

TURKEY AND THE COMINTERN

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This paper consists of three parts. In the first, I'll try to give a resumé of TKP's relations with the Communist International. In the second part, I'll make some critical remarks on the Turkish studies about Turco-Soviet relations in general during the Comintern period. Finally in the third part, I'll relate a case highlighting the tragedy of Communists who were obliged to become traitors to their own country for the benefit of their adopted "socialist fatherland."

I

I am not a Comintern expert. But I dare say it is an objective fact that this organization has been under the heavy spell of Russian Communism from its creation onwards. After Lenin, it became under Stalin, further a docile instrument of the Soviet foreign policy.

Five years ago, The International Institute of Social History organized in Amsterdam an truly crowded international congress on the Comintern where I also participated. The papers submitted there, are being edited by Jürgen Rojahn, but unfortunately they have not yet appeared in book form. I hope the present congress will be an important addition to the amassed information in that general symposium, because the emphasis at the previous meeting was naturally on the developed Western countries, largely neglecting the Middle East.

30 years ago, in the first edition of my study on the Left in Turkey, I had made the following observation in relation to the Soviet passivity upon the extermination of the TKP Central Committee members by the Turkish authorities: "*The attitude taken by the Soviets and the Comintern vis a vis the murdering of Mustafa Suphi & his comrades constituted a very important precedent for the development process of world wide left also. The foreign policy interests of the Socialist fatherland clashed in this case with the existence of a brother party and the Communists were forced to make a preference. That they chose to side with Mustafa Kemal, became the first instance of an opportunistic pattern usually attributed to Stalin (especially by the Trotskites). Yet when this policy decision was made, Lenin presided the Soviet state officially and actually.*" (1967 edition -in Turkish-, pp. 122-23.)

The Turkish participants in the first two Comintern congresses sounded quite nationalistic. The speaker-delegate at the 3rd congress was exceptionally anti-nationalistic & I intend to relate his story in some detail as an interesting case at the end of this paper. The Turkish delegation at the 4th congress was composed of representatives from Ankara (People's Communist - Halk İştirakiyun party) and Istanbul (the circle around the *Aydınlık* magazine). In the congress they protested the Turkish govt. who had banned the party in Ankara and the workers' association in Istanbul. They had also complaints against the

local Greek-dominated *Union internationale du travail* for its refusal to join the Turkish workers to create a united front. (This need not be interpreted as a nationalistic gesture.)

We see one of the rare references to Turkey in the public documents of the Comintern at its 5th congress in 1924. There, Manuisky severely reprimanded the representatives of the Turkish party (in Istanbul) for supporting the bourgeois Ankara govt. He claimed that the Turks were committing Struveism or the social-patriotic ideological mistake of the 2nd International. Ali Cevdet, the TKP delegate (who was to be a long time resident in Moscow, to be purged & executed in 1936 for the false accusation of being a Trotskite) partly admitted that his comrades had toyed with the ideas of state and municipal socialism. He tried to legitimize their attitude by saying that they had endorsed only revolutionary nationalism in the struggle against imperialism and feudal residues such as the caliphate. But Manuisky's accusation was not confined to their collaboration with the destructive functions of the bourgeoisie, but also with its constructive functions. Support of the owners of indigenous capital meant outright right-wing deviation. This view continued into 1926, when in May a Turkish party conference which convened in Vienna evaluated the Central Committee under Vedat Nedim (Tör) as having fallen into "Menshevik and liquidationist deviations." Those were the days of the leftist hard-line of the Comintern and the Soviet party. Yet soon the orientation would change. When Stalin would be engaged in struggle against the left opposition, one would expect a more lenient attitude towards the Communists of backward countries who could wish to support their progressist, but basically bourgeois reformers. We must however, note that in the late 20s the Comintern began to loose its importance parallel to the thriving of official inter-governmental relations.

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As for the 1928 Comintern congress, I want to quote a paragraph from E.H.Carr's *History of Soviet Russia - Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929* (Part IV, pp. 672-73): "The process of Soviet-Turkish rapprochement was regarded without enthusiasm by the few Turkish communists and by those Comintern circles which reflected on the increasingly ruthless measures of repression applied by the Kemal régime to Turkish workers. In the debate on colonial and semi-colonial countries at the sixth congress of Comintern in July 1928, Shakhri <this must be a mis-reading of a pseudonym used by Ali Cevdet in this congress, who was Faruk at the 5th congress, but styled himself as Fahri here> the Turkish delegate, protested vigorously against the assumption, in the draft theses submitted by Kuusinen, that Turkey was a primitive country where 'pre-feudal' conditions prevailed, and where Kemal's struggle against foreign imperialism could be regarded as a progressive factor. Shakhri argued that Turkey had been launched on the path of industrialization for 70 or 80 years, and now had 600.000 industrial workers. It was the rising commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, with the army on its side, which supported Kemal; it was 'the Kemalist bourgeoisie' which persecuted the working class, and had 'gone over completely to the camp of counter-revolution'. Shakhri concluded by calling for better organization of the communist party and for 'demunciation of the Kemalists before the Turkish toiling masses as betrayers of the revolution, as a counter-revolutionary class'. But nobody attempted to answer this inconvenient tirade; and any mention of the embarrassing Turkish problem was eliminated from the final text of the theses."

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Indeed, The Comintern Programme adopted ^{but} at this congress does not mention Turkey at all. There is a three-fold classification of countries according to their developmental degree in ch.8 entitled "Struggle for the World Proletarian Dictatorship and Main Types of Revolution" of part IV : "Transition from Capitalism to Socialism and Proletarian Dictatorship" They were: Fully developed countries; Medium developed countries, Colonies and semi-colonies. In the congress discussions Otto Kuusinen included Turkey at the last category to which Ali Cevdet opposed, claiming that Turkey was in the second group together with Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, Balkan countries etc. and not on the level of Ethiopia, Libya and Arabia. According to the Programme, in the countries of the second category, a Democratic dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry ought to precede a Proletarian Dictatorship; therefore agriculture and peasant movement should be emphasized with a resulting relatively slow pace of socialist construction. But, as Carr notes, the Turkish delegate's thesis was not accepted.

In his speech

Fahri's full speech ^{speech was fully} in the (English language) *Inprecorr*, VIII/76 (30 Oct. 1928), pp. 1408-9; cf. in the German *Protokoll Sechster Weltkongress der Kommunistischen Internationale - Moskau, 17. Juli - 1 Sept. 1928*, vol. III, pp. 330-33. He tries to analyse the reasons why Turkey did not pursue a line of non-capitalistic development and chose a capitalist orientation. Besides subjective factors, he relates seven objective facts in explanation. These were:

1. The scattered situation of the workers all over the country.
2. Their acceptance of bourgeois leadership due to lack of organization.
3. Weakness of the TKP because of its newness.
4. Comintern's insufficient relations with the Turkish proletariat. The international working class movement was yet inexperienced in dealing with struggles against imperialism and wars of liberation in the colonies.
5. The unorganized position of the peasantry.
6. Bourgeoisie's ability due to its accumulated political experience to create a strong government with the support of the army.
7. Bourgeoisie's achieving victory utilizing the inner contradictions between the imperialist powers

Fahri claimed that Kemalism had transformed itself into a counter-revolutionary nature by compromising with the comprador bourgeoisie and imperialism as attested in consenting to the loss of Moussul and recognizing the Ottoman debts. He further spoke of two kinds of deviation inside the TKP. One was a current of political collaboration with Kemalism confining their activities only to economic struggle. The other was an extreme leftist current which divided the trade union movement.

From the 5th congress of the Comintern it had taken 4 years to convene the 6th, and another 7 to convene the 7th. This last congress in 1935 ^{was} adopted new tactics envisaging the creation of democratic popular fronts in all countries against fascist threats. A year later the TKP was **decentralized**, i.e. it ceded to be a section of the Communist International. This separation imposed on the Turkish party virtually meant its dissolution. As the official foreign policy of the Kemalist Republic was pro-Soviet, it was considered a mistake to disturb it with demands concerning workers' rights etc. Clandestine communists were expected to "surface" and participate in legal organisations and press.

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Only a skeleton party organization ought to be maintained to co-ordinate activities. 30 years later the first secretary of the cenral committee, Zeki Bařtım̄ar would euphemistically praise this “new war path” declaring that it had positive results in both the workers’ and youth movements.

The radical change in the party took some time to materialize. For instance the 4th printing of the Programme of Activities in 1936, continued to insult the former members of the opposition who were purged long ago, as mercenaries of the government and the police, servants of Kemalist bourgeoisie, provocateurs, Trotskites etc. Yet the new shift was an approval of both the **Kadro** line and the Nazım Hikmet’s opposition.

II

Both the official and the unofficial literature published by Turkish authors on the Turco-Soviet relations are far from being satisfactory, but quitedeficient. There are few of them and their quality is rather poor. They are written by people who lack sufficient historical knowledge and are under heavy ideological influences.

I want to take as an example a Turkish book on the Turco-Soviet Relations between 1920-1953 (*Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri*) published in 1991 by the prestigious Türk Tarih Kurumu (placed after the 1980 coup, under the newly created “Atatürk High Institution of Culture, Language and History). The very first sentence of the book is as follows: “The event called the Great Socialist Revolution of October by the Russians, consisted in fact of a kind of coup d’etat which toppled and replaced the **Menshevik** government in power...”

The “slip of the pen” making Kerensky’s provisional government a Menshevik power is not purely accidental. It reflects the writer’s general innocense of history. The author Kâmuran Gürün is an ex-ambassador. He has been asked to teach at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Ankara University, after the purge of undesirable faculty members in 1983 among whom I was honoured to be included. He has written this book mainly depending on the publications of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs without bothering to consult respectable Anglo-American sources such as the works by Louis Fisher (*Soviets in World Affairs 1917-1929*), X.J.Eudin & R.C.North (*Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927*), Mrs.Jane Degras (*Communist International Documents 1919-1943* and *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* - 3 vol.s each), E.H.Carr (*History of Soviet Russia* - 14 vol.s). He has not even seen studies in Turkish like my own works.

Let me discuss one point.

Mustafa Kemal Pařa after landing in Samsun in North Anatolia on the 19th of May 1919, had spent almost a month in the nearby thermal spring town Havza for the cure of his kidney trouble. He communicated with civilian and military authorities in the country during this period. A retired chief of military intelligence (Teřkilât-ı Mahsusa - Special Organization), Hüsamettin Ertürk claimed in his memoirs (*İki Devrin Perde Arkası* - Behind the Curtain in Two Epochs, 1964) that Mustafa Kemal was visited there by a Soviet delegation headed by Colonel Budiyenni who offered him military and financial assistance against common enemy, the Entente allies, in return for accepting communism.

His excellency Gürün relates this claim in his book with some reservation (pp. 8-9), saying that he did not see this piece of information repeated in any other source. He goes on to say however, if it was true, then this has been the first contact with the Russians where they wanted the establishment of a communist regime in Turkey. Yet Ertürk's claim have been -falsely- confirmed by the late Senator Dr. Fethi Tevetoğlu in a series of articles during the late 1960s in the English language periodical *The Week*, besides having been repeated and commented upon by a multitude of other writers with a variety of motives, some to give a share of honour to the Russians at such an early phase for helping us, and some to belittle Atatürk for getting support from them. Dr. Tevetoğlu asked the Turkish premier of the time Suat Hayri Ürgüplü who visited Soviet Union to ask personally the retired Marshall Budiyenni the truth of the matter. He depends on Ürgüplü's testimony that Budiyenni corroborated the story. I suspected a forgery for many reasons. Then I learned that Budiyenni had not written any such account of a visit to Anatolia in early summer of 1919 in his published memoirs in Russian in 1959. The late Academician Anatoli Filipovich Miller whom I consulted on this matter when he came to Ankara in autumn 1970, explained to me that Budiyenni had come to Turkey only once in 1933 together with Voroshilov on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic. He had merely sent in late 1921 with Gen. Frunze who visited Anatolia, a technical report on the use of new tactics of independent cavalry units according to his experiences in the civil war. I published an article on this subject which is also included among my compiled articles in book form. ("Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri Tarihinde Atatürk'le İlgili Olarak Uydurulmuş Bir Hikâye," <An invented story about Atatürk in the history of Turco-Soviet relations> **1973 Sinan Yılığ**, also in **Bilineceği Bilmek** <Alan Yay., 1983>, pp. 198-201.)

In other places of his book, Gürün states that "*Enver Paşa felt obliged to go to Bukhara after seeing that he had lost Russians' interest when the Green Army Association was banned... and the prosecution of the underground communists began following the victory at Sakarya.*" (pp. 51 & 63). It is true that Enver was kept in reserve by the Russians until the outcome of the battle in autumn 1921 would be seen and discarded thereafter. Yet the rest of the argument concerning the ban of the Green Army and prosecution of the clandestine communist organizations are anachronical. The Green Army was banned at the end of the year 1920 and the prosecution of the communists continued **until** Sakarya. Immediately after the victory a special pardon was granted to the convicted members of the Anatolian People's Communist <Halk İştirakiyun> Party, releasing them from prison.

I do not want to continue discussing such inaccuracies of the book.* I am afraid they are rather typical in the treatments of the subject by Turkish writers.

* He gives the name of Aralov's predecessor in Ankara as "Sergey Petrovich" with reference to a Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yearbook <for 1967?> (p. 72, fn.77). The surname of that Russian ambassador was Nazarenius. See G. Jaeschke, "Neues zur russisch-türkischen Freundschaft von 1919-1939," *Die Welt des Islams* (New Series), Vol. VI, Nr. 3-4, p. 222.

III

Attila İlhan, a sui generis leftist author (poet, novelist & essayist) once told me that Süleyman Nuri was known as "*the eye of Moscow*" among Turkish progressists in the 1950s. I had heard of this name before, only as the delegate speaking in the 3rd Comintern congress in 1921. But when I visited Moscow 18 years ago (in 1979), I was fortunate to be able to read his unpublished memoirs, covering his life story until 1936 when he was dispatched to Turkey as a spy. These memoirs typewritten in Turkish are 422 pages divided into 18 chapters. Their composition was completed in June 1963. Obviously he intended to write a second volume for later years, but I don't think he did. Parts of his memories have been published in Russian during 1960s in **Jurnal Yunusti**.

Süleyman Nuri (1895-1966) was born in Istanbul. His father was an ironsmith who had performed pilgrimage twice. His mother was from an emigree family from a village of Şumen in Bulgaria who had taken refuge in Turkey in the 1870s. When he was five years old, his parents were divorced because of his father's stern character. S.Nuri went to Gallipoli together with his mother to live with her relatives there, but she died in a year & S.Nuri was raised by his maternal uncles. He studied 12 years in primary, secondary and high schools. After working as a cobbler's apprentice for a year, he wanted to become an officer, but he was not accepted to the War School, because his father was not an officer. He had to enroll in the Non-Commissioned Officers' School from whence he graduated as a sergeant. He stayed in the same school for a year in the capacity of a teacher. Next year he volunteered to fight in the Dardanelles. The year after, his military unit was transferred to the Caucasian front. He personally surrendered to the Tsarist Russian army in February 1917 with a "fancy to save himself from the war adventures." He spent a year in the POW camps in Sarıkamış and on the island of Nargin across Baku in the Caspian. He quarrelled with his fellow prison inmates who were usually Pantürkist chauvinists. Hoping to save his skin he got naturalized as a Russian citizen and even converted to Christianity. Yet he got released only by the Bolshevik 26 Baku Commissars in 1918. Then he served as a sailor for nine months aboard the tanker Emanuel Nobel greasing its engines. He was arrested for subversive propaganda and sent to Krasnovodsk prison. To his greatest luck, he shared the same ward with the surviving Baku Commissars. He befriended there Suren Shaumian and Anastas Mikoyan. Upon his release he eloped from Krasnovodsk to Baku in June 1919 where İbrahim Abilov introduced him to his communist friends such as the Dagistani Celal Korkmazov. There were other Turkish communists in Baku, one of whom (possibly Saliyev Adil) was sent in 1920 by the Organisation Bureau of the TKP to contact Vasil Kollarov, secretary of the Bulgarian KP and member of the KI-CC for the establishment of Balkan Federation between the KPs of the region and also to Turkey to find connections with local TKP organizations.

S.Nuri became friends with Dr. Fuat Sabit in Baku who was sent from Anatolia to obtain help from the Soviets, an ex-nationalist converted to socialism under the influence of the German Spartacists, he was to gain notoriety as a Trotskite later. This connection would be used against S.Nuri in the future. Under orders of the Russian KP's Caucasian Committee S.Nuri fought in the Eleventh Red Army Corps together with other Turkish communists against Nuri Paşa's Pantürkists, Denikin and Biçeharov's counter-revolutionary forces. Yet when he was ordered by the Dagistani Stab to aid Halil Paşa

who was organizing for the Müsavatist Azerbaijan a resistance force towards the Dashnak Armenians in Nagorni Karabağ, he did not hesitate to comply. He came to admire the "democratic" manners of Halil Paşa who was leading an austere life. The Russian KP's Caucasian Committee and the Azeri KP decided to work for the felling of the Müsavat govt. in April 1920. When the Central Bureau of the Communist Organisations of Turkey under M. Suphi moved to Baku from Taşkent at the end of May 1920, S. Nuri joined him. He is rather critical of M. Suphi because of the latter's confidence in people who would turn out to be provocateurs and saboteurs. He also is disturbed by M. Suphi's pompous marriage ceremony to a Russian woman.

S. Nuri participated in the preparations at northern Caucasus of both the Congress of the Peoples of the East and the ensuing foundation congress of the TKP. In the former he was elected a member in the *Council for Propaganda and Action of the Peoples of the East* and in the latter a member of the CC of the TKP. After the departure of M. Suphi and comrades to Turkey, he was appointed a member to the Military Revolutionary Committee in Soviet Armenia with the joint decision of the Russian and Armenian KPs. Though it sounds unbelievable, he claims to have served as People's Commissar of Justice and President of Supreme Court in Armenia. (He says he had Semih Hüseyin, a journalist from Baku, edit and publish a newspaper in Turkish in Armenia.) But because his Russian was weak and his Armenian non-existent, his official functions did not last beyond a few months. In summer 1921 he represented together with Salih Zeki, TKP in the 3rd Comintern Congress where he delivered a sharp speech against the Kemalist govt. in Ankara.*

The TKP (External) Organisation Bureau which was set up before M. Suphi and comrades left Baku was dissolved according to the articles of Moscow and Kars treaties forbidding reciprocally subversive activities between Turkey and Soviet Union. S. Nuri enrolled in the Railways Institute in Leningrad in 1922. He transferred to Moscow in 1924 and met there Dr. Ferdi (Şefik Hüsnü Değmer) as the director of Comintern's Oriental Section. During his study in Moscow, S. Nuri had connections with the students at KUTV. He thoroughly disliked Nazım Hikmet and his friends whom he already knew from Azerbaijan.

S. Nuri got married to Zinaide Stepanova in 1927. (He had a daughter from this marriage, Svetlana who is Bilal Şen's wife in Sofia.) He graduated as transportation engineer from the institute in Moscow and settled in Baku. He was an elected member to the Soviet here. When he was a manager in the Baku Highways Bureau, in 1936 he was trained as an intelligence agent by the Political Bureau of the Black Sea Fleet and sent to Turkey under

*This speech was made on the 12th of July. Two days later, in the French language periodical organ of the 3rd Congress, *Moscou*, a short article on the "Communist Movement in Turkey" appeared, co-authored by S. Nuri and Salih Zeki Kuçerov, the other Turkish delegate at the Comintern Congress. Here, they claim that 4.500 Turkish workers participated in the Spartacist uprising and the ensuing civil war in Germany in 1919. During the same year in Hungary, when a Soviet government was being established, the communists utilised from Red Army units which were made of Turkish workers and prisoners of war. The text goes on to say that presently there are more than 20 organisations in Ankara, Istanbul and elsewhere; and these groups are engaged both in the struggle against world capitalism and the preparation for a socialist revolution in the country.

The New York Times dated the 17th of July has a news item under the following heading: "Turkish Communists who began to oppose Kemal, maintain that his rule is no different than that of Abdulhamid." Here, (without giving his name) the bitter criticisms of S. Nuri against the nationalist government in Ankara voiced at the Comintern Congress is summarized.

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a disguised identity by the approval of the CC of the CPSU. For a year and a half he worked successfully as a spy and got arrested at the end. He was put to trial and convicted to 15 years imprisonment; after serving a dozen years in jail, he was exiled to Çorum for 7 years. After finishing his term, he struggled for a whole year to go back to Soviet Union. The representative of the TKP in Moscow (İ.Bilen = Marat, i.e. Lâz İsmail) did not help him. Largely due to his wife's incessant efforts, he succeeded to return to Moscow on 8th February 1958, at the end of 22 years in his former country.

He tried to write his book, but needed documents to support his story. Access to archives was denied. He applied to Marat in 1961, then he petitioned the CC of the TKP in 1962, he wrote a letter to the new first secretary Yakup Demir (Zeki Baştimar) in 1962 with no positive result. Now I want to translate parts of his petition to the CC. He starts the letter by asserting that he is wrongly represented by Marat to the Control Commission of the party. Obviously, he was not expelled as Marat wished, but retained his membership (CPSU and/or TKP). Then he boasts to have loyally collaborated lifelong with the Russian workers and Communists. He says he suffered in the SR, Menshevik and Müsavatist jails, living all the time with the sublime ideal to see one day his own country as a worthy member of the future victorious family of socialist countries. He continues: "I see one of the most important factors of TKP's past failings in the negligence of the struggle against the traitors and provocateurs among the party cadres. For instance, I myself did not insist stubbornly enough to prevent the voyage to Turkey by Mustafa Suphi and the CC members of the TKP in the beginning of 1921... This tragic result could have been avoided had comrade Suphi not resorted -with a dictatorial mentality peculiar to oriental people- to conduct party business personally or in a narrow circle - moreover some members of this circle turned out to be traitors and they sold the party." He has in mind especially two provocateurs: Mehmet Emin and Süleyman Sami, whom M. Suphi enabled to be elected, one to the CC and the other Central Inspection <teftiş> Commission, in spite of the fact they had previously participated in the *Basmacı* movement in Fergana, fighting at the head of 7.000 insurgents against the young Soviet Republic of Turkistan and the Red Army.

Then he proceeds to relate a story of a conflict among the Turkish students of KUTV (Communist University of the Toilers of the East). S.Nuri is extremely critical of Nazım Hikmet and Vala Nurettin who were purged from the TKP by students of working-class origin. He claims that these two intellectuals retaliated by accusing those students with Trotskyism and succeeded in sending them away to production. Whereas, Nazım and Vala were acting under the dirigence of Ahmet Cevat <Emre> whom they addressed as their teacher. Yet this very man, Ahmet Cevat was the head of a group who sided with Trotsky's ideas against Lenin's, in the profsoyuz (trade unions) debate at the Yaçeyka meeting of the External Bureau of the TKP in Baku in 1921.

S.Nuri is also cross with the present TKP leadership for their laxity in contacts with the Communist emigrants from Turkey. He refers back to the circle of intellectuals at the KUTV and reminds that Şevket (Süreyya) Aydemir has authored an autobiography (The Man in search of water) insulting the Soviet Union and its leaders; Vala Nurettin deserted the movement and Ahmet Cevat was officially appointed by Atatürk to a responsible

position concerning the alphabet reform. He goes on: "Only Nazim Hikmet is left with us from that intellectuals' group at the university. He is presently enjoying the generosity extended to poets and writers in the Soviet Union. But his membership in the TKP is irrelevant with this. Yet one wonders why he was hurriedly readmitted to the party. Didn't the TKP chiefs know that Nazim Hikmet twice dispersed in two separate occasions TKP organisations resulting with the arrests of their members by the police?"

S.Nuri makes a reference to the case of Salih Hacıoğlu in order to accuse Marat indirectly. He says Salih was wrongly convicted in 1949 during the reign of "personality cult." But afterwards (that is following the death of Stalin) no attempt was made by the Moscow representative of TKP to save him from the camp and he perished in 1954.

He ends his memorandum with a number of proposals for increasing the efficiency of the clandestine work of the TKP. He warns the organisation against bureaucratism. Rather unexpected of him, he defends the repatriation of those who volunteer to go back to Turkey. He says that he had observed both in prisons and in ordinary life, people who had fled from the Soviet Union - almost all of them were eager to return. If willing people are permitted to go to Turkey, he firmly believes that they will turn out to be propagandists for the Soviet Union and the TKP. Such a policy would have the additional advantage of repudiating the widespread tales to the effect that Turks in the Soviet Union are banished to Siberia to perish from cold there.

(Handwritten notes in Turkish, partially obscured by a watermark)
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(R'ın Prof Ar L Köker, N'ii ile
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TURKEY AND THE COMINTERN

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I

I am not a Comintern expert. But I dare say it is an objective fact that this organisation has been under the heavy spell of Russian Communism from its creation onwards. After Lenin, it became under Stalin, further a docile instrument of the Soviet foreign policy.

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We see one of the rare references to Turkey in the public documents of the Comintern at its 5th congress in 1924. There, Manuilsky severely reprimanded the representatives of the Turkish party (in Istanbul) for supporting the bourgeois Ankara govt. He claimed that the Turks were committing Struveism or the social-patriotic ideological mistake of the 2nd International. Ali Cevdet, the TKP delegate (who was to be a long time resident in Moscow, to be purged & executed in 1936 for the false accusation of being a Trotskite) partly admitted that his comrades had toyed with the ideas of state and municipal socialism. He tried to legitimize their attitude by saying that they had endorsed only

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revolutionary nationalism in the struggle against imperialism and feudal residues such as the caliphate. But Manuilsky's accusation was not confined to their collaboration with the destructive functions of the bourgeoisie, but also with its constructive functions. Support of the owners of indigenous capital meant outright right-wing deviation. This view continued into 1926, when in May a Turkish party conference which convened in Vienna evaluated the Central Committee under Vedat Nedim (Tör) as having fallen into "Menshevik and liquidationist deviations." Those were the days of the leftist hard-line of the Comintern and the Soviet party. Yet soon the orientation would change. When Stalin would be engaged in struggle against the left opposition, one would expect a more lenient attitude towards the Communists of backward countries who could wish to support their progressist, but basically bourgeois reformers. We must however, note that in the late 20s the Comintern began to lose its importance parallel to the thriving of official inter-governmental relations.

As for the 1928 Comintern congress, I want to quote a paragraph from E.H.Carr's *History of Soviet Russia - Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929* (Part IV, pp. 672-73): *"The process of Soviet-Turkish rapprochement was regarded without enthusiasm by the few Turkish communists and by those Comintern circles which reflected on the increasingly ruthless measures of repression applied by the Kemal régime to Turkish workers. In the debate on colonial and semi-colonial countries at the sixth congress of Comintern in July 1928, Shakhri <this must be a mis-reading of a pseudonym used by Ali Cevdet in this congress, who was Faruk at the 5th congress, but styled himself as Fahri here> the Turkish delegate, protested vigorously against the assumption, in the draft theses submitted by Kuusinen, that Turkey was a primitive country where 'pre-feudal' conditions prevailed, and where Kemal's struggle against foreign imperialism could be regarded as a progressive factor. Shakhri argued that Turkey had been launched on the path of industrialization for 70 or 80 years, and now had 600.000 industrial workers. It was the rising commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, with the army on its side, which supported Kemal; it was 'the Kemalist bourgeoisie' which persecuted the working class, and had 'gone over completely to the camp of counter-revolution'. Shakhri concluded by calling for better organization of the communist party and for 'denunciation of the Kemalists before the Turkish toiling masses as betrayers of the revolution, as a counter-revolutionary class'. But nobody attempted to answer this inconvenient tirade; and any mention of the embarrassing Turkish problem was eliminated from the final text of the theses."*

Indeed, The Comintern Programme adopted at this congress does not mention Turkey at all. There is a three-fold classification of countries according to their developmental degree in ch.8 entitled "Struggle for the World Proletarian Dictatorship and Main Types of Revolution" of part IV: "Transition from Capitalism to Socialism and Proletarian Dictatorship" They were: Fully developed countries; Medium developed countries, Colonies and semi-colonies. In the congress discussions Otto Kuusinen included Turkey at the last category to which Ali Cevdet opposed, claiming that Turkey was in the second group together with Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, Balkan countries etc. and not on the level of Ethiopia, Libya and Arabia. According to the Programme, in the countries of the second category, a Democratic dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry ought

to precede a Proletarian Dictatorship; therefore agriculture and peasant movement should be emphasized with a resulting relatively slow pace of socialist construction. But, as Carr notes, the Turkish delegate's thesis was not accepted.

Fahri's full speech is printed in the (English language) *Inprecorr*, VIII/76 (30 Oct. 1928), pp. 1408-9; cf. in the German *Protokoll Sechster Weltkongress der Kommunistischen Internationale - Moskau, 17. Juli - 1 Sept. 1928*, vol. III, pp. 330-33. He tries to analyse the reasons why Turkey did not pursue a line of non-capitalistic development and chose a capitalist orientation. Besides subjective factors, he relates seven objective facts in explanation. These were:

1. The scattered situation of the workers all over the country.
2. Their acceptance of bourgeois leadership due to lack of organization.
3. Weakness of the TKP because of its newness.
4. Comintern's insufficient relations with the Turkish proletariat. The international working class movement was yet inexperienced in dealing with struggles against imperialism and wars of liberation in the colonies.
5. The unorganized position of the peasantry.
6. Bourgeoisie's ability due to its accumulated political experience to create a strong government with the support of the army.
7. Bourgeoisie's achieving victory utilizing the inner contradictions between the imperialist powers

Fahri claimed that Kemalism had transformed itself into a counter-revolutionary nature by compromising with the comprador bourgeoisie and imperialism as attested in consenting to the loss of Moussul and recognizing the Ottoman debts. He further spoke of two kinds of deviation inside the TKP. One was a current of political collaboration with Kemalism confining their activities only to economic struggle. The other was an extreme leftist current which divided the trade union movement.

From the 5th congress of the Comintern it had taken 4 years to convene the 6th, and another 7 to convene the 7th. This last congress in 1935 adopted new tactics envisaging the creation of democratic popular fronts in all countries against fascist threats. A year later the TKP was **decentralized**, i.e. it ceded to be a section of the Communist International. This separation imposed on the Turkish party virtually meant its dissolution. As the official foreign policy of the Kemalist Republic was pro-Soviet, it was considered a mistake to disturb it with demands concerning workers' rights etc. Clandestine communists were expected to "surface" and participate in legal organisations and press. Only a skeleton party organization ought to be maintained to co-ordinate activities. 30 years later the first secretary of the cenral committee, Zeki Başımar would euphemistically praise this "new war path" declaring that it had positive results in both the workers' and youth movements.

The radical change in the party took some time to materialize. For instance the 4th printing of the Programme of Activities in 1936, continued to insult the former members of the opposition who were purged long ago, as mercenaries of the government and the police, servants of Kemalist bourgeoisie, provocateurs, Trostkites etc. Yet the new shift was an approval of both the **Kadro** line and the Nazım Hikmet's opposition.

far from being satisfactory, but quite

II

Both the official and the unofficial literature published by Turkish authors on the Turco-Soviet relations are deficient. There are few of them and their quality is rather poor. They are written by people who lack sufficient historical knowledge and under heavy ideological influences.

I want to take as an example a Turkish book on the Turco-Soviet Relations between 1920-1953 (*Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri*) published in 1991 by the prestigious Türk Tarih Kurumu (placed after the 1980 coup, under the newly created "Atatürk High Institution of Culture, Language and History). The very first sentence of the book is as follows: "The event called the Great Socialist Revolution of October by the Russians, consisted in fact of a kind of coup d'état which toppled and replaced the Menshevik government in power..."

The "slip of the pen" making Kerensky's provisional government a Menshevik power is not purely accidental. The author Kâmuran Gürün is an ex-ambassador. He has been asked to teach at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Ankara University, after the purge of undesirable faculty members in 1983 among whom I was honoured to be included. He has written this book mainly depending on the publications of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs without bothering to consult respectable Anglo-American sources such as the works by Louis Fisher (*Soviets in World Affairs 1917-1929*), X.J. Eudin & R.C. North (*Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927*), Mrs. Jane Degras (*Communist International Documents 1919-1943* and *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* - 3 vols each), E.H. Carr (*History of Soviet Russia* - 14 vols). He has not even seen studies in Turkish like my own works.

Let me discuss one point.

Mustafa Kemal Paşa after landing in Samsun in North Anatolia on the 19th of May 1919, had spent almost a month in the nearby thermal spring town Havza for the cure of his kidney trouble. He communicated with civilian and military authorities in the country during this period. A retired chief of military intelligence (Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa - Special Organization), Hüsametdin Ertürk claimed in his memoirs (*İki Devrin Perde Arkası* - Behind the Curtain in Two Epochs, 1964) that Mustafa Kemal was visited there by a Soviet delegation headed by Colonel Budiyenni who offered him military and financial assistance against common enemy, the Entente allies, in return for accepting communism.

His excellency Gürün relates this claim in his book with some reservation (pp. 8-9), saying that he did not see this piece of information repeated in any other source. He goes on to say however, if it was true, then this has been the first contact with the Russians when they wanted the establishment of a communist regime in Turkey. Yet Ertürk's claim have been -falsely- confirmed by the late Senator Dr. Fethi Tevetoğlu in a series of articles during the late 1960s in the English language periodical *The Week*, besides having been repeated and commented upon by a multitude of other writers for a variety of motives, some to give a share of honour to the Russians at such an early phase for helping us, and some to belittle Atatürk for getting support from them. Dr. Tevetoğlu asked the Turkish premier of the time Suat Hayri Ürgüplü who visited Soviet Union to ask personally the retired Marshall Budiyenni the truth of the matter. He depends on Ürgüplü's testimony that Budiyenni corroborated the story. I suspected a forgery for many reasons.

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Then I learned that Budiyenni had not written any such account of a visit to Anatolia in early summer of 1919 in his published memoirs in Russian in 1959. The late Academician Anatoli Filipovich Miller whom I consulted on this matter when he came to Ankara in autumn 1970, explained to me that Budiyenni had come to Turkey only once in 1933 together with Voroshilov on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic. He had merely sent in late 1921 with Gen. Frunze who visited Anatolia, a technical report on the use of new tactics of independent cavalry units according to his experiences in the civil war. I published an article on this subject which is also included among my compiled articles in book form. ("Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri Tarihinde Atatürk'le İlgili Olarak Uydurulmuş Bir Hikâye," 1973 Sinan Yılığ, also in **Bilineceği Bilmek** <Alan Yay., 1983>, pp. 198-201.)

[An invented story about Atatürk in the History of T-S Rel.s]

In other places of his book, Gürün states that "Enver Paşa felt obliged to go to Bukhara after seeing that he had lost Russians' interest when the Green Army Association was banned... and the prosecution of the underground communists began following the victory at Sakarya." (pp. 51 & 63). It is true that Enver was kept in reserve by the Russians until the outcome of the battle in autumn 1921 would be seen and discarded thereafter. Yet the rest of the argument concerning the ban of the Green Army and prosecution of the clandestine communist organizations are anachronical. The Green Army was banned at the end of the year 1920 and the prosecution of the communists continued until Sakarya. Immediately after the victory a special pardon was granted to the convicted members of the Anatolian People's Communist <Halk İştirakiyun> Party, releasing them from prison.

I do not want to continue discussing such inaccuracies of the book. I am afraid they are rather typical in ~~our~~ treatments of the subject by Turkish writers.

* He gives the name of Anarov's predecessor in Ankara as "Sergey Petrovich" with reference to a T. Ministry of Foreign Affairs yearbook [for 1967?] (p. 72, fn. 77). The surname of that Russian Ambassador was Nazarens. I don't know if the given first name & patronymic are correct. Cf. G. Jaerchke, "Neues zur russisch-türkischen Freundschaft von 1919-1939," Die Welt der Islams (New Series), Vol. VI, Nr. 3-4, p. 222.

TÜRKİYE

III

Attila İlhan, a sui generis leftist author (poet, novelist & essayist) once told me that Süleyman Nuri was known as "*the eye of Moscow*" among Turkish progressists in the 1950s. I had heard of this name before, only as the delegate speaking in the 3rd Comintern congress in 1921. But when I visited Moscow 18 years ago (in 1979), I was fortunate to be able to read his unpublished memoirs, covering his life story until 1936 when he was dispatched to Turkey as a spy. These memoirs typewritten in Turkish are 422 pages divided to 18 chapters. Their composition was completed in June 1963. Obviously he intended to write a second volume for later years, but I don't think he did. Parts of his memories have been published in Russian during 1960s in **Jurnal Yunusti**.

Süleyman Nuri (1895-1966) was born in Istanbul. His father was an ironsmith who had performed pilgrimage twice. His mother was from an emigreé family from a village of Şumen in Bulgaria who had taken refuge in Turkey in the 1870s. When he was five years old, his parents were divorced because of his father's stern character. S.Nuri went to Gallipoli together with his mother to live with her relatives there, but she died in a year & S.Nuri was raised by his maternal uncles. He studied 12 years in primary, secondary and high schools. After working as a cobbler's apprentice for a year, he wanted to become an officer, but he was not accepted to the War School, because his father was not an officer. He had to enroll in the Non-Commissioned Officers' School from whence he graduated as a sergeant. He stayed in the same school for a year in the capacity of a teacher. Next year he volunteered to fight in the Dardanelles. The year after, his military unit was transferred to the Caucasian front. He personally surrendered to the Tsarist Russian army in 1917 with a "fancy to save himself from the war adventures." He spent a year in the POW camps in Sarıkamış and on the island of Nargin across Baku in the Caspian. He quarrelled with his fellow prison inmates who were usually Pantürkist chauvinists. Hoping to save his skin he got naturalized as a Russian citizen and even converted to Christianity. Yet he got released only by the Bolshevik 26 Baku Commissars in 1918. Then he served as a sailor for nine months aboard the tanker Emanuel Nobel greasing its engines. He was arrested for subversive propaganda and sent to Krasnovodsk prison. To his greatest luck, he shared the same ward with the surviving Baku Commissars. He befriended there Suren Shaumian and Anastas Mikoyan. Upon his release he eloped from Krasnovodsk to Baku in June 1919 where İbrahim Abilov introduced him to his communist friends such as the Dagistani Celal Korkmazov. There were other Turkish communists in Baku, one of whom (possibly Saliyev Adil) was sent in 1920 by the Organisation Bureau of the TKP to contact Vasil Kollarov, secretary of the Bulgarian KP and member of the KI-CC for the establishment of Balkan Federation between the KPs of the region and also to Turkey to find connections with local TKP organizations.

S.Nuri became friends with Dr. Fuat Sabit in Baku who was sent from Anatolia to obtain help from the Soviets, an ex-nationalist converted to socialism under the influence of the German Spartacists, he was to gain notoriety as a Trotskite later. This connection would be used against S.Nuri in the future. Under orders of the Russian KP's Caucasian Committee S.Nuri fought in the Eleventh Red Army Corps together with other Turkish communists against Nuri Paşa's Pantürkists, Denikin and Biçeharov's counter-revolutionary forces. Yet when he was ordered by the Dagistani Stab to aid Halil Paşa

who was organizing for the Müsavatist Azerbaijan a resistance force towards the Dashnak Armenians in Nagorni Karabağ, he did not hesitate to comply. He came to admire the "democratic" manners of Halil Paşa who was leading an austere life. The Russian KP's Caucasian Committee and the Azeri KP decided to work for the felling of the Müsavat govt. in April 1920. When the Central Bureau of the Communist Organisations of Turkey under M. Suphi moved to Baku from Taşkent at the end of May 1920, S. Nuri joined him. He is rather critical of M. Suphi because of the latter's confidence in people who would turn out to be provocateurs and saboteurs. He also is disturbed by M. Suphi's pompous marriage ceremony to a Russian woman.

S. Nuri participated in the preparations at northern Caucasus of both the Congress of the Peoples of the East and the ensuing foundation congress of the TKP. In the former he was elected a member in the *Council for Propaganda and Action of the Peoples of the East* and in the latter a member of the CC of the TKP. After the departure of M. Suphi and comrades to Turkey, he was appointed a member to the Military Revolutionary Committee in Soviet Armenia with the joint decision of the Russian and Armenian KPs. Though it sounds unbelievable, he claims to have served as People's Commissar of Justice and President of Supreme Court in Armenia. (He says he had Semih Hüseyin, a journalist from Baku, edit and publish a newspaper in Turkish in Armenia.) But because his Russian was weak and his Armenian non-existent, his official functions did not last beyond a few months. In summer 1921 he represented together with Salih Zeki, TKP in the 3rd Comintern Congress where he delivered a sharp speech against the Kemalist govt. in Ankara.

The TKP (External) Organisation Bureau which was set up before M. Suphi and comrades left Baku was dissolved according to the articles of Moscow and Kars treaties forbidding reciprocally subversive activities between Turkey and Soviet Union. S. Nuri enrolled in the Railways Institute in Leningrad in 1922. He transferred to Moscow in 1924 and met there Dr. Ferdi (Şefik Hüsnü Değmer) as the director of Comintern's Oriental Section. During his study in Moscow, S. Nuri had connections with the students at KUTV. He thoroughly disliked Nazım Hikmet and his friends whom he already knew from Azerbaijan.

S. Nuri got married to Zinaide Stepanova in 1927. (He had a daughter from this marriage, Svetlana who is Bilal Şen's wife in Sofia.) He graduated as transportation engineer from the institute in Moscow and settled in Baku. He was an elected member to the Soviet here. When he was a manager in the Baku Highways Bureau, in 1936 he was trained as an intelligence agent by the Political Bureau of the Black Sea Fleet and sent to Turkey under a disguised identity by the approval of the CC of the CPSU. For a year and a half he worked successfully as a spy and got arrested at the end. He was put to trial and convicted to 15 years imprisonment; after serving a dozen years in jail, he was exiled to Çorum for 7 years. After finishing his term, he struggled for a whole year to go back to Soviet Union. The representative of the TKP in Moscow (İ. Bilen = Marat, i.e. Laz İsmail) did not help him. Largely due to his wife's incessant efforts, he succeeded to return to Moscow on 8th February 1958, at the end of 22 years in his former country.

He tried to write his book, but needed documents to support his story. Access was denied. He applied to Marat in 1961, then he petitioned the CC of the TKP in 1962, he wrote a letter to the new first secretary Yakup Demir (Zeki Baştimar) in 1962 with no positive result. Now I want to translate his petition to the CC.

parts of

to archives

This paper consists of three parts. In the first, I'll try to give a resumé of TKP's relations with the Communist International. In the second part, I'll make some critical remarks on the Turkish studies about Turco-Soviet relations in general during the Comintern period. Finally in the third part, I'll relate a case highlighting the tragedy of Communists who were obliged to become traitors to their own country for the benefit of their adopted "socialist fatherland."

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
TÜSTAV