

the center of gravity within the KPJ away from the Serbs to the non-Serbs and Zagreb and not Belgrade became the center of party strength and activity thereafter.

The Communist Party of Turkey during this period had the dubious distinction of remaining the most insignificant of all the Balkan sections of the Comintern. With a membership of about 500 persons, perhaps an exaggeration, the party was in fact nothing more than an incompetent sect of would-be conspirators headed by intellectuals, who, it seems, were more poorly grounded in Marxism-Leninism than their comrades in the other Balkan communist parties. Both leaders and rank and file were guilty of insubordinate tendencies and deviations caused mainly by their nationalistic outlook. Despite the fact that the Turkish communists were severely persecuted by Kemal Pasha and that they bitterly attacked him in their propaganda, many of them supported his foreign policy of complete independence from the "imperialist" powers and friendship with the USSR, as well as his internal policy of modernizing Turkey. Moreover, most Turkish communists as Turks found it difficult to criticize his achievements and they no doubt secretly agreed with and even took pride in what he was doing. This ambivalent attitude toward Kemal stemmed from the fact that most of the Turkish communists were nationalists at heart. This fact caused deviations that plagued the Communist Party of Turkey continuously. This situation not only explains in great part the reason the party could not attract more Turks into its ranks but also the dilemma faced by the Turkish communists as to what attitude to take toward the nationalist movement of Kemal.

The factors militating to keep the party a small sect were similar to those in the previous period: constant governmental harassment, almost complete support of the Turkish people for Kemal's nationalist revolution and a corresponding lack of interest in communist revolution, a small and backward working class, the Russophobia of the Turkish nation, and a very incompetent leadership. The communist movement in Turkey was so small and insignificant that the only signs that it was active in the underground were the arrests and trials of its members and the reports presented by its delegates at the plenums of the ECCI and at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928.

Toward the end of 1926 the leaders of the party, after the government's harsh measures and the dissolution of the communist-dominated Organization for Workers' Progress in 1925, made an attempt to resume activity. They began to issue, whenever possible, their illegal organs and other propaganda material. They also resumed work in the labor field where there was the possibility for legal activity. Their efforts there were directed toward re-establishing the Organization for Workers' Progress. They did not organize any strike activity. The two main strikes at that time, the tobacco strike in Constantinople during April-May 1926 and the boatmen's strike, were led by pro-Kemalist leaders.<sup>87</sup>

The revival of activity was accompanied by deviations on the part of members of the Central Committee who, according to a

<sup>87</sup>. Fifth to Sixth Congress, pp. 404-5; IPQ, Dec. 5, 1927, pp. 1561-62; LT, Oct. 14, 1926.

Comintern report, were guilty of "Menahavik liquidatory deviations." For instance, the Turkish communist leaders favored the economic instead of the political or more revolutionary type of struggle, which would seem to be justified considering the difficult conditions in which they had to operate. Then, during the boatmen's strike they took an "inadmissible" position when they supported the Kemalists on the ground that the boatmen represented the "proletarianized petty-bourgeoisie" and that it was the party's task to "accelerate their proletarianization." They irked the Comintern leaders further by demanding the independence of their party from the Comintern. The ECGI reacted swiftly to this heretical viewpoint of the Turks by convening a conference with the Turkish leaders in Moscow, at which the entire leadership was reorganized.<sup>88</sup> It was probably after this conference that the ECGI, dissatisfied at the progress of the Turkish movement, sent Dr. Husni Bey, who in 1926 had escaped to Soviet Russia, back to Turkey to reorganize and direct the party.<sup>89</sup>

The revival of party activity was followed within less than a year by new government measures to suppress the movement, because it was discovered to have secret connections with an agency of the Soviet government in Constantinople. In the autumn of 1927 the government again dissolved the Organization of Workers' Progress and arrested its leaders and many members in Constantino-

88. Fifth to Sixth Congress, pp. 404-5.

89. LT, Nov. 21, 1927.

ple, Smyrna, and Adana. Despite the fact that the Organization for Workers' Progress was not an affiliate, the Executive Bureau of the RILU issued an appeal in its behalf which charged Kemal's People's Party with trying to monopolize the Turkish trade union movement and "imbue it with a Fascist spirit." It declared that the Turkish working class would "shake off the Kemalists yoke, build its own class organizations, and wage a struggle for final liberation from the yoke of exploiters."<sup>90</sup>

In November the police arrested over 50 communist party members, including its leaders, Husni Bey and V. Nedim. Many of them were put on trial in December and sentenced to long prison terms. During the trial two of the Turkish communist leaders admitted being employees of the Soviet Arcoos Corporation in Constantinople, while the public prosecutor revealed that the Turkish employees of Arcoos were attempting to spread communism among the Turkish intelligentsia. This was the second time this firm was found to be involved in espionage and propaganda, although it had been pledged not to engage in such activities. In March 1927 one of its employees, Akunov, had been arrested in possession of many compromising documents allegedly containing data on the Turkish-Iraqi frontier. Because of the close relations between Moscow and Ankara at that time, both sides preferred not to lodge notes of protest in either case. However, in February 1928 Arcoos terminated its business operations and left its interests in charge

90. IFG, Nov. 17, 1927, pp. 1448-49; Dec. 8, 1927, pp. 1561-62.

of the Soviet commercial legation in the former capital.<sup>91</sup>

The reaction of the Turkish communist propagandists to Kemal's actions against party members was not as vehement as that of the RILU. An article by the Turkish communist Ali Riza refrained from employing the epithet "fascist" and condemned Kemal in a more moderate tone. It lamented that, in view of his persecution of communists, Kemal's friendship with the USSR was "losing every significance" and that the Turkish government was "turning towards reaction and towards the imperialists." In a tone more moderate than that of the RILU it advised that

The Turkish workers and peasants must then turn away from such a government, they must put the question as to a decisive fight against this government. The fight against the Kemalist Government will, at the same time, be a struggle for the country's peace and independence. To renounce entering on this fight would have the most serious consequences for the workers of Turkey. The workers of all countries should raise their voice in protest against the policy of the leaders of Kemalism who are carrying on an obscure activity with the purpose of choking off the labour movement of the young country....<sup>92</sup>

The speech of Turkish communist Fachri at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern revealed a sharpening of criticism against Kemal, which was consistent with the leftward turn of the Comintern. It was also due, however, to communist irritation at Turkey's  rapprochement  with the Western powers. "The Kemalist bourgeoisie," comrade Fachri complained, has "gone over to the camp of the counter-revolution" and is "already concluding treaties with the imperialist bourgeoisie, for example, Italian capitalism. They

<sup>91</sup> IFG, Dec. 8, 1927, pp. 1561-62; LI, Mar. 17, 21, 1927; Nov. 21, 1927; NYI, Nov. 20, 1927.

<sup>92</sup> IFG, Dec. 8, 1927, pp. 1561-62.

are directed toward war against the Soviet Union." Turkey under the Kemalists, he observed, had gone through a bourgeois revolution, but only the Turkish proletariat can "take up the task of the transition from the workers' and peasants' dictatorship to the proletarian dictatorship." As one of the main tasks of the Turkish section, he pointed out that, in addition to fighting both rightist and left deviations,

...We must denounce the Kemalists to the masses of workers of Turkey as the betrayers of the independence of the country, as the betrayers of the revolution, as a counter-revolutionary class. We must establish a revolutionary front of workers and peasants against the Kemalist bourgeoisie. We must carry on an increasing campaign against Kemalism and its preparation for war against the Soviet Union.

It is obvious that Fachri was merely parroting the Comintern line in its Turkish context in order not to appear guilty of deviation before the congress. It is unlikely that either he or many other Turkish communists thought of Kemal in the above terms or believed that he was preparing for war against the Soviet Union. This was revealed by Fachri himself when he admitted that the party was still split over Kemalism and the line that should be pursued toward it. One faction indulged in the deviationist notion that Turkish capitalist development bore an anti-militaristic character and that the bourgeoisie represented the interests of all the classes. It opposed a political or class struggle against Kemal and at most advocated only an economic struggle for partial demands and improved conditions. It went to the anti-Bolshevik extreme of opposing not only a revolutionary attack against capitalism but also opposed the Communist Party's becoming

a mass party, restricting it to the status of a study circle. A second faction, driven to despair and embittered because of the governmental terror and the effectiveness of agents provocateurs, committed errors of another type. It rejected mass action and ceased to strive for unity of the party and its trade unions. Instead, it resorted to acts of individual heroism that were anarchistic in nature. It was also guilty of sectarianism in its attitude and the slogans it issued.<sup>93</sup> Whether these deviationists were expelled or disciplined to carry out the tasks as described above by Fachri is not known. It is possible that they were neither expelled nor disciplined.

There is evidence that the Turkish communists, following the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, attempted to carry out a propaganda campaign propagating its left extremist line that the greatest enemy of the workers was the nationalist bourgeoisie, which "daily betrayed the cause of the national revolution." This activity was brought to an abrupt end just before May Day 1929, when the police uncovered the central office of the party in Constantinople which was transmitting instructions and propaganda to the provinces. The authorities alleged to have established that the party was receiving money from abroad, presumably Moscow. Over 60 party members in Constantinople, Smyrna, and several other centers were arrested. It was the occasion of their trial and sentencing that prompted Kemal to warn the Turkish communists that they would be destroyed.<sup>94</sup> An article by the Turkish

93. IPG, Oct. 30, 1928, pp. 1408-9.

94. IPG, June 21, 1929, pp. 638-39; LT, Apr. 22, 29, 1929; Aug. 2, 19, 1929.

communist P. Hassanoglu strongly attacked the suppression of this propaganda activity which sought to "open the eyes of the Turkish workers to the true character of the bourgeoisie." It alleged further that

The ruling Kemalist bourgeoisie desires to show the imperialist western countries that the radical enthusiasm of its youth has already been outlived. The Kemalists are doing their best to flatter the financial capitalists, for they desire to get a loan at any price. ... The Turkish workers have come to see that the nationalist bourgeoisie, whom they assisted in attaining independence, are merely out to secure their own power and prosperity by an unprecedented exploitation of the working class.

The article then made the claim, completely false, of course, that the Turkish workers were paying increased attention to the communists and that they recognized the Communist Party of Turkey as "their only protector." Finally, it made the prediction, which never came true, that the workers would advance under the flag of communism, "under which they will fight till the final victory over the bourgeoisie...."<sup>95</sup> This article displays more bitterness at Kemal's new ties with the western powers than at his blows against the Turkish communists. Despite its left extremist phraseology, it refrained from designating the Kemalists as fascists.

The persecution of the communists continued unabated into 1932, when there was the last mention of any arrests. In September 1930, 50 more communists were arrested in Constantinople and Ankara for disseminating propaganda, and in December Hassan Ali Bey, the party's representative to the Comintern, and 12 others were arrested in Constantinople and sentenced to two years'

95. IPG, June 21, 1929, pp. 638-39.

imprisonment. In May 1931 a party cell was discovered at Aidin and eradicated. On February 28, 1932 the police conducted a raid which netted 35 communists. They were tried behind closed doors and 18 were sentenced to a total of 80 years. The trial was marked by much commotion and disorder on the part of the defendants. It is very likely that among these arrested was the entire leadership of the party, for some months afterwards an article describing these events was signed by the "Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey."<sup>96</sup> These arrests seem to have been a virtual death blow to the Turkish party; it seems to have disappeared entirely from the Turkish scene. It is interesting to note that during the persecution from 1929 to 1933 there was no violent propaganda campaign against the Kemalists as there was against Alexander's regime in Yugoslavia. In the International Press Correspondence there was only one article, by the veteran Turkish communist B. Ferdi, which was critical of the Kemalists' actions and it went no further than to attack their regime as a dictatorship.<sup>97</sup>

The only place that the Turkish communists were able to remain active was within the Comintern political circle in Moscow. The party's representative in Moscow at that time seems to have been Ferdi. His report to the Thirteenth Plenum of the ECCI in December 1933 contains the last bit of information available concerning the status of the Turkish party and the Turkish communist

96. IT, Sept. 4, 1930; Dec. 6, 1930; Feb. 12, 1931; May 23, 1931; IPQ, Jan. 5, 1933, p. 9.

97. IPC, Aug. 20, 1931, p. 613.

attitude toward the policies of the Kemalists regime. His report indicated that the Turkish communist attitude was still one of vacillation. The tone of his report was entirely devoid of criticism of the Kemalists and in certain instances approbative. Ferdi gave the following interpretation and evaluation of Kemalists policies and the stand of the Turkish party:

Since its foundation the Kemal Republic has been carrying on with remarkable consistency an unchanged foreign policy in entire agreement with its nationalist and bourgeois character. The nationalism of the Kemal party which, at the head of the toiling masses, with arms in its hands and with the moral and superior support of the Soviet Union against the attempts of the foreign imperialists to subjugate Turkey, achieved its national independence, clings with both hands to its alliance with the country of socialist construction. We Communists fight against the nationalism of the Turkish bourgeoisie in so far as it is directed against other nationalities and leads towards the destruction or the violent assimilation of the non-Turkish peoples in Asia Minor. The nationalism of the Kemal bourgeoisie embodies its desire to retain the monopoly of the exploitation of the native workers and the natural resources of the country in Turkey.

The Kemalists are fully aware of the fact that the independence of Turkey is linked up with the existence and friendship of the Soviet Union, and that if it were not for this they would not be in a position to offer even the slightest resistance to the underhanded attempts of imperialist capital to subjugate them anew. That is the secret of Ankara's continuous loyalty to its alliance with the Soviet Union.

However, Ferdi explains, while on one hand the Kemal dictatorship's nationalism drives it to seek Soviet support, its bourgeois character and capitalist policy, on the other hand, "drives it to throw itself into the arms of international finance capital and the imperialist Powers that dominate it." He warns, moreover, that "The imperialists... have not given up hope of forcing the Kemalists to their knees." Significantly, Ferdi no longer makes mention of Kemalists "betrayal of the national revolution" because

of "capitulation to the imperialists" or of Kemalist "preparations" for anti-Soviet war.

Ferdi's report indicates a shift away from the previous extreme line of labeling the Kemalist regime as "fascist" and, on the contrary, presents the Turkish communist rationale for defining or classifying it as non-fascist. He reasoned that

In view of the fact that at the beginning the People's Party employed its measures of oppression above all against reaction and clericalism, that it played a positive role in the victorious war for national independence, that it placed itself at the head of the armed anti-imperialist struggle of the toiling masses of Asia Minor and that up to now it has proved loyal in its friendship to the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of Turkey believed that it could not qualify its nationalist dictatorship as a fascist dictatorship, but declared it to be a masked dictatorship, a parliamentarism of the bourgeoisie and the large landowners directed against the people. Kemal's People's Party has been pursuing an interrupted policy of terror, particularly since 1927. It is striving physically to annihilate the Communist Party

However, Ferdi pointed out, while the Kemalists were pursuing an interrupted policy of terror against the Communist Party of Turkey and were striving to annihilate it, they were seeking at the same time by the diffusion of their own "confused" and "demagogic" ideology to kill the class consciousness of the workers and awaken their nationalist feelings in order to "befool them." Because of this the Communist Party of Turkey was striving to "expose the falseness, inconsistency, and the spirit of advertising of all the nationalist propaganda" and to free the workers from the nationalistic ideology and bring them under its own influence. Ferdi's report did not openly state, however, that the party aimed at the overthrow of Kemal, as it did several years earlier.<sup>98</sup> It

98. IFG, Mar. 5, 1934, pp. 398-99.

is obvious that the change in line was due to the Soviet and Comintern leaders' satisfaction with Kemal's foreign policy, which took on increased importance with the rise of Hitler. They were obviously satisfied to leave well enough alone.

Ferdi's report, despite its claim that the Communist Party of Turkey had become "a real proletarian party" and that it alone had "undisputed influence among the working class," would not but help betray its impotency and bad organizational status. It was not strong enough to consolidate all its existing organizations. It was very weak in the trade union movement and conducted no fractional work in the Kemalist organizations, and it had taken no steps to set up a youth organization. Contacts with the countryside were weak and there was no work among the peasants and, finally, work among the women was "just as poor." The only "success" it could mention was the demonstration in court by members arrested in February 1932.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, by 1934 the Communist Party of Turkey had proved to be a poor investment for the Comintern. Its condition was not even as good as in 1926, when it had some influence among the workers. After it had lost this contact, it became completely isolated from the Turkish masses. The efficient police were able to infiltrate the tiny party and arrest most of its leaders and members, so that it was kept a tiny and disorganized sect. The general growth of the Balkan communist movement after 1931 was not reflected in the Turkish party. Instead it virtually

99. IFG, Mar. 5, 1934, pp. 395-96.

vanished from the scene. The main factor for its disappearance, of course, was the effectiveness of the police; however, it must be admitted that Turkey provided the worst soil and climate in the Balkans for the growth of communism because of the factors already enumerated. Because of this, it is likely that the Comintern, although it continued to subsidize exiled Turkish communists, thereafter ceased to press the establishment of a viable party in Turkey as it did in Rumania either because it was impossible considering the conditions and the cadres it had to work with, or because it was no longer necessary inasmuch as Kemal's foreign policy was pro-Soviet. By 1934 the Comintern no doubt became reconciled to the fact that it would not be able in the near future to proletarianize Kemal's bourgeois and nationalist revolution through the Communist Party of Turkey.

## XVI

## Soviet Foreign Policy and the Nazi Menace

The year 1934, as shown in the previous part, was a "year of decision" for the Soviet Politburo. It altered the foreign policy of the USSR to one of close relations with the democracies of Western Europe. Simultaneously, it caused the Comintern to jettison gradually its left extremist line in favor of one more to the right.

Up to 1933 the Soviet Politburo pursued a policy on the diplomatic level that could be described as one of relative aloofness or isolation. The USSR was still a hostile member of the European family of nations. It consistently attacked the territorial arrangements of the Paris Peace Conference and chose to remain outside the League of Nations, which the Bolsheviks had attacked as the "Holy Alliance of the bourgeoisie for the suppression of the proletarian revolution." Any treaties that Moscow had signed were mostly with neighboring states and they provided for nothing more than neutrality and friendship. The USSR had signed no mutual assistance pacts and therefore belonged to no alliance system. Its closest ties were with Kemalist Turkey and Weimar Germany. Its only real and dangerous enemy up till 1933 was in Asia, the Empire of Japan. In Europe its professed enemies were "imperialist" Great Britain and France; but actually the danger from this direction after the failure of the Intervention during