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MARXISM IN TURKEY

Mete Tunçay
Faculty of Political Sciences
University of Ankara

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In my book on the early history of the Turkish Left, I made a distinction between 'political' and 'administrative' periods in the history of contemporary Turkey periods, that is, in which national life was characterized by intensified political activity or was dominated exclusively by state administration. Since 1908, political and administrative periods have alternated. 1908-1925 was thus a political period and 1925-45 an administrative one. The period after 1945 can be characterized as political with two year interludes in 1960-62, 1971-73 and 1980 to the present. The developments after the return to normalcy in 1973, and the dramatic rise in ^{the incidence of} terrorism, are still too fresh to be analyzed objectively. I will therefore confine my observations to the period 1908-1973.

The first of our 'political' periods, 1908-1925, witnessed the growth of a number of Leftist movements. These movements, however, were relatively unimportant in the general context of politics in Turkey; they almost never reached the dimensions of popular movements and were confined to small intellectual circles. The same is true of Marxism, not only in its early stage when it enjoyed relative freedom of expression, but also of its entire history down to the present. Let me translate the remarks with which I concluded the above-mentioned study:

The Turkish Left between the years 1908-1925, from the viewpoint of the struggle for political power, has apparently been a small and insignificant movement. What renders it a subject worthy of study, besides satisfying a purely historical curiosity, is the attempt undertaken by the Left on the intellectual plane. Our first leftists, revising the socialist theory so as to fit it to the realities of Turkey,

have taught us, through their practice-oriented labors, much about the formation of politics in this country. But it is obvious that they have failed both in approaching their long-term objectives, and in achieving the short-term goal of preventing Turkey from taking a route leading to the establishment of bourgeois capitalism based on private property. It is possible to explain these failures by saying that the leaders of the leftist movement even if they made sound analyses, were mistaken in their tactical decisions. However, there may be a deeper reason of this failure. Could it be that the leftist theory [meaning Marxism, of course] is too alien to the structure of the Turkish society to be salvaged through revision or by avoidance of tactical errors. The best reply to this will be supplied by the future development of the Turkish Left.

From 1908 to 1925

In the Second Constitutional Period 1908-1925, which can be regarded as the beginning of the Turkish bourgeois-democratic revolution, various socialist parties made their appearance. Socialist party of Hüseyin Hilmi and his Ishtirak was the most famous of these. These parties did not represent on the whole a real contact with Marxism, let alone any extension of its theory. Even their level of understanding of socialism was rather shallow. Yet, the declared aim of Hilmi's party for instance, was to better the political and social conditions of the people and to transform all capitalist societies into a collective single unit through the international collaboration of workers. The internationalism of Hilmi's party was also reflected — in the periodical organs that appeared after Ishtirak — by a motto deriving from Victor Hugo's "avoir pour patrie le monde et pour nation l'humanite."²

It is significant that Hilmi's Socialist party sought a rapprochement with Islam and tried to represent socialism as an application of the Islamic principles of social justice. This party in its pre-First World War life, though frequently referred to the "working class," did not succeed to recruit many members, workers or otherwise. In 1919-20, the party did become a mass organization, but this was due not to its flirtation with Islam, but to its functioning as a labor union.³ The leader of Hilmi's Ottoman Socialist Party's Paris filiale, Dr. Refik Nevzat, was probably the first Turk who acquired a decent knowledge of Marxism.⁴

A more significant figure was an internationally known socialist theoretician by the pen-name of Parvus who arrived in Turkey before the Balkan Wars. His real name was Alexander Israel Helphand; he was a Russian Jew who had become a member of the short-lived St. Petersburg Soviet during the 1905 Revolution.⁵ Parvus was ostensibly a correspondent for the Social Democratic German press in the Ottoman Empire. But he engaged in the arms trade and became very rich. Parvus greatly influenced the economic thinking of the Young Turks. He impressed upon them the necessity of terminating the Western imperialist economic domination and exploitation of Turkey and thus taught them economic nationalism.

It is also worth mentioning that an attempt was made by the Union and Progress Party government to participate in the abortive Stockholm Conference of International Socialists in 1917 in order to enlist leftist support for Turkey. A number of trusted intellectuals were hand-picked,

but the bogus Turkish socialist delegation was refused admission.⁶
The Union and Progress Party, however, did have a real left wing.
This wing was hardly Marxist; it rather aimed at the creation of a
national bourgeoisie. This was to be/ ^{done} for reasons of economic
nationalism done through state capitalism according to the Bismarckian
model, which was, however, called "socialisme d'Etat."

During the Armistice, many Unionist leaders were dispersed between
Germany, Russia, Switzerland and Italy. Those who went to exile in
Germany and Russia sought to exploit the continuing prestige of the
Turks over other Moslem countries. Talat Paşa who was in Germany
toyed with the idea of securing British support in return for enlisting
Moslem peoples against the Soviet Union. Enver Paşa who had gone to
Russia, on the contrary, offered the Bolsheviks the support of all
Moslems against British imperialism. Both fractions then endorsed the
left wing's search for a social program that would suite the needs of
the country. Several organizational designs emerged from this search:
Mesâî was an articulated social democratic program; another program
devised by Kör Ali İhsan Bey found its way to Ankara to exert a populist
influence on the leaders of the nationalist struggle there.

The Anatolian Left of the year 1920 developed under the stimulus
these Unionist strivings. In all the fractions of the Left in Anatolia
such as the Green Army Society, the parliamentary People's Group (Halk
Zümresi), the official Turkish Communist Party and the Turkish People's
Communist Party, there is a marked endeavor to reach a synthesis between
Islam and Communism, a reluctance toward internationalism and a stress
against imperialist transgressions.

It is now time to turn to the foundation of the Turkish Communist Party (TCP). The founder of the party, Mustafa Suphi (1883 - 1921) had, as a liberal, sought refuge in Tsarist Russia in 1913 and had been kept as a civilian P.O.W. after the outbreak of the World War. While he ^{had been} a sociologist and even anti-socialist before, he became a convinced Marxist in Russia. Suphi was always a nationalist teacher with a sense of the importance of the cohesive bonds of Moslem internationalism. (One ought to remember that the term used in Turkish to denote nation millet, originally meant — and in Arabic still does — religion!) After his conversion to Marxism, he succeeded in forming a small Turkish Communist organization in Soviet lands, combining some Turkish P.O.W.s with some local Turkic people.

(a) In 1920 a branch of Suphi's organization, the secret TCP, published a program in Antolia which widely differs from other native productions. This is a document of 25 articles, entitled as the General Statues. The party called itself Bolshevik and followed the Russian Soviet model of organization for the liberation of all the oppressed nations and classes from the domination of capitalism and imperialism. It advocated the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat as a provisional government, banning bourgeoisie and the exploiting class to take part in the elections. Property rights were to be abolished, and large-scale nationalizations carried out. The party advocated thoroughgoing secularization. It also called for the abolition of frontiers and customs between Turkey and other socialist countries.

The secret TPC was the first pure-bred example of communism in Turkey. Meanwhile, in Russia and under the auspices of the People's

Commissariat of Nationalities (headed by Stalin), Suphi had organized a circle of Turkish Left Socialists in 1918, and had represented it at the first Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in March 1919. This group gradually evolved into the Turkish Communist Party.

In the first Congress of the Comintern, Suphi made a famous anti-imperialist speech, declaring:

Comrades, as is known, if the head of French-English capitalism resides in Europe, its trunk spreads to the wide regions of Asia. The urgent task for us Turkish Socialists is to uproot capitalism from the East.

Suphi for two years engaged in organizational activities for Moslem Communists in Crimea, Turkestan and finally Azerbaidjan, while keeping contacts with Turkish Communists in Anatolia. The Congress of Eastern Nations, convened in the beginning of September 1920 in Baku, was largely the outcome of Suphi's efforts. Another meeting immediately followed the Baku Congress. On the 10th of September 1920, 74 representatives of 15 organizations of Turkish Communists united and founded a single Turkish Communist Party.

The first program of the TCP, began with a general analysis of the world situation. It described the development of finance capitalism and the international effects of that process on colonial and semi-colonial countries. The growth of capital into its monopolistic stage, though represent the highest degree of material wealth, appeared to have lost its original civilizing power. The Second International socialists were severely castigated for mixing sociology with revolutionary socialism, handed over the proletarians to the bourgeois supremacy. With the victory

of communism, brotherhood, unity and justice, among nations as well as individuals, would be realized through the abolition of private property which / was not a right but a superstition.

Bourgeois democracy had made a beginning in Turkey, but the class struggle was still in its primitive phase of development. Presently, there was a coalition of poor classes with the property-owning petite bourgeoisie, against the assaults of foreign capitalism, their common foe. The conditions for a social revolution all over the world had now ripened. The TPC was to act as the vanguard of industrial and agricultural workers towards final victory. Whereas absolutist regimes and constitutional governments pretended to be democratic and yet served the oppressors, the Soviet was the best suited type of provisional government for the transition from capitalism to socialism.

TCP considered religion a communal matter and adopted the principle of freedom of conscience. Yet it undertook to fight against superstitions which created animosity and hatred among human beings. As regards nationalities, the TCP supported the idea of free federation of various peoples.

In economics, TCP aimed at the collectivisation of all natural resources and the means of production, a centrally planned economy, and the formation of cooperatives. Labor unions, which were organizations to defend workers' rights under bourgeois governments were expected to undertake productive functions as soon as the social revolution occurred. The party counted on technical assistance from the European and American unions. One of the major targets of the TCP was the group of intermediate traders who were to be replaced by consumers' cooperatives.

The educational system was to be socialized and compulsory free education provided for all male and female Turks under the age of seventeen. The party also took a strong stand against alcoholism, prostitution, gambling and narcotic drugs. All armies were eventually to disappear, but there was an immediate need for the organization of red armies in defense of revolutionary workers and farmers all over the world. Political inspectors were to be attached to military commanders. Police work in cities and villages were to be given over to militia organizations. Revolutionary people's tribunals were to replace all existing law courts.

There was little originality in this program, and Suphi was mainly a man of action, an organizer, rather than a theoretician. The presidium elected in the First Congress of the TCP with Suphi as its chairman, after some correspondence with Mustafa Kemal Paşa, finally decided to move into Anatolia. A proof of Suphi's continuing nationalism is to be found in one of the letters he wrote to Ankara. In fact,

in a letter (co-signed by Ethem Nejat), to Mustafa Kemal Paşa from Baku in November 1920, that the successful expedition of the Turkish Eastern Army was ^{said to have been} explained by the TCP as essentially a punitive operation against the Dashnak government which acted in collaboration with the Entente powers. He assured Mustafa Kemal Paşa that this propaganda was well received by the public opinion, even the Armenian Communist press justified the Turkish action, and the usual accusations about our barbarism did not occur this time. Suphi further requested him to prevent any incidents which could be interpreted as an Armenian

massacre that would raise the Russian and European proletariat against the Turkish operation.

Suphi and his aides were murdered on January 28/29, 1921. ⁸ All the fractions of the Anatolian Left were suppressed in Spring 1921 as a concession for the London Conference convening to revise the treaty of Sevres. Once the failure of the Conference became evident (later in the same year), some of them were allowed to revive in time for Frunze's visit to Ankara. They were banned again in Summer 1922. The definitive suppression of communism in Turkey (including Istanbul) ^{however,} took place only in 1925, after the Maintenance of Order Act.

The most intellectually stimulating socialist movement in the early history of the Turkish Left was the one that flourished around the journal Aydınlık (clarity). This movement was a merger of a group of students and trainees who were in Germany during the Great War (hence, falsely known as Spartakists) with two prominent French educated young thinkers: Şefik Hüsnü (Değner) and MD (specialist in Neurology) and Sadrettin Celâl (Antel) a teacher and pedagogist. They were both sons of the so called "good families" — one's father was a civilian paşa from Salonica, the other's was an ex-minister of Justice. This group first continued a journal called Kurtuluş (liberation) which had already started in Berlin and then published Aydınlık. They also organized a "Turkish Workers' and Farmers' Socialist Party." (Early in the ~~career~~ ^{career} of this circle, some of its members went to Ankara to join Mustafa Kemal Paşa; most of them were appointed to high positions.)

Here, I want to summarize Dr. Şefik Hüsnü's Marxian analysis of Turkey, as it appeared in his various Aydınlık articles. According to him, in Turkey until the Tanzimat period, politics had abnormally dominated economy. Then two sorts of bourgeoisie began to emerge in big cities, one developing out of notable families and the other, from the chiefs of the army and the administration. Parallel to them, a class corresponding to petite bourgeoisie was born in villages and small towns. There were also agricultural and urban workers. The urban workers of Turkey who ought to lead the struggle and set an example to other classes in Europe for the improvement of class relations, were nevertheless unorganized and therefore / ^{lacked} the necessary consciousness for this task. Organization ^{was} / the gist of the matter. Turkey / ^{could not} afford staying beyond the world-wide social revolution. The emergent proletarian revolution everywhere, / ^{would} result in the creation of a single-classed (or classless) society through the abolition of private property and the socialization of natural resources.

The revolutionary process was to begin with the seizure of political power. Suppression of the reaction that / ^{would} inevitably come from the former privileged classes, and the erection of a governmental structure capable of educating the people for the ideal society constituted the next stage. This important stage was likely to last long in countries such as Turkey, where there was a mixture of feudalism and primitive capitalism. Dr. Şefik Hüsnü significantly assumed that urban proletariat could establish its rule in Turkey in the short-run. This view, however,

was to be radically changed during the next few years.

Aydinlik circle supported the Mustafa Kemal Paşa with many articles. After the abolition of the sultanate, they expressed their hope that this political revolution would be completed with a social revolution based on communal production and property. But this was nothing else than wishful thinking, and Aydinlik was soon to receive a severe blow from the nationalists. The political organ of the Aydinlik circle, TWESP, by now became a secretly affiliated member of the Comintern. It tried to get organized among the labor unions and to participate actively in the general elections after the military victory. But many of its members were arrested in 1923 on conspiratorial high-treason charges, in connection with a First of May declaration they issued. These persons managed to get acquitted through some procedural rule; but the Left was warned that it would not be tolerated by the emerging regime.

Dr. Şefik Hüsnü's one of the more important articles in Aydinlik was written on the occasion of his arrest. "Currents of Socialism and Turkey" starts with a classification of contemporary political ideas into two groups: those of the bourgeoisie and those of the proletariat. The latter can be divided into three: Anarchism (or rather, Anarcho-Syndicalism), Socialism, and Communism. As it is impossible to speak about the first current for the present-day Turkey, he dwells at length on the distinction between Socialism and Communism. After giving an account of the historical process that divided them, Dr. Şefik Hüsnü concludes that the vital disputes between these two currents in Europe have no value whatsoever for Turkey. Capital is almost exclusively in foreign hands. The

level of industrial development is very low and the class struggle is far from being acute. Therefore, division into two factions separately striving for social revolution ought to be out of question for us. Yet there are classes and there is a class struggle in Turkey. But owing to the numerical weakness of the capitalist bourgeoisie and the overwhelming majority of the workers and peasants, this struggle usually takes the form of a national struggle between foreign capitalists and their satellites: the local notables and the native rich. The present popular government deriving its power from national sovereignty should be a government of work and workers. Further steps in socialism can only be expected after the development of industry under such a government.

I find this analysis very interesting, because it reflects the view of the pre-1925 TCP. According to this conception, Ankara is not a bourgeois government that ought to be fought against, but a kind of people's government which is open to a coalition of lower classes. In ten years, when some deviants from the TCP defended their ideological line in the journal Kadro, they were more or less making the same assumptions. Thus, it was in fact not these "deviationists" but the party-line that had changed in the meantime; a change which was probably not unrelated to the change in the nature of the Ankara government.

In the Summer of 1923, Dr. Vedat Nedim (Tör), the economist, who was to be one of the future Kadro writers and later, an aesthetic advisor for private banks' artistic activities, wrote in Aydınlık that if the political independence newly secured through a military victory was not supplemented with economic independence, the blood shed for this purpose

Would

be a sin, a crime against the nation and the humanity at large.

Aydınlık opposed the proclamation of the republic, rightly fearing that it would be an imitation of the class dominated republics of Europe and America. But this was not merely a dispute over labels. According to Dr. Şefik Hüsnü, there would be no harm in calling the new state "Popular Republic of Turkey," provided it did not follow Western bourgeois models by creating a ruler without a dynasty. After the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, Aydınlık gradually saw in the People's Party in power, a representative of class domination, and discarded its previous hopes of influencing the government in its social policy.

The last dozen issues of Aydınlık are more openly pro-Soviet and they more frequently refer to Marxist theory. An article by Dr. Şefik Hüsnü that appeared in February 1924, criticizes the social reformers in power for their utopian thinking: modernization attempts at the level of super-structure are bound to remain superficial and useless. Industrialization should necessitate changes in social institutions. Planned economic growth should be emphasized, instead, say, of toying with ideas of educational reform and changes in the marriage law for instance which are trivial. Still, Aydınlık circle supported the ruling party against the so-called Progressivist (Terakkiperver) opposition when the latter seemed to challenge the abolition of the caliphate, the exile of the members of the Ottoman dynasty and to support religious reaction. Yet, this was no more than a family quarrel between

two wings of the bourgeoisie.

Aydınlık / ^{was} severely criticized in the Fifth Congress of the Comintern for its / ^{collaborationist} line with national capitalism. Manuilsky, a Ukrainian delegate, accused Aydınlık / ^{of following} the social patriotic ideology of the Second International. The Turks defended their position by claiming that they had only supported revolutionary nationalism. They admitted, however, that a few of their numbers had backed measures of state and municipal socialism. This deviation, however, had been rectified.

Dr. Şefik Hüsnü in his last Aydınlık article distinguished the financial capitalism of the bourgeoisie in big comprador cities from the petite bourgeoisie of the provincial Anatolia who aspired to become an industrial bourgeoisie. The first stratum of the capitalists represented / a laissez faire attitude, but the second demands ^{ed} a protectionist policy. The ruling People's Party had a tendency to go with the provincial Anatolian petite bourgeoisie.

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However, because of the lack of capital accumulation, it was inconceivable for this group to create a national industry. They would, ~~be~~ the logic of necessity, have to beg for foreign capital. This would result in a reconciliation of the two groups of capitalists at the expense of the toiling masses.

The early period of Turkish Marxism exhibits two sorts of ideological approaches to social problems: one that refused to envisage any formal conciliation between Islam and Marxism, and a second approach that propounded such a conciliation. It is worth noting that even in the first group, the Aydınlık circle, the consideration of and the

respect for people's beliefs produced some sympathy towards popular religion as distinct from the dogma of the orthodoxy. But the sympathy was much greater and more explicit among the proponents of the second approach.

Hüseyin Hilmi's attitude towards Islam is typical of many other Ottoman socialists also. In an article he has written in Ishtirak (March 6, 1326 / 19, 1910), we read that socialism started with Christ and its principles endorsed by many a divine verse in Koran as well a multitude of Hadiths are transformed into a practical shape through the institution of zekat in Islam. Conversely, some Moslems writing in the same journal have tried to utilize from socialism depicting it as a requirement of their religion.

Native Anatolian leftist movements during the War of Liberation, (many of which derived from the Unionist Pan-Islamism anyway) also reconciled themselves with Islam. When the alliance with Bolsheviks was claimed to be an act of infidelity, the official left responded by arguing that Bolshevism was much closer to Islam than the European debauchery. Socialism was taken to be identical with Islam.

land mark The turning point of 1924 put an end to all hopes of pushing the Ankara government to a path of non-capitalist development. From then onwards, the attitude of the TPC vis-a-vis the Ankara government was the classical one of the Communist parties against bourgeois governments.

The Maintenance of Order Law, accepted on the pretext of a large scale Kurdish rising in the East in early 1925, became a major turning

point in the course of recent Turkish history. The new authoritarian government effectively suppressed the Marxist activities in spite of the fact that the Marxists gave their full support to the government, considering it their duty to side with progressive bourgeoisie against a feudal reaction. The trial and condemnation of the leftist leaders pushed Marxism to the underground.

From 1925 to 1945

Shortly before the beginning of an oppressive era with the Maintenance of Law Order, the Third Congress of the TCP met in Istanbul. Little is known about this meeting which presumably discussed the new party line condemning the Kemalists as tools of the bourgeoisie. But the change thus effected was neither abrupt nor final. Some members still clung to their former opinions. This latter group included Dr. Vedat Nedim, who began to guide the party organization as one of the few leaders who were not arrested and still remained in the country. His rule over the underground party was later dubbed as the Menshevik period. However this did not directly imply a theoretical tendency of believing in the inevitability of passing through a bourgeois-capitalist phase before aspiring to socialism. It rather meant adherence to a loose organizational model, the so-called pointed system, instead of the strictly disciplined Bolshevik type. Dr. Şefik Hüsnü and his friends abroad invited Vedat Nedim to a conference in Vienna in 1926 to determine the future activities. The agreement reached there, did not work smoothly in practice. Şevket Süreyya (Aydemir) after his release from the prison joined Vedat Nedim in the party administration.

They did not obey the directives from abroad. Finally, Vedat Nedim informed upon Dr. Şefik Hüsnü who had returned to Turkey incognito. A crowded arrest of Communists followed. The 1927 trial in the civilian Istanbul Court resulted with light sentences (3 or 4 months) for 30 outstanding TCP members.

Let me hasten to add that during the years between 1925 and 1936 occasional news in the daily press of distributed hand-bills and leaflets and subsequent arrests of trials of Communists became something of a routine. But all these influenced the Turkish society little, if at all.

After the incidence of 1927, the right-wing left the party. Many of those who parted company with the TCP at this junction were to join forces in 1932-34 to publish the Kadro journal in order to forge a statist ideology for the ruling single party. In 1929, there was an attempt to reorganize the TCP and reorientate it in accordance with the general Comintern policy. A left-wing opposition to the Central Committee developed under the direction of Dr. Şefik Hüsnü. Nâzım Hikmet, the poet, was prominent in this left-wing which convened a secret meeting in Pavli, a tiny island off the Asiatic suburban coast of Istanbul. We know little about the contents of this movement, save that it was called a "Trotskyite-police opposition" by the Central Committee, after an arbitration ruling of the Comintern in favor of the faction in power. There appeared two anonymous letters in Die Fahne des Kommunismus (The flag of Communism), the journal of the German Communist Party's Left opposition by their comrades in Turkey. Thereafter, this opposition was duly purged from the party and its

This odd composition existed among the Turks also. Some of the early graduates of KUTV were intellectuals like Şevket Süreyya, Nâzım Hikmet, Vâlâ Nurettin, Ismail Husrev (Tökin: another future Kadro ideologist), etc. and Lâz Ismail (I. Bilen, the present First Secretary of the illegal TCP). Their taking an active part in the TCP after their return, placed the party under a stricter control of the Comintern. Indeed, the TCP was a "Section of the Communist International" like all others. But as time went on, personality conflicts came to the fore. Leadership struggles in this small organization caused unbridgable rifts. Even after the right and left purges, polemics against the deviants were continued. In the Foreword of the 1936 edition of the party program, Nâzım Hikmet and his friends were called "the hirelings of the Kemalist bourgeoisie, loyal servants of the police, enemies of the workers and the toiling popular masses of Turkey." This must be considered to be a curious attitude, as from the seventh (and the last) Congress of the Comintern (1935) onwards, the creation of anti-fascist popular fronts everywhere was accepted as a general policy. Yet Turkish Communists did not stop their internal feuds. But 1936 represents the last active year of the party; from then onwards, the TCP activities were reduced to a minimum and the members were encouraged to participate in popular organizations and contribute to the pro-democratic press. During the Second World War years some freedom was given to the left-liberal intellectuals to maintain an equilibrium between various tendencies. (Some pro-Nazi activities were also tolerated until Stalingrad.) But the contents of the publications then considered to be leftist are surprisingly moderate

by contemporary standards. For instance, an urge for urbanization to modernize the country was thought to be a / ^{leftist} stand, as it contradicted the prevalent idyllic myths about the village life.

At the end of the war, there was a Turkish daily (Tan) which defended a pro-Soviet foreign policy for Turkey. The government secretly organized a massive student riot to destroy its printing presses, pretending that this was a spontaneous reaction on the part of the nationalist youth.

From 1946 to 1960

Transition to a multi-party democracy in Turkey improved the situation of the Left very slightly. Though it wanted to legalize itself through several attempts at founding parties, there were strict limits recognized for political activities and Marxism of all shades was clearly beyond them. Hence, the Left continued to be illegal. It succeeded, however, in organizing some support among the intellectuals and especially the university students. Some large scale arrests put the whole leadership in prison. The most important of such actions against them was the trial of the 167 in the

Martial Law Tribunal at the year 1952 which resulted in heavy sentences for many underground party members, including the veteran Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Değner (after serving his time in jail, he died in 1959 in an Anatolian town where he was banished).

During this period, the TCP put much emphasis on foreign policy. It vehemently opposed Turkey's taking part in the Korean War and her entry to NATO. It also disapproved the economic integration of Turkey

to the capitalist camp. Marxists tried to portray this as a betrayal of Ataturk's statist autarchical conception. But both of the major parties, the Democratic Party — which had won power in 1950 — and the Republican People's Party, the opposition, shared the opposite assumption to the effect that Turkey could survive as an independent nation only if she sided with the West.

Meanwhile, the members of the TCP in exile in Moscow had suffered purges in the late 30s and the 40s. After the war, the party was revived there. But it did not function in any significant manner, except serving as a loyal voter of the CPSU in international meetings. The party has, up until now, pretended to uphold the cause of the national independence of Turkey vis-a-vis western powers, but has in fact slavishly followed the Moscow line under the pretext of proletarian internationalism.

From 1960 to Present

Republican People's Party during its ten years of parliamentary opposition (1950-60), emphasized the statist dimension of the Kemalist legacy and advocated central economic planning against the more (economically) liberal-minded Democratic Party — though in practice DP differed little from its predecessor and rival. RPP developed more in a leftist direction after the coup d'etat of 1960. Throughout the score of years to the present, "social justice" had been a favorite theme in public discourse. A weekly journal, Yön (direction) was quite important in propagating such leftist ideas. Its editor,

Doğan Avcıoğlu was a French educated socialist. His understanding of Marxism was rather instrumentalist. This permitted him to search allies in the ranks of the RPP and the radical army officers for an ideological front against imperialism^m abroad and capitalism^m at home. Social conditions at that time helped such an intellectual coalition to materialize. One positive effect of the partial slide of the RPP to the Left was the breaking of taboos about socialism.

For over three decades there was no public discussion of Turkey's problems in terms of Marxist concepts. Even abstract theoretical works were not allowed to appear. Ideas of socialism and communism had come to be viewed as treason. A whole generation was barred from getting acquainted with leftist literature. During 1960s and 1970s Marxist classics were translated into Turkish. Periodicals gradually began to be published. These sought both to inform Turkish readers about the developments of socialist ideas abroad and to put forward analyses of the problems of Turkey from varying Marxist perspectives. Yet, a tendency to favor the simplistic and dogmatic panaceas was clearly discernible among the Turkish sympathizers of socialism. Borrowed action programs were usually preferred to those attempts at dealing with Turkish problems without imitating a ready-made model.

This phenomenon can be explained perhaps with reference to Islamic traditions. In fact, Atatürk's positivistic conception of secularization could be interpreted from a structural viewpoint as a Second Islam. Doubt is alien to the Kemalist mentality, which rests on the premise of the unity of truth (with "science" replacing

"theology"), and the moral right of those who possess this truth to impose it on the others.¹⁶ Such features characterize many of the Turkish socialist currents of the 1960s and 1970s also, deserving to be designated as a Third Islam.¹⁷

As for the quasi-religious characteristics of the many recent Turkish socialist currents, these can perhaps be attributed (besides the easiness of continuing in a mentality) to the relative novelty of Marxism in this country. During the outlawed years of the TCP, its intellectual vitality had dried out. The short span of free socialist activity at the mid forties did not suffice to go deeper than the mere surface. At the sixties when Marxism was discovered anew, the appeal of ready paths was too strong to resist for many enthusiasts who wanted quick panaceas. Be that as it may, socialism was indeed accepted as a neo-Kemalism by many intellectuals (especially teachers) during the 1960s. Even if some of them can be suspected of adopting this attitude for reasons of expediency, there were others who took it earnestly. Then they were faced with the same dilemma of Kemalists, being alienated from the popular masses on whose benefit and behalf they wanted to act. One enterprise to overcome this gap was to win the favor of the people by appealing them through religion. This was not a new idea, but now it was articulated consciously on populist lines in the model of the 19th century Russia. One of their champions translated Dostoyevsky's Pushkin Speech to serve as a correct example of approach to people's established beliefs. Yet; this adventure remained as an unfulfilled intellectual dream when its originators

came to realise the internal contradictions such an attempt would inevitably raise.

Another fashionable ideological trend was to explain the course of Turkish history in terms of Asiatic mode of production, instead of the transition of feudalism into a capitalist stage. Inspired by some French Marxists working on Moslem and Eastern countries, two professors of Economics in Istanbul University (Sencer Divitçioğlu and Idris Küçükoğlu) claimed inapplicability of the usual Marxist evolutionary scheme to Turkey. The Asiatic mode of production

theory in Turkey was also thought as a device to overcome the neo-Keimalist difficulties in the path of socialism, without necessarily repudiating the validity of Marxism elsewhere, indeed using Marx's

own permission. ¹⁸ A kind of populism could be based on this theory, ¹⁹ as it stressed the particularity and peculiarity of Turkey.

If we accept that our social structure is of a sui generis character incomparable to western Europe, then we need not to follow the same path towards socialism with those countries who had evolved into capitalism from a feudal past. Whether the Ottomans were really feudal or not, did not weigh as much as the practical implications in the discussions that surrounded this issue. There was a lot of confusion: What was the feudal model? (Even, what was a model?) Was there a universal pattern that fitted western Europe as well as Japan, for example? Were not the Byzantines and the Seldjukites feudal? When we speak of the Ottoman Empire, what should we focus on?

Were there homogenous relations of production in the classical 16th century all over the Empire? The evidence is to the contrary: Balkans and the Kurdish East at least were always feudal. By the beginning of the 19th century even the Anatolian core was doubtlessly feudal. Such considerations were not taken to be important and a school of intellectuals and artists came into being to uphold the theory of the Asiatic Mode of Production. At the bottom of it, there was an inherent idealization of the Ottoman system stressing its uniqueness. Some novelists and film-makers elaborated on this line, while some leftist politicians utilized it in rendering a target for their activities the authoritarian features of the Benevolent State conception that was involved in this theory. Aybar, the president of the Turkish Workers' Party was one such politician.

The Turkish Workers' Party was originally founded by some labor unionists. It developed toward the Left, after electing Mehmet Ali Aybar to its presidency in early 1962. Aybar was an associate professor of International Law from Istanbul University who had been obliged to drop his academic career for engagement in left-wing politics. The party succeeded in winning ~~3% of the total vote and~~ 15 seats at the 1965 general elections. ²⁰ But optimistic prospects of a growing socialist party led to premature leadership struggles. At this juncture, some people cherishing ideas of "extra-parliamentary opposition" challenged the conventional tactics of the TWP. They were also showing a keen interest in Mao's theories. But Aybar lost his position in the party due to attacks from the opposite wing, when

he openly blamed Soviet Union for the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Aybar who formulated a new Humanitarian Socialism (on Garaudy's line) against the intervention of Warsaw Pact countries, managed to keep his presidency of the TWP for yet another year and resigned on November 15, 1969 ^{following} the electoral failure of his party. After him, TWP became more of a classical Marxist-Leninist party. The Chinese-oriented factions partly left on their accord and partly expelled. TWP always condemned terrorist inclinations among the leftist university students. Young men and women of these tendencies united out of the party in a federative structure called Dev Genç (literally meaning Giant Young, shortened from Devrimci Gençlik = Revolutionary Youth). A year before the army intervention of 12th March 1971, splintering leftist movements began to increase at an unbelievable rate.

Lately the intellectual fashion concerning Asiatic Mode of Production is being replaced or complemented with another fad of Center-Periphery analysis of the World System; in other words, basically, the Wittfogelian revision of Marxism with the Wallersteinian. But the practical implications of this new trend on the left are far from clear.

There were factions of all shades ranging from pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese to the Trotskyites and to those that followed the Albanian line. Yet the bigger organizations were not identifiable with such a single inspiration. They all accused one another for being "revisionists." Some of the sharper groups resorted to bank robberies

and armed resistance to the police. Then the 12th of March period came that lasted for more than two years, as a strong reaction to all these and to the more liberal Left. Wholesale arrests followed. The military backed government, at one point took hostages from the intellectuals as if they were organizationally related to terrorists. The Constitutional Court outlawed the TWP for espousing the rights of the sizeable Kurdish minority in the East.

Two common features can be observed in the credos of all these groups. The first is the priority given to the anti-imperialist struggle and the second, the belief in the imminency of a revolution. Considerations about economic development and planned industrialization which were dominant during the earlier sixties, now seemed to be postponed to the realization of the revolution. Anti-imperialism was essentially anti-Americanism. The Cyprus conflict (where USA was suspected to favor the Greeks) made this stand increasingly popular among university students. The shared feeling of urgency related to a revolution wrongly expected to arrive soon, gave rise to an unhealthy radicalisation in almost all groups. They were divided, however, as to the nature of the coming revolution. Was it going to be a socialist revolution as TWP supporters held or a national-democratic one as many youth organizations such as the Dev Gen thought. The latter who were much more fiery than the easier going TWP membership, formulated a slogan of "fully independent and really democratic Turkey " reflecting their anti-imperialism and national-democratic revolution creed. Mihri Belli's followers who styled themselves "proletarian

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revolutionaries" (proletarian perhaps ideologically, but not sociologically; in fact the sharper a group appeared to be the more probable was their members being of upper-class origins) were prominent in this block for a while; then they were superseded by those who were ready for more violent actions. Proliferation of groupings continued.

To ask whether a certain theory is suitable to a given social structure, is not an empty question. During the last decade, interesting developments have taken place which have confused us greatly. This experience has neither corroborated nor negated the suitability of Marxism to Turkish conditions. Some features of the socialist program spread to non-leftist circles. But the Left itself split into many factions. Most important of all, a military-based movement, aiming at a short-cut to power and cherishing a set of seemingly leftist demands, but also drawing on Kemalist support and utilizing Kemalist methods, created a pretext for a counter-reaction. It was sensed that there was some participation in this movement by the Left itself. (Following the 1971 military intervention, the major inciters of this attempt were purged from the army ranks and some were condemned at the ensuing Martial Law Command courts.)

Today, our leftist movements evaluating the experiences of other socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and China, and applying the result of these evaluations to Turkey's conditions, constitute irreconcilable factions which consider one another arch-enemies. This splintering of the forces of the Left in the last twenty years is a novel development in Turkey. Throughout the 1945-1960 period, in spite of the formal disappearance of the Comintern, the tiny Turkish Left was still kept in the central line. By contrast, in

the 1960s and 1970s, with the increase of interest in Marxism, a proliferation of approaches came about. The result was a much freer atmosphere in the Left and assimilation of many European neo-Marxist tendencies on the one hand, and an undisciplined dispersion of groups on the other.

¹ Almost no references are given for the section on Marxism in Turkey from 1908 to 1925, as all the information here derive from my book in Turkish: Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar 1908-1925 (Ankara: Bilgi Publishers, 1978), 3rd enlarged edition, 556 pp.

² 'To have the world for one's country, and humanity for one's nation,' from the Foreword to Hugo's Les Burgraves.

³ The Turkish Socialist Party (the old Ottoman SP was dubbed Turkish SP after its resurrection in February 1919) of Hüseyin Hilmi, organised successful strikes at Tannigⁿ Factories, Dockyards and Tramways in spring 1920. The party became powerful especially among Transport workers. There are rumors to the effect that Hilmi was secretly supported by the British Occupation Forces against the French companies who held concessions for operating most of İstanbul's transportation lines. It is even suggested in Tim Harrington Looks Back (London: John Murray, 1940), that the French may have been responsible for Hilmi's mysterious murder soon afterwards.

⁴ Socialist ideas had penetrated Turkey early in the century through westernized individuals. As a curiosity, one could mention the case of an Ottoman admiral (retired) who joined Keir Hardie's Independent Labor Party; though judging by his letters to Hardie, he had no genuine understanding of the problems of socialism.

⁵ Parvus had influenced Trotsky in formulating the famous theory of the permanent revolution. Parvus also collaborated with the German General Staff. He was to advise them to transfer Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders from Switzerland to Petrograd in a sealed train in the spring of 1917.

Trotsky, after nearly two decades was to come to Turkey and live there -mostly in Büyükkada/Prinkipo- for over four years, exactly as Parvus did. But from 1915 onwards they had definitely parted friendship. For Parvus see Z.A.B. Zeman and W.B.Scharlau, The Merchant of Revolution (London: Oxford Univ.Press, 1965); Trotsky's 'Obituary to a living friend' is mentioned in I.Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 219.

Footnotes

1 Almost no references are given for the section on Marxism in Turkey from 1908 to 1925, as all the information submitted here derive from my book in Turkish: Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar 1908-1925 (Ankara: Bilgi Publishing House, 1978), 3rd enlarged edition, 556 pp.

"To have the world for one's country and humanity for one's nation"

1 See for example, F. Engels' Preface to the English edition of 1888 of the Communist Manifesto: "An Armenian translation, which was to be published in Constantinople some months ago, did not see the light, I am told, because the publisher was afraid of bringing out a book with the name Marx on it, while the translator declined to call it his own production."

2 From the Foreword to Hugo's Les Burgraves.

3 The Turkish Socialist Party (the old Ottoman SP was dubbed Turkish SP ^{after} ~~during~~ its resurrection in February 1919) of Hüseyin Hilmi, organised successful strikes at Tanning Factories, Dockyards and railways in spring 1920. The party became powerful especially among transport workers. There are rumors to the effect that Hilmi was secretly supported by the British Occupation Forces against the French companies who held concessions for operating most of İstanbul's transportation lines. It is even suggested in Tim Harington Looks Back (London: John Murray, 1940), that the French may have been responsible for Hilmi's mysterious murder soon afterwards.

7. I have had photocopies of 19 issues of Yeni Dunya, a Turkish language newspaper Suphi published in Moscow and Crimea during 1918-1919 (later in Turkestan and Baku), which I intend to publish in full transliteration as soon as the political atmosphere will be more conducive to the appearance of such material in Turkey.

collaboration

8. The identity of the person who had given the order for their assassination still remains a mystery. I personally believe it was the Commander of the Eastern Army, Kâzım Karabekir Paşa, in collusion with the local ex-Unionist notables, and not Mustafa Kemal who only wanted their extradition.

9. Aydınlık, together with a special periodical organ issued by the same circle addressing to the workers, Orak Çekiç (sickle and hammer) was banned by the government in a general wave of press prohibitions. 38 members of the circle were arrested in May, because of a May Day declaration they published. Some of the top leaders such as Dr. Şefik Hüsnü had already escaped to avoid arrest. The Ankara Independence Tribunal subsequently sentenced most of these leftists to 7 and 10 years of imprisonment and those who had fled were sentenced in absentia to 15 years. However, all leftist convicts were released in a year and a half, due to a modification in the Penal Code.

10 The press reports of this important trial is compiled (in Latin transcription from the Arabic lettered originals) in a book by Miss Julie Ergüder: 1927 Komünist Tevkifatı: İstanbul Ağır Ceza Mahkemesindeki Duruşma (Birikim, 1978), introduced by myself. As the juridical archives ^{we} are since then burnt down in a fire, this is all one can find about the proceedings.

11 Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Değner, using the pseudonym "Ferdî" has participated in the 6th, 7th and 8th Enlarged Plenums of the Executive Committee of the Communist International during the years 1926 and 1927. Subsequently, in the Sixth Congress (1928) he was elected to ECCI and in the Seventh Congress (1935) to the International Control Commission. See Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern, prepared by Branko Lazitch, in collaboration with Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Hoover, 1973). In between the two World Congresses he headed for a while the West European Bureau. He was arrested in Berlin in connection with the Reichstag Fire and he spent 6 months in Nazi jails.

12 "Die Lage in der Türkei" (situation in Turkey), Nr. 26 (19. Juli 1929), pp. 203-4 and "Brief türkischer Genossen" (Letter of Turkish Comrades), Nr. 35 (20 Sept. 1929), p. 277.

13 an English translation

of it can be found in Ivar Spector's Soviet Union and the Muslim World (p. 111 ff.), from a Soviet booklet entitled "Program Documents of the Communist Parties of the East" which in turn gives a Russian translation of the 57 articulated Turkish text that originally appeared in the illegal periodical İnkılâp Yolu (way of the revolution).

The illegal periodical literature of the TCP is extremely difficult to find. Here are the names of some, which I have been able to detect.

Yeni Yol = Marxist Leninist political review. Issued in dual numbers, 1930-1932.

Bolşevik = Newspaper (August 10, 1930).

Orak Çekic = Central organ, 1936

Kızıl (red) İstanbul = Organ of the provincial committee, 1934-1935.

148 KUTV was founded by the CPSU in April 21, 1921 to train cadres for the Eastern Soviet Republics; soon students from the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean were included. In 1923 Soviet and Foreign sections were separated.

15 This has to be qualified in several ways. First of all the titles chosen for translation were the less sophisticated and more provocative ones. Those books dealing with serious philosophical problems or difficult economic analyses were prone to be overlooked, because they demanded a deeper culture. How could they be understood apart from their historical context to which the novices of socialism had no desire to be initiated? Then, few of the translators were really capable to cope with their texts. They made many mistakes due to their being inexperienced non-professionals. Furthermore, some consciously took liberties with the books they translated and "corrected" them according to their lines, without bothering to indicate the modifications they made.

Also, many translators for fear of juridical persecution automatically substituted "socialism" wherever "communism" was mentioned, thus often created confusion between these concepts. So far, about the rendering of Marxist classics into Turkish. As for the actual consumption of the translated works, another grim observation is due. They were bought and placed on book-shelves in private homes, but seldom read, let alone be fully grasped. They were venerated like holy books. In their stead, vulgarizations such as George Politzer's texts for the Workers' University in France before the Second World War were being read by students and staff members alike. Later on, especially in Maoist circles vulgarizing techniques spread. The result was the replacement of Marxian analysis with slogans and quotations cited more often than not appropriately.

16 Comtean positivism was surely atheistic, but the Religion of Humanity attempted to be created by its founder on the organizational model of the Catholic Church, had retained all the features of a usual creed. The New Ottomans and the Young Turks of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were fascinated by positivism through Freemasonry. They believed that it was very progressive and they did not discern its basic similarity with the religion they blamed for preventing the advancement into modernity. In fact, positivism was much more conservative than it looked.

17 75 I do not regard Marxism to be inherently dogmatic as positivism is; but it can be rendered into a dogmatism as many other libertarian ideologies have been. Marxism in fact has been transformed into a "state religion" in those countries where communist parties are in power. Marxist parties in other countries who follow their lead are often torn between loyalty to them and to the theory itself. Only where a Marxist party is strong enough to challenge the leadership of an external center, the full potential of Marxism to keep abreast with all kinds of current problems can be observed.

18 9 Karl Marx (and Friedrich Engels, for that matter) has written nothing of a theoretical character about Turkey. His journalistic articles (and those of Engels) that appeared originally in the New York Daily Tribune and subsequently collected by his daughter and son-in-law (the Avelings) under the title of Eastern Question (London, 1897) are mainly concerned with the events around the Crimean War. Marx in general is severely critical of the Liberal anti-Turkish tradition and he usually sides with the Conservative anti-Russian and pro-Turkish attitude.

Though Marx and Engels have never studied Turkey in the light of their standard theory; there is at least one indication that they considered it not as an exception to five-staged schema of growth (which gained wide currency during the Stalin era in the USSR), let alone be an example of the Asiatic mode of production. Indeed, in

an editorial that appeared in the New York Daily Tribune on April 11, 1853 (in the section about Nationalities in Turkey, written in fact by Engels) we read the following (as I am retranslating from the Turkish version, the wording may not be exactly like the original, and the underlinings are mine):

Turks can hardly be defined as the ruling class of Turkey, for the class relations are confused as the relations between the races. The Turk according to situation and circumstances is either a laborer, a farmer, a small property owner, a trader, a feudal lord at the lowest, the most barbarian level of feudality, a civil servant or a soldier; yet no matter where he is placed among these various positions, he belongs to a privileged religion and nationality. ...

TÜRKİYE SOSYALİZM ARAŞTIRMA VAKFI

19 The application of this theory to Turkish history (largely following Prof. Küçükömer's 1969 book, Düzenin Yabancılaşması: Türkiye'de [Alienation of the Order: West(ern)ization]) is to be found in Nevçilili's Yükseliş ve Düşüş (Rise and Fall - İstanbul, 1981), pp. 4-6.

The six hundred years-old Turkish Ottoman sovereignty differs in various respects from oriental societies as well as from classical western societies. Ottoman society was founded on the support of the Anatolian peasant's reaction who was striving to stay free against the Byzantine Empire, then in the process of transition to a feudal order. The founders of the Ottoman system offered to the Anatolian population a solution drawn from oriental and Islamic traditions: land would not be the subject of personal property.

The Ottoman Sultan, i.e., the public authority who represented a tolerant version of oriental despotism was the sole owner of the whole arable land. For individuals only usage benefits (usis fructi) existed. This became a very important historical factor allowing the large peasant masses to behave more freely in comparison to western feudalism, both during the Ottoman and the Turkish Republican periods. Ottoman central authority undertook to realize the organization of the land. Establishment and functioning of the order was above all a question of resources. Therefore, another dominant social force was bound to appear who would appropriate the value created from the land and render the state bureaucracy into a very important instrument. This stratum composed of civilian or military state functionaries was different from the western civilian bureaucracy at the disposal of the economic system. In contradistinction to the western civilian bureaucracy, the Ottoman state bureaucracy had a very peculiar social status, able to exert control on the whole economy. Sometimes it acted as if it was a ruling class enjoying extensive powers possessing all means of production though it did not.

The Ottoman economic system which was situated at the junction of the east-west land trade routes and had reaped at its early period important shares from the world commerce, due to new international geographical discoveries, began to shake at its most vulnerable foundation. Eastern trade started over the Oceans afar from the Ottoman lands. As a result, the Turkish economy became progressively deprived of the external surplus value gained through mediation in foreign trade. This epoch also represented the reaching of the Ottoman expansion in Middle East, North Africa and Mid-Europe to its ultimate frontiers. It was a period when millions of people living in the vast Ottoman

... could no longer be provided by the agriculture under public ownership because of the tendency towards diminishing returns in production.

... this phase and its aftermath in the Ottoman society is a period of stagnation and fall, and of social and economic anarchy. Western Europe wished to make Turkey gradually a market and a depot of raw materials. Internally too, the first funds which began to accumulate through rising contraband trade desired to transform themselves into an agricultural and commercial capital. The historical state structure became once again an impediment to development. The dominant forces of the system prevented the evolution of capitalistic production relation for fear of losing their active status, yet they failed to bring about better solutions instead of the developments they stopped.

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The TWP polled at these elections 3 % of the total votes (276.000 out of 9.300.000). At the partial senate elections of 1966 (21 provinces) it polled 3,2 % (79.000 out of 2.472.000) and of 1968 (22 provinces) 4,7 % (143.700 out of 3.067.000). This continuously rising ratios declined to 2,7 % (243.600 votes out of 9.086.000) at the 1969 general elections and the proportional representation with the national remainder having been changed, this resulted in electing only 2 of the 450 members of the assembly.

21 Even I was arrested in 1971 for translating some excerpts of Marx' s 1844 manuscripts from a compilation of Thomas Bottomore, the English sociologist. I stayed in jail for ten weeks and then get acquitted. But I was under the threat of the standard seven-and-a-half years imprisonment for spreading Communist propaganda through the printed media.

TÜRKİYE SOSYALİSTİK İHTİŞAR PARTİSİ