

TKP as reflected in the contributions of the Turkish representatives at the Comintern Congresses

TKP was not yet formed when its future president Mustafa Suphi participated at the founding congress of the Comintern. He was formerly an extreme nationalist. In spite of his conversion to Bolshevism, he seems to continue with his earlier convictions. Yet he criticized the Union and Progress Party's Pan-Turkist adventures in the (First) World War. 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

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 M.N. Roy, expressed a fiercer nationalism, almost excusing Pan Turkist attempts of the Unionists as an obligatory alternative to the Pan Islamist policy pursued under the Sultans. (This speaker was a military POW who stayed on in Azerbaijan after the war. He is reputed to have gone mad in late 1930s. But I suspect the authenticity of this lunacy. Perhaps knowing that such a past sin of nationalism would be unforgivable during the purges, he feigned madness.)

The Turkish delegate at the Third Congress, in contradistinction to his predecessors, was far from being a nationalist. He opted for conditional support to M.Kemal's government, threatening him to walk over his corpse for fighting against imperialism in case he betrays the joint cause. During the Second World War he was sent to Turkey as a spy where he was caught and sentenced to imprisonment. Later he succeeded to return to Soviet Union.

Turkish delegation at the Fourth Congress was composed of two groups, one representing Ankara, and the other Istanbul Communists. The secretary's speech was confined to a protestation against the government who recently banned the party organisation in Ankara and the Turkish Workers' Association in Istanbul. However, there was also a slight accusation directed against the local Greek-dominated Union of International (read, inter-Ethnic) Workers 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 Republican People's Party in power was reprimanded at the Fifth Congress. The Turkish spokesman after partially admitting the accusation, assured the Congress that the Comparty had rectified its line. Yet he posed the question of the limits of support to be given to the revolutionary nationalism of the bourgeoisie. TKP was of 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 for TKP 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 left extremist 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 in its acceptance to pay the Ottoman State debts and to leave Musul to the British Irak as required by the League of Nations.

I indicated above ("Explanation of Its Own Weakness"), that this intervention by the Turkish delegate had begun with a reproach for (Otto Kuusinen's) classification of Turkey as a pre-feudal country like Ethiopia, Libya and Arabia. Of course, such a diagnosis would imply a different set of objectives to be attained by the party. He was right at least on this point. But there was no change in Turkey's designation by the Comintern.

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

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