

# Whence Modernization: Sovietism or Indigenous Autocracy?

## THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN TURKEY, 1920-1936

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### 1. Periodization

The history of the Turkish communist movement under the Communist International (CI) can be divided in periods according to various criteria. I propose a periodization in accordance with the general political developments in Turkey. The re-proclamation of the Constitution in the late Ottoman period in 1908 can be regarded as the starting-point of a new "political" era, which, seeing various fluctuations, lasted until 1925, when the "Maintenance of Order Act" was passed by the Grand National Assembly in reaction to a Kurdish rebellion. The following period was characterized by the substitution of "administration" for politics. It took twenty years of single-party rule before a transition to multi-party politics could be made in 1945. Hence, the history of the communist movement can also be divided into a period from its beginning in 1919 until 1925 and another one from 1925 onwards. During this second span of time, the "decentralization" or "separation" of the Turkish Communist Party (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*; TKP) from the Comintern in 1936 constitutes a new turning point, while the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 had little impact on the Turkish communist movement, it being already rather weak by then. Thus, we have three periods: 1919-1925, 1925-1936 and 1936-1945.

### 2. Main Problems and Dilemmas of the TKP

Turkey, being a backward agricultural country in the 1920s and 30s, had few industrial workers. However, after the proclamation of the Republic the country underwent rapid social change. Many of the reforms carried into effect by the ruling single-party were close to the hearts of the Communists. All they could criticize was the lack of political freedoms and the fact that no land-reform was accomplished.<sup>1</sup>

Another factor inhibiting the TKP's anti-government propaganda was the government's consistent friendship with the Soviet Union. Thus, the activities of the Turkish communists were limited by both the objective conditions and the directives of the CI.

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1. The government was pursuing a modernization policy through education of an urban vanguard and did not concern itself with peasants, who continued living in their traditional ways.

After the separation of the TKP from the CI ("decentralization") in 1936, Turkish communists who stayed in the Soviet Union shared the fate of many others in the purges. Their persecution continued until Stalin's death. I have no knowledge about their trials (if indeed they were ever brought before a court) beyond hearsay.

### 3. *Illegality*

The TKP has been illegal throughout its history, except for brief periods during the Turco-Greek War when it operated under legal coverage, utilizing party names that did not contain the word "Communist", for instance the "People's Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party" (Istanbul, 1919-23) and the "Turkish People's *İştirakîyyun*<sup>2</sup> Party" (Ankara 1920-21 and 1922). (Yet, there was a short-lived "official" TKP established in the National Assembly in 1920!) Hence, the secrecy which surrounded its activities does not allow us to find precise answers to most of the questions we would like to pose about it.

A brief survey of legislation concerning the offence or crime of communism may be pertinent here. Technically speaking, in the 20s there was no prohibition of communism in the Ottoman/Turkish corpus of laws. After the proclamation of the Republic, the Ottoman Penal Code, being an adaptation of the Code Napoléon of 1810, which was accepted in the 1850s, continued to be in effect. In 1914 the Turkish law was amended to ban, under severe sanctions, the publication of articles encouraging people to disobey the law, disturb the order of the state, endanger the safety of the country, incite one class against another or organize public meetings for similar aims.

The Maintenance of Order Act of 1925 did not add any new penal limitations to the existing ones, it only empowered the government to prevent "anarchy". Following its acceptance, a new amendment was passed. It concerned persons actually provoking the people of Turkey to armed rebellion against the government or inciting them to kill one another. Thus, the element of force was a prerequisite, communist ideas as such being left unpunishable.

In 1926 a new Turkish Penal Code, being an adaptation of the Italian Code of 1889, was promulgated. This piece of legislation, naturally enough, also forbade forcible actions against the "established order" and still left any kind of "thinking" unprohibited. Only in the Press Law of 1931 was communist agitation regarded as criminal; hence "thought" became punishable if it was published. In 1936 the notorious articles 141 and 142 were added to the Penal Code. These contained comprehensive prohibitions, but still required the crime to include force.

However, in spite of the looseness of the legal framework summarized above, many a communist was sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. For instance,

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2. *İştirakîyyun* is an Arabic word meaning "socialist" rather than "communist".

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the poet Nazim Hikmet, who got the heaviest penalties in 1938, was not convicted for communist propaganda, but for "supposedly" instigating the armed forces to rebellion.

#### 4. Sources

Archival sources for the history of the TKP became accessible only in 1991, when the Comintern Archives were transferred from the Moscow Institute of Marxism-Leninism (IML) to the Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Modern History Documents (*Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniya i izucheniya dokumentov noveishei istorii*; RTsKhIDNI).

The archives of the Turkish section of the CI are held in two separate locations:

a) Documents from the period before 1926 (whatever remained from the destruction of the main corpus of the party archives in Turkey in early 1921, and some documents from the years between 1921 and 1926, plus correspondence with the Azerbaijani Communist Party), dealing with the "Operation and Propaganda Soviet of the Peoples of the East" (Baku 1920) and the Transcaucasian Federation, *Zakkavkom*, are held by the Archives of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party (a former subsidiary of the Moscow IML) in Tbilisi.

b) Post-1926 documents were preserved in the Central Party Archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in Moscow. I was denied permission to work there, on the grounds that the materials were not yet classified by the TKP. But occasionally Soviet researchers such as R.P. Kornienko were able to utilize these sources. In 1992 the TKP signed an agreement with the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam on the removal of the TKP's archives from Moscow to the Institute's premises in Amsterdam. In February 1994 the IISH received microfilm copies of a bunch of documents from the Comintern Archives in Moscow pertaining to the history of the TKP and the Turkish sections of the international communist mass organizations. These microfilms are said to total some thirty-five thousand pages in nearly five hundred files, the overwhelming majority of which date from the early 20s. They come from seven branches of the Comintern Archives:

- the general records (365 files, 1918-37);
- the records of the Eastern Secretariat of the CI's Executive Committee (ECCI) (32 files, 1921-39);
- the records of the representative of the TKP at the ECCI (60 files, 1922-35);
- the records of the Communist Youth International (CYI) (15 files, 1921-36);
- the records of the Peasants' International (Krestintern) (1 file, 1925-1935);
- the records of the International Red Aid (IRA) (10 files, 1924-35).

I have not yet been able to see them. But judging from the titles (and dates) in Russian and German inventories, there is reason to hope that these materials

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will greatly contribute to our existing knowledge in this field of micro-history.<sup>3</sup>

Next to the archives, the Comintern Library's Turkish collection is very important. It was transferred to the Academy of Social Science of the CPSU. However, during a stay in Moscow I was told that the Academy's library does not contain the Turkish collection. So its present whereabouts is a mystery. Hopefully, in due time the location of the collection will be discovered.

The Turkish Police must have extensive files on communists. However, they are not generally accessible. Judging from the work of (right-wing) researchers who were apparently able to consult them, one may conclude that they are fragmentary and unclassified. Another possible source can be minutes and exhibits from law court cases against communist groups and individuals. Recently, some such trial records have been traced. But the State Intelligence Organization seems to have reserved some dossiers from 1925 for its own exclusive use. Also, a fire in the Palace of Justice in the 40s burned a lot of documents.

### 5. Bibliography

Most of the literature on the subject is in Turkish. Authors who have written in other languages than Turkish are either Western or Soviet and Bulgarian researchers. Western authors usually show a critical or even hostile attitude towards the Turkish communist movement, but they are meticulous in details.<sup>4</sup>

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3. In the meantime, the IISH gave copies of these films to the newly established , Istanbul.
4. Gotthard Jaeschke, "Türkei", in *Der Weltbolschewismus. Ein internationales Gemeinschaftswerk über die bolschewistische Wühlarbeit und die Umsturzversuche des Komintern in allen Ländern* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1936), pp. 439-443; id., "Kommunismus und Islam im türkischen Befreiungskriege", *Die Welt des Islams*, 6 (1961), No. 3/4, pp. 203-222; id., "La rôle du communisme dans les relations russo-turques de 1919 à 1922", *Orient*, 1963, No. 26, pp. 31-44; Socrates-James Asteriou, "The Third International and the Balkans 1919-1945" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1959); George S. Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey* (Stanford, Cal., 1967; also published in Turkish); Jacob M. Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey* (Leiden, 1974; also published in Turkish); Giacomo E. Carretto, "Polemiche fra kemalismo, fascismo, comunismo negli anni '30", *Storia Contemporanea*, 8 (1977), No. 3, pp. 489-530 (Turkish translation: "1930'larda Kemalizm - Faşizm - Komünizm Üzerine Polemikler", *Tarih ve Toplum*, 1985, Nos. 17-18, pp. 56-60); (prepared in French but published only in Turkish:) George Haupt and Paul Dumont, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyalist Hareketler* [Socialist Movements in the Ottoman Empire] (Istanbul, 1977) (the title is misleading, in fact the book is about Jewish Socialism and particularly the Socialist Federation of Salonica); Paul Dumont, "La fascination du bolchevisme: Enver Pacha et le parti des soviets populaires 1919-1922", *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 16 (1975), No. 2, pp. 141-166; id., "Bolchevisme et Orient. Le parti communiste turc de Mustafa Suphi. 1918-1921", *ibid.*, 18 (1977), No. 4, pp. 377-409; id., "A propos de la 'classe ouvrière' ottomane à la veille de la révolution jeune-

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[Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırmaları Vakfı]

Soviet and Bulgarian authors are inclined to praise the Turkish comrades and criticize the Ankara government. Since they had access to material beyond our reach at the time, they do nevertheless have some value.<sup>5</sup> There is a bibliographical article by Mark Pinson covering major Russian books and articles on the history of the Turkish Republic, published in the early 60s, where occasional references to the communist movement are made.<sup>6</sup> Apart from these, there are also several more specific Russian publications, of course.<sup>7</sup>

The Turkish publications can be classified under five headings:

turque", *Turica*, 9 (1977), No. 1; id., "Sources inédites pour l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier et des courants socialistes dans l'Empire ottomane au début du XXe siècle", *Études balkaniques*, 1978, No. 3; id., "Les organisations socialistes et la propagande communiste à Istanbul pendant l'occupation alliée 1918-1922", *ibid.*, 1979, No. 4; Guy Hermet and Jean-François Bayart, "Die Kommunistische Partei der Türkei", in Heinz Timmermann (ed.), *Die kommunistischen Parteien Südeuropas. Länderstudien und Queranalysen* (Cologne and Baden-Baden, 1979), pp. 383-405. Of course, general works on international communism also include some information about the Turkish party, e.g., Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents*, 3 Vols. (London, 1956-1965).

5. Michael Pawlowitsch [i.e. Mikhail Lazarevitch Veltman], "Die kommunistische Bewegung in der Türkei", *Die kommunistische Internationale*, 1921, No. 17, pp. 269-271; P. Kitaigorodsky, "The Labour Movement in Turkey", *The Communist International*, 1925, No. 12, pp. 83-96; A. Şnurov, "Kemalist Devrim ve Türkiye Proletaryası" [Kemalist Revolution and the Turkish Proletariat] was first published in Russian language in Moscow in 1929 and is the first part of A. Şnurov and Y. Rozaliyev, *Türkiye'de Kapitalistleşme ve Sınıf Kavmaları* [Capitalisation in Turkey and Class Struggles] (Istanbul, 1970), separately reprinted as *Türkiye Proletaryası* (Istanbul, 1973).

6. Mark Pinson, "Turkish Revolution and Reform (1919-1928) in Soviet Historiography", *Middle East Journal*, 17 (1963), No. 4, pp. 466-478.

7. E.g., A.D. Novichev, "Prevrashchenie osmankoi imperii v polkoloniyu", *Ocherki ekonomiki Turtsii do mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 1937), Turkish translation: *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Yarı Sömürgeleşmesi* (Ankara, 1979). Prof. Novichev has also written a comprehensive book (in Russian) on Turkish labour history in the early 1950s, but it was printed only in a dozen copies or so and not allowed to be published due to a reference to the existence of the TKP, which the Soviet censors disapproved, as the TKP was not officially recognized by the USSR at the time. See also N.R.[= Yu.N.] Rozaliyev, *Türkiye-Sanayi Proletaryası* [Industrial Proletariat of Turkey] (Istanbul, 1974); R.P. Kornenko, *Rabochee Dvizhenie v Turtsii 1818-1963 gg.* (Moscow, 1965; US Department of Commerce translation: *The Labor Movement in Turkey (1918-1963)*, New York, 1967); Mahad Mahmudoglu Sofiev, "1918-1923'ci Yillarda Türkiye'de Milli Azadlık Mübarezesi Devrinde Marksizm-Leninizm İdeyalarının Yayılması ve Komünizm Harekâtı" [The Dissemination of the Ideas of Marxism-Leninism and the Operation of Communism during the Period of National Liberation Struggle in Turkey in the Years 1918-1923] (dissertation, Baku, 1965); Ştefan Velikov, a Bulgarian researcher, has contributed a number of articles to *Études Balkaniques*, such as the following: "Participation d'internationalistes turcs à la défense de la République soviétique hongroise (1919)", 1974, No. 1, and "G. Dimitrov et quelques questions du mouvement ouvrier en Turquie", 1972, No. 2; finally, the work of the Bulgarian journalist Dimitri Shishmanov available to me in its Turkish translation: *Türkiye İşçi ve Sosyalist Hareketi* [Workers' and Socialist Movement in Turkey] (Istanbul, 1978).

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a) Hostile works by “merchants of anti-communism” such as İlhan Darendelioğlu, Fethi Tevetoğlu, and Aclan Sayılğan,<sup>8</sup> by members of the national Intelligence, the military and the police such as Şevki Mutlugil, Faruk Güventürk, and Adnan Kınay,<sup>9</sup> by journalists such as Feridun Kandemir and Cemal Kutay<sup>10</sup>, and by conservative historians such as Akdes Nimet Kurat and Hikmet Bayur.<sup>11</sup> Studies in this category can be used only with great caution.

b) TKP publications: The few sources that make historical references reflect the actual ideological needs and tendencies of their publication date. Hence, they must be used with great caution. But they themselves are a part of the object to be studied.

c) Memoirs: For the earlier period Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, İbrahim Sırrı Topçuoğlu, Laz İsmail, Abidin Nesimi (Fatinoğlu), and Hikmet Kıvılcımlı.<sup>12</sup> Vâlâ Nureddin’s biography of Nazım Hikmet<sup>13</sup> is also basically a memoir. Hikmet’s own autobiographical novel could also be added here.<sup>14</sup>

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8. İlhan Darendelioğlu, *Türkiye’de Komünizm Hareketleri* [Communist Movements in Turkey], 2 Vols. (Istanbul, 1962-1963); Fethi Tevetoğlu, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faaliyetler* [Socialist and Communist Activities in Turkey] (Ankara, 1967); Aclan Sayılğan, *Solun 94 Yılı (1871-1965)* [Ninety-Four Years of the Left (1871-1965)] (Ankara, 1968).
  9. [Şevki Mutlugil], *İçimizdeki Düşman* [The Enemy Inside Us] (s.l., s.a.); Faruk Güventürk, *Komünizm ve Maskeler* [Communism and Masks], 2d ed. (Istanbul, 1968); [Adnan Kınay], *Türkiye’de Komünizmin Cephe Politikası* [The Front Policy of Communism in Turkey] and *Türkiye’de Komünist Tekniği* [The Communist Technique in Turkey] (Publications of the General Directorate of Security, Section for Important Affairs, Nos. 4 and 5).
  10. Feridun Kandemir, *Atatürk’ün Kurduğu Türkiye Komünist Partisi ve Sonrası* [The TKP which Atatürk had arranged to be set up] (Istanbul, 1967) and Cemal Kutay, *Türkiye’de İlk Komünistler* [The Earliest Communists in Turkey] (Istanbul, 1956).
  11. Semih Çoruhlu [i.e. Akdes Nimet Kurat], “İstiklal Savaşında Komünizm Faaliyeti” [Communist Activities during the War of Independence], a series of 27 instalments published in the newspaper *Yeni İstanbul* in May and July, 1966; Hikmet Bayur, “M. Suphi ve Milli Mücadeleye El Koymaya Çalışan Başlı Dışarıda Akımlar” [M. Suphi and Currents Externally Led which Tried to Dominate the National Struggle], in the organ of the Turkish Historical Society, *Belleten*, 1971, No. 140.
  12. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam* [The Man in Search of Water] (Istanbul, 1967); İbrahim Sırrı Topçuoğlu, *Savaş Yarası. Anı* [War Wound. Memoirs], 2 Vols. (Istanbul, 1977-1978); İ. Bilen [i.e. Laz İsmail, party-name: Marat], *Savaş Dolu Yıllar* [Years Full of Wars] (London, 1978); Abidin Nesimi, *Türkiye Komünist Partisinde Anılar ve Değerlendirmeler (1909-1949)* [Memoirs and Evaluations inside the TKP (1909-1949)] (Istanbul, 1979), and *Yılların İçinden* [Through the Years] (Istanbul, 1977). For Hikmet Kıvılcımlı see note 26.
  13. Vâlâ Nureddin (Vâ-Nû), *Bu Dünyadan Nâzım Geçti* [Nazım Passed from this World] (Istanbul, [1965]).
  14. Nazım Hikmet, *Yaşamak Güzel Şey Bekardeşim* [It is Beautiful to Live Brother] (Istanbul, 1967). A French translation appeared under the title *Les romantiques*.

- d) Novels: Attila İlhan's and Vedat Türkali's <sup>(i)</sup> *rover* volumes.<sup>15</sup>  
 e) Research works: Working class histories by Oya Baydar and Kemal Sülker,<sup>16</sup> books by Kerim Sadi, Rasih Nuri İleri and Mete Tunçay,<sup>17</sup> occasional studies by Çetkin Yetkin<sup>18</sup> and others.

### 6. The Genealogy of the TKP

The TKP was founded in Baku on 10 September 1920. Here I shall mention the names of ten organizations and two dozen persons as clues to the history of the TKP at the stage of its formation.

a) The Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Party ("Turkish Spartakists" of Berlin 1919) included future prominent communists such as Ethem Nejat (first general secretary of the TKP, killed as a member of the Mustafa Suphi group mentioned below in January 1921), (Arap) İsmail Hakkı (member of the first central committee, killed as a member of the same group), Vehbi (Prof. Sarıdal, who changed to Kemalism early in his career), Vedat Nedim (Tör, general secretary in 1925-1927, renegade thereafter), Ali Cevdet (Turkish Comintern representative, spokesman of the TKP at the Fourth and Fifth World Congresses, liquidated in 1936).

b) Some intellectuals who were educated elsewhere in Europe belonged to the Social Democratic Party (1918) and the Turkish Socialist Party (1919), like Dr. İhsan (Özger) and Suphi Nuri (İleri); others were independent of these parties, such as Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer, long-time TKP leader), Sadrettin Celal (Prof. Antel, who left the movement after 1925) and Hüseyin Ragıp (Baydur, who shifted early to the Kemalist camp and later became ambassador to

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15. Attila İlhan, *Bıçağın Ucu* [Tip of the Knife] (Ankara, 1973), *Yaraya Tuz Basmak* [Pressing Salt on the Wound] (Ankara, 1978), *Dersaadet'te Sabah Ezanları* [Morning Prayer Calls in Istanbul] (Ankara, 1982), and *O Karanlıkta Biz* [Us in the Darkness] (Ankara, 1988); Vedat Türkali, *Tek Kişilik Ölüm. Roman* [Death for One Person. Novel] (Istanbul, 1989).
16. Oya Baydar, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Tarihi* [History of the Working Class in Turkey], Vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), and Kemal Sülker, *100 Soruda Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketleri* [100 Questions on Workers' Movements in Turkey], 2nd ed. (Istanbul, 1968).
17. A. Cerrahoğlu [i.e. Kerim Sadi], *Türkiye'de Sosyalizmin Tarihine Katkı* [Contribution to the History of Socialism in Turkey] (Istanbul, 1975); Rasih Nuri İleri, *Atatürk ve Komünizm* [Atatürk and Communism] (Istanbul, 1970) and *Türkiye Komünist Partisininin Gerçeği ve Bilimsellik* [TKP Reality and Scientificity] (Istanbul, 1976); the 4th revised edition of my *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar* [Left-wing Movements in Turkey], covering the period 1908-1925 came out in Ankara in 1991 (it was published first in 1967). A sequel volume to it covering the years 1925-1936 was published in 1992. Their bibliography sections include most of the literature mentioned above.
18. Çetkin Yetkin, *Siyasal İktidar Sanata Karşı* [Political Power against Arts] (Ankara, 1970).

For your information: Surnames didn't exist in Turkey until 1930s. Therefore, I added in parantheses the surnames of persons which were later acquired

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Moscow and London). These two groups merged to create the Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party (Istanbul, September 1919).

c) "Communists from abroad": Mustafa Suphi, the first TKP president, who was killed in January 1921 together with his 14 (?) comrades off the Black Sea coast in north-east Turkey when attempting to reach Ankara from Baku, where they had established the TKP a few months before; World War I prisoners-of-war like İsmail Hakkı from Kayseri (delegate to the Second CI Congress), and Süleyman Nuri (delegate to the Third CI Congress); Russian subjects of Turkish and Muslim origin sent to Turkey for agit-prop purposes, such as Ziyetullah Nuşirevan and Şerif Manatov; (from 1922 onwards:) those who studied at the Communist University of the Workers of the East (*Kommunisticheskiı universitet trudyashchikh sya vostoka*; KUTV) in Moscow, such as Şevket Süreyya (Aydemir), Nazım Hikmet (Ran) and İsmail Hüsrev (Tökin).

d) Left-Wing Union and Progress members. Some (if not all) were in contact with their fugitive leaders abroad. A group participated in the creation of the People's Soviet Party, later known as the "Disorganized Party". Those who were members of the General National Assembly established a "People's Faction" (*Halk Zümresi*) which was in effect the parliamentary party for the Green Army Society, out of which the "official" (or "loyal") TPK was brought into being (general secretary: Hakkı Behiç-Bayıç), the rest of the members of parliament, including the general secretary of the Green Army Society, Nazım (Resmor), joined forces with the "secret" (Anatolian) TKP, led by Salih Hacıoğlu (a veterinarian major), to establish officially the Turkish People's Communist Party (*Türkiye Halk İştirakiyyun Fırkası*; THİF) in December 1920.

e) There were also groups of communist-inclined workers such as (Van'lı) Kâzım (Kip), teachers, other indigenous professionals and later students, especially medical students like Hikmet (Kıvılcımlı) and Hasan Âli (Ediz).

## 7. Membership

Both at the time of its formation and during its subsequent underground life the TKP was mainly composed of intellectuals, most of whom were educated abroad, where they had had contacts with radical ideas and organizations.

We know little about the Party's working-class members. But it seems that they were mainly refugees from the Balkan countries (including the Aegean islands and Crete), where socialist workers' movements had already begun. Another reason for this fact may be that these "displaced persons" tended to be more rebellious, innovative, searching and adventurous in comparison to the docile, settled indigenous population.

Among Party-member workers the gypsies (coming from Greece and Bulgaria) were conspicuous. Most of them were employed in tobacco processing plants. They could usually be classified as *Lumpenproletariat*, who lacked class consciousness and determination. Stable industrial workers were rare in the rank



and file of the TKP. Therefore, the story of the Turkish party can only be interesting as an intellectual enterprise.

### 8. Aims and Activities

Viewed as a current of ideas, communism in Turkey exhibits two distinct periods: before and after 1925. Until the establishment of the single-party dictatorship, the TKP aimed at influencing the newly emergent state ideology in favour of an economic and social programme. By means of legal publications it attempted to guide the founders of the Republic to a non-capitalistic path of development. It is true that it failed. But during this early period, TKP intellectuals were thinking quite originally. They did not blindly advocate blueprint projects alien to local conditions. They indeed tried to accommodate Marxist principles with the circumstances prevailing in Turkey.

After 1925, however, they could no longer aspire to penetrate the ruling elite. Yet, in the absence of legal opposition, they were compelled to fill in this vacuum, criticizing many acts and steps taken by the republican government in their clandestine publications, which had a limited circulation.

### 9. Ethnic Composition of the TKP and Nationalism

Socialist ideas and actions were introduced into the Ottoman Empire by members of the non-Muslim minorities (officially called "elements" or "components"): the Armenians, Jews, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Serbians and Greeks. Some Turks (in the Balkans) participated in their organizations like the Socialist Federation of Salonica (1909 - mainly Jewish) and the International (read: inter-ethnic) Workers' Union (Istanbul 1920 - mainly Greek). Though all of these groups aspired to establish multi-national associations, only the Jews seem to have been immune from an anti-Turkish bias. The nationalistic inclinations of the rest were fresh and strong. That was valid for the Turks also. During the dissolution process of the empire, many instances can be observed where socialist organizations' mutually antagonistic nationalisms clashed.

In the early 1920s, in Istanbul under allied occupation, there were two rival Marxist workers' organizations, one established for and by the Greeks and one for and by the Turks. Ostensibly both were affiliated to the Profintern and linked to the TKP.

A project under my direction, sponsored by the IISH, ~~now well under way,~~ <sup>was</sup> may shed light on some hitherto unknown facts on this general subject. The research <sup>was</sup> is a combined effort by international scholars to study "The Role of Ethnic and Religious Communities in the Emergence and Development of Socialism in Turkey: 1876-1925". Though the span of time is limited to the earlier years of the TKP, ~~we may expect~~ <sup>has</sup> a lot of information about the inter-ethnic collaboration in its birth. \*19

19) Mete Tunçay and Erik J. Zürcher (eds.), Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire (British Academic Press) <sup>has surfaced in this study</sup>

The Ankara government, utilizing an anti-imperialistic discourse, provoked the Turkish workers against their non-Turkish compatriots, especially when competing for the few employment opportunities, accusing them of having acted as collaborators and accomplices of the enemy forces.

Nevertheless, the TKP succeeded in maintaining an internationalist flavour by recruiting many Jewish, Armenian and Greek members (some of which were elevated to the central committee). The second man under Laz İsmail (İ. Bilen) during the 60s and 70s was Aram Pehlivanian, an Armenian. The first and long-time leader of the Party, Şefik Hüsnü [■], was a member of a family from Salonica converted from ■ to ■. That may have been a factor for the multi-national appeal of the Party throughout most of its history, whereas the founder of the TKP in Baku, Mustafa Suphi, was a fierce nationalist early in his intellectual career and retained such sentiments even after he became a communist.

As for nationalism vis-à-vis the Comintern, we must go back to the winter of 1926-27, when Şefik Hüsnü was abroad and Vedat Nedim in charge of the TKP at home. Şevket Süreyya was released from prison and began to struggle with the Comintern representative, Kitaigorodskii who tried to force the Turkish section into submission. Şevket Süreyya was later ousted from the Party by Şefik Hüsnü and started a monthly journal, *Kadro*, which aimed at permeation into the ruling Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası*; CHF). Süreyya boasted to me in his old age that his group was the first nationalist opposition in the international communist movement - long before Tito. This may have some truth in it. Turkish party members educated in Soviet Russia during the early years of the revolution seem to be imbued with a subtle Turkish nationalism (perhaps under Sultan Galiev's influence?). Thereafter nobody in the Party contested the view that the interests of the Comintern (read: Russia) were identical with their own.

#### 10. The TKP's General Platform

The TKP's stand as reflected in its clandestine publications, the production and distribution of which was the main activity of the Party, can perhaps be classified as follows:

Foreign policy: "Anti-imperialism" was the key-word here. The need to continue a loyal friendship with the Soviet Union was justified as the sole way to maintain independence from world capitalism. The Republican government's acceptance of its liability for the old Ottoman debts was criticized as a humiliating submission to the West.

Inner politics: The realization of constitutional rights which at that time existed only on paper was demanded. Also, the amelioration of political mechanisms (such as direct elections, universal suffrage and proportional

which had ostensibly

Judaism to Islam

For your information:

"C.H. Fırkası,"

later in the 30s became

"C.H. Partisi" hence CHP

Depm  
1887-19

representation) was stressed. Kemalist repressions against the TKP were protested.

Economy: Distribution of agricultural land belonging to feudal owners, pious foundations etc. together with animals and farming implements to landless peasants, without payment, was demanded. Another demand was the abolition of existing monopolies which operated against the people's interests. Progressive taxation of the rich was defended, instead of exploitation of the poor by excessive taxes.

Working conditions: Fair treatment of the workers by their employers was demanded through rises in salaries and their orderly payment, also the shortening of the working day to eight hours, the protection of female and child labour and the organization of free workers' unions with the right to strike.

Most of these demands were liberal rather than socialist. Although the TKP criticized the government's diminishing revolutionary zeal, it fully supported some of its anti-feudal measures. This duality of approach is particularly evident in the TKP's evaluation of the repression of Kurdish revolts by the Government. According to the TKP, the Kurdish rebels were extremely reactionary: they were toys in the hands of the imperialist powers and their actions were contrary to the interest of the people and the revolution, when looked at in the light of their leaders' intentions, slogans and affiliations. Yet, from another point of view, the Kurdish people revolted because governmental policies deprived ethnic minorities of their right to live freely. The state's dictatorial economic and fiscal measures destroyed the poor masses and benefited the rich only. Hence the Kurdish peasantry's following reactionaries was mistaken but understandable.

#### *11. The TKP's Explanation of its Own Weakness*

The Turkish representative at the Sixth CI Congress protested against Turkey's classification together with pre-feudal countries like Ethiopia, Libya and Arabia. He claimed that the Turkish bourgeois revolution had taken the path of capitalism, which had already begun developing many years ago. This amounts to a confession of the TKP's failure to guide the new Republican government to follow a line of non-capitalistic development. He tried to account for this by enumerating a series of factors:

a) The scattered existence of the workers and the resulting absence of communication between them.

b) The prevention by the bourgeoisie of the workers' joining forces among themselves.

c) The TKP's inability to organize the popular masses. (Indeed, the TKP could never reach the hard core of the industrial proletariat, as far as such a proletariat existed, but only marginal groups of workers such as the tobacco-nists, transport workers and porters.)

d) The lack of contact with and guidance by the international working-class movement. (This was an accusation directed at the Comintern.)

- e) The absence of peasant organizations.
- f) The strength and experience of the local bourgeoisie, which also enjoyed the support of the army.
- g) The chances afforded to the Turkish bourgeoisie by rivalries and conflicts between the imperialist powers.

It was the last time that there was a public debate on the TKP in the CI.

## 12. Opposition Groups within the TKP: Resignations, Factions, Purges

Inner-party struggles are especially important since Turkish communism was basically significant as a current of ideas. Unfortunately, we are not in possession of the various opposition groups' policy documents. The official Party press, endorsed by the Comintern authorities, explained these movements simply in terms of "treason", calling their proponents defeatists, renegades, provocateurs, opportunists, Trotskyites, petit-bourgeois, police-agents etc., who did not serve the real cause of the proletariat. In many case studies I have tried to show that such epithets were used merely as terms of opprobrium, without any truth.

If we do not regard the surviving members of the group of Turkish Spartakists, who had established the Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Party in Berlin in early 1919 and continued it for a while after they returned home,<sup>19</sup> as the first deserters, the earliest case of someone's leaving the TKP is that of İsmail Hüsrev Tökin.<sup>20</sup> He became a member of the THİF when very young and secretly went to Moscow in 1922 to study medicine there. He enrolled at the KUTV to learn Russian, then stayed on and graduated from that institution in 1924. He was a member of the Turkish delegation at the Fourth CI Congress. After finishing his courses, he continued for one year at the KUTV as a lecturer.<sup>21</sup> He told me that he, even before leaving Moscow for Turkey in (spring?) 1925, had made up his mind to abandon the Party. This was not due to ideological differences, but to fear resulting from the Ankara government's severe repression of communists. Under such circumstances (mass arrests had already begun with the Maintenance of Order Act), he could not cherish any hope that covert underground work would succeed. Indeed, he advised

<sup>20</sup> <sup>19</sup> This group of a dozen young men, which was seemingly attracted to Marxism as a way of liberating their country, included future parliamentarians, ministers of state, founders and directors of public banks engaged in large-scale mining and industry (such as Etibank and Sumerbank), academicians and successful private sector entrepreneurs. Upon the recovery of Istanbul by the Nationalists from Allied (Entente) occupation, most of them silently dropped out of the leftist political struggle. But they retained their radical world-views, none became anti-Marxist.

<sup>21</sup> <sup>20</sup> He is still alive and lives in Istanbul. I twice interviewed him and videotaped the second interview on July 30, 1989.

<sup>22</sup> <sup>21</sup> A photocopy of the official translation of his KUTV diploma, signed by G. Broido, has been published in the last edition of my *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar*, Vol. 2, p. 622.

died recently (in June 1994)

his school-friend Vâlâ Nureddin (Vâ-Nû) to follow his example, which the latter did. Tökin, after returning home, handed his resignation from the TKP to the acting general secretary, Vedat Nedim (Dr. Tör).<sup>22</sup> (23)

The second important resignation from the TKP seems to have been that of Sadreddin Celal (Prof. Antel, 1890-1954), educated as a teacher in France, who previously had become a member of the Turkish Socialist Party. Antel was the Turkish delegation's secretary at the Fourth CI Congress.<sup>23</sup> After he was ~~sentenced~~ in summer 1925 and served a sentence of more than one year in prison, his parting company with the Party has also no identifiable ideological excuse, but looks as if it resulted from considerations of prudence. (24)

Antel was followed by Şevket Süreyya (Aydemir, 1897-1976), also a prisoner during 1925/26 and also convicted by the Independence Court. He had acrimonious discussions with the Comintern representative, Kitaigorodskii, before leaving the Party on a national-communist opposition platform.

We are in the dark about the motives for the departure of two other central committee members around 1926/27: Salih Hacıoğlu and Nuri, an electrician, both of whom emigrated to the Soviet Union after leaving the Party. Whether they were expelled or resigned of their own accord, we do not know.

A major departure from the TKP occurred in autumn 1927, when Vedat Nedim, the acting general secretary of the TKP, informed the police when Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer, 1887-1959), the real leader of the Party, came secretly from abroad to correct the "Menshevik" party line pursued by Vedat Nedim (Tör). In an interview I had with Tör he told me that Şefik Hüsnü was exerting pressure on him by letter from his voluntary exile, instigating strikes to be organized by the TKP, against which Tör resisted for the preservation of the newly recruited Party functionaries and of the recently formed cells, which were still very fragile. Tör accused Şefik Hüsnü of pushing the Party into adventurous activities purely for the sake of showing off in his reports to his Comintern superiors.

While all former members who had resigned kept their Marxist convictions, Vedat Nedim turned not only anti-Bolshevik, but also anti-Marxist. However, this did not prevent him from joining forces with his previous comrades, such as Tökin and Aydemir, for the establishment of an important revisionist monthly journal, published regularly for three years between 1932 and 1934. \* (25) *Kadro* was a high-brow periodical aiming at the penetration of the CHF in power, with a view to imbuing it with a radical, anti-imperialist single-party

23 <sup>22</sup> Kerim Sadi (pseudonym of Nevzat Cerrahlar), a younger man than Tökin's peers, who went to Moscow to study at the KUTV, was obliged to cut short his stay in Moscow and also left the Party. He however continued his free-lance Marxist intellectual career, occasionally collaborating with TKP leaders. He is said to have been in a state of mental disorder, but this is not very convincing; the real reasons for his divergence are unknown.

24 <sup>23</sup> The manner and motives of departing from the party of Sakallı Celal (Yalnız), an original and eccentric intellectual, who too was a member in that delegation, is also unknown.

(25) cf. Fikret Adanır, "Zur 'Etatismus' Diskussion in der Türkei in der Weltwirtschaftskrise. Die Zeitschrift *Kadro* 1932-1934," in *Der nahe Osten in der Zwischenkriegszeit* edited by L. S. Schilder & C. Scharf

(Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989) ... 255 272

ideology, which owed perhaps more to Leninism than to Marxism, without wholly discarding it. Besides the journal, *Kadro* also brought out a series of publications. Aydemir was their chief ideologue and Tökin wrote one of the earliest and perhaps the best analysis of the peasant question in Turkey. This venture was vehemently condemned and attacked by the TKP, though it seems to me that *Kadro* continued the pre-1925 Party-line, whereas the new central committee of the Party had changed its former evaluation of Kemalism and begun to see it as a tool of the nascent bourgeoisie.

The most crucial opposition yet to the central committee of the TKP appeared in late 1929, centred around the famous poet Nazım Hikmet (Ran, 1902-1963). After severely criticizing the Şefik Hüsnü group for its passivity when Nazım and his friends were attacked for their lack of respect to the Comintern, Nazım's group did not obey its negative arbitration and was duly purged from the Party, according to the secret press for their "Trotskyite and police opposition".

Nazım Hikmet's group never accepted this verdict passed on it and indeed claimed to be the true TKP. Thus, for nearly twenty years there existed one "official" section of the Comintern and another - unrecognized - alternative party organization. This schism had far-reaching repercussions. During the transition to a multi-party system in Turkey after the Second World War, the two rival socialist party attempts reflected this old feud between the central committee and Nazım's alternative group. Nazım, who had been condemned to 28 years of imprisonment in two consecutive trials in 1928 (one in connection with his supposed contacts with students from the Army Cadet School and the other for contacts with the navy), was only readmitted to the party towards the end of his sentence, when an international campaign was started for his release.

Initially Nazım's group consisted, besides himself, of Party workers like Hamdi Şamilof and Ahmet (nicknamed Mussolini). But later on Nazım also collaborated with intellectuals like the poet Nail Vahdeti (Çakırhan, who was to be a famous architect) and Sabiha Sertel (a versatile publicist) in producing legal books and periodicals. Besides reciting his poems for commercial recordings, he also wrote plays staged in the Istanbul Municipality Theatre through his friendship with Muhsin Ertuğrul, a Soviet-trained director. Especially during his imprisonment in the late 1930s and throughout the 40s, he was a mentor to the future novelists Orhan Kemal and Kemal Tahir and to A. Kadir, the poet, and Balaban, the painter, who were also in jail.

I do not believe that the accusations directed against Nazım Hikmet in the early 1930s, portraying him as a Trotskyite as well as a Kemalist agent, contain any truth. What adds to the importance of such an enquiry is the residence of Trotsky himself in Turkey during that very epoch, living for more than four years in exile in Istanbul from February 1929 onwards. Now, "Trotskyite" can mean one or both of two things: to be attached to the person and organization of Leon Trotsky and/or to side with the policy of a world-wide revolution

resting on the theory of "permanent revolution", against the policy of "socialism in one country" first expounded by Lenin, but practised by Stalin and hence to oppose national sections of the Comintern from the point of view of a left extremist.

Nazım was not a Trotskyite in either of these senses. Yet Hikmet Kıvılcımlı (about whom I have more to say below) in his last (and bitterest) book writes that Nazım Hikmet did not, could not and did not need to conceive and assimilate the whole Trotskyite ideology; but, with his social and psychological constitution, he was unknowingly a "Trotsky" himself.<sup>24</sup> (26)

Kıvılcımlı, following the current Comintern phraseology, regarded Trotskyism as a petit-bourgeois intellectual seesaw, which masquerades as if it is defending the most unchangeable principles in the world but acts in an exactly contrary manner. Here we have yet a third meaning of the term. Indeed, "Trotskyite" was used extensively and loosely in the communist jargon of the 1930s as a boggy-word, denoting collaboration with the police and the fascists, against the Soviet Union and communist parties affiliated to the Comintern and being a kind of agent-provocateur. This must be the sense in which Nazım and his associates were called "Trotskyites" by the TKP.

We do, however, possess some evidence as to the existence of sympathy for Trotsky among Turkish leftists. In 1929 in Berlin a booklet by Trotsky on *The Real Situation in Russia* was translated into Turkish and printed in the Arabic characters recently discarded in Turkey. Also, an article analyzing Turkey and a "Letter from Turkish Comrades" appeared in *Die Fahne des Kommunismus* (The Flag of Communism), the organ of the ultra-radical Lenin League (*Leninbund*), a left-wing opposition group to the German Communist Party.

In addition to Nazım's opposition, there was Kerim Sadi, who also had the reputation of being a Trotskyite. According to hearsay Ali Cevdet, who headed the Turkish delegations at the Fifth and Sixth CI Congresses and stayed in Moscow for many years as the TKP representative, was executed in 1936 for his Trotskyite crimes. All this led me to correspond with the late Isaac Deutscher and Pierre Frank (the long-time leader of the Fourth International, who served Trotsky as his secretary while in Istanbul) as to the possibility of a Turkish Trotskyite organization or branch. They both denied it and Mr. Frank informed me that there were only a few individual Turks among the subscribers to their journal.

An interesting, albeit rather ambiguous evaluation of oppositions within the TKP, can be found in the writing of an original Marxist thinker, [name?], who sided with the central committee in Nazım's quarrel for the sake of party discipline, in spite of several misgivings he had about Şefik Hüsnü's circle.

Kıvılcımlı

26 24. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Kim Suçlamış? Brejnev'e Mektup* [Who accused? ■] (Istanbul, 1979), p. 60.

A Letter to Brejnev

An important dimension in the inner-party struggle seems to have been trained "up there" (that is, in Russia). Kıvılcımlı, like Şefik Hüsnü, was not a product of KUTV education, though the latter had at a later date lectured at the KUTV. Yet, the bitterest quarrel in the Party was between two KUTV products: Nazım Hikmet and Hasan Âli (Eiz). The one person who survived the purges of the late 30s in the Soviet Union and recreated the Party under his domination in the 60s, Lâz İsmail (better known under his pseudonyms Marat and İ. Bilen), was also a KUTV graduate.

Kıvılcımlı wrote a report to his fellow-members of the central committee of the TKP while serving one of his many sentences at Elazığ prison (1929-33). This lengthy memorandum, *Yol*, is composed of seven books, five of which saw the light of day when they were printed posthumously by his followers in the late 70s. Books 3 and 4 contain valuable information for our inquiry.<sup>25</sup> But Kıvılcımlı usually has a very difficult style, here even more obscure, as a precaution.

Book 3 on "stages and guests in the Party" is a critical history of four distinguishable consecutive movements in the Party. Kıvılcımlı unites the "Fifteen" (Mustafa Suphi and his 14 comrades, who were killed in early 1921) and the THİF under the heading of "Utopianism". Under another heading, "Enlighteners and Contemplators", he deals with the "Legal Marxism" of the years 1922-25 (*Aydınlık*, which was the name of their monthly journal modelled after the French *Clarté*, means "light" rather than "clarity" in Turkish) and the "Economism" of the years 1926-27, when the reformist tendencies of the central committee dictated a policy of "wait and see" and one of collaboration with Kemalism. According to Kıvılcımlı, these are mensheviks and mensheviks-in-reverse, also with inclinations towards being what Lenin called "otzovists" (recallers).

Book 4 of Kıvılcımlı's work on "party and factions", after some theoretical consideration, identifies two main factions which appeared in the TKP after 1927. The first he brands "Anarcho-Bundism" or "Narrow Minoritism" and the second "New-Proletarianism" or "Communist Dogmatism" or "Ultimatism". I am not sure whom he had in mind with the former characterization. This may be hinting at some central committee members or even at a group already purged. With the latter, we may be confident that Nazım's group is intended. Kıvılcımlı accuses them of primitivism, reciting by rote, instability and lack of discipline to the extent of Bakuninism; also demagoguery and provocation, which leads to compromise with the police ("Kemalism is an exaggerated militarist-fascist system"). Kıvılcımlı has a lot to say against the intellectuals in the Party who pose as "essentialists", but are prone to opportunism.

[The Road]

25. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Yol*, Vol. 3: *Fırkada Konaklar ve Konuklar* [Stages and Guests in the Party] (Istanbul, 1978) and Vol. 4: *Parti ve Fraksiyon* [Party and Factions] (Istanbul, 1980).



These vague observations are important in the absence of documentary evidence about reciprocal platforms shared by the central committee and the cited opposition groups. From Kivilcimli's phraseology one typical feature emerges. As in the case of other national sections, Turkish communists like Kivilcimli conceived the world with Marxist references and categories drawn from Soviet politics. This went as far as searching for Turkish equivalents of Russian heresies such as the Workers' Opposition and Trotskyism. Their counterparts were always discovered in the context of a radically different situation. This may be explained to some extent with drawing resemblances in order to make intelligible an alien set of ideas to people who were familiar only with certain categories. Hence, to liken Nazım's group to the Workers' Opposition in Russia could be (though grossly misleading) a kind of shorthand.

Observing such servile usage of terminology, one may wonder why I regard Kivilcimli as "original". His originality resides in his (mostly unsuccessful) endeavours in the sphere of a materialist philosophy of history, where he attempted to combine the oriental and Ottoman experience with the occidental.

A last word on communist opposition groups may be understood as praise for freedom from centralist stereotypes. Nazım, for example, contributed drily dogmatic articles to *Aydınlık* in 1924, when he was still under the heavy spell of his indoctrination. But when he was ousted from the Party, he no longer adhered to the dictates of the Comintern and wrote more freely and humanely and his style improved. On the other hand, Şefik Hüsnü, who used Marxism creatively in analyzing Turkey's problems in his articles in *Aydınlık*, started to write in a rather boring, uninteresting and unreal idiom once he began to obey the line imposed on all loyal communists by the Comintern.

### 13. The TKP's Delegates at the Comintern Congresses<sup>26</sup> (28)

The TKP was not yet formed when its future president Mustafa Suphi participated in the Founding Congress of the Comintern. He had formerly been an extreme nationalist. In spite of his conversion to Bolshevism, he seems to have stuck to his earlier conviction. Yet he criticized the Union and Progress Party's Pan-Turkist adventures in World War I. He was sceptical about all religions and naively hopeful for the prospects of an imminent world revolution. He believed that communism, through its anti-imperialism, would benefit Turkey as well as the rest of the oppressed East.

İsmail Hakkı, the Turkish delegate who spoke at the Second Congress, where the national and colonial questions were debated on the bases of the theses by Lenin and Manabendra Nath Roy, expressed a fiercer nationalism,

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<sup>26</sup>. See Annex 3.

almost excusing the Unionists' Pan-Turkist attempts as an obligatory alternative to the Pan-Islamist policy pursued under the Sultans.<sup>27</sup> (29)

The Turkish delegate at the Third Congress, Süleyman Nuri, unlike his predecessors, was far from being a nationalist. He opted for conditional support of Mustafa Kemal's government for fighting against imperialism, threatening that he would walk over his corpse if he betrayed the joint cause. During the Second World War he was sent to Turkey as a spy. He was caught and sentenced to imprisonment. Later he succeeded in returning to the Soviet Union.

The Turkish delegation at the Fourth Congress was composed of two groups, one representing the communists in Ankara and the other those in Istanbul. The secretary's speech was confined to a protest against the government, which had recently banned the party organization in Ankara and the Turkish Workers' Association in Istanbul. However, there was also a minor accusation directed against the local Greek-dominated International Workers' Union, which ostensibly refused to join the Turkish workers for the creation of a united front. We know that the Comintern wanted all of these groups (plus the Armenian *Hinchaks*) to enter into an alliance, which never materialized.

The right-wing deviation of the TKP, defending collaboration with the CHF in power, was condemned at the Fifth Congress. The Turkish spokesman, Faruk (Ali Cevdet), after partially admitting the accusation, assured the Congress that the TKP had rectified this line. Yet he posed the question of the limits of support to be given to the bourgeoisie's revolutionary nationalism. The TKP was of the opinion that lending help to the nascent Turkish bourgeoisie in its destructive functions (i.e. anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism) was permissible, but not in its constructive work (i.e. developing capitalism).

The question was not satisfactorily resolved in the ensuing four years, as can be seen in the speech made by the same person at the Sixth Congress. He confessed the existence of two deviationist tendencies in the upper echelons of the party, one favouring political collaboration with Kemalism, struggling only in the sphere of economy for workers' rights, the other sticking to a ultra-left position, insisting on a no-compromise attitude which would split the workers' associations. He suggested the creation of a joint workers' and peasants' front against Kemalism, which had - according to him - already capitulated to imperialism by accepting liability for the Ottoman state debts and agreeing to cede Musul to British Iraq, as required by the League of Nations.

As mentioned above, this intervention by the Turkish delegate had begun with a reproach for Otto Kuusinen's classification of Turkey as a pre-feudal

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29) İsmail Hakkı was a prisoner of war who stayed on in Azerbaijan after the war. He is reputed to have gone mad in the late 1930s, but I doubt the authenticity of this lunacy. Perhaps, knowing that such a past sin as nationalism would be unforgivable during the purges, he feigned madness.

country like Ethiopia, Libya and Arabia. Of course, such a diagnosis would imply a different set of objectives to be attained by the Party. Ali Cevdet was right at least on this point. But there was no change in Turkey's designation by the Comintern.

Though the TKP was represented at the Seventh (and last) Congress, no specific question pertaining Turkey was discussed.

#### 14. The "Decentralization" of 1936

A surviving "Old Rifle" (as communist veterans are named in Turkey) once related to me what he had heard from the participants of the TKP central committee meeting where a Comintern representative announced the directive to separate from the centre. He began his report by stating that he was not an agent of Mustafa Kemal, as his listeners might suspect after hearing what he was about to say.

The message he delivered amounted to the virtual dissolution of the Party. Because the official foreign policy of the Turkish Republic was pro-Soviet, this was no time for creating troubles for the government by harassments about workers' rights etc. Communists working underground should now surface, participate in legal organizations, including the CHF, contribute to the ordinary press, with a view to safeguarding democratic ideals (which in this context meant: the interests of the Soviets). Though fascism was illegal in the country, there new currents could develop favouring it (in fact, they did!) and against such contingencies communists should constantly be on the alert. Only a skeleton organization should be preserved underground, independent of the Comintern, to coordinate such activities.

Of course, this dictate to the TKP was a special application or adaptation of the new Comintern tactics adopted in its Seventh Congress in 1935, for the establishment of an anti-fascist popular front in every country. The "General Staff of World Revolution" always drew up its plans with the equation of the interests of socialism and those of the Socialist Motherland (the Soviet Union) in mind. But in this instance, it surpassed every former record in giving priority to the defence of the Soviet state above all. I do not know if other Middle Eastern communist parties received similar treatment at that time.<sup>28</sup> (30)

In one of the rare - subsequent - pronouncements by Turkish Party officials concerning the "decentralization" we read the following:

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30 28. As far as I know, the Egyptian party had already been excluded from the Comintern; but this was not a consequence of the Seventh World Congress or related to its logic. It seems the difficulties encountered in Egypt had to do with bringing together in the Party foreign residents and natives and especially with the Arabs' dislike of including Jews in the Party's ranks.

"The Seventh Congress of the Comintern gave the key to our Party to start a new era of activity. The Party determined for itself a new war path. It decided to support the government of İsmet İnönü in all its acts which served the country's national independence and social development, and which were conducive to the interests of the people. The Party's clandestine workers' unions and the secret Communist Youth Organization [Turkish name?] were disbanded and their members were ordered to join legal workers' and youth organizations. The positive results of this campaign soon appeared both in workers' and in youth movements. A manifest slide to the left was observed in the syndical movement. Legal leftist unions and union leaders began to play prominent roles in the Turkish workers' movement. The youth movement too was vitalized. Youth initiatives, especially those of university students, increased. The direction of this movement, which was previously under the influence of extreme nationalism, changed. The voice of progressive youth grew louder."<sup>29</sup> (31)

Türkiye  
Komünis  
Gençler  
Birliği

Discounting the idealizations and exaggerations expressed above, this, in a way, was an affirmation of the *Kadro* line severely reprimanded at the time (1932-34) by the TKP. As *Kadro* itself, being largely composed of ex-Party members, was a continuation of the pre-1925 Party line it can also be interpreted as a return to the original diagnosis of the situation and strategy. The harsh attitude taken towards Nazım Hikmet's opposition group, calling it an accomplice of Kemalism, had, with this new shift, also become devoid of a theoretical foundation. Yet the healing of wounds took time.

A recent essay by an old-timer claims that the Comintern wanted to liquidate the TKP in the interests of the Soviet state in 1936, when a world war was approaching. But leaders such as Şefik Hüsnü and Reşad Fuat<sup>30</sup> opposed it and succeeded in imposing on the Comintern the famous compromise of Separate Work.<sup>31</sup> (32)

Had this decision anything to do with Georgi Dimitrov's proposal of the Trojan Horse tactics at the Seventh CI Congress? Though there is an obvious resemblance, at the time neither the communists at home nor those abroad regarded the CHF in power as a fascist party.

31 <sup>29</sup> From Yakup Demir's speech on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the 1935 Comintern Congress in the émigré journal *Yeni Çağ* (October 1965). The real name of Yakup Demir, the First Secretary of the central committee of the TKP, was Zeki Baştımar. He was a KUTV graduate. (then)

32 <sup>30</sup> Reşad Fuat (Baraner, 1900-1968), general secretary of the TKP in the 1930s, also edited *Kızıl İstanbul*. He had studied chemical engineering in Germany from 1925 to 1927 and then had a political education in the Soviet Union.

33 <sup>31</sup> Rasih Nuri İleri, "Atatürk, T.K.P. ve Kürt Sorunu Hakkında Bir Deneme" [An Essay on Atatürk, the TKP and the Kurdish Question], *Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi*, 1992, No. 140, 52-54, esp. p. 54.

A brief article on the TPK in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*<sup>32</sup> claims that the Party, in spite of the prevailing hard conditions, organized a series of workers' mass demonstrations against the policy of collaboration with fascist Germany, as defended by reactionary circles in Turkey during the Second World War, that the demonstrators wanted friendly relations to be established with the Soviet Union and that the Party had been prosecuted again and again; especially in 1941 and 1951 many of its leaders and activists were arrested. The TKP, according to the article, consistently supported the vital interests of the working classes and demanded a truly independent democratic Turkey, withdrawal from NATO and CENTO and the dismantling of US bases in Turkey.

This account hid the fact that the TKP was largely passive during the war years, only contributing to the cause of democracy (that is, the allies) in the daily press, which was tolerated by the government for a while. Towards the end of the war, when all "extremes" began to be prosecuted, it was forced to revitalize itself, though confined to a marginal section of the urban populace under severe repression.

34 32. N. Il'darova, "Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Turtsii", in *Bol'shaya sovetskaya enciclopediya*, 3rd ed., Vol. 12 (Moscow, 1973), p. 562. ~~English in~~ The English edition, Vol. 12, (London, 1976).

## Annex 1: TKP Congresses

Congresses	Statutory Documents
1. Bak <sup>35</sup> (35)	1st Programm and Statutes <sup>34</sup> (36)
2. Ankara (THİF) <sup>35</sup> (e)	
3. Istanbul (Akaratler) <sup>35</sup> (37)	
- Party Conference, Vienna	
	2nd Programme <sup>36</sup> (38)
4. Istanbul (Haliç)	
- Party CC Plenum <sup>37</sup> (39)	

## Annex 2: Party Press

## a. Legal (until 1925)

*Yeni Dünya* (Baku, 1920), also (editor) of pamphlets.

*Yeni Dünya* (Eskişehir, 1920), Islamic-Bolshevik.

*Yeni Dünya* (Ankara, 1920-1921), organ of the (official) TKP.

*Anadolu'da Yeni Gün* (Ankara, 1920-1921), id.

*Emek* (Ankara, January 1921), daily organ of the People's Communist Party, six issues.

*Yeni Hayat* (Ankara, 1922), weekly organ of the same party, twenty-six issues.

*Kurtuluş* (Berlin and Istanbul, 1919-1920), monthly organ of the Turkish Workers' and Peasants' (Socialist) Party, one and five issues, and one issue in German.

*Aydınlık* (Istanbul, 1921-1925), monthly (with intervals), thirty-one issues.

*Vazife* (Istanbul, 1923), weekly, unknown number of issues.

35 33. Minutes of proceedings published in Baku 1920 in Turkish in Arabic characters. A transcription of the full text is given in the 4th ed. of my *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar*.

36 34. Both published as separate pamphlets in Baku in 1920. Full transcription *ibid*.

37 35. This meeting, like the next three, was illegal, hence no minutes or decisions are published. Yet possibly reports of the observant Comintern representatives may be found in the TKP archives.

38 36. First drafted in the Vienna Conference, it then underwent corrections by the Comintern. Published by the (illegal) "İnkılâp Yolu" in January 1931 as a 52-page pamphlet: 58 articles preceded with an introduction by Şefik Hüsnü and complemented with "Theses on the Question of Turkey". It is fully reproduced in my *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar*, Vol. 2, pp. 248-265.

39 37. Supposedly attended by prominent leaders of the Comintern such as Dimitrov, Kuusinen and Manuil'skii. Cf. a brochure published abroad in Turkish celebrating the 65th anniversary of the TKP: *TKP'nin Savaş Tarihinden Sayfalar* [Pages from the War History of the TKP] (Essen, 1985), p. 62.

*Orak ve Çekiç* (Istanbul, 1925), weekly, seven issues, also editor of handbills and other publications.

b. Illegal (after 1925)

These periodicals are mostly mimeographed and all published in Istanbul, unless otherwise indicated.

*Alev* (1927), three issues.

*Bolşevik* (1927), one issue and a pamphlet, *Lenin* (1927).

*Kıvılcım* (1928), one issue and a May Day pamphlet.

*Kommunist* (1929), two issues and a handbill and a May Day pamphlet.

*İnkılâp Yolu* (1930-1932), four double issues, organ of the Central Committee, reputedly printed in Berlin and smuggled into Turkey.<sup>38</sup> (40)

*Kızıl İstanbul* (1930-1935), fortnightly but irregular, about forty issues, organ of the Provincial Committee; in the summer of 1932 two issues were published as *Bolşevik*, organ of both the Central Committee and the Provincial Committee.

*Kızıl Eskişehir* (1930), one issue, organ of the Provincial Committee.

*Kızıl Samsun* (1935), one issue, id.<sup>39</sup> (41)

*Orak ve Çekiç* (1935-1936), twelve issues at irregular intervals, organ of the Central Committee.

*Aydınlık Mecmuası* (1936), one issue, organ of the Study Group on Turkey.<sup>40</sup> (42)

40 38. There are many KUTV publications (mimeographed pamphlets; usually translations of marxist classics for the students of the party school in Moscow); it is not clear, to what extent they have circulated in Turkey.

41 39. *Kadro* (Ankara, 1932-1934), monthly, thirty-six issues, an important - legal! - revisionist journal by ex-communists, must also be mentioned.

42 40. *Projektör* (March 1936), one issue, appeared legally but was promptly banned.

Annex 3: The TKP Delegates at the Comintern Congresses<sup>41</sup>

1. 1919	Mustafa Suphi <sup>42</sup>	(43)
2. 1920	İsmail Hakkı, second delegate unknown <sup>43</sup>	(44)
Congress of the Peoples of the East, Baku, 1920 <sup>44</sup>	(to many to mention here!)	(45)
3. 1921	Süleyman Nuri Salih Zeki <sup>45</sup>	(46)
4. 1922	Salih Hacıoğlu Mizamettin Nazif Ziynetullah Nuşirevan İsmail Hüsrev (Tökin) Orhan (Sadrettin Celal Antel) (Sakallı) Celâl (Yalnız) Vedat Nedim (Tör) <sup>46</sup>	(47)
5. 1924	Faruk (Ali Cevdet) Şefik Hüsnu (Değmer) <sup>47</sup>	(48)
6. 1928	Fahri (Ali Cevdet) <sup>48</sup>	(49)
7. 1935	Ferdi (Şefik Hüsnu Değmer) <sup>49</sup>	(50)

43 41. Party code names in italics.

44 42. Delegate with consultative vote. His speech was not included in the original minutes but appeared in *Izvestiya* of 6 March 1919; see also *Pervyi kongress Kominterna, mart 1919 g.*, Pod redaktsiei E. Korotkogo, B. Kuna i O. Pyatnitskogo (Moscow, 1933), pp. 244-246.

45 43. Mistakenly called "Pasha". His speech is given in *The Second Congress of the Communist International. Proceedings of Petrograd Session of July 17th, and Moscow Session of July 19th-August 7th, 1920* (Moscow, 1920), pp. 141-142.

46 44. See *Le premier Congrès des Peuples de l'Orient. Bakou, 1-8 Sept. 1920. Compte-rendu sténographique* (Petrograd, [1921]; reprint Paris, 1971). English translation from the Russian original: *Congress of the Peoples of the East. Baku, September 1920. Stenographic report* (London, 1977).

47 45. *The Third Congress of the Communist International. Report of Meetings Held at Moscow June 22nd - July 12th 1921* (London, 1921), p. 159. I have quoted relevant pages from Süleyman Nuri's unpublished memoirs in my *Türkiye Sol Akımlar*, I/2.

48 46. *Bulletin of the 4th Congress of the Communist International, 1922, No. 17*, pp. 27-31.

49 47. *Protokoll. Fünfter Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale, 2 Vols.* (Hamburg, 1924), Vol. 2, pp. 708-712. *italic*

50 48. *Protokoll. Sechster Weltkongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale.* Don't es (Moskau, 17. Juli-1. September 1928, Vol. 3 (Hamburg, 1928), pp. 330-333.)

Cf. John Riddell (ed.), *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920 - First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (Pathfinder, 1993).



Annex 4: Participation of the TKP in the mass organizations affiliated to the Comintern

Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern), established in 1921:

- The Anatolian TKP (THİF) seems to have created a "Preparatory Central Bureau of Red Trade Unions of Anatolia" headed by Necati (?), according to a hand-bill declaration distributed in Istanbul in autumn 1922.<sup>50</sup> (52)
- Among the signatories of a protest against the Government of TGNA towards the end of 1922 there is one "Mahmut Ahmet, delegate to Profintern".<sup>51</sup> (53)
- A booklet by the TKP (THİF) published in late 1922, addressing "The Toilers of Turkey", is signed by "The Preparatory Bureau of the Trade Unions of Turkey", besides the Central and Ankara Provincial Committees of the Party.<sup>52</sup> (54)
- Two delegates from Turkey (İsmail and Rollan (?)) spoke at the Third Profintern Congress.<sup>53</sup> (55)
- Two Profintern publications in the Turkish language were printed in Moscow in 1923: "Programm of Activities" and "Resolutions of the Second Congress".<sup>54</sup> (56)

Communist Youth International (CYI), established in 1919.

- An organizational bureau was formed at the first TKP congress.
- There are several documents issued by the Communist Youth Union of Turkey [Turkish name? ■] in the early 1920s, including a periodical called the [Turkish name? ■] (Enchained Youth).<sup>55</sup> (57)
- A May Day declaration by the Union in 1928.<sup>56</sup> (58)

Türkiye Komünis Gençler Birliği

Zincirbend Gençlik

International Red Aid (IRA), established in 1922.

- There is an appeal to Turkish workers in the (mimeographed) underground organ of the TKP Provincial Committee, *Kızıl İstanbul* (Red Istanbul), 1930, No. 7, to join the Red Aid organizations in factories where they exist, and elsewhere to set up revolutionary committees in order to help needy workers.

51 49. This delegate, who was elected (in absentia) to the ECCI at the Sixth Congress, was now made a member of the Congress Presidium and elected to the Control Commission. He was the chairman of a session on August 15 but did not speak. VII. Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale. Gekürztes stenographisches Protokoll (Moscow, 1939), Vol. 1, p. 10, Vol. 2, p. 807.

52 50. See my *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar*, Vol. 4, p. 421.

53 51. *Ibid.*, p. 454.

54 52. *Ibid.*, p. 460.

55 53. *Protokoll über den Dritten Kongreß der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale* (Berlin, 1924), pp. 299-301.

56 54. See my *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar*, Vol. 2, p. 565.

57 55. *Ibid.*, pp. 484-492.

58 56. Published in transcription *ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

Don't  
escape!

I/2

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II

- Another reference to IRA in the Turkish party literature is in a statistical table in a book by Hikmet Kıvılcımlı.<sup>57</sup> (59)

Western European Secretariat, later Bureau (WES/WEB), established in 1919.

- Şefik Hüsnü is reputed to have worked in it and even to have headed it.

Peasants' International (Krestintern), established in 1923.

- So far no information has been available to me as to Turkish participation in this organization.

57. In his *Parti ve Fraksiyon*, p. 52. Kıvılcımlı states, in a comparative chart of ratios between intellectuals and workers between 1923 and 1932, that 42.85% of the workers left the Party (yet, unlike the intellectuals, none became "doggish"), 14.28% stayed as Party leaders and 42.85% wavered (28.56% were IRAists). (The publisher has a note here, no. 65, confessing he did not recognize the word!) By the way, Kıvılcımlı's toying with percentages is of course nonsensical. He did not know (together with many an academic pseudo-social-scientist) the absurdity of taking percentages when one deals with small numbers.

MOPR, Russian for IRA!