded. At the beginning of 1960 more than a dozen well-known journalists were in prison simply for having criticized government policy.

In April 1960 the Democratic party decided to mount a general offensive against the Republican People's party, around which all opposition was gathering. The government accused the Republican party of subversive plotting, and at the end of a stormy session on April 27, 1960, the Democratic-controlled parliament passed an emergency law establishing an investigating commission empowered to arrest citizens, suppress newspapers, etc. The obvious intention was to outlaw and dissolve the PRP and thus to open the way for a dictatorship.

MILITARY SEIZURE OF POWER

On the day that this law was passed, antigovernment demonstrations were held in Ankara. The next day there were similar demonstrations at the university of Istanbul, followed by riots and violent repression by the police. A state of seige was proclaimed on April 28, 1960, but student demonstrations in the two great cities continued and were followed by demonstrations of military cadets. After the government ordered the use of firearms against the students, one was killed and several others were wounded. On the same day it was overthrown by a military junta of 38 officers, headed by General Cemal Gursel, whom Menderes had retired some months earlier because of his independent attitude.

While the coup was accomplished by a group of officers, it had been made possible by growing discontent in the cities and among the intellectuals, arising from the government's ever-increasing arbitrariness and its peasant-oriented departures from secularism. From the beginning the junta, which took the name of the Committee of National Unity (CUN), declared that the military seizure of power was not directed against any party as such or against any class of citizens, that it was purely temporary, and that its aim was to proceed to honest and democratic elections as soon as normal conditions had been restored.

Initially CUN arrested only the most active Democratic leaders, later
those who had been compromised by their excessively partisan and aggressive attitude during the Democratic tenure, and finally all the Democratic deputies without exception. They were held for trial before a special high court on charges of high treason and violation of the constitution. Among those arrested were five deputies from minority groups—two Armenians, one Greek, and two Jews, Yussuf Salman (Joseph Salmona) and Izak Etabaki (Isaac Altabev). Salman later died of a heart attack while still under arrest awaiting trial. One of the Armenian deputies also died while under arrest.

Two tendencies were soon apparent within CUN. On the one hand, the older officers sincerely wanted to confine the revolution’s role to the restoration of democracy and honest elections. On the other, a group of younger officers held that the revolution would be meaningless unless it instituted structural social reforms. After a second coup, on November 14, 1960, the committee was reduced to 23 members and the most unyielding partisans of a more thoroughgoing revolution, led by Alparslan Turkesh, were removed from the junta and sent abroad on various diplomatic missions. The reduced committee remained under the presidency of General Gursel, who appeared to be the spokesman for a limited revolution and a return to civilian rule. One journalist summed up the second coup by saying that it differed from what had happened in Egypt in February–March 1954 in that the Turkish victors were like Mohammed Naguib and the losers like Gamal Abdul Nasser (AJYB, 1955 [Vol. 56], p. 487).

CUN’s subsequent policies were calculated to promote the promised return to civilian government and the creation of the necessary conditions for free and honest elections. After a period in which all political activities were banned, the formation of new parties was permitted. Two new parties, the New Turkey party and the Justice party, attempted to pull together the wreckage of the dissolved Democratic party and take over its following.

As soon as it came to power, CUN lifted all restrictions on the press, which thereafter enjoyed a degree of freedom that it had never known before. All the journalists arrested by the Democratic regime were freed, and the press took advantage of its freedom to criticize CUN.

From the beginning CUN demonstrated its intention to fight religious fanaticism, particularly the Democratic-inspired practice of exploiting religious issues for political purposes. Secularism again became a basic principle of Turkish policy. Only recently modernized, Turkey had known much religious fanaticism until less than four decades earlier and still suffered from obscurantism. The decision to maintain the separation of church and state was therefore of the greatest importance.

At the outset, CUN took steps to show that in spite of its dissolution of the National Assembly it did not intend to use its power arbitrarily, but rather planned to act in accordance with the principles of law. Thus it asked the professors of law and political science at the universities of Istanbul and Ankara to prepare a draft for a new constitution and to prepare a provisional charter establishing a modus operandi for CUN and defining the rights of citizens in relation to the revolutionary power. The charter was
promulgated and remained in effect until the establishment of the constituent assembly. The very formation of this assembly signaled the junta's intention of restoring civilian government in short order. The members of the assembly were not elected by universal suffrage, but consisted of representatives of the major parties (except the dissolved Democratic party), professional groups, CUN appointees, and presidential appointees. The assembly was to draw up a new constitution for Turkey, using the draft prepared by the professors but not being bound by it.

Gursel included among his nominees one representative from each minority community, designated by the minorities themselves. The Jewish candidate so designated was Erol Dilek, a young Istanbul lawyer who had for some time been active in communal affairs. He was the only Jewish member of the constituent assembly.

Besides its principal task of drawing up the constitution, the assembly shared with CUN the power to pass ordinary laws before the election of the new parliament. On July 9, 1961, after the constitution had been drafted by the assembly and approved by the CUN, it was submitted to a popular referendum under conditions of complete freedom. The honesty of the poll was attested by the fact that 38 per cent of the ballots were counted against the constitution, indicating a still potent opposition in Anatolia from the partisans of the defunct Democratic party.

New Constitution

The new constitution contained guarantees of all the basic human rights, article 12 prohibiting distinctions in law on the basis of language, race, religion, or personal convictions. The constitution initiated some radical changes in Turkish political life. It provided for a bicameral parliament—a national assembly, to be elected every four years by proportional representation based on universal suffrage, and a senate of 150 members, one-fourth of whom were to be elected by plurality every two years. There was to be a strong executive and a supreme court empowered to pass on the constitutionality of laws.

Nevertheless, some CUN measures were scarcely compatible with Western concepts of democracy. These were explained as necessary to meet the stubborn and unconstructive opposition of former Democrats, who, with the aid of every obscurantist element, employed their negative propaganda to try to win leadership in Anatolia, especially in the east and southeast. The continued Democratic opposition did to some extent explain the emergency measures adopted by the CUN, if it did not always justify them.

One such emergency law, promulgated before the establishment of the constituent assembly, empowered the government to banish persons considered as dangerous to the nation from certain cities or regions, and even to liquidate their possessions in such regions. Decisions in these matters were to be made administratively rather than by the courts, and there was no provision for appeal. Another law permitted administrative detention for as long as 30 days without a judicial hearing. Ostensibly to reform the univer-
tities, CUN put through a special law removing 147 university professors and instructors, including some of the best known, without giving any reasons. It was not clear why CUN adopted this measure, which was very badly received in intellectual circles. This arbitrary purge did not involve any element of anti-minority prejudice, since of the 147 removed, only one, a Greek, was a member of a minority.

**Minorities**

From its inception, CUN and all departments of the government took pains to make sure that nothing in their acts could be considered as inimical to non-Moslem citizens. In the first declaration over the state radio, the spokesman of the armed forces who were about to take power emphasized that all citizens, irrespective of race or religion, could count on the protection of the new government. What is more, some of the Democratic leaders, arrested and tried before the high court sitting on the island of Yassiada, were called to account for their responsibility in the riots of September 1955 in which the Moslem population, angered by events on Cyprus, maltreated citizens belonging to the Greek and other minorities and looted stores in predominantly Greek, Jewish, and Armenian districts (AJYB, 1957 [Vol. 58], pp. 332–333). The former Democratic regime was accused of having either stirred up the riots or of having failed to provide adequate protection for minority citizens.

From its establishment, the CUN military government was invariably represented by the governor at important events in the communal life of the various minority communities. Thus General Refik Tulga, governor of Istanbul, visited a synagogue on Yom Kippur of 1960.

**Attitude to Jews**

While the revolutionary government showed that it considered all citizens as equal before the law, the revival of nationalist feeling which accompanied the revolution made the new government less ready than the old to recognize the communities as administrative organisms. It was inclined to give rigorous application to Kemal Atatürk's doctrine that administration was exclusively the function of the state. After taking power, the revolutionary government hastened to advise all the minority communities officially that the authority of their community organizations was limited to religious questions. The Jewish community was told that the Grand Rabbinate and the religious council were officially recognized, but that the lay council, which dealt with administrative matters of concern to all the Jews in Turkey, and the joint fund appeal had no legal existence and were not authorized to meet. This decision created a considerable furor abroad. The London *Jewish Chronicle* for November 23, 1960, even spoke of a decree disintegrating Jewish communal life in Turkey. Actually, the situation created by the government's communication was not new. The Jewish and other minority communities had lacked any well-defined juridical status ever since Atatürk's establishment of the republican regime and the renunciation by the communities of certain privileges granted them in the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923.
Until 1949 the central organizations of the community were tolerated but not recognized. In 1950 a new law on religious endowments required that each property devoted to religious purposes should be managed independently by a committee chosen by the parishioners, and the law on associations provided that each individual charity was to be organized as an independent association. This legislation created complicated practical problems for the communities, since it was almost impossible to manage every synagogue or cemetery or charity separately. There were always community-wide problems, for which some central organ was indispensable. The Democrats had shown a great deal of flexibility in order to win Jewish votes in Istanbul. Hence the new government did not create a new legal situation, but simply required the laws in force to be strictly applied. It later showed a more understanding attitude and agreed to allow the chief rabbi to have not only religious but also lay counsellors.

Raphael Saban, who had been chief rabbi of Turkey since February 1953, died on November 26, 1960. The authorities authorized the community to elect a successor, and on July 25, 1961, delegates elected on the basis of one for each 300 Jews in Turkey convened. On August 21, they elected David Asseo as the new grand rabbi. The 47-year-old Rabbi Asseo had long been Rabbi Saban's assistant.

Rabbi Saban's impressive funeral was attended by the governor and military chiefs of the Istanbul region.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

No census of the Jewish community was possible, so that population estimates were only rough approximations. The Jewish population of Turkey was estimated at 46,000, of whom 38,000 were in Istanbul and 5,000 in Izmir. There were small communities in Gallipoli, Tekirdagh (Rodosto), Edirna, Ankara, Kirklareli, Brousse, Aydin, Mersin, Adana, and Diyarbakir. Jewish emigration was a little greater than in the preceding period, the majority of emigrants going to Israel.

Jewish Education

The Istanbul community maintained four primary schools and one secondary school, on the lycée level. The lycée's building was in need of modernization and improvement to enable it to meet the steadily increasing demands for admission. In Izmir there was also an increase in enrolment in the Jewish schools, many who had formerly sent their children to government or foreign schools now preferring to send them to schools offering Hebrew instruction. One of the Izmir schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which had for some years been closed as a result of the large-scale emigration of 1948, was reopened.

Social Welfare

Other communal institutions in Istanbul included an orphanage, the Or ha-Hayyim hospital, Tzedakah u-Marpe and Mishneh Torah which assisted
needy students, and Bikkur Holim, a dispensary. There were also an organization to assist needy and undernourished young people (La Goutte de Lait), a home for the aged, a fund to help tuberculars, and the Mahazike Torah, a sort of religious seminary.

Publications

There were two specifically Jewish and communal weeklies, Salom and La Vera Luz, published partly in Turkish and partly in Ladino (a Jewish dialect of Spanish). The French-language daily Journal d'Orient was not a specifically Jewish paper but featured events of interest to Jews.

Antisemitism

In general, it could be said that there was a decline in antisemitism during the period under review. Anti-Jewish publications appeared only occasionally and aroused no public interest. Periodicals such as Büyük Doğu and Hur Adam (AJYB, 1960 [Vol. 61], p. 282) no longer appeared. Investigations into the acts of the former regime established that the well-known antisemitic poet Necib Fazil Kıskürek, owner and editor of Büyük Doğu, had received substantial subsidies from state secret funds while the Democrats were in power.

Eichmann Case

Whatever interest there was in the Eichmann case was favorable to the Jews. Several newspapers sent reporters to Tel-Aviv, but they did not remain beyond the beginning of the trial. The Journal d'Orient carried regular accounts of the court sessions, while the most important recitals of the horrors of Hitler's crimes appeared in the newspapers Milliet, Cumhuriyet, and Dunya. The afternoon French-language daily Istanbul, subsidized by the French embassy, regularly carried reports of the trial and stressed the moral importance of the case against Hitler and his henchmen. But the interest of the Turkish people themselves in the case was limited, primarily because their own country was going through a period full of important and dramatic developments, among them a great and spectacular political trial. Moreover, since Turkey had not taken part in the Second World War, the people had never formed a clear idea of the sufferings of the German-occupied countries and especially of the Jews.

Relations with Israel

Journalists assigned to Israel for the Eichmann trial also furnished general reports on Israel, some lukewarm and others enthusiastic. The new government maintained a friendly attitude toward Israel, and in March 1961 a new commercial treaty was signed between the two countries. Nevertheless the new government, more than any previous one, was anxious to improve relations with the Arabs in the hope of drawing them closer to the Western camp. It was for this reason that diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel were not restored to the ambassadorial level, on which they had been
before Sinai. Each country continued to be represented in the other by a chargé d'affaires.

In August 1961 a group of young Jewish athletes asked permission to participate in the International Maccabiah in Israel. Permission was at first granted but later withdrawn, probably at the instance of Arab diplomats. Later, however, permission was again given to participate under the Turkish flag, and the team was able to go to Israel.

While developments in the period under review were on the whole favorable to the Jews, the future remained uncertain. Turkey was on the eve of important developments. It still had to deal with such vital problems as the liquidation of feudalism in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country, the fight against obscanturism and illiteracy, and the reorganization of the economy. The inflationist policy of the Democrats had seriously shaken the economy and the reports of the experts indicated that there was trouble ahead. Agricultural production was inadequate, and its future growth seemed unlikely to match the increase in demand produced by an explosive demographic situation.

The idea was steadily gaining ground among intellectuals that Turkey's cultural level was too low and the problems the country faced too complicated for solution within the framework of a democratic regime based on universal suffrage. The economic crisis, which followed the unavoidable adoption of severe deflationary measures in August 1958, produced unemployment and growing poverty. If this situation continued, there was danger that it would lead to a political and even social crisis which could create a dangerous situation for the minorities, including the Jews.