Historians of the Western world generally take it for granted that good historical research, especially when it is concerned with the modern period, has to be based on primary sources. In the language of the historian this nearly always means archives. For the historian of the Middle East, however, it is often impossible to consult the relevant archives. The older collections are often inadequately systematized or catalogued and the modern archives are often seen by the nation-states of the Middle East which guard them, as too sensitive to be opened to researchers, especially to foreigners. This situation certainly obtains in Turkey. There, too, the availability of the archives to historians, even Turkish ones, is very limited. The Baskanlik Arsivi ('Archives of the Office of the Prime Minister'), into which the Ottoman state archives are incorporated, is to all intents and purposes closed for the period after 1914. The archives of the Türk Tarih Kurumu (the 'Turkish Historical Society') and of the Türk Devrim Tarihi Enstitüsü ('Institute for the History of the Turkish Revolution'), which house some important private collections, are open only to a select group of trusted Turkish historians. The reasons for this policy are not stated officially, but it is hard not to imagine that the Armenian problem may have something to do with it.

In such a situation the historian who strives to evaluate the current representation of historical events in modern Turkey has to look for alternative sources, which can take the place of the archival materials as primary sources, even if only temporarily. Among these alternative sources may be mentioned: foreign archival collections, published documentary collections, the contemporary press in Turkey and abroad and also the memoirs and autobiographies of the protagonists of the period.

A large number of works in this last-named category has appeared in Turkey in the last 30 years, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. They frequently offer facts and opinions about the history of the national independence movement and the 'Kemalist' revolution, which differ considerably from those of the generally accepted Turkish historiography.

One can discern in Turkey an 'official' or 'orthodox' historical tradition which has developed since the mid-1920s on the basis of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's own version and which has ever since been canonized in an endless stream of schoolbooks, official publications and popular histories and guarded jealously by the Türk Tarih Kurumu. The dissident autobiographies and memoirs seem hardly to have affected this tradition, if at all, in spite of their sometimes wide readership. Nevertheless, used in combination with other types of sources and with each other, these works may offer the opportunity for an important readjustment of the image created by the Kemalist tradition.

The value of these Turkish memoirs and autobiographies for the historian is
very unpredictable. It is determined by a number of factors. In the first place there is the character of the author and the motives behind his writing. There are the circumstances in which he writes and the time-lag between the events he describes and the time of writing. Because of the gradual liberalization of the political climate in Turkey from the 1950s onwards many memoirs have only been published 25 to 30 years after the events described in them (which is not to say that all of them were only written at that time, of course). There are also wide-ranging variations in the form in which the memoirs are presented. In some cases we are dealing with verbal accounts or notes which have been turned into a book by the protagonist himself or by one of Turkey’s many popular historians or journalists with an interest in historical topics, such as Cemal Kutay, Feridun Kandemir or Samih Nafiz Tansu. Examples of this type of work are the memoirs of Ali Fethi Okyar, an important young Turk officer and later Prime Minister of Turkey, and of Hüsamettin Ertürk and Kusqubasizade Esref, both important members of the Teskilat-i Mahsusa (‘Special Organization’), the Turkish secret service in the First World War, which played such an important role in the independence movement after 1918. This kind of memoirs is generally unsupported by documents and is meant as a form of entertainment for a large public. It should therefore be used only with the utmost caution. At the other side of the spectrum – as far as information and controllability are concerned – are those works which really only consist of a connecting text between (sometimes large numbers of) published documents. Examples of this type are Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s own Nutuk (‘Speech’) of 1927 and Kâzım Karabekir’s Istiklal Harbimiz (‘Our Independence War’), which was only released in 1968.

Before going into the history and contents of this last-named work, as an example of the potential importance of this type of material, it is perhaps useful to have a short biographical sketch of its author, Kâzım Karabekir Pasha (1882–1948), who is undoubtedly one of the major figures in the early history of modern Turkey.

Kâzım Karabekir was born in Istanbul in 1882 as the son of an Ottoman pasha. He received his education at the military schools of Fatih and Kuleli and subsequently at the Military Academy (Harbiye Mektebi) and the General Staff College (Erkân-i Harbiye Mektebi) in Pangaltı. In 1905 he graduated first in his class. At the military academy he made the acquaintance of Mustafa Kemal, the later Atatürk, who was one year his senior. In December 1906, when he was an officer with the staff of the Third Army in Macedonia, he joined the Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti (‘Ottoman Freedom Society’). This was the secret committee founded in September 1906 in Salonica, which in 1907 merged with the İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti (‘Committee of Union and Progress, CUP’) of Ahmet Riza in Paris, and in July 1908 brought about the constitutional revolution under this latter name. Kâzım never played an important political role in the CUP, concentrating instead on his professional career as a soldier. During the First World War he fought on the Caucasian front, in Iraq and at the Dardanelles. When the armistice of Mudros was concluded in October 1918, he found himself in Azerbeydzhan at the head of a Turkish expeditionary force. Soon after the armistice he was recalled to Istanbul to head the General Staff. This,
however, he refused, after which refusal he was given the command of the Fourteenth Army Corps with divisions in Tekirdag and Bandirma.

Käzim Pasha was one of the earliest supporters of the idea of the organization of a national resistance movement in Anatolia, plans for which were being hatched within the CUP and especially among its military members from October 1918 onwards. In early 1919 he ferried his troops in European Turkey to the Anatolian side. He was convinced, however, that a real basis for a national movement could only be found in the East, out of reach of the Entente powers. In March 1919 he succeeded in having himself appointed Commanding Officer of the Fourteenth Army Corps (the former Ninth Army) in eastern Anatolia with headquarters in Erzurum. There he immediately supported the activities of the Vilayät-i Sarkiye Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Milliye Cemiyeti ('Society for the Defence of the National Rights of the Eastern Provinces'). This organization had been founded in Istanbul in December 1918 by a number of prominent Unionists from the eastern provinces to fight Armenian claims on the area and it was now preparing the famous congress of Erzurum (July 1919).

In the earliest phase of the national resistance movement (1918–20) Käzim Karabekir was the key military figure in Anatolia, because his force was the only regular army of any size the nationalists had at their disposal. Käzim successfully sabotaged the demobilization of his troops and in the Autumn of 1920 he used them to force the Armenian republic to recognize Turkish territorial claims and cede the provinces of Kars and Ardahan to Turkey.

Thereafter attention shifted to the western front and Käzim’s role gradually became less important. From 1920 onwards he was nominally a member of the Great National Assembly, although he did not actually attend the meetings. He came to belong to that group of pioneers of the national resistance movement that was gradually cut off from the centre of power from 1923 onwards and that, under the leadership of Hüseyin Rauf Orbay (1881–1964) opposed the radical and authoritarian tendencies of the group around Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In 1924 this opposition culminated in the founding of the first opposition party of republican Turkey, the Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Firkası (‘Progressive Republican Party’). Although the initiative for the founding of the party was not his, Käzim sympathized. He resigned his army inspectorate in order to be able to take up his seat in the assembly and was elected president of the new party, which presented itself as a moderate, liberal-democratic alternative to the governing party, the Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası (‘Republican People’s Party’). From the start the new party was under pressure and it was not long before it was closed down after the introduction of the Takrir-i Sükün Kanunu (‘Law on the Maintenance of Order’) in March 1925. During this period of rather unsuccessful opposition, Käzim remained a figurehead and did not play an active role either in the organization of the party or in the drawing-up of its programme.

A year later the leaders of the Progressive Republican Party were among the groups which were purged with the trials following the Izmir conspiracy in the summer of 1926. Although Käzim Karabekir and the other prestigious military leaders who had been involved with the PRP were acquitted, his career was at an end for as long as the radical wing around Mustafa Kemal
Atatürk dominated the scene.

In the years that followed, he lived in Istanbul, retired and embittered, and devoted himself to writing a large number of books and composing rather unsophisticated music. This life in relative obscurity lasted until after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death in 1938. Then there followed a comeback on the political scene, which served as a form of rehabilitation, while giving him no real power. In 1939 he was elected to the National Assembly again and from 1946 until his death two years later he even was president of that body.

Of the many books, the manuscripts of which he wrote in the last 20 years of his life, by far the most important is his monumental (1230 pages!) Istiklal Harbimiz. This book is a richly documented history of the Turkish independence war on the basis of Kâzim Pasha's own experience and his personal archives, more than 1000 documents from which are included in the text.

The history of the publication of this work is interesting in itself as an illustration of the development of the freedom of the press in modern Turkey. Kâzim Karabekir seems to have collected the materials and to have prepared the manuscript between 1927 and 1933. In 1933 he commissioned the publication of a short synopsis of his memoirs concerning the national resistance movement under the title Istiklal Harbimizin Esasları ('The Foundations of Our War of Independence') from the publisher Sinan Omur, but in April of that year the printing was halted on the orders of Keliç Ali (1888–1971) and Kil Ali Çentinkaya (1878–1949), two close associates of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who had played a prominent role in the persecutions of 1925 and 1926, as members of the İstiklal Mahkemesi ('Independence Tribunal') of Ankara. The proofs of the book were collected and burned. However, the materials on which they were based had been rescued and hidden in time. No publication, either of the synopsis or of the complete work was attempted during the rest of Kâzim Karabekir's lifetime, but after the victory of the Democratic Party in the elections of 1950 his heirs considered the political climate more promising and the publication of the memoirs was taken up again. First the Esaslar appeared in 1951. After this 'trial balloon' the publication of the larger work could be considered and in 1959 Karabekir's daughters commissioned the publishing house Türkiye in Istanbul to print and publish it. Of course, the printing of so large a work took considerable time, but in July 1960 it was offered for sale. For some months it was sold without incidents in spite of the call for a ban in some newspapers. By now Turkey was ruled by the National Unity Committee (Milli Birlik Komitesesi), a military junta, which had come to power in the coup d'état of 27 May, 1960.

In January 1961 the whole situation concerning the publication of İstiklal Harbimiz changed, when the public prosecutor started an investigation and later (in March) also a lawsuit against the publisher of the book on the grounds of infringement of articles one and two of law 5816 of 1951, which made defamation of Atatürk's memory a punishable act.

In the indictment 34 passages from the book were quoted in illustration of the charge. The fact that the decision to prosecute was made, however, probably had more to do with the person of the publisher than with the work
The publisher, Tahsin Demiray, was a controversial figure at the time as co-founder and first secretary of the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi), and the campaign against the book coincided with the first moves to found this party, which was a barely disguised heir to the ousted and outlawed Democratic Party (Demokrat Partisi). The trial of Demiray was suspended in October when he was elected to the National Assembly and thus received immunity. In 1965, however, Demiray decided not to stand for re-election and he himself then asked for the trial to be reopened. This happened and the book was eventually released for publication in November 1968. The case was won on a technicality, that is, that the prosecutor had not decided to take action within six months of the original publication of the book in 1960, as demanded by law.

What makes Karabekir's _Istiklal Harbimiz_ so interesting and important among the many memoirs, is its resemblance to Atatürk's _Nutuk_, his famous speech of 1927. The speech is often seen and used as the historical survey *par excellence* of the Turkish revolution, even if it is sometimes acknowledged that it contains a highly partisan view. In reality, it had quite a different function when it was given in 1927 to serve as a justification for the purges within the nationalist movement of the year before, during which the former leaders of the war of independence (the group to which Karabekir also belonged) had been eliminated. No less than 52 passages in the _Nutuk_ are devoted to criticism of these former colleagues of Atatürk and their role is belittled throughout.

_Istiklal Harbimiz_ is in many ways an anti-_Nutuk_. Both memoirs resemble each other closely in form and they also largely deal with the same subject matter and period, although Karabekir stops in 1922 with the victory of the nationalists over the Greek forces. Of the later period he says 'The events of later date have been witnessed and are being witnessed by everyone.' The fact that we know that he wrote at least the first version of his memoirs between 1926 and 1933 also makes it probable that the book is a reaction to the _Nutuk_ and the mottos both of _Istiklal Harbimiz_ ('Istiklal harbi yaptik Amilleri yazmazsa tarihı masal olur – We fought the independence war. If its creators do not write it, its history will become a fairytale') and of _Istiklal Harbimizin Esasları_ ('Yanlış bilgi felâket kaynagıdir – Incorrect information is a source of disaster') can easily be interpreted as veiled criticisms of the _Nutuk_.

In a number of places the version of history given by Karabekir differs considerably from the one in the _Nutuk_, on which modern Turkish historiography bases itself for this period. The most important differences can be summarized as follows:

1. According to Karabekir, Mustafa Kemal waited and hesitated for too long, before he decided to join his colleagues who were preparing a national resistance movement in Anatolia.
2. When he came to Anatolia in May 1919, Mustafa Kemal tried to bypass the embryonic nationalist organization in the eastern provinces, which was preparing the congress of Erzurum, and to organize a separate national congress in Sivas. Only with difficulty could he be persuaded to come to Erzurum first and to convene the national congress in Sivas only afterwards.
3. Mustafa Kemal forced an independent and radical line on the movement by severing all communications with the government in Istanbul, thus in effect making the national movement independent, while most other leaders still saw it as a temporary emergency.

4. Much attention is devoted to the relations between the Turkish nationalists and the Bolsheviks. As commander on the eastern front Kâzım Karabekir witnessed the development of these relations at close quarters, but while he realized the importance of Soviet aid, he found Mustafa Kemal too accommodating to the Bolsheviks and their ideas. Lacking the tactical subtlety of Kemal, he was afraid the latter was allowing them to take over the national movement.

5. Mustafa Kemal is accused of developing an authoritarian and extremist attitude, which resulted in widespread mistrust within the movement, especially in the Eastern provinces, where even the nationalist activists were ideologically much more conservative than in the West. This feeling was strengthened by stories about the 'immoral' lifestyle of Kemal and his circle and it led to attempts to replace Kemal at the head of the movement.

6. Karabekir criticizes the fact that Mustafa Kemal called off the operations to recapture Kars and Ardahan in the summer of 1920 at the last moment, because of pressure from the Bolsheviks.

Throughout, Karabekir emphasizes his own role, for instance when he describes his refusal to arrest Mustafa Kemal after the latter had come to Erzurum in 1919, even though he was ordered to do so by the government, and the fact that he continued to support him as leader even when he was dismissed from the army and his army inspectorate was offered to Kâzim himself. This crucial episode, when Mustafa Kemal only survived as leader thanks to the open support of Kâzim Karabekir, is left out of the Nutuk completely, but it is well documented in other memoirs.28

What can we say about the reliability of İstiklal Harbimiz? When we check the criteria we listed earlier, we come first to the character and the motives of the author. Karabekir comes alive from the pages of his book as a rather limited, honest man with an unmistakable tendency to vanity and self-importance. He certainly was not a far-sighted politician. The book is clearly an attempt at vindication, written at a time when he was very bitter about his forced retirement and the way his role was depicted in the Kemalist sources, and especially in the Nutuk. Against this, the book may have been published late, but it was almost certainly written relatively shortly after the events described. It is extensively well documented and the documents make the impression of having been rendered quite faithfully.

As to the specific differences between Karabekir's version and that of Atatürk: in several important instances the former is supported by other sources. It is true that Mustafa Kemal was not one of the first high-ranking officers to leave for Anatolia in 1918–19 (he was involved in political intrigues in the capital for the first four to five months after his return from the front) and that others persuaded him of the rightness of the 'Anatolian option' and launched him on his way.29 That he intended to bypass the Erzurum congress and replace it with a national congress of his own is confirmed by other
memoirs, too.\textsuperscript{30} Traces of criticism of Mustafa Kemal’s authoritarianism and radicalism (and of his personal lifestyle) can be found in many places. It seems to have been especially strong in the eastern provinces, where it led to the establishment of the \emph{Muhafaza-i Mukaddesat Cemiyeti} (‘Society for the Preservation of the Holy Traditions’) in 1921.\textsuperscript{31} In Ankara the founders of the \emph{Ikinci Grup} (‘Second Group’) in the National Assembly in 1922 were motivated by the same factors.\textsuperscript{32} Mustafa Kemal’s reputation in this respect was also one of Enver Pasha’s strong suits when the latter tried to return to Anatolia to replace Mustafa Kemal in the summer of 1921.\textsuperscript{33} No doubt the attention devoted to this point in \emph{Istiklal Harbimiz} reflects Karabekir’s own religiously conservative attitude, too.

The problem of the relations of the Nationalists with the Soviet Union presents a complicated and fascinating problem.\textsuperscript{34} While it is clear that Mustafa Kemal had to walk a tightrope, maintaining good relations with the Bolsheviks (essential for the survival of the nationalist movement) while avoiding ‘sovietization’ at the same time, it is most unlikely that he ever seriously contemplated founding a Soviet state in Anatolia. He played a very delicate game, which was perhaps beyond the grasp of Karabekir.

In addition to offering these striking differences with the ‘official’ \emph{Version} based on \emph{Nutuk, Istiklal Harbimiz} is a mine of information on all kinds of detailed questions. However, I hope that even the few points enumerated above may serve to give an idea of the potential value of Young Turk memoirs like Kâzim Karabekir’s for a revaluation of modern Turkish history.

\section*{Notes}

\begin{enumerate}
\item For instance, the collections published by Bilâl N. Simşir since 1973 (Bilâl N. Simşir, \textit{İngiliz Belgelerinde Ataturk} (Ankara Turk Tarhi Kurumu, 1973), Vol 1, 1975 Vol 2, 1979 Vol 3 and such Turkish journals as \textit{Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi} and \textit{Tarih Vesikalari}
\item Large collections of early Turkish newspapers are to be found both in the \textit{Millî Kuruphane} in Ankara and in the \textit{Atatürk Kitaplığı} in Istanbul.
\item As laid down by him in interviews with the newspapers \textit{Vakıf} (in January 1922) and \textit{Mülkiye} (in March 1926) and in his speech before the congress of the Republican People’s Party in 1927, the \textit{Nutuk}
\item Cf Enk J. Zürcher, \textit{The Unionist Factor The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement (1905–1926)} (Leiden Brill, 1984), pp 24–30
\item For a recent example of a widely used history of the Turkish revolution which displays all the characteristics of the ‘official’ Kemalist tradition, see Suna Kılıç, \textit{Türk Devrim Tarihi} (İstanbul Tekin), 1982
\item Fethi Okyar in, Cemal Kutay (ed ) \textit{Üç Devirde Bir Adam} (İstanbul Tercüman, 1980)
\item Husamettin Erturk was a leading staff-officer of the \textit{Teskilât-i Mahsusa}. He was ordered by Enver Pasha in 1918 to keep the organisation intact after the war, as an instrument for the Turkish resistance in the coming struggle. After March, 1920, he served as liaison officer between the General Staff in Ankara and the nationalist underground in Istanbul. His memoirs were published as Husameddin Erturk, \textit{Iki Devrin Perde Arkası} (İstanbul Nurgok, 1957) (Samih Nafiz Tansu, ed)
\item Esref was an important field-officer of the \textit{Teskilât}. His handwritten memoirs form the basis
\end{enumerate}
of several books by Cemal Kutay and are used extensively in Celâl Bayar's memoirs


11 There are many editions of the Nutuk. The best-known modern Turkish edition (and the one I used) is Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk* (İstanbul Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1967) 3 vols. The English translation published in Istanbul in 1963 (*A Speech Delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk* 1927) is notoriously unreliable

12 Kâzım Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz* (İstanbul Türkiye, 1960)

13 Cf Zürcher, op cit pp 38–44. For Karabekir's own role in the CUP see his *İşhat ve Terakki Cemiyeti 1896–1908* (İstanbul Faruk Özerengin, 1982) Written in 1945


15 In 1919 the strength of Karabekir's Fifteenth Army Corps was 17,860. In case of total mobilization this strength rose to 30,000 regulars and about 20,000 irregulars (Karabekir, op cit p 25)

16 Hüseyin Rauf Orbay was the son of an Ottoman admiral. He himself became a national hero as commander of the cruiser *Hamidiye* in the Balkan War of 1913. In 1919 he was one of the pioneers of the national resistance movement. He sat on the *Heyet-i Temsilîye* (representative committee) of the nationalists and in the last Ottoman Parliament, whence he was deported to Malta by the British in 1920. After his return he served as Minister and Prime Minister in Ankara. His memoirs first appeared in *Yakin Tarhiımız*, a weekly published by Fendun Kandemir for Turkpetrol between March 1962 and February 1963.

17 According to a decree of July 1923, army officers could only sit in the assembly after having given up their army command (they were not required to leave the army), but this rule was only enforced in November, 1924 (Cf Michael M. Finefrock, *From Sultanate to Republic Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and the Structure of Turkish Politics 1922–1924* (unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton, 1976) p 227

18 This author is currently engaged in writing a history of the Progressive Republican Party

19 Cf Azmi Nihat Erman, *İzmir Suikastı ve İstiklâl Mahkemeleri* (İstanbul Temel, 1971), Ferdun Kandemir, *İzmir Suikastı'nı İçyüzü* (İstanbul Ekinçil, 1956) Also Zürcher, op cit pp 142–165

20 Kâzım Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz'ın Esasları* (İstanbul Sinan, 1951)

21 The Independence Tribunals had originally been instituted in 1920 to deal with espionage and desertion. They had been abolished after the Nationalist victory, but two tribunals had been instituted after the passing of the *Takrir-i Sukun Kanunu* in March 1925, one to deal with the Kurdish insurgent in the east and one to deal with the opposition in the rest of the country.

22 Kâzım Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimizin Esasları*, pp 190–2

23 Atatürk'un hâlârasına ailen hakaret eden veya soven kimse bir yılda üç yıla kadar hapis cezasıyla cezalandırılır ('Anyone attacking or insulting the memory of Atatürk shall be punished with one to three years imprisonment') (Art 1)

24 The whole story of the trial of Tahsin Demiray is given in Tahsin Demiray, *İstiklâl Harbimizin Müdafaası* (İstanbul Türkiye, 1969)

25 Cf Finefrock, op cit p 57. For a recent Turkish discussion on the value of the Nutuk as history and as source, see *Felsefe Kurumu Seminerleri* (1974–1975) 3 Türkiye'de Tarih Eğitim (Ankara 1977), pp 404–32

26 Cf Zürcher, op cit pp 162

27 *Bundan sonraki ahval herkesçe gorulmus ve gorulmektedir* (Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz*, p 1)


31 Ataturk, Nutuk Vol 2, pp 596-601