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Reflections on "Some Problems of Concept and Method in Studying the Social History of Republican Turkey", a lecture by Korkut Boratav

It is great honour, but it is also great responsibility to take stance in crucial questions of Turkish historiography among such distinguished historians. My task is all the more difficult, because it was only three weeks ago that I received the lecture of Mr. Boratav, and thus I was not able to read C. Keydar's State and Class in Turkey, which initiated Boratav's lecture. However, his review was very much stimulating, I read it with pleasure also because many of the problems raised by him have concerned me as well for a long time. In addition to a 'review of a review' let me now also comment in some detail on a very important question of Turkish historiography, namely, the relationship between the state and the classes, the formation and stratification of the national bourgeoisie, and on theoretical problems arising in this field.

If we consider earlier eras of history, it is obvious, and in fact can be taken for granted, that concepts and theories on historical reality include several remarks that were apparently made on class grounds, reflecting class interests, and they took into account only those aspects of historiography which were relevant from the point of view of a particular concept, and in this way they inevitably gave a distorted reflection of reality. On the other hand,

preconceptions arising from the comparison of types of historical development, in a special way, also endanger historiography.

Consequently, it would be fallacious to investigate 19th and 20th century Turkish history from the point of view of Europe-centered, traditional growth and modernization theories. Those theories interpret the optimal functioning of the social system on the basis of the ideal, theoretical model of mature capitalist society, which is put into practice by the developed countries. In that interpretation relative lagging behind is an earlier, imperfect phase of the historical development that leads to the ideal prototype. The still unclear phases of the development of Turkey and its present structure basically differ from those propositions that lie behind the logic of those theories.

Thus, the idealized or mechanic ideas of the traditional theories have to be replaced by an approach that makes it possible to describe the structure and functioning of society and its problems in concrete terms. From this argument it follows that our investigations should aim at establishing an analytic theory based on the historical study of the development of society.

A historical point of view and the identification of structural factors are important for the functioning and interpretation of a system with that particular structure, and ultimately for the analysis of structural changes themselves. Research in social sciences aims at exploring

the interdependence between cause and effect from the point of view of value premises, that is, in our case, modernization ideals.

It is in this context that I would like to endeavour to outline a theory of the function of the state, the formation of classes, and questions of class struggle.

The 20th century in Turkey saw processes serving as the original accumulation of capital, the formation of the two basic classes of capitalist society. The divergence of the structure of classes from the aims of the Ataturk revolution, which "substituted" for the bourgeois revolution, became manifest in the particular character of the revolution. I will examine this problem in my lecture in more detail. In this way the revolution was not the political conclusion of a long economic evolution, overthrowing the remnants of feudalism, as were the classical bourgeois revolutions in Western Europe, but, on the contrary, it was the revolution itself that created the institutional framework of the development of capitalist production relations. This leads to a special historical configuration in which coexistent precapitalist and developing capitalist production relations serve as the basis of a superstructure which is to develop a capitalist socio-economic system. Despite slow and irregular elimination of feudal and semi-feudal remnants, social development leads to the formation and dominance of the two basic classes of capitalist society, namely the bourgeoisie and the working class. It follows from the dialectics of

antagonist conflicts that the two classes, though they represent the two poles of society and they have basically conflicting interests, are mutually dependent on each other. It is not the original accumulation of capital that is a prerequisite for the formation of the bourgeoisie, but the original expropriation, that is that direct producers are deprived of their means of production on the one hand, which leads to the accumulation of means of production on the other.

The basic difference between social classes and social groups is that classes are determinant factors of a society, their existence is determined by the fact that they are interdependent and conditional upon one another, while social groups are not immanent constituents nor determinant factors of the socio-economic formation, historically they are provisional categories. This, however, does not exclude the possibility that the group interests of certain strata, or groups, or of the so called intermediate strata of a society cannot, from time to time, coincide with the interests of one of the fundamental classes. In certain cases social strata may even temporarily lead struggles for class interests. This is what actually happened when the Ataturk revolution came to be led by a coalition of the intelligentsia, the army, and the bureaucratic elite.

At this point I may seem to have arrived at a contradiction within my "own" system, because the bureaucratic elite, which formed the state and economic leadership after the Ataturk revolution, in my view, belong

to the bourgeoisie. In its ideology and its goals this stratum, and now I do not mean it in the politico-economical sense of the word, is already capitalist, and its members, with control over the key spheres of the economy are potential entrepreneurs, and have chances of growing rich, and thus becoming capitalists themselves. The institutional system of the state not only makes this possible, but even stimulates it. To quote the famous definition of Lenin, social classes can be differentiated on the basis of the quantity and of their means of getting the social goods at their disposal. And it is at that point that I cannot see any relevant difference between the bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, because the latter is part of the mechanism which ensures the expropriation of surplus value. Their interests are fundamentally identical with those of the bourgeoisie, even if the conflict between the interests of the two fractions of the bourgeoisie seem to have, temporarily, become significant. This conflict, however, is never so profound, or at least it has never become so profound as to jeopardize the current social system. They did jeopardize the social system in feudalism, and the two fractions led the struggle against feudalism. That is they both committed themselves to the bourgeois social system, and to the future bourgeoisie.

Class contours within the bureaucratic bourgeoisie are not distinct, though, nor are they in the whole, newly developing capitalist class, because the bureaucratic bourgeoisie comprises ^{recruited} intermediate strata, just as the capitalist class comprises ^{recruited petty bourgeoisie} small entrepreneurs. But the

pure bureaucratic bourgeois, who does not directly take part in exploitation, is attracted towards growing rich, becoming capitalist himself, while important posts in state administration are also appealing to the capitalist. Thus the boundaries of the two fractions of the bourgeoisie are permeable and not distinct, and in many cases the two fractions become interwoven. Considering the conflicting interests of the fractions of the bourgeoisie in the modern history of Turkey, it becomes clear that it is not class struggle. The economic and political changes are the result of fights only within the higher strata, on the top of the social hierarchy, and they are in fact nothing but a restructuring of priorities of power, economy, and politics within the same class.

The position of classes, intermediate strata, and groups can be defined by examining the system of distribution and redistribution processes. I think that here we must differentiate between processes of distribution and of redistribution, and, within the latter, between primary, that is state controlled redistribution, and secondary redistribution which is partially controlled by the state and partially by spontaneous laws of economy.

The benefit of primary distribution, that is the direct expropriation of surplus value in capitalist production relations is only available for the entrepreneurial stratum, which has direct interests in production. As I will outline in my lecture in more detail, the state controlled price and credit mechanism, through the primary redistribution

processes, provides means for the capitalist to benefit from financial means that were expropriated from the primary production processes, then centralized, and redistributed, that is to gain profit both from the primary distribution processes and from those of primary redistribution.

The power system, which is manifested in the bourgeoisie, was not suitable for using state taxation for the redistribution of incomes through the financial administration, thus enforcing the accumulation of private capital reserves, as is done in the developed capitalist countries.

If we suppose that the class content of a social group is determined by its direct role in production, that is by direct exploitation in the case of the bourgeoisie, our earlier statement on the class content of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie could be challenged. However, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie in fact aims at developing and consolidating capitalist production relations and it represents the state, the repressive force for the maintenance of these production relations. Consequently, members of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie mainly strive for becoming entrepreneurs themselves thus benefiting from primary distribution processes. Hence the benefits of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie from the distribution processes could not be regarded as redistribution, rather as a reordering of primary distribution. I think, though, that now there are also secondary redistribution processes in Turkey. I think of redistribution processes induced by inflation, because

those processes affect the various strata of the bourgeoisie in different ways, and do not lead to a balance of the rate of profit within the bourgeoisie as a class, but rather the opposite. For instance the great capitalist can easily shift the negative effects of inflation to a socially weaker partner. At the same time inflation can contribute to financing state expenses, and it is also a means for deficit financing through regrouping incomes.

The distribution and redistribution processes that have been mentioned so far are all of market character. It is much more difficult to follow and is virtually impossible to assess non market character distribution processes, like social privileges, surviving hierarchy of power, and factors affecting the consciousness in the symbolic spheres of society (art, religion, education), which ultimately all contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities.

Now going back to the initial question, I would like to point out again that in my view the bureaucratic bourgeoisie is not a separate class. Those at the top of the state administration hierarchy, leading statesmen and scientists, members of the general staff all belong to the bourgeoisie. They mainly come from intermediate strata, but those, as a category, cannot be identified with marginal strata, although neither of them are closely related to any social class. They are, to some extent, provisional formations. But intermediate strata are closely related to the spheres of production, reproduction, distribution, and services, while marginal strata have been driven to the periphery of those

processes, their relation is occasional and sporadic. Their existence is fragile, and thus they themselves are at the periphery of society. I have found that a consolidation of this pseudo-proletarian stratum started in the 70s, while a fairly extensive mobility can be observed in intermediate strata.

In the economic literature there are various theories of the role of the state in the capitalist social system. Some concentrate on state interference from a capitalist entrepreneurial point of view, others on its economic effects. A great number of theories centre at the class content of state interference.

In my lecture I would like to outline the role of the state in the development of capitalist production relations, and also would like to comment on the class content of state interference.

First I would like to present a short historical introduction in which I am going to investigate why the socio-economic formation developed in the Osman Empire was not suitable for initiating the development of capitalist production relations and for producing a national bourgeoisie that could have led the bourgeois revolution.