

**CHASING THE SPECTER IN ANATOLIA: POLITICS AND THE DISCOURSE OF
COMMUNISM AND ANTI-COMMUNISM IN EARLY COLD WAR TURKEY**

By

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2017

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ABSTRACT

Despite the opening of archives following the collapse of the Soviet Union, very little has been written about Turkey at the onset of the Cold War. While some recent texts have attempted to fill this historiographic gap, these texts focus primarily on high politics. Additionally, the literature on communism in Turkey focuses principally on two periods, the 1920's and then the 1960's to early 1980's. This thesis serves as a pre-history of 1960's leftist radicalism in Turkey, examining the events and discourse from 1945 to the 1960 Coup and charting the development of Cold War leftist militancy.

This thesis seeks to address three central questions. First, what political activities were the Turkish communists conducting as Turkey entered the Cold War? How did the state respond to these activities? Lastly, how did the communists respond to anti-communist policy? To answer these questions, I will utilize a wide array of primary sources, including court documents, communist and non-communist newspapers, the diaries of politicians and activists, declassified state documents, and the memoirs of politicians and communists from this period.

Based on my analysis of these sources, it appears that the communists during the onset of the Cold War critiqued state policy, often using Kemalist language, and advanced a reformist rather than revolutionary agenda. The heavy-handed attempt to repress these voices, through legal and financial intimidation, resulted in the widespread flight of the left, many seeking the support of the Soviet Union. Rather than silencing the communists, this experience of political disenfranchisement contributed to radicalism and hardened their stance toward the Turkish state.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Brett Wilson at Central European University. He offered countless suggestions throughout the year and was always willing to meet and address my questions and concerns. His course “From Ataturk to Erdogan” provided me the opportunity to explore many facets of modern Turkish history, helping me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the period covered in this thesis. His advice helped me to address numerous shortcomings in my work. This thesis would not have been possible without his valuable assistance.

I would also like to thank Dr. Constantin Iordachi at Central European University, who served as the second reader of the thesis, and provided considerable guidance in his courses “Radicalism in Global Perspective” and “Socialist Intermediaries.” These classes were extraordinarily insightful and also greatly contributed to my understanding of both the far left and right.

Additional thanks to Dr. Borbala Farago at the Academic Writing Center whose meticulous attention to detail caught numerous errors in the text. She was incredibly generous with her time, even willing to meet outside of her schedule to help.

I would like to thank the many individuals who offered love and emotional support throughout this process. Thanks to my mother, father and grandmother who have been supportive in every way possible, even when I was sleep deprived and unpleasant. I would also like to acknowledge my late grandfather David Kobor who sparked my love of history and set me on this path. I would additionally like to thank my friend Flora who was willing to have a coffee and let me vent, even in the middle of the night. I’m thankful that despite being busy herself, she set aside an entire night to read my thesis draft and give me her thoughts. She is a truly wonderful person and I know she will be a great scholar one day. Lastly, I would like to thank my dear friend and partner Pelin Demir. Despite this being a difficult year for both of us, she managed to keep my spirits high. Her enthusiasm for my studies provided me encouragement when I truly needed it. She also was incredibly supportive to me while learning Turkish and her comments on my translations helped me to correct numerous errors. She helped me to realize when to double down and when to say “boşver.” I am truly grateful to know her.

While I am the author of this thesis, the text is not mine alone. Without the professional and emotional support of all of those mentioned, this work would not have been possible. While all of the aforementioned individuals provided invaluable assistance to me during the writing of the thesis, any inaccuracies, mistranslations or flaws in the text are purely mine alone. My most sincere gratitude to all those who have made my time in Budapest such a wonderful experience.

Robert Elliott. Budapest, Hungary (June 7, 2017).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Sources and Methodology	2
1.2 Outline.....	4
CHAPTER 1 – AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOLARLY WORKS ON COLD WAR TURKEY.....	7
1.1 Introduction	7
1.2 Turkey in General Cold War Survey Texts	7
1.3 The Cold War in National Survey Texts on Turkey	9
1.4 Specialist Texts on Turkey, Cold War and Communism	12
CHAPTER 2 – A COLD WAR PRELUDE? TURKISH ANTI-COMMUNISM IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD.....	17
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 Origins of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP)	18
2.3 Turkish Communist Party as a Threat and Rival	19
2.4 Nationalist Response to the Turkish Communist Party	20
2.5 The One-Party System and Ideological Hegemony	23
2.6 Sheikh Said Revolt and the Left	24
2.7 Interwar Press Censorship	26
2.8 Turkish-Soviet Relations in the 1930's	27
2.9 The case of Kadro	27
2.10 Conclusion.....	29
CHAPTER 3 - THE 'TAN INCIDENT' AND THE ONSET OF THE COLD WAR IN TURKEY, 1945	30
3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 Origins of the Tan Newspaper	31
3.3 Political Liberalization.....	34
3.4 The Sertels: Communist, Minority, Opposition and the Dawn of the Cold War	35
3.5 The <i>Tan</i> Incident.....	38
3.6 The Sertels' Criminal Case	40
3.7 <i>Tan</i> and Kemalism	42
3.8 Conclusion.....	43
CHAPTER 4 – LEFTIST PRESS OPPOSITION TO THE TURKISH-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP, 1949-1950.....	44
4.1 Introduction	44
4.2 Turkish-Soviet Relations in the Pre-Cold War Period.....	45
4.3 The Turkish-American Partnership	47
4.4 The Communist journals <i>Nuhun Gemisi</i> and <i>Barış</i>	49
4.5 Aid or American Imperialism?	51
4.6 Americans as Warmongers and Fascists	55

4.7 A Leftist Kemalist Alternative.....	56
4.8 Conclusion.....	59
CHAPTER 5 – THE EXODUS OF THE LEFT	60
5.1 Introduction	60
5.2 The Rise of the Democrat Party.....	61
5.3 Anti-Communism in Action – Communists and the Legal System.....	63
5.4 The Communist Exodus.....	64
5.5 Eastern Bloc Activism.....	67
5.6 Bizim Radyo	70
5.7 Conclusion.....	72
CONCLUSION	73
WORKS CITED	75
ARCHIVAL SOURCES	75
JOURNALS AND NEWSPAPERS	75
MEMOIRS	75
PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS.....	75
SECONDARY SOURCES.....	76

INTRODUCTION

In a conversation with a former Turkish communist leader, I was told that communism is no longer a relevant force in Turkey. He explained that with the repression of the 1980's and then the collapse of the Soviet Union, most "true believers" gave up all hope of building communism in Turkey. Though a myriad of socialist and communist parties still exist in Turkey, he explained that these groups did not have the same level of commitment and seriousness as the groups active during the turbulent years of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union thus marks the end of an era of communism in the Turkish context. When I informed him of my interest in reflecting on the experience of the left during this period, he responded, "It's about time someone wrote our history."

My interest in this topic began somewhat accidentally while completing my first master's degree in Istanbul. As someone interested in both leftist and Turkish history, I attempted to find a coherent overview of the history of communism in Turkey. I found that while some work had been published, most texts were decades old, polemical in nature, or focused on the most turbulent periods of Turkish history, namely the period of the Independence War and the left-right polarization from the 1960's to 1980 coup.

Even with this focus on specific episodes, the history of the left in Turkey is generally relegated to the margins in the bulk of work on modern Turkey. As such, the history of the left between these two periods has largely been ignored. This appears somewhat puzzling as Turkey was a strategic concern for the Soviet Union following World War II, and the crisis of the Straits and other territorial demands represent a key flashpoint in the onset of the Cold War. Considering the Soviet Union's long history of

internationalism via the Comintern and later Cominform, I was surprised that the activities of the Moscow-aligned leftists, as well as the Turkish state's handling of these political actors, was not more pronounced in the literature. Following the 1960 Coup, the left-right polarization of the 1960's and 1970's has tended to be interpreted as part of the general zeitgeist of the period. This thesis attempts to take a step back from viewing communism in Turkey as a product of the 1960's, by examining political and discursive antecedents in the period from the end of World War II to 1960. This analysis will therefore help us better understand the political situation and left-right polarization of the Cold War in Turkey by demonstrating that the emergence of the radical left was not an event, but rather a process unfolding over more a decade.

Thus, I raise several questions: what political activities were the Turkish communists engaged in as Turkey entered the Cold War? How did the state respond to the presence of these political actors? How did the Turkish communists respond to state-led repression and crackdowns? As the history of the left during this period has been studied generally peripherally, this research will rely largely on primary sources, utilizing a wide array of documents from American, Turkish and Soviet sources, in both English and Turkish.

I.1 Sources and Methodology

This thesis will rely heavily upon the use of memoirs and the personal, and sometimes private writings of those involved. Several Turkish officials from the period have published their memoirs and writings. For example, Prime Minister Ismet Inonu, who was in office from 1938 to 1950, yet played an active role in politics, before and

after his time in office, has published both his notebooks from his time in office as well as his memoirs. In addition to the writings of Turkish officials from this period, I will utilize the memoirs of several notable communists from this period. As there are many of these memoirs, I will focus primarily on the prominent communists who fled Turkey during the Cold War and continued their activism primarily in Eastern Europe, such as the family of leftist journalists, Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel.

I additionally will utilize governmental archival documents which have been digitized. Some of these digital archives include: Freedom of Information Act Archives, Truman Library and the Radio Free Europe Archives. Rifat Bali has additionally published many volumes of American diplomatic notes, cables and oral history testimonies. While these clearly will show the American perspective on events as well as America's vision for Cold War Turkey, many of these sources contain conversations and comments from Turkish officials.

This thesis will additionally utilize newspapers and magazines from the Cold War period. To understand the Soviet perspective on Turkey, I will utilize documents found in the "Current Digest of the Russian Press" (CDRP). The CDRP is a collection of articles that were published in the Eastern Bloc press, but were translated into English for use by diplomats, pundits and academics. Lastly, certain communist journals and newspapers from this period will be examined, such as *Nuhun Gemisi* (Noah's Ark) and *Barış* (Peace). By utilizing this wide array of sources, I will be able to highlight the activities of the Turkish communists as Turkey entered the Cold War, the Turkish state's perception and repression of the communists, and the communists' response to this repression.

As I will be using both English and Turkish sources, specific aspects of this must be addressed. Regarding Turkish names, certain political leaders and well-known individuals will have their names written in the Latin script. I have chosen this simply as most readers will be accustomed to this spelling, and the original Turkish spelling may seem out of place. Other individuals, as well as publications will be written using their original Turkish spelling. The use of original spelling is used in these cases as it will be easier for the reader to find more information with the original spelling, rather than the somewhat irregular transliterations. In certain translations where seeing the original may be helpful to the reader, I have included the Turkish word in parenthesis. All translations from Turkish sources are my own unless otherwise indicated. For the sake of accuracy, many of these translations have been double-checked by a native Turkish speaker. However, any inaccuracies or mistranslations are purely mine alone.

I.2 Outline

Chapter one serves as a literature review examining the trends and ways in which the Turkish communists have been examined in three genres of historical text: general Cold War monographs, survey texts on modern Turkey, and specialized texts on either Cold War Turkey or the Turkish left. An analysis of the secondary literature indicates that the scholarship has focused on two general periods: the 1920's in which the nationalists both utilized Soviet assistance while maintaining strained and sometimes adversarial relations with the Comintern-affiliated Turkish Communist Party (Türkiye Komünist Partisi "TKP"). The literature additionally focuses on the turbulent years of left-right polarization from the 1960's to the 1980 Coup. While Turkey is largely

absent from the Cold War survey texts, Turkey is included peripherally, with the focus relegated to Turkey's relations with the superpowers during certain flashpoints. The specialized texts on Turkey maintain a similar focus on elite politics. This review finds the Turkish communists largely ignored, and their activities and the state response absent in the early post-World War II period. This suggests that an analysis of the communists between the early years of the Republic and the 1960's would contribute to the historiography by greater contextualizing the particularly turbulent period of the 1960's and 1970's in Turkey.

Chapter two serves as the historical background, examining the Turkish state's relations with the Turkish Communist Party from the War of Independence to World War II. This chapter provides the relevant background information to contextualize the onset of the Cold War, as well as highlighting key trends in anti-communist policy, namely the eradication of the communists as a domestic military threat and fifth column during the Independence War. This chapter will also provide an overview of the state's attempt to maintain ideological and political hegemony, which involved the repression of the communists, among others.

Chapter three examines the case study of the Sertels, a family of communist journalists whose newspaper was destroyed and who subsequently were arrested because of their political activism. This chapter additionally provides an overview of the onset of the Cold War in Turkey, including the liberalization of the political system and the beginning of the Turkish-American partnership.

Chapter four examines leftist press opposition to the American-Turkish partnership following the destruction of the *Tan* newspaper. The chapter argues that

the communists attempted to utilize Kemalism as a means of furthering Soviet policy goals. While critiquing policy, the communists nonetheless presented the possibility for the Turkish state to change course.

Chapter five examines the 1950 electoral victory of the Democrat Party, and the consequence that this had on Turkey's domestic communists. This chapter argues that the state's attempt to silence the left backfired as rather than ending communist activism, it drove them into the hands of the communist regimes. In Eastern Europe, radicalized by their experience, and under the control of the Soviets, they adopted a more critical and adversarial stance against the Turkish government.

This thesis concludes that from the end of World War II to the 1960 Coup, a process of radicalization occurred in the left, providing the basis for leftist militancy in the 1960's and 1970's. In the wake of World War II, the Turkish communists represented moderate opposition, attempting to use their publications to appeal to the nationalist sensibilities of the government and the general Turkish public to spur on policy change. With concerns of Soviet aggression, and the believed and imaginary links between the Turkish left and Moscow, the Turkish communists summarily faced legal repression and political disenfranchisement. With this harsh treatment, the communists' strategy of peacefully appealing to the government and the public was no longer viable. This resulted in a change of strategy, with the communists fleeing *en masse* to communist Eastern Europe, attacking the Turkish government directly with their publications, and urging the Turkish public to resist the Menderes government, by any means possible.

CHAPTER 1 – AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOLARLY WORKS ON COLD WAR TURKEY

1.1 Introduction

Seldom do texts focus on Turkey's role in and experience of the Cold War. Even fewer books address the Turkish communist movement as Turkey entered the Cold War, except in passing. As such little is being published on this topic, it is very difficult for one reading the secondary literature to acquire a clear understanding of what the communist party was doing, who was in the party or their relations with either the Turkish or Soviet governments. This short historiographic analysis seeks to provide an overview of how Turkey and the Turkish communists are addressed in general survey texts on the Cold War, histories of modern Turkey, and more specialized texts focusing on Turkey's experience of the Cold War. This chapter asserts that the period from the end of World War II, to the 1960 Coup represents a glaring omission in the historiography of communism in Turkey. Such a historiographic gap is problematic, as during this period, while the Turkish government was moving closer to the West, the Turkish communists challenged state policy. An incorporation of these voices would provide both a more comprehensive understanding of the ideological *milieu* of this time, as well as providing a precursor to the left-right polarization of the 1960's and 1970's.

1.2 Turkey in General Cold War Survey Texts

With a focus on the Cold War as a struggle between two superpowers, Turkey has been relegated to the margins of the historiography. Turkey's role in the conflict has been underrepresented, generally relegated to a few specific incidents. These episodes include the transition of Turkey into the Western camp following World War

II, Marshall Plan Aid, NATO membership and the Cuban Missile Crisis. This focus highlights the general trend in the historiography, until very recently, to view the Cold War through the lens of superpower conflict. This represents an emphasis on the history as a history of elites: superpower versus superpower or superpower versus Turkey. Turkey's peripheral position in these texts is somewhat expected, as the function of survey texts is to provide a broad overview of a topic, rather than explore the myriad of niches.

In McMahon's *The Cold War, A Very Short Introduction* (2003), Turkey is only mentioned a few times. The onset of the Cold War in Turkey is only described in passing, "[the Soviets]...in March 1946; pressed Turkey aggressively for concessions, even massing troops along the Bulgarian border in an effort at intimidation."¹ Additionally, Cold War survey texts tend to focus on Turkey as merely an object of the superpowers, ignoring Turkish internal affairs, and Turkish political actors, and providing little context. For example, in Gaddis' *The Cold War, A New History* (2005), Gaddis falls into this pattern describing the Crisis of the Straits purely from a superpower perspective. This is exemplified when Gaddis states, "Truman and Attlee rejected the Soviet bid for boundary adjustments at Turkey's expense, as well as for Turkish and Mediterranean naval bases."² Despite the Straits Crisis concerning Turkey, Turkish political actors are not brought into the equation. Ismet Inonu and

¹ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 26.

² John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War, A New History* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 28.

Adnan Menderes, the Turkish leaders during this period, are not even mentioned in Gaddis' and McMahon's texts.

As the Cold War was a global phenomenon, paying too much attention to Turkey would be unreasonable. However, even a few sentences on Turkey's relations and historic dealings with the Soviet Union, as well as Turkey's domestic affairs, would have a great explanatory effect as to why Turkey was so hostile towards the communists and receptive to cooperation with the United States. As such, Turkey has been only peripherally incorporated within these larger Cold War texts. While one would expect this issue to be addressed more in depth in Turkish histories, or specialist texts on the Cold War in Turkey, these texts have their deficiencies as well.

1.3 The Cold War in National Survey Texts on Turkey

While Turkish survey texts place much less emphasis on the roles of the superpowers in the Cold War conflict, these texts nonetheless tend to maintain an elite focus. When addressing the communists, these texts focus on two primary time periods, providing much detail on the 1920's when the communists came into conflict with the nationalists, and during the left-right violence of the 1960's and 1970's. However, the experience of the left in the time between these two periods is essentially relegated to the footnotes, usually mentioning a policy which targeted the left, despite providing little detail on who these leftists were and how these policies affected them. Subsequently, the reader has little awareness of who the communists were and what they were doing. As much of the policy during the Cold War reflected both concerns

over the real and imagined threat of communism, omitting the activities of these communists impedes our ability to understand this period.

Bernard Lewis' *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1964), the classic English-language survey text on the Turkish Republic, follows this pattern, providing only a few notes on early Cold War Turkey. While Lewis provides a coherent overview of the conflict between the Turkish Communist Party and the nationalists during the 1920's, his examination of the Turkish left during the early Cold War years is scant. When addressing the Left, Lewis will generally mention a certain policy meant to repress the left, yet does not provide context as to who exactly the leftists are nor the consequences of these policies. For example, he mentions that in 1946 with the opening of the political system, a legal left-wing party called the Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey was established, but was closed by the end of the year for spreading communist propaganda.³ Additionally, he notes that liberal political reforms following World War II resulted in the greater political participation, and the legalization of political activism, with anti-laicism and communism being the two exceptions.⁴ The reader thus is able to take two things from this: that a communist left existed and that the state did not approve. However, the reader is left without knowing who these communists were, what constitutes "communist propaganda" and how the state's policy affected them.

The left is addressed analogously in Feroz Ahmad's *The Making of Modern Turkey* (2003). While he mentions the Turkish communists numerous times in the pre-1960 period, like Lewis, when addressing the communists, the focus is on elite politics,

³ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 310.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 383.

mentioning anti-communist policy, without providing information as to who exactly these communists were and how these policies affected them. One example of this is the closing of the Village Institutes. These rural education centers were closed due to accusations that they were hotbeds of communist agitation. Like the other examples of anti-communism, the depiction is extremely state-centered. The author describes the policy and the government rationale, but fails to elaborate on the actual communists themselves.⁵ By neglecting these factors, the reader is unaware of the impact of this activism, and why a state would end such a widespread rural education program while illiteracy remained so widespread.

Erik Zürcher's *Turkey, A Modern History* (2004), follows a similar pattern. While providing significant detail on the communist movements in the 1920's, he mentions that for the rest of the single-party period, 1925-1945, the only real opposition before the Cold War was the Kurdish nationalist movement and the underground communist movement which he describes as "insignificant."⁶ Despite this text covering the Cold War in detail, the text does not provide an arc, highlight the development of the communist movement from the 1920's to the Cold War period.

While these texts have addressed the existence of communism in Turkey, their analysis of communism in the early Cold War period has focused generally on scattered anti-communist policies, letting the reader know that such policies existed, yet not providing enough context to enable a coherent understanding of the communist left, their activities, or how the policies affected them. As these are only broad histories of the Turkish Republic, one could expect there to be some gaps that would be

⁵ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 83.

⁶ Erik Z. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 176.

reserved for more niche texts. Despite this, specialized texts on the Cold War in Turkey have continued this pattern of state-focused history and have neglected the study of the radical left.

1.4 Specialist Texts on Turkey, Cold War and Communism

The key problem with Cold War Turkish historiography is the lack of new material. Many of the core texts on modern Turkey cite much older works, such as Harris' *The Origins of Communism in Turkey* (1967), which are now decades old, when addressing the topic of communism in Turkey. As such, these texts were written when government sources were classified, the personal papers of key leftists were still private, and party papers were not available to the public. Like in the survey texts, specialized works covering communism in Turkey focus on two periods. The first of these is the early 1920's when the Comintern-sponsored Turkish Communist Party attempted to gain control during the Turkish War of Independence, only to have its leadership murdered by Turkish nationalists. There is also a great focus on the communist movement during the 1960's and 1970's when considerable left-right polarization and fighting plunged Turkey into chaos and contributed to numerous military interventions in which the armed forces took control of the government to restore order. As such, the history of the Turkish communists in the period between the 1930's and 1960's represents somewhat of a blank spot in the history of the left. Thusly, there is very little explanation of the activities of the Turkish left before and during the early years of the Cold War.

The key text on communism in Turkey is George S. Harris' *The Origins of Communism in Turkey*. As this text was published in 1967, many sources were unavailable to him. Additionally, the text focuses almost exclusively on the first two decades of communism in the Turkish Republic, and is thus incomplete. As this text was written during the turbulent 1960's, one would think that a work seeking to contextualize the rise of the left would need to include the 1940's and 1950's. This text utilizes what was available at the time: some published state documents from the Turkish and American governments, a myriad of journals of all political persuasions and the memoirs of some diplomats active during this period.⁷ While this represents a strong contribution, a similar, albeit updated text is necessary, extending the chronology to a later date. While Bülent Gökay attempts this feat in his text *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey*, this venture is only partially successful.

A more recent, and more comprehensive text on Cold War Turkey is *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920-1991: Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism* (2006), by Bülent Gökay. As this text was published in 2006, Gökay could utilize many archives and collections that were unavailable to earlier researchers, even using some of the large archival collections at the International Institute of Social History (IISH) and the Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı (TÜSTAV) (Social History Research Foundation of Turkey) archives.⁸ As Gökay notes, "There exist several scholarly studies of Turkish communism, but none of them spans the period covered here."⁹

⁷ George Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Publications, 1967), 186-187 and 200-201.

⁸ Bülent Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920-1991 Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 169.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

However, his coverage of the communist movement in Turkey during the 1930's is limited to only one page.¹⁰ His coverage of the communist movement in the 1940's and 1950's is additionally very scarce. While he provides a detailed account of Turkey's political affairs during World War II and the late 1940's, only a few paragraphs mention the leftist movements in Turkey.¹¹ Considering the communists published copiously on anti-fascism before World War II, pro-Soviet during the war, and often anti-American/ "pro-peace" after the war, it is strange that he does not utilize the journals, newspapers or polemical texts. The period of 1930-1960 in Gökay's text is essentially a Turkish political history, especially in relation to the United States and the Soviet Union. Some newer texts have contributed to the study of communism in Turkey, yet have only addressed certain thematic topics and episodes.

One of the newest additions to the Cold War historiography on Turkey is a collection of essays edited by Cangül Örnek and Çağdaş Üngör, titled *Turkey in the Cold War: Ideology and Culture* (2003).¹² While some of the chapters focus on the early Cold War period, only one of these chapters focuses on the Turkish left. In this chapter, "Engagement of a Communist Intellectual in the Cold War Ideological Struggle: Nazim Hikmet's 1951 Bulgaria Visit", Gözde Somel and Seslişah Leman Başaran examine the famous Turkish communist poet Nazım Hikmet's visit to communist Bulgaria.¹³ While this essay highlights an interesting episode, it focuses

¹⁰ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey*, 47.

¹¹ Ibid., 58.

¹² Cangül Örnek and Çağdaş Üngör, *Turkey in the Cold War: Ideology and Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹³ Gözde Somel and Neslişah Lehman Başaran. "Engagement of a Communist Intellectual in the Cold War Ideological Struggle: Nazim Hikmet's 1951 Bulgaria Visit," *In Turkey in the Cold War: ideology and culture*, ed Cangül Örnek and Çağdaş Üngör (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 87-99.

very narrowly on this specific visit. As seen in most other texts on Cold War Turkey, the focus in this collection is primarily from the 1960's onward. While these papers have expanded our awareness of this period, a comprehensive overview of the Turkish left is sorely needed.

Jamil Hasanli's recent book *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945-1953* (2011), is an excellent addition to the scholarship on Turkey's experience of the Cold War.¹⁴ Utilizing Turkish, Russian, United States and Azeri sources, Hasanli provides an extraordinary account of Turkish, Soviet and American high politics of this period.¹⁵ Despite the intricate details of these political events, the Turkish Communist Party is almost entirely absent. Hasanli mentions a few episodes in passing regarding Soviet attempts to utilize the party towards Soviet state goals.¹⁶ Unfortunately, these episodes represent only a few sentences of the text.

One of the texts closest to examining the communist movement in Turkey in the early Cold War period is Ulus' *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey* (2011). While the focus of the text is the activities of the left after the 1960 Coup, Ulus provides some analysis of the state of the Turkish Communist Party in the 1940's and 1950's. While he mentions this period over only two pages, it is the most coherent explanation of this period. Ulus mentions that between 1930 and 1946 the Turkish Communist Party was exceptionally weak, and despite being extraordinarily loyal to Stalin, focused primarily on cultural issues.¹⁷ He explains that in 1943 the TKP transitioned from an anti-

¹⁴ Jamil Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011).

¹⁵ Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis*, 395.

¹⁶ Ibid., 110

¹⁷ Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2011), 138-139.

Kemalist strategy to a united front strategy in which the communists sought to aid in the struggle against fascism. Although he briefly mentions the closing of the Socialist Workers-Peasants Party in 1946, he ignores the rest of the 1940's. He summarizes the rest of the 1940's and 1950's, mentioning that the 1951 crackdown by the Democrat Party destroyed communist operational abilities within Turkey.¹⁸ While Ulus is correct in mentioning the destruction of the party within Turkey, this ignores the Turkish communists in exile. These crackdowns pushed the communists abroad. Many prominent leftists in this period continued their activism from abroad, publishing newspapers, journals, polemical texts and even maintaining Turkish-language radio programs in Eastern European capitals such as Warsaw, Leipzig and Budapest. As such, this decentralized period of the party is almost entirely absent from his text.

With a wealth of sources from both American and Turkish archives declassified, now is an ideal time to begin revisiting the period of 1940's and 1950's Turkey and examining the role of the left. Investigating non-elite actors such as the Turkish communists will enable a more nuanced view of this period, moving beyond the traditional superpower focus of Cold War historiographies, and the elite focus of national histories of Republican Turkey.

¹⁸ Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left*, 139.

CHAPTER 2 – A COLD WAR PRELUDE? TURKISH ANTI-COMMUNISM IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

“We didn’t have the communist problem there [in Turkey] we had in Iran. They weren’t around us; the Turks took care of them in their own way. Thank goodness for Turkey.”

Lewis Hoffacker¹⁹

2.1 Introduction

The beginning of the Cold War is generally associated with the period following the second World War, with the division of Europe between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. This periodization is often applied to Turkey, as during this period, Turkey was a formal recipient of Marshall Plan aid and became an early NATO member. However, certain features of the Cold War, such as Soviet support for leftist proxies in foreign countries, as well as anti-communism, can be seen in Turkey during much of the first half of the twentieth century. The Soviet Union fought for influence during the Turkish War of Independence and supported various Turkish communist movements and cadres in the interwar period. The Turkish state, in turn, adopted various “McCarthyite” policies to combat real and imagined communist subversion.

This chapter has two central goals. Firstly, to provide an overview of the socialist left in Turkey before the onset of the Cold War, and thus contextualizing the onset of the Cold War conflict in light of Turkish-Soviet and Turkish-communist history. Secondly, to explain how the state sought to crush the left and why the state made this a conscious policy. Within this context of anti-leftist repression two distinct periods

¹⁹ “Lewis Hoffacker, Economic Officer. Istanbul (1953-1955),” in *American Diplomats in Turkey: Oral History Transcripts (1928-1997)*, ed. Rifat N. Bali. (Istanbul: Libra, 2011), 134.

before World War II can be seen. The first period being the Turkish War of Independence in which the left represented a military threat and then the one-party period, in which the state attempted to repress groups and individuals that challenged the Kemalist state-building project.

2.2 Origins of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP)

The chaos of the Independence War created an ideological and political *milieu* in which a dizzying array of leftist groups could emerge and operate. The most well-known of these groups is what is now known as the old (eski) or historic (tarihsel) Turkish Communist Party. This party was formed in Baku and was given a central role following the Baku Congress for the Peoples of the East. Moscow not only served as an ideological model for this party, but offered material support. At the conference, Karl Radek (1885-1939), a German communist, and influential figure in international communism, informed the delegates, "... Soviet Russia can produce arms and arm not only its own workers and peasants, but also the peasants of India, Persia, Anatolia, all the oppressed, and lead them on a common struggle and a common victory."²⁰ The Soviets intended to use the Turkish Communist Party and similar parties in the colonial and semi-colonial world as part of Lenin's "Eastern Policy." By this policy, the Soviets intended to help national liberation movements throw off the shackles of imperial oppression. As the Soviets believed that Western powers lived at the expense of the east, this support would both weaken the Western imperial powers and provide fertile

²⁰ "Extracts From an ECCI Appeal on the Forthcoming Congress of Eastern Peoples at Baku. July, 1920," In *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents*, ed. Jane Degras (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1956), 105.

ground for the socialist revolution.²¹ With the Turkish case, the Soviets intended to support both the nationalists and the Turkish communists. After “liberating” Turkey from Western occupation, the Turkish communists would act as the vanguard and undertake a secondary revolution in which the communist party would capture power and establish a soviet republic.²²

2.3 Turkish Communist Party as a Threat and Rival

The Turkish Communist Party represented both an ideological and military threat to the nationalists. During World War I, the Russians captured around 60,000 Ottoman soldiers in the Caucasus.²³ Mustafa Suphi (1883-1921) played a significant role “re-educating” these prisoners, disseminating the Turkish-language Bolshevik journal *Yeni Dünya* (New World).²⁴ Suphi, a former teacher, reached the Soviet Union after being forced to flee Turkey due to his leftist beliefs.²⁵ This party had a revolutionary agenda which posed a threat to the national movement. This challenge can be seen in many of the party’s founding statutes. For example, the Turkish Communist Party’s General Statutes, Article Five, states, “The Turkish Bolsheviks will deprive the present bourgeois and oppressor classes of the right to vote in the elections for the Soviet governments.”²⁶ With many in the national movement coming from the government and high echelons of the military, such an article was provocative. Article

²¹ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey*, 7.

²² “Turkish Communist Party General Statutes. June, 1920,” in *The Origins of Communism in Turkey*, by George Harris (Stanford: Hoover Institution Publications, 1967), 149.

²³ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 157.

²⁴ Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey*, 163.

²⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 398.

²⁶ “Turkish Communist Party General Statutes,” in Harris, *The Origins*, 149.

Six of the statutes states, "...the Turkish Bolsheviks have concluded a close union with the communist and socialist organizations in every country and will act together with them. They are also attached to the Third International."²⁷ By stating their attachment to the Third International, the party was asserting its loyalty to the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Additionally, Article Nineteen highlights the death penalty as "...legal recourse against the supporters of reaction..."²⁸ With an army of Bolshevized Ottomans, stated claims of transforming Turkey into a Comintern vassal and punishing class enemies and reactionaries, the Turkish Communist Party represented not only a competitor but a threat to the nationalist movement.

2.4 Nationalist Response to the Turkish Communist Party

Mustafa Kemal and the nationalists saw the spread of communism as a creeping threat in Anatolia. While discussions of communist militants among the nationalists often focused on the spread of communism among Christians, primarily Armenians, there was a concern that Turkish peasants would slowly warm to Bolshevism. In a discussion with Mustafa Kemal regarding the threat of communism, Hüseyin Avni Bey (1877-1930), a commander during the Independence War, stated,

This is an illness, not an army that is seen. This is encroaching, spreading. The government does not want it, but although it's not wanted, is entering the country, doing damage, and, may Allah protect [our forces], it destroys the armies we trusted so much.²⁹

²⁷ "Turkish Communist Party General Statutes," in Harris, *The Origins*, 149.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁹ "İtilâf Devletleri Sovyet Rusya, Gürcistan ve Ermenistan ile Olan İlişkiler Hakkında, 3 Ocak 1921," in Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçlerinden Seçmeler [A Selection of Atatürk's Statements and Speeches]. Turkish Armed Forces' Atatürk Webpage.

http://www.ata.tsk.tr/content/media/01/soylev_ve_demecleri.pdf [Last accessed: 22 March, 2017]

These comments were made while the Turkish Communist Party was attempting to convince the nationalists to join forces. With the nationalists edging towards victory, Suphi attempted to make a deal with the nationalist movement, offering them both weapons and support from the Soviets, in exchange for legal recognition and the ability to operate openly in Anatolia. The Turkish Communists maintained the Comintern line that a united front strategy was required, and that all anti-imperialist forces should support first the national/bourgeois revolution and that the communist revolution would follow later.³⁰ Despite the Soviet and communist party's attempt to cultivate good relations with the nationalists, domestic security concerns made the nationalists cautious. These fears of domestic threats were exacerbated by the "rebellion" of Çerkes Ethem (Ethem the Circassian) (1886-1948) in western Anatolia.³¹ Ethem led a heterodox band known as the Green Army which combined or incorporated Bolshevik communist with Islamist, pan-Asian and anti-imperialist elements.³²

While the nationalists were attempting to crush the Green Army and Ethem's loyalists, Mustafa Suphi and a group of fifteen leading communists left Baku for Anatolia, where they intended to meet with the nationalist leaders and discuss the possibility of cooperation. Shortly after arriving, the group was told to leave. On January 28, 1921, while en route to Baku, Mustafa Suphi and the TKP delegates were overtaken on the Black Sea and murdered.³³ The destruction of the Turkish Communist Party in exile's leadership struck a massive blow to the nascent communist movement

³⁰ Loren Goldner, "'Socialism in One Country' Before Stalin, and the Origins of Reactionary 'Anti-Imperialism': The Case of Turkey, 1917-1925," *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 38:4 (2010): 642.

³¹ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy*, 20

³² Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 84.

³³ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy*, 17.

in Turkey and was followed by other waves of repression. The following year, the Turkish government banned “communistic propaganda” in an effort to stifle the presence of communist discourse.³⁴

While there is not much written about the details of the Baku incident in the secondary literature, one can make some assumptions as to why the nationalists decided to murder the Turkish Communist Party leadership. The two entities had very different visions for the future of Turkey. With Mustafa Kemal and his counterparts denouncing the atheism of communism, and reiterating the incompatibility of Turkish culture with communism, the idea of power sharing would not be a feasible option. Additionally, as the War of Independence was fought to “liberate” Anatolia from Western imperialists and their Ottoman collaborators, it would not make sense to share power with a political party operating under the instructions and being supported by the Soviet Union. The murder of the chairmen of the Turkish Communist Party and the leading commissars marked an end to the vision of a Turkish Soviet Socialist Republic in this period. Despite this, the Turkish communists continued to operate in Turkey, and the Soviet Union attempted to cultivate Turkey as a potential partner and ally, rather than as a potential socialist vassal. In spite of the murder of Moscow’s Turkish proxies, and the repression of the Turkish communists, Moscow was still willing to provide Turkey with aid and even signed the Turco-Soviet Treaty of Friendship only a few months later.³⁵

³⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 284.

³⁵ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy*, 27.

2.5 The One-Party System and Ideological Hegemony

An intolerance of opposition was not something limited to the state's treatment of communists. From the birth of the Republic to the aftermath of the second World War, Turkey maintained a strict one-party system. This meant that despite Turkey being proclaimed a republic, there was only one state-approved party, and the Grand National Assembly, a parliament, deemed the only legitimate voice of the people.³⁶ While the government flirted with the idea of allowing a loyal opposition party to form, in 1925, an Islamo-Kurdish rebellion in the southeast and a series of other small Islamic rebellions convinced the state that loosening the reigns of authority was premature.³⁷

In addition to the maintenance of a one-party system, the state had little toleration of groups which either challenged the state, or the state's interpretation of the nature, or character, of the Turkish nation. On April 20, 1931, Mustafa Kemal published a manifesto in which he defined the six key characteristics of the Turkish nation as being: republican, nationalist, populist, etatist, secularist, and revolutionary.³⁸ As Ataturk wished to create a secular republic for ethnic Turks, anything which challenged these features would not be accepted. This includes Islamists, as political Islam challenged Ataturk's vision of a progressive, secular Turkey. Kurdish nationalism, or more appropriately separatism by Kurds, was fiercely rejected, as these individuals threatened both the territorial integrity and Turkish national characteristic of the republic. Communism, correspondingly, was a threat to the republic. As Turkey neighbored the nascent Soviet Union, communists were perceived to be either the

³⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 256.

³⁷ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 177-178.

³⁸ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 286.

agents or sympathizers of a foreign power, and thus a fifth column. In addition to concerns over sovereignty, communism challenged Atatürk's image of Turkey.³⁹ While Atatürk was a secularist, on numerous occasions he mentioned the incompatibility between atheistic communism and Turkish Muslim culture.⁴⁰ Additionally, Atatürk wished to create a homeland for the Turks, a staunchly nationalistic and nativist system, incompatible with the cosmopolitanism and internationalist dream of the left. Anti-communist repression from the 1920's through the 1940's was thus part of a larger attempt for the one-party state to maintain ideological hegemony over what the Turkish Republic was, and its character.

2.6 Sheikh Said Revolt and the Left

While many are familiar with the state repression of the Kurds in wake of the Sheikh Said Revolt, the repression of the Turkish left during these events is often overlooked. The Kurdish revolt resulted in the 1925 Law for the Maintenance of Order. This expanded the power of the state and allowed them to ban any organization or publication that disturbed the public order.⁴¹ Despite the revolt occurring in the country's southeast, press censorship, and the clamping down on dissent occurred throughout the country. Jefferson Patterson, an American diplomat stated, "Constantinople, and its press, always hostile to Angora, were thus intimidated."⁴² This

³⁹ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey*, 20.

⁴⁰ "Atatürk komünizm hakkında ne düşünüyordu?/Güncel/milliyet blog." [What did Atatürk think about Communism?] Blog.milliyet.com.tr. Accessed December 10, 2016. <http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/ataturk-komunizm-hakkinda-ne-dusunuyordu-/Blog/?BlogNo=376342>.

⁴¹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 171.

⁴² "Jefferson Patterson Department of State Division of Near Eastern Affairs. August 15, 1931. Turkish History (1923-1931)," in *Turkish History, 1918-1931, as Interpreted by Two American Diplomats*, ed. Jay Pierrepont Moffat, Jefferson Patterson, and Rifat N. Bali (Osmanbey, İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2015), 85.

press censorship affected all opposition, including leftist papers. In 1925, all the Turkish Communist Party's journals: *Aydınlık* (Enlightenment), *Yoldaş* (Comrade) and *Orak ve Çekiç* (Hammer and Sickle) were closed by the government.⁴³ During the late 1920's Mustafa Kemal made numerous statements regarding the dangers of communism and its incompatibility with Turkish culture. In an interview that appeared in the *Eskişehir Gazetesi*, Kemal stated, "Communism is the Turkish world's biggest danger. Wherever it is seen it must be destroyed."⁴⁴ Such a statement is particularly telling. By mentioning communism, rather than the Soviet Union, he is referring to the ideology and its adherents. İsmet İnönü additionally mentions the threat of communism during this period in his personal writings:

Today's situation: an established, powerful republican administration. There is government and supervisory authority in the Grand National Assembly. [But] The internal and external enemies are striving.

Propaganda:

1. *The Gazi's illness*
2. *Taxes – economic relief*
3. *Disputes (İhtilaflar)*
4. *Religious propaganda*
5. *Attacks on the military*
6. *Communist propaganda*
7. *The victims of the old national forces.*

*This propaganda is primarily fed from the outside. It is managed from outside.*⁴⁵

While the nationalists crushed the communist movement as a large, armed military threat, during the War of Independence, the ideas of communism were still held by certain segments of Turkish society, and the state feared that this could be harmful to their rule. Both Atatürk and İnönü mention the ideology of communism as the concern. The events of 1925, reaffirmed the need to maintain strict control of the intellectual and political spheres. With the crackdowns against voices of opposition in

⁴³ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy*, 46.

⁴⁴ "Atatürk komünizm hakkında ne düşünüyordu?/Güncel/milliyet blog." Blog.milliyet.com.tr.

⁴⁵ İsmet İnönü and Ahmet Demirel, *Defterler* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2001), 117-118.

wake of the Sheikh Said Revolt, the Turkish Communist Party was legally dissolved, and membership made illegal.⁴⁶

2.7 Interwar Press Censorship

Freedom of the press was not a feature of the interwar political *milieu*. While leftist journals and newspapers were in circulation, some being illegally imported from abroad, the legally operating papers risked closure due to charges of spreading communist propaganda. Despite this climate of censorship, several prominent journals and newspapers emerged such as *Resimli Ay* (The Illustrated Monthly), *Kadro* (Cadre), and *Tan* (Dawn).⁴⁷ In addition to communism being prohibited, political laws banned activism based on features such as religion, class or ethnicity. The government feared that activism around such factors would incite disunity.⁴⁸ Leftist papers and groups additionally faced the risk of being prohibited based on their connection, or supposed connection, to Moscow.

During the interwar period, the state's focus was on constructing a new Turkish nation rather than democracy and liberalism. As such, specific legislation was passed to ensure stability. In 1931, Turkey passed the "Press Law", a piece of legislation that permitted the government to dissolve any paper or publication which contradicted the general policies of the government.⁴⁹ Utilizing Fascist Italy as a model, the 1934 Turkish Labor Law was expanded in 1936 to prohibit the formation of unions and the

⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 284.

⁴⁷ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey*, 46.

⁴⁸ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 182.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 180.

holding of strikes. The Republic borrowed additional anti-left legislation from Italy such as Articles 141 and 142 of the Penal Code forbidding “communist propaganda.”⁵⁰

2.8 Turkish-Soviet Relations in the 1930's

Despite Turkey passing various pieces of legislation banning communist propaganda and using this legislation to stamp out the far-left, Turkish-Soviet relations were surprisingly positive for much of the 1930's. During this period, the Turkish state attempted to modernize the Turkish economy by developing state-sponsored industry. Wishing to cultivate Turkey as an ally, the Soviet Union contributed considerable support for this venture, providing economic planners, engineers, specialists and even the capital for Turkey's first five-year plan.⁵¹ This type of support was rare for the Soviet Union at this time, as during the Interwar period, Turkey, along with Iran and Afghanistan, were the only countries to be given credit by the Soviets.⁵²

2.9 The case of *Kadro*

A high-profile case of anti-leftist repression during the interwar period was the Turkish state's closure of the journal *Kadro*. The *Kadro* movement, centered around the *Kadro* journal, has often been characterized as leftist-Kemalist in orientation. This journal borrowed heavily from the Soviet example and sought to direct Turkey on a developmental path somewhere between capitalism and socialism. While etatism was

⁵⁰ Feroz. *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 99.

⁵¹ Samuel J. Hirst, “Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet-Turkish Convergence in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 72:1 (Spring, 2013): 33.

⁵² Gu Guang-Fu, “Soviet Aid to the Third World an Analysis of Its Strategy,” *Soviet Studies* 25:1 (January, 1983): 77.

seen as a temporary expediency for Turkish industrial development, the *Kadro* writers saw state-directed economics as a permanent institution.⁵³ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, one of the founders of the journal, and an important contributor, had studied in the Soviet Union, with other Turkish communists,⁵⁴ and was a member of the Turkish Communist Party in the 1920s.⁵⁵ Despite their support for Kemalism, the journal was deemed too leftist, resulting in the state closing the paper and relocating the editor to Albania for a diplomatic position, essentially political exile.⁵⁶ The repression of this journal, at first glance, seems paradoxical; the *Kadro* writers cooperated with some high-level officials in the Turkish government such as İsmet İnönü.⁵⁷ They additionally maintained support for Kemalism, albeit interpreting it through a leftist perspective, and were operating at a time when the Soviet Union was supporting Turkish development.⁵⁸ As Turkey was receiving developmental assistance from the Soviets during this period, the state may have feared that the population would see the Soviets and socialism in too positive a light. Additionally, by blending socialism with Kemalism, *Kadro* could make socialism appear nationalistic and Turkish, rather than a foreign ideology. The closure of *Kadro* should be seen as part of the larger campaign to stifle leftist thought in the interwar period and preserve the hegemony of the one-party regime.

⁵³ Ali H. Bayar, "The Development State and Economic Policy in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 17:4 (1996): 776.

⁵⁴ Mustafa Türkeş, "The Ideology of the *Kadro* [Cadre] Movement: A Patriotic Leftist Movement in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34:4 (1998): 95.

⁵⁵ John M. VanderLippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy: İsmet İnönü and the Formation of the Multi-party System, 1938-1950* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 20.

⁵⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 470.

⁵⁷ Mustafa Türkeş, "A Patriotic Leftist Development-Strategy Proposal in Turkey in the 1930s: The Case Of the *Kadro* (Cadro) Movement," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33:1 (Feb, 2001): 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 115-116.

2.10 Conclusion

The Turkish state has had a history of anti-communism dating back to the earliest years of the Independence War. While often overshadowed by the Cold War, the Turkish state's treatment of domestic communists in the interwar period should not be ignored. An examination of this period provides greater contextualization for Turkey's decision to side with the United States in the post-World War II period. The examination of anti-communist policy since the beginning of the Republic additionally shows a level of continuity blurring traditional Cold War periodizations. By examining the way in which Turkey sought to repress armed communist groups during the Independence War and then crush communist cells and censor their publications, we should view this period as a Cold War prelude.

CHAPTER 3 - THE 'TAN INCIDENT' AND THE ONSET OF THE COLD WAR IN TURKEY, 1945

3.1 Introduction

While Turkey maintained a stringent anti-communist policy since the birth of the Republic, the onset of World War II and the Cold War ushered in a new epoch of intensified anti-communist repression. Despite this being considered a period of political liberalization in Turkey, the Turkish left experienced a new wave of anti-communist crackdowns. By the early 1950's with the rise of the Democrat Party, most of the prominent leftists were charged with politically-based crimes, resulting in either arrest or flight. This chapter then seeks to address how exactly this repression occurred in practice in the immediate post-World War II period. This chapter will focus on the experience of Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, a married couple that were both Turkish communist journalists, and the ways in which the political events and policies of this period tangibly affected their business and livelihood. The '*Tan* Incident', the destruction of the *Tan* Newspaper represents a key event in the onset of the Cold War anti-communism in Turkey. The Sertels were known communists who published an openly pro-Soviet newspaper. With the rising hostilities against the Soviets and communists following World War II, their newspaper was targeted and the government opened numerous criminal cases against this family. As such, it represents a clear case of anti-communist repression in the early Cold War period incorporating collusion between the government, media and private citizens. To highlight the experience of the Sertels during this period, this chapter will rely upon several primary sources, such

as personal memoirs, diaries and oral history testimonies, in addition to the court documents from the Sertels' criminal cases.

3.2 Origins of the *Tan* Newspaper

During the interwar period, *Tan* was one of the largest and most critical independent newspapers, which, somewhat ironically, was purchased from the Turkish state. Under state control, the *Tan* paper had run a net financial loss, and the state-run bank holding the property decided to sell it. This paper was bought by Ahmet Emin Yalman (1888-1972) and Zekeriya Sertel, with Sertel in charge with running affairs and editing.⁵⁹ The Sertels and Yalman had much in common, having both lived and studied in the United States. Despite this, the Sertels and Yalman had different visions of what *Tan* should be. Rather than maintaining the newspaper's generic stance, Sertel wished to attract journalists with a revolutionary and progressive orientation.⁶⁰ According to Sertel, he sought to use the newspaper as a weapon against the spread of fascism in Turkey. This revolutionary agenda put Sertel at odds with Yalman. Rather than seeking to achieve the same political goals as Sertel, Yalman states in his memoir, *Turkey in My Time* (1956), that he used his time at *Tan* for, "...preaching definite principles of cleanliness and efficiency in public life and the "good neighbor" policy and collective security in foreign relations." However, besides shared goals of being a "good neighbor" to the Soviets, their political agendas differed significantly.⁶¹ This would result in the eventual split between the two with Yalman breaking ties and attempting

⁵⁹ Zekeriya Sertel. *Hatırladıklarım* [*The Things That I Have Remembered*] (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2015), 193.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁶¹ Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in My Time* (Norman, OK: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 165.

to distance himself from the paper, due to the Sertels' leftist politics claiming, "Even a pinkish tinge could have meant early death to the opposition movement in Turkey, for the public, although most discontented with single-party administration, was wide awake to the Russian danger."⁶²

As journalists, Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel received material from the various foreign embassies operating within Turkey. As such, the Sertels encountered pro-fascist propaganda coming from the German embassy. The Nazis had attempted to cultivate a positive image of Turkey in their domestic press as well as a positive image of Turkish-Nazi relations. The Nazi press was so pro-Turkey that when negative portrayals of the Nazis appeared in the Turkish press, it was difficult for the Nazis to temper their support for the Turkish Republic.⁶³ The Nazis additionally published material for the Turkish public in several languages, with several in German and French, in addition to the Turkish language *Yeni Dünya* (New World), which championed Nazi-Turkish friendship and argued that the Nazis would protect the Turks from Soviet expansion.⁶⁴ With the goals of this journal in mind, it is somewhat ironic that a journal with the same name was used after the Bolshevik Revolution to proselytize communism to Ottoman prisoners of war. Adding to this confusion was an additional journal named *Yeni Dünya* simultaneously in publication promoting a leftist agenda.⁶⁵ This pro-Turkish propaganda was intended to warm the Turkish state towards Nazi Germany and provide the good-will necessary to secure a Nazi-Turkish

⁶² Yalman, *Turkey in My Time*, 225.

⁶³ Stefan Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 135.

⁶⁴ Vanderlippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy*, 41.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 124

partnership. The Nazis proclaimed their admiration for Turkey, claiming that the ‘national socialism’ of Atatürk and Hitler was quite similar, and that the two nations were kindred, considering their rejection of shameful treaties after World War I, destroying degenerate multicultural societies and building new revolutionary ethnic states.⁶⁶ In Zekeriya Sertel’s memoir, he wrote that he saw the spread, and possible allure of this material in Turkey as disconcerting, as fascism represented a threat both domestically and globally. The anti-Soviet propaganda coming from Nazi Germany threatened to erode Turkish-Soviet friendship which Sertel feared could potentially lead to conflict or even war. Thus, he sought to use *Tan* to counteract Nazi activism and disinformation campaign, and to reaffirm the historic friendship between the Soviet Union and the Turkish Republic.⁶⁷

This political activism drew the ire of the Turkish interior ministry. Turkey was attempting to take a neutral position during the war, cooperating with both the Allied and Axis powers. Within the highest echelons of the Turkish government, various ministers favored different combatants. Despite this, private citizens taking an active role was considered politically inappropriate and a challenge to state policy. Even while on a short trip to Romania, Sertel received a phone call from the interior minister, questioning him on one of his articles. Sertel mentions that fear of the Turkish Press Law was looming over him always, and the writers at *Tan* never knew when the state would choose to punish them.⁶⁸ This fear was not unfounded, as the newspaper was closed on several occasions. Repression during this period could occur in one of a few

⁶⁶ Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination*, 194.

⁶⁷ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 198.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

different ways – short-term closings, permanent closings, and fines or jailing. Sertel mentions that even temporarily closing a paper was more damaging than one would assume. He asserted that state-mandated closures resulted in thousands of dollars' worth of losses and that it could take weeks for operations to begin functioning normally afterwards. Thus, what legally could be considered a “slap on the wrist” could financially ruin a struggling paper.⁶⁹ Despite operating within a one-party system in which press censorship was a looming threat, this paper was not permanently closed until the “liberalizing” period following World War II.

3.3 Political Liberalization

Following the second World War, Turkey attempted to move closer to the Western powers, primarily the United States. Because of Soviet demands for control of the Turkish Straits, and the return of certain eastern Anatolian provinces, the Turkish Republic sought to cultivate a new distant ally to defend them from a near foe. As Turkey had been essentially a one-party autocracy since the beginning of the Republic, the Turkish leadership attempted to craft a new image. This included the attempt to portray Turkey as a modern, liberal democracy. At the San Francisco Conference, Prime Minister Ismet Inonu instructed the Turkish Foreign Minister Hasan Saka to declare Turkey's desire to increase democratization and harmonize democratic standards with the guidelines proposed by the United Nations.⁷⁰

To craft the image of a new democratic Turkey, various measures were taken, such as a relaxation of press censorship and the opening of the political system to

⁶⁹ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 197.

⁷⁰ Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis*, 67

other political parties. In 1946, the Democrat Party was established, the first realistic challenge to Republican Peoples' Party rule.⁷¹ While communism remained illegal, leftists attempted to gain a legitimate voice in the new political *milieu* by founding leftist parties. One leftist party which emerged from this period was the "Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey" (est. June 20, 1946), but on Dec 1, 1946 was closed under martial law and leaders arrested for communist agitation. Additionally, certain communist papers and unions were banned around December 1946.⁷² Despite modest efforts at opening the political system, this was only partial, and the state worked to curtail the activities of those seen as clearly working against their interests. One key example of this was the somewhat mysterious "*Tan* Incident", the physical destruction of the *Tan* printing press.

3.4 The Sertels: Communist, Minority, Opposition and the Dawn of the Cold War

In 1945, a nationalist mob, screaming and carrying placards, destroyed the printing office of *Tan*.⁷³ Despite years of publishing, why would this happen now? The Sertels were viewed with suspicion and distrust for several reasons, primarily their ethno-religious background and their politics. While Zekeriya was a Sunni Muslim, Sabiha was known to be a member of the somewhat secretive and distrusted Dönme community.⁷⁴ Repression of the Dönme went alongside repression of other groups

⁷¹ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 306.

⁷² Ibid., 310.

⁷³ Vanderlippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy*, 124.

⁷⁴ Note: The Dönme originated as the Jewish followers of rabbi Sabbatai Sevi, a 17th century Gazan rabbi who claimed to be the messiah. His movement gained a following in the Ottoman Empire, so large that it threatened stability, resulting in the Sultan giving him two options: convert to Islam, or die. When Sevi converted to Islam, many of his followers converted as well. However, despite their conversion, many of his followers remained segregated from Ottoman Sunni society, and either preserved aspects of their Judaic heritage, or, according to the suspicions of society, were secretly still Jewish, and were

considered outside the Sunni Muslim mainstream, such as the Greeks, Armenians and Jews. These communities were all targeted during this period, with many of these communities being financially ruined or sent to concentration camps because of the 1942 Wealth Tax. This piece of legislation was presented as targeting war profiteering, but in essence, was an arbitrary tax, punishing minorities for conspicuous consumption.⁷⁵ One document from the British Chamber of Commerce in Istanbul states, “The differentiation shown in the assessments between Moslem Turks on one side, Jews, Greeks, Armenians and Donmez on the other, is so glaring that the policy I referred to appears evident to every intelligible person.”⁷⁶ As such, mainstream Sunni society viewed the Sertels with varying levels of suspicion.⁷⁷

The Sertels were furthermore viewed with suspicion and hostility due to their politics. Despite the state attempting to maintain ideological hegemony, the Sertels had a history of challenging state policy. They called on Turkey to allow open elections, and to permit freedom of speech, allowing all to operate as they wish, without facing discrimination or harassment for their beliefs. The Sertels were moreover highly critical of the condition of economic affairs of Turkey, especially the prevalence of poverty. As such, the Sertels called on the state to allow the creation of peasant and worker

insincere in their conversion. For a somewhat informal, yet still incredibly insightful overview of the Dönme, please listen to the March 27, 2017 podcast between Cengiz Şişman and Matthew Ghazarian titled “Sabbatai Sevi and the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes” on the Ottoman History Podcast. For a more comprehensive text, see Marc David Baer’s *The Dönme, Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks* (2010).

⁷⁵For more information, please see Ayhan Aktar’s “Tax me to the end of my life!” and Aysun Akan’s “A Critical Analysis of the Turkish Press Discourse against Non-Muslims: A Case Analysis of the Newspaper Coverage of the 1942 Wealth Tax.”

⁷⁶ “Document No.10 Dated December 30, 1942. Speech Delivered by Mr. Edwards (Chairman) at Meeting of British Chamber of Commerce, Istanbul,” in *The Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi) Affair: Documents From the British National Archives*, ed. Rifat N. Bali (İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2012), 80.

⁷⁷ “Military Intelligence Division W.D.G.S Military Attache Report Turkey Subject: “Principle Newspapers, Periodicals and News Service. G. No. 2810 June 1, 1942,” in *An Overview of the Turkish Press Through the Reports of American Diplomats (1925-1962)*, ed. Bali, Rifat (İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2011), 62.

societies and legalize labor activism.⁷⁸ As Turkey had been ruled by a single-party state, which claimed to be the sole legitimate representative of the nation, criticism of the party could be interpreted as a criticism of the Turkish people and could thus represent disloyalty.

The family's leftism was additionally an open secret. Sabiha Sertel was seen as a fervent Bolshevik, who pulled her socialist husband farther to the left.⁷⁹ Both the American and Turkish governments were aware of the Sertel family's leftist political orientation. The family had faced legal trouble for their beliefs, going back decades. Sabiha Sertel, along with another editor, was arrested in 1929 for her writings in *Resimli Ay* (Illustrated Monthly), which the state accused of inciting class hatred.⁸⁰ One American military attaché report from the period mentions their concerns over the paper, and directly comments on *Tan's* editors, "...Very cautious because the editor, ZEKERIYA SERTEL, who was educated at the Columbia School of Journalism, and his wife have been accused of being communists..."⁸¹ During World War II, their newspaper *Tan* was perceived as highly sympathetic to the Soviet Union. This newspaper was not on the political fringe, only appealing to an inconsequential section of Turkish society. According to this same report on the Turkish press, the *Tan* paper was one of the largest papers circulating in Turkey. The largest paper, *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic) had a daily readership of 30,000, while *Tan's* readership numbered around 18,000.⁸²

⁷⁸ Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis*, 149-150.

⁷⁹ Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1943-1945; Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 81.

⁸⁰ George S. Harris, *The Communists and the Kadro Movement: Shaping Ideology in Atatürk's Turkey* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2002), 84-5.

⁸¹ "Military Intelligence Division W.D.G.S Military Attache Report Turkey," in Bali, *An Overview*, 62.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 61-62.

While the Sertels' and newspaper *Tan*'s political stance was undesirable, yet tolerable while Turkey remained neutral during most of World War II, the tensions between Turkey and the USSR in the war's aftermath made the Sertels highly suspect. As the Soviets were demanding the transfer of the Turkish provinces of Ardahan and Kars to the Georgian and Armenian Soviet Socialist Republics, and joint-control coupled with Soviet militarization of the Turkish Straits, the Sertels essentially became the supporters of a hostile foreign power.⁸³ Thus, their criticism of state policy, societal suspicion due to their ethno-religious identity, their leftist politics and the tensions regarding the onset of the Cold War created a perfect storm in which the Sertels were increasingly vulnerable.

3.5 The *Tan* Incident

On December 4, the offices of *Tan* were attacked by an angry placard-wielding mob. The signs accused the Sertels of being Soviet agents and traitors.⁸⁴ The storming of the paper led to the destruction of their printing presses and the virtual end of the newspaper. The attack on *Tan* coincided with a series of other attacks on leftist institutions such as bookstores.⁸⁵ Despite the prominence and the popularity of this newspaper, the police were largely inactive. These mobs were not a surprise to either the police or the Sertels. Rival newspapers had called for demonstrations, and student organizations had acquired permission to demonstrate. The clearest call for action against the Sertels can be seen in the somewhat confusingly similarly named

⁸³ Hasanli, *The Turkish Crisis of the Straits*, 66.

⁸⁴ Vanderlippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy*, 124.

⁸⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 309.

newspaper *Tanin*. Shortly before the attack on *Tan*, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın wrote an article titled “Rise, oh People of the Fatherland!” which called on Turks to rise up against *Tan*.⁸⁶ In this article, Yalçın writes:

When I opened the *Görüşler* journal and read Mrs. Sertel’s “Chained Freedom” article and saw the bright-red ironwork decorating the page, I immediately understood what kind of freedom they wanted to prepare for us. Mrs. Sertel says that, “The society of free peoples’ greatest slogan is the sacrifice of personal interests for the benefit of the broad masses.” Those not engaged with communist literature may miss the hidden meaning behind these lines: The name of the place in which freedoms are sacrificed for the benefit of the larger people is Russia. The answer of silencing them [the Sertels] does not fall on the government. The last word (söz) falls on the literate journalists and the free citizens.⁸⁷

If we are to believe Zekeriya Sertel, he had contacted the mayor of Istanbul to maintain the safety of his property. Yet when the demonstrations turned violent, the police neither stopped nor pursued the vandals. Recounting the events in his memoirs, Sertel states:

On the morning of December 4, 1945, university fascist youths attacked the printing press with axes, sledgehammers and red ink bottles that had previously been prepared. The cops waiting there were spectators. They did not do their duties. The demonstrators broke the doors of the printing house with axes and went in. They broke the machines with sledgehammers. They smashed in the windows of the building. They broke the things that were inside and threw everything (...döktüler) [onto the floor]. Whatever passed into their hands was laid to waste. Then, with red paint bottles in their hands, asked, “where’s the Sertels?” They went looking for us. Their aim was to strip us naked and pour red paint on us, then parade us forward (...önlere katıp...) around the streets, yelling, “Here are the reds!” All of this occurred right in front of the police.⁸⁸

Due to the Sertels’ critical stance of the state, and their open support for the Soviets, many believed that the attacks were either organized by the state, or that the state chose to remain inactive as the angry mobs attacked leftist businesses.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 237.

⁸⁷ “Kalkın Ey Ehli Vatan! [Rise, Oh People of the Fatherland!] *Tanın* Gazetesi. December 3, 1945,” in *Roman Gibi* [Like a Novel], by Sabiha Sertel (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 2015), 287.

⁸⁸ Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, 238.

⁸⁹ Sina Akşin, *Turkey From Empire to Revolutionary Republic: the Emergence of the Turkish Nation from 1789 to the Present* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 247.

Zekeriya Sertel asserted that above all, that president Ismet Inonu had a particular hatred for the Sertels and their press activity.⁹⁰ Despite the Sertels and the *Tan* newspaper being the victims of an attack, a legal case was brought against them.

3.6 The Sertels' Criminal Case

On December 15, 1945, the Istanbul Public Prosecutor released their accusation of criminal charges against Zekeriya Sertel and several of his contemporaries at the *Tan* newspaper. They were charged with violation of Article 55 of the Press Law for insulting the honor and dignity of the Grand National Assembly, Council of Ministers and government officials. This charge was made in response to two recently published articles in *Tan*. One article published on December 1, titled “We Would Like to Settle Accounts in Front of the Nation.” This article was written as part of a press spat with a government controlled newspaper.⁹¹

The Republican People's Party had spent 400,000 Turkish Lira (TL) to establish a newspaper in Sivas, a small central Anatolian city. This newspaper had published a series of articles, questioning where the Sertels' wealth was coming from, the assumption being that due to the Sertels' decade-long support for the Soviets, that the Sertel family was receiving money from abroad. The state-run newspaper raised this accusation by asking how the Sertels' were able to buy a large newspaper and own “...a beautiful house in Moda”, this being a very expensive and fashionable part of

⁹⁰ Sertel. *Hatırladıklarım*, 237.

⁹¹ “İddianame. İstanbul Asliye İkinci Ceza Yargıçlığı'na. T.C İstanbul C. Müddeiumumiliği. Esas: 2. Tedkik 45-13124. 15/12/1945. [Criminal Accusation to the Secondary Penal Court of First Instance. The Public Prosecutor of the Turkish Republic. Matter: second investigation 45-13124. Date: 12/15/1945],” in *Davamız ve Müdafaamız* [Our Criminal Case and our Defense], by Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 2015), 23.

Istanbul, the word “moda” even meaning “fashion” or “trend.”⁹² In response to these accusations, Sertel wrote an article defending himself, attributing his success to a lifetime of hard work, and then furthermore, challenging the party newspaper and the state.⁹³ Zekeriya Sertel wrote, “as far as we understand from the copies published since the first day, their goal is to poison the Anatolian public with a series of slanders and allegations.” In addition to criticizing the paper, he raised the question: where did the government get the funds to establish the paper? He additionally states, “Those who published the newspaper set up a company as if they invested the capital by themselves.” This article additionally questioned how certain government ministers could acquire so much wealth, and live lifestyles, which would appear, well beyond their salaries. The implication behind this being that these officials were either stealing money from the state, or abusing their position for personal gain. He furthermore mentions that in addition to government officials obtaining money illegally, these officials knowingly hid this money using Swiss bank accounts.⁹⁴

Throughout this case, the Sertels remained in prison. As the Sertels were arrested directly after the attack on their business, it appears that police detention was used as a tool to prevent them from working to reestablish their business, and to prevent them from propagating their leftist views and political criticism during a

⁹² “Millet Önünde Hesaplaşmak İstiyoruz! Tan gazetesinin 1 Aralık 945 tarihli nüshasında. M. Zekeriya Sertel imzasıyla çıkan başmakale. [We Want to Settle Accounts in Front of the Nation! From the December 1, 1945 issue of Tan Newspaper. Editorial signed by M. Zekeriya Sertel],” in *Davamız ve Müdafaamız* [Our Criminal Case and our Defense], by Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2015), 20.

⁹³ Ibid., 20-21.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 21-22.

politically difficult period. After three months of appeals, the Sertels were finally freed from prison.⁹⁵

3.7 Tan and Kemalism

While the Sertels' were targeted for their 'pinkish' politics, and their warm views of the Soviets, this did not make them anti-Kemalist or anti-Turkish. Rather, *Tan* must be seen as part of the broader legacy of leftist Kemalism. The Sertels' embraced many aspects of the Kemalist legacy, a focus on anti-imperialism, national sovereignty, secularism and state-sponsored economics. Rather than plotting to destroy Kemalist Turkey, the Sertels' interpreted Kemalism from a leftist lens and wished to defend and accentuate the leftist characteristics of Kemalism. Additionally, their support for the Soviets is congruent with Kemalism as well. As mentioned in chapter two, and highlighted more in depth in chapter four, since the Bolshevik Revolution, Turkey and the Soviet Union had periods of cooperation and friendship. Ataturk himself even mentioned the importance of preserving good relations with the Soviet Union. Thus, by admiring the Soviets and defending Turkish-Soviet friendship, the Sertels were not conspiring with an arbitrary foreign country, but were rather defending a partnership established by Ataturk and the nationalists.

⁹⁵ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 240.

3.8 Conclusion

Anti-communism in Turkey was not a new feature of the Cold War. Despite anti-communism being present in Turkey since the very founding of the Republic, the onset of the Cold War marked a new period of anti-communism. Soviet aggression towards Turkey brought additional hostility towards the Turkish left, as these leftists were seen as being sympathetic, or even the agents of a hostile foreign power. This led to disproportionate repression, as leftism was equated with disloyalty. Within this context, the *Tan* Incident represents an early case of anti-communist repression with the state and private actors both targeting leftist media outlets for their political views. Despite this, *Tan* and the Sertels' were not necessarily anti-Turkish, or anti-Kemalist. Rather, the Sertels interpreted Kemalism from a leftist perspective, while maintaining loyalty to the nation itself. The *Tan* Incident marked the end of the Sertels' control of the paper. *Tan* was reopened several years later, but only as the Sertels were leaving the country.⁹⁶ Following the *Tan* Incident, the Sertel family attempted a number of business ventures, which due to the political situation were sold as the Sertels fled the country. The flight of the Sertels, as well as their activities in exile, are continued in the chapter "The Leftist Exodus." The *Tan* Incident did not represent the end of leftist publications in Turkey, from 1945 onward, a series of other leftist publications emerged which attempted to direct Turkey on a leftist Kemalist path.

⁹⁶ Saime Göksu, Edward Timms, and Yevgeni Yevtushenko, *Romantic communist: the life and work of Nazim Hikmet* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), 214.

CHAPTER 4 – LEFTIST PRESS OPPOSITION TO THE TURKISH-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP, 1949-1950

4.1 Introduction

Tan was not the only paper which attempted to set Turkey on a new politically leftist course. Following the destruction of *Tan*, a new series of journals emerged in the early Cold War period which critiqued government policy from a leftist perspective. While many texts seek to elucidate the onset of the American-Turkish partnership following the crisis of the Straits, as Turkey and the United States grew ever closer and Turkey received American aid, these leftist voices of opposition are rarely incorporated into the literature. This chapter seeks to examine how the Turkish Communist Party (TKP), and their journals, served as intermediaries between the Soviet Union and the broader Turkish public. The role of the TKP as an intermediary is crucial, as they filtered pro-Soviet messages through a leftist-Kemalist lens. The TKP portrayed the Turkish-American partnership as betraying the Kemalist legacy, as cooperation with the Americans meant ceding Turkish sovereignty and betraying the economic well-being of the Turkish people.

The Turkish Communist Party journals followed Moscow's line, publishing on nearly identical topics and themes, often in close chronological proximity to those same themes being published in Soviet papers, such as *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. This chapter will focus on two Turkish communist journals of the early post-World War II period: *Nuhun Gemisi* (Noah's Ark) and *Barış* (Peace). While these journals were often critical of state policy, and followed Moscow's political line, they tended not to be critical of the Turkish state. As the Turkish state often closed newspapers which were insulting to

the government or highly critical, these newspapers' approach ensured the temporary survival of the periodicals, as well as providing the Turkish state an opportunity to willingly change their policy towards the United States and the Soviet Union.

4.2 Turkish-Soviet Relations in the Pre-Cold War Period

Russian concerns for Turkish affairs long predate the onset of the Cold War. From the Middle Ages to the modern era, the Ottoman and Russian empires were neighboring and often conflicting entities. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, relations between the Ottomans and the Russians were particularly hostile, as the Tsarist state attempted to use ethnic and religious kinship with certain Slavic and Christian Ottoman subjects to gain influence and strategic leverage within the empire.⁹⁷ This hostility continued into World War I, as the Ottomans and Tsarist empires, fighting on opposite sides, clashed in the Caucasus.⁹⁸ The Bolshevik Revolution marked a possible turning point in Turkish-Russian affairs, providing an opportunity to reset relations and chart a new course. As Zekeriya Sertel writes in his memoirs, "History made us neighbors..." [but], "The Soviet Union was no longer the old Tsarist empire."⁹⁹ During the Turkish War of Independence, the Soviet Union provided weapons and money for the Turkish nationalists and the two budding states were both the enemies of "Western imperialism." The two states nonetheless had mixed relations. Despite the Soviets providing support for the Turkish nationalists during the Independence War, the nationalist faction murdered the chairmen of the

⁹⁷ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 19.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

⁹⁹ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 199.

Turkish Communist Party, Mustafa Suphi, and fifteen members of the central committee.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, while the Soviets provided aid and developmental assistance to Turkey throughout the 1930's, the Ankara government simultaneously arrested communists and closed their publications.¹⁰¹ Despite the Turkish state's repression of the Turkish communists, the Soviets largely ignored the plight of their Turkish comrades, focusing rather on cultivating a strong relationship with the Turkish state itself as to limit British influence. Such a callous approach to the Turkish communists was adopted as the Soviets primary concern was ensuring Turkish-Soviet friendship to maintain cordial relations on the vulnerable Caucasian periphery, and to limit British influence in the region.¹⁰²

World War II marked a new setback in political relations between the two countries. The Turkish state's ability to control the Straits represented leverage that Soviet officials found disconcerting. During World War II, as some Nazi ships were allowed to enter the Black Sea through the Straits, the Soviets realized that this vulnerability had to be addressed.¹⁰³ Stalin mentioned this directly at Yalta, denouncing the right of Turkey to control such a strategic and vulnerable point, resulting in him claiming that the Soviets would not accept a situation in which, "Turkey has a hand on Russia's throat."¹⁰⁴ Thus, when the Soviets sought to capitalize on the prestige gained by helping to defeat Nazi Germany, and demanded joint control over the Turkish Straits

¹⁰⁰ Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey*, 24.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 29 and 46.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰³ Anthony R. De Luca, "Soviet-American Politics and the Turkish Straits," *Political Science Quarterly* 92:3 (Autumn, 1977): 507-508.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Mustafa Aydin, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures During the Cold War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36:1 (January, 2000): 106, doi: 10.1080/00263200008701300.

as well as the return of the eastern Anatolian provinces of Kars and Ardahan, the Turkish state sought American support.¹⁰⁵

4.3 The Turkish-American Partnership

The Turkish-American partnership opened with a series of aid programs, beginning with the Truman Doctrine, and then the Marshall Plan, culminating with Turkey's eventual admission into the NATO alliance in 1952.¹⁰⁶ As saber rattling had backfired, the Soviets began a new strategy for Turkey, aiming to convince the Ankara government to reconsider the Turkish-American partnership and adopt a more neutral position in which Turkey could work with the Soviets as well. This attempt to convince Turkey to take a more neutral geopolitical position can be seen in various leftist journals and publications. Convincing Turkey to reject the American partnership was a difficult task, as the United States was providing Turkey with significant financial aid, in addition to technical, military and developmental support. While the Americans did provide assistance to Turkey during World War II, one United States War Department document described this aid as, "... a steady flow, even though small, in order to make evident to the Turks our goodwill and our intention to produce material assistance of the best of our ability."¹⁰⁷

The Truman Doctrine was crafted as a tool for stabilizing the Eastern Mediterranean, with Greece seen as the primary target, but with Turkey and the rest

¹⁰⁵ Hasanli. *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis*, X.

¹⁰⁶ Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 107-8.

¹⁰⁷ "Notes on discussion with US War Department regarding Turkey", 26 August, 1941 [Electronic Record]. U.S. War Department; Atlantic Archive. 1. <http://archive.atlantic-archive.org/321/> [[Last accessed: 6 June, 2017]]

of the Middle East in mind. While the British had been providing aid to these countries throughout World War II, their declaration that this support would come to an end marked a new period of uncertainty. A speech given to the American Congress on March 12, 1947 stated, "If Greece falls, so will Turkey, and then chaos in the rest of the Middle East." This speech also states, "The United States contributed \$341 billion towards winning WWII. This is an investment in world freedom and world peace."¹⁰⁸ To ensure stability in the eastern Mediterranean, in 1947, \$250 million was granted for Greece, with \$150 million earmarked for Turkey as part of the Truman Doctrine.¹⁰⁹

Aid to Turkey was essential during the immediate post World War II period, as Turkey's largely agricultural economy was forced to financially sustain the mobilization of a large army throughout World War II. Additionally, the removal of so many men from the workforce meant less economic productivity. Throughout the war, Turkish gross domestic production decreased nearly 35%, with wheat production falling by over 50%.¹¹⁰ Subsequently, this economic trauma caused shockwaves throughout the economic system, causing the cost of living to increase substantially. According to an International Monetary Fund study, between the years 1938 and 1945, the cost of living more than tripled.¹¹¹ The 'National Defense Law,' passed in 1940, additionally permitted the state to artificially set prices below the market level, resulting in scarcity and the booming of the black economy.¹¹² The Marshall Plan continued this stabilizing

¹⁰⁸ "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine", 12 March, 1947 [Electronic Record]. Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman 1945-1945. Truman Library.

¹⁰⁹ Mehmet Halis Ozer, "The Effect of the Marshall Plan Aids to the Development of the Agricultural Sector in Turkey, the 1948-1953 Period," *International Journal of Economic and Financial Issues* 4:2 (2014): 428.

¹¹⁰ Pamuk, "Economic Change in Twentieth-Century Turkey," 280.

¹¹¹ "Analysis of Quota for Turkey", 6 August, 1946 [Electronic Record]. International Monetary Fund, Membership Committee; International Monetary Fund Archives. 10.

¹¹² Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 199.

effort, but also sought to achieve two additional goals: modernize Turkey's largely un-mechanized agricultural economy, garnering good will from the Turks, and ensuring stability, while simultaneously increasing the production of raw materials which could be used to rebuild Europe. Between 1948 and 1952, \$184 million in aid was provided to Turkey.¹¹³ While the Turkish state requested to utilize much of this for the development of heavy industry, the United States wished to use this to modernize Turkey's agricultural and mining industries.¹¹⁴ Thus, if the Soviet Union wanted to dislodge Turkey from the American partnership, they had to demonstrate that this aid was not simply American benevolence, but was rather part of America's plans to erode Turkish sovereignty and achieve world hegemony.

4.4 The Communist journals *Nuhun Gemisi* and *Baris*

Throughout the 1940's and early 1950's the Turkish communists published a series of different political journals and newspapers. These journals are important for understanding this period as they exemplify the dissemination of Moscow's messages and propaganda to the Turkish public. As the average educated Turk could not read the Russian language papers *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, these journals served an important intermediary function between the Soviet state and the Turkish intelligentsia. Additionally, as illiteracy was still staggeringly high in Turkey during the 1940's, the large sections of political cartoons made these journals accessible to an even larger audience. The Turkish communists published various newspapers and journals during this period, each with a different style, and intended for a different audience.

¹¹³ Ozer, "The Effects of the Marshall Plan Aid," 430.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 432.

Two important journals from this period include *Nuhun Gemisi* (1949-1950) and *Barış* (1950). Despite being produced by the Turkish Communist Party, these journals were produced legally. Looking at these journals, one would not immediately know that they were produced by the communists – the party affiliation is not mentioned, they rarely use the word ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ and the articles tend not to have the authors’ names listed. The journal *Nuhun Gemisi* was a Turkish Communist Party satirical journal which was released every weekly between the years of 1949 and 1950 in Istanbul. This journal is described in the masthead as a political satire magazine (Siyasi Mizah Dergisi). The youth focus, or possible mass appeal, of this journal can be seen in its presentation and art style which features a broad use of bright colors, many political cartoons and comedic article titles. Another journal, *Barış*, was published by the Turkish Communist Party every two weeks throughout much of 1950 and was produced in Istanbul as well. This journal, while containing many of the same messages as *Nuhun Gemisi*, utilized a more formal presentation, using a narrower color palette and embracing a more serious tone. Unlike *Nuhun Gemisi*, this journal identified itself in the masthead as being focused on “Politika, Fikir, Sanat” (Politics, Thought and Art). As such, this journal was intended for a more sophisticated readership.

Despite differences in appearance and genre, these periodicals held much in common. Such journals attempted to steer Turks away from the alliance with the United States, by portraying the Americans as the new leaders of world fascism; warmongers who will sow chaos, as well as imperialists who will erode Turkey’s sovereignty and capture the Turkish economy. These papers additionally promoted leftist

internationalism by publishing left-wing news from around the world and publishing political cartoons by their leftist contemporaries in other countries. As such, these journals and publishers can be seen as socialist intermediaries, transmitting leftist-themes to the general Turkish audience through satirical political cartoons and leftist-themed articles.

4.5 Aid or American Imperialism?

These cartoons often portrayed American economic assistance as laying the foundation for imperialism in Turkey. This was particularly common in many of the Soviet newspapers from this period. In a February 21, 1949 issue of *Pravda*, titled “New American Colonial Business”, Yu Zhukhov, referring to Truman aid, states, “Naturally, not even the smallest place is left in it for the sovereignty of the governments of the economically backward countries, but this troubles Wall Street least of all.”¹¹⁵ Additionally, a document titled “Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR on the NAP,” published both in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* in January 1949, states:

Implementation of the Marshall plan is not directed at the real economic recovery of the European states, but is a means of adapting the policy and economic life of the “Marshallized” countries to the narrowly selfish and military strategic plans of Anglo-American hegemony in Europe.¹¹⁶

Portraying the relationship through the lens of colonialism was a logical strategy, as the fall and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire occurred, at least in part, out of conflict with Western imperial powers.

¹¹⁵ Yu Zhukov, “New American Colonial Business,” *Current Digest of the Russian Press* 8:1 (March, 1949): 39.

¹¹⁶ “Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U. S. S. R. on the North Atlantic Pact,” *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 5:1 (March, 1949): 11.

American aid frequently came with conditions, often pushing Turkey towards a more liberal economic policy. The communist journals often addressed this issue pointing out the potential pitfalls. For example, in the November 9, 1949 edition of *Nuhun Gemisi* a cartoon depicts two figures, one with large muscles and a dollar sign carrying a sign saying, “We want free competition” and the other much more fragile figure with a sign saying, “we want free competition too.”¹¹⁷ Considering the United States was injecting millions of dollars into Turkey with the Marshall Plan, this cartoon appears to be a warning that if Turkey liberalizes the economy, they will be unable to compete with larger economic actors such as the United States. Economic liberalism marked a shift, as since the 1930’s, Turkey had attempted to establish a state-directed, closed economic system labelled by the state as “etatism.” This was officially established in theory with the Republican Peoples’ Party’s “Six Arrows”¹¹⁸ which defined the state and party as being republican, nationalist, populist, etatist, secularist, and revolutionary.¹¹⁹ This theory was put into practice in the 1930’s when the Soviet Union provided specialists, planners, funds and equipment for Turkey’s first five-year plan.¹²⁰ Despite the Soviet’s poor economic conditions in the 1930’s, in 1932 the USSR sold \$8 million worth of industrial equipment to Turkey, interest free, with a payment plan over twenty years.¹²¹ The first five-year plan included the establishment of the large state-owned banks Sümerbank (1933), and Etibank (1935), which held large

¹¹⁷ “Biz De Serbest Rekabet İsteriz! [We Also Want Free Competition!..]” Cartoon, *Nuhun Gemisi*, 9 November, 1949, 1.

¹¹⁸ Note: The “Six Arrows” are Mustafa Kemal’s six characteristics of the modern Turkish Republic. These are meant to serve as the ideological structure on which the state is built.

¹¹⁹ Lewis. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 286.

¹²⁰ Samuel J. Hirst, “Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet-Turkish Convergence in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 72:1 (Spring 2013): 33.

¹²¹ Hirst, “Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery,” 39.

sections of state-controlled business and industry.¹²² This Soviet-supported five-year plan led to the development of key industries such as textiles, sugar, mining, metal production, cement and utilities.¹²³ With the establishment of the American-Turkish partnership, however, the United States expected the Turkish economy to open up to the larger world market, potentially putting these Turkish industries in danger.¹²⁴

In addition to concerns over free trade, these journals addressed the issue of Turkish control over local industry. A cartoon published in the January 11, 1950 edition of *Nuhun Gemisi* shows a hefty man with a scroll in front of a line of disgruntled Turkish peasants with the caption “American Assistance” (Amerikan Yardımı). The next images show those very same Turks being kicked out of a farm and then factory.¹²⁵ The message being that while it may appear that the Americans are helping Turkey while they are in a vulnerable economic position, this “help” will result in the erosion of Turkish economic sovereignty, and lead to the return to economic control by “foreigners.” Similar messages can be seen in the Soviet press from this period as well. One article from *Izvestia* claims that the United States was seeking to capture the world tobacco market and had already achieved this to a large extent in Turkey. The same *Izvestia* article mentions that the Soviet Union would never do such a thing to their partners, citing the Bulgarian tobacco industry as an example. This article cites a “Bulgarian farmer,” from Plovdiv, saying that the Soviet Union, “does not squeeze us

¹²² Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 198.

¹²³ Şevket Pamuk, “Economic Change in Twentieth-Century Turkey: Is the Glass More Than Half Full?,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Reşat Kasaba, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 277.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹²⁵ “Amerikan Yardımı [American Assistance]” Cartoon, *Nuhun Gemisi*, 11 January, 1950, 2-3

like as the Americans do the Turks and Greeks.”¹²⁶ Attempting to instill this fear of “foreign domination” of the economy harks back to many concerns of the Ottomans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By that time, the indigenous Christian communities, referred to often as either foreigner (yabancı) or infidel (gavur), were seen as being undeservedly overrepresented in business ownership and commerce.¹²⁷

The association between American assistance, and the spread of American military control is addressed in a series of cartoons. In the May 1, 1950 issue of *Barış*, a diplomat is standing with a blanket covering something behind him. Underneath the blanket is a canon labelled “Marshall Plan” alongside bags of money.¹²⁸ An adjacent cartoon features diplomats carrying luggage shaped like canons, the caption reading “diplomatic baggage” (Diplomatik Valiz).¹²⁹ These two cartoons attempt to make the point that the Marshall Plan and American cooperation came with strings attached; American aid means American bases and troops. On a similar note, these concerns over American empire can also be seen in one May 1, 1950 cartoon which shows an octopus with a gruesome human face and dollar signs for eyes.¹³⁰ As this cartoon is adjacent to other political cartoons pertaining to the Marshall Plan and American militarism, the message is quite clear, the United States is an unsavory actor, and Turkey best stay away.

¹²⁶ A. Stekolnikov, “Among Bulgarian Tobacco Growers,” *Current Digest of the Russian Press* 16:1 (May, 1949): 48.

¹²⁷ Thomas Sowell, *Migrations and cultures: a world view* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1996), 28.

¹²⁸ “Kamufraj [Camouflage]” Cartoon, *Barış*, 1 May, 1950, 12.

¹²⁹ “Diplomatik Valiz [Diplomatic Baggage]” Cartoon, *Barış*, 1 May, 1950, 12.

¹³⁰ Cartoon, *Barış*, 1 May, 1950, 12.

4.6 Americans as Warmongers and Fascists

These journals additionally attempted to discredit the partnership with America by portraying the United States as militaristic, imperialistic and fascist. According to a declassified CIA document from 1946, studying Soviet propaganda on a global scale, portraying the Americans as warmongers was a common theme. This report labelled “Analysis of Soviet Foreign Propaganda Broadcasts,” states, “Great Britain and the United States share scathing attacks on “zealous warmongers” who seek to prevent “further development of the cooperation among democracies that arose (during) the war against Fascist Aggression.””¹³¹ In a February 28, 1949 issue of *Pravda* an article labeled “One More Aggressive Bloc”, states,

The U.S.A., in its turn, is becoming feverishly active. It is taking steps to transform Franco Spain into its arsenal. Repeating Hitler's experiment, it is transferring German factories to Spain, negotiating for the transfer to the U.S. of Minorca for 25 years in order to form its bases there, and making the stipulation in advance that even Spanish ships will not be able to enter the ports of Minorca without permission from the American authorities. At the same time, subsidies to the Greek fascists and Turkish reactionaries are being increased.¹³²

In the Turkish journals, creating an association between the United States and fascist aggression was commonly achieved by mixing American with Nazi motifs and portraying the Americans as deceptive. One November 30, 1949 issue of *Nuhun Gemisi* features a cartoon which depicts liquid from a dollar-sign painted bottle being injected into a Nazi armband-wearing monster next to a dead bird labelled ‘peace.’ The caption reads “Frankenstein’s resurrection” (Frankenştein’in dirilişi).¹³³ The attempt to

¹³¹ “ANALYSIS OF SOVIET FOREIGN PROPAGANDA”, 23 July, 1946 [Electronic Record]. CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM; CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP. Central Intelligence Agency. Washington D.C, United States of America. 2.

¹³² Ya. Viktorov, “International Review: One More Aggressive Bloc,” *Current Digest of the Russian Press* 8:1 (March, 1949): 23.

¹³³ “Frankenştein’in Dirilişi [Frankenstein's Resurrection]” Cartoon, *Nuhun Gemisi*, 30 November, 1949, 1.

associate the United States with a new right-wing internationalism can be seen in other Soviet papers, one states,

The camp of world reaction, headed by the U.S.A., fiercely opposes the establishment of a stable peace on a democratic basis. The Wall Street billionaires, who dream of a dollar-dominated world, the colonizers who make gold and diamonds from human blood, military spies and provocateurs -these are primarily responsible before humanity, history and culture for the propaganda and preparation of a new war.¹³⁴

This association between America and the Nazis is additionally seen in the June 1, 1950 issue of *Barış*. This cartoon shows an American eagle refashioning a swastika into a dollar sign.¹³⁵ Like the previously mentioned cartoons, this cartoon depicts American money not as aid, but as something sinister: the spread of American money will not result in the rebuilding of Europe, but a new fascist order. Additionally, an April 1950 article of *Barış* shows an eagle with an American flag hat trying to eat a dove carrying an olive branch, the caption reading “a peace request” (*Barış isteği*).¹³⁶ The message of this being that the United States was such a warmongering superpower that war was their mission and they would suppress anyone who got in their way.

4.7 A Leftist Kemalist Alternative

While the USSR and their proxies highlighted the moral shortcomings and threat of the West, the very same media outlets voiced communism and friendship with the socialist world as a pragmatic, and more favorable, alternative. These journals attempted to convince their Turkish readers that the American partnership was not in their best interest, and was a deviation from the path that Atatürk set Turkey on. One

¹³⁴ N. Plesetsky, “The Vatican and its Politics,” *Current Digest of the Russian Press* 13:1 (April, 1949): 3.

¹³⁵ “Anka Kuşu [Phoenix]” Cartoon, *Barış*, 1 June, 1950, 2.

¹³⁶ “Barış İsteği [A Peace Request (or) Barış’s Request]” Cartoon, *Barış*, 15 April, 1950, 12.

Bulgarian diplomatic note, for example, attempts to appeal to Turks directly claiming, "...the adventurous plans of the aggressive North Atlantic Alliance, is also against the interests of the Turkish nation, which has been thrown into the fire for the interests of American multimillionaires."¹³⁷ Such articles directly attempt to convince Turkish readers that rather than benefitting from a partnership with the United States, the Turkish people are betraying their own self-interest. The Soviets attempt to even reject the notion that the socialist world represents a threat to Turkish sovereignty, one article stating:

The speeches of a number of statesmen of the Western countries and also articles in the Anglo-American and French press openly make aggressive statements to the effect that the Western Union was formed against the U. S. S. R. and the states of people's democracy, although the peace-loving character of the policy of the latter countries is an incontestable and well-known fact.¹³⁸

With such framing the Soviets make it clear that the defensive partnership with the West is both unnecessary and harmful and that the Americans are trying to trick Turkey into ceding their sovereignty to Western imperialists. This is most clearly shown in a November 23, 1949 issue of *Nuhun Gemisi* which shows two adjacent cartoons, the one on the left featuring a Turkish soldier stabbing a top-hat wearing bourgeois figure above the year 1922. The other image shows a Turkish soldier serving as the chauffeur of a top-hat wearing bourgeois figure above the date 1949.¹³⁹ This cartoon appeals to the nationalist sentiments of the viewer, raising the question: why did Turkey fight the

¹³⁷ "Full Text of Bulgarian Note to Turkey", 3 May 1952 [Electronic Record]. HU OSA 300-1-2-19113; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: General Records: Information Items; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. 2. <http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/osa:cc404128-0168-4c1a-8fd5-db837d687e3e> [Last accessed: 6 June, 2017]

¹³⁸ "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U. S. S. R. on the North Atlantic Pact," *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 5:1 (March, 1949): 10.

¹³⁹ "1922/1949" Cartoon, *Nuhun Gemisi*, 23 November, 1949, 2.

Independence War only to cede sovereignty to Western capitalists only a few short decades later? Thus, it is the Turkish citizen's national duty to resist a partnership with the Americans.

The Turkish communist journals continue this attempt of fostering a socialist "imagined community." In Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, he argues that both the novel and the newspaper were central in creating an "imagined community" or nation as they "... provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation."¹⁴⁰ *Barış*, for example, featured a section labeled "Fifteen Days' Events" (On Beş Günün Olayları), which featured news from across both the communist and non-communist worlds.¹⁴¹ While this does not appear at face value to encourage communism, the choice of articles and subjects covered is telling. Rather than covering general news, these articles favored topics such as strikes, student movements and demonstrations, anti-imperialism and covering the threat of warmongering western imperialism on a global scale. *Barış* additionally featured other sections focusing on the global peace movement. This journal also featured political cartoons from all over the world. In the section labelled World Caricatures (Dünya Karikatürleri), the editors of the journal collected anti-capitalist and anti-American cartoons from across the world.¹⁴² By following leftist news, not only in Turkey, but on a global scale, the readers could imagine themselves as part of a larger community of progressives, fighting for the same cause of peace and socialism.

¹⁴⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 24-5.

¹⁴¹ "On Beş Günün Olayları (Fifteen Days' Events)" *Barış*, 15 April, 1950, 2.

¹⁴² "Dünya Karikatürleri (World Caricatures)" *Barış*, 1 May, 1950, 12.

4.8 Conclusion

The Turkish Communist Party served an important intermediary role as Turkey entered the Cold War, acting as a vehicle by which Soviet messages could be transmitted to the Turkish public. The Turkish Communist Party was vital for this venture as they would have a greater understanding of the means and symbolism to make socialist messages both understandable and acceptable. While much further research is needed on this subject, certain shared themes can be seen in *Nuhun Gemisi* and *Barış*. This includes attacking the Turkish-American partnership by painting the United States as a warmonger, and any assistance to Turkey as the first step in economic imperialism. While the articles and cartoons that appeared in the Turkish Communist Party journals clearly represent opposition to the Turkish government's policy, they tend not to be critical of Turkey itself. The Turkish communists, and the Soviets, therefore provide the Ankara government the opportunity to change course, abandoning the American-Turkish partnership and withdrawing from collective security, and taking a more benevolently neutral position.

CHAPTER 5 – THE EXODUS OF THE LEFT

5.1 Introduction

By the end of the 1950's, with student demonstrations and general discontent with the Democrat Party, the Menderes government was overthrown in a military coup. One voice to articulate the discontent over the Menderes regime was the Turkish Communist Party in exile. While the Turkish communists had faced repression since the very founding of the Republic, the onset of the Cold War, coinciding with the electoral success of the Democrat Party, created an environment in which the Turkish communists were either imprisoned or forced to flee the country *en masse*. This attempt to rid Turkey of socialists backfired, as rather than silencing the communists, they fled to Eastern Europe under the auspices and financial support of the communist regimes. This chapter will examine the experience of several prominent leftists who fled Turkey during this period, including the Sertel family, Nazim Hikmet and some other members of the Turkish Communist Party. While the Turkish communists published numerous periodicals, and had several radio programs, this chapter will focus on Bizim Radyo (Our Radio), a radio broadcast active as anti-Menderes sentiment reached a crescendo. This program is of particular importance to this period, as it included a number of well-known and influential figures of the Turkish intelligentsia and media, such as the aforementioned communist poet Nazim Hikmet and the Sertel family.

5.2 The Rise of the Democrat Party

The 1950 elections marked the official end of the one-party regime. After more than two decades of Republican People's Party (RPP) rule, the Democrat Party won the majority of seats in the Grand National Assembly, and Adnan Menderes replaced Ismet Inonu as prime minister. The Democrat Party, formed shortly after World War II, was founded by several RPP rebels such as Celal Bayar, Refik Koraltan, Fuad Koprulu and Adnan Menderes.¹⁴³ The Democrat Party came to power with the support of groups which had been "slighted" by the RPP establishment. As Menderes had been a large landowner, he appealed to the class interests of the large landholding Anatolian elites. The Democrat Party's less hostile views towards religion additionally won them the support of the country's more conservative Muslim segments.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, as some of the founders of the party were businessmen, the Democrats embraced a more liberal view of economics, ensuring the favor of the growing Turkish commercial class.¹⁴⁵

The Democrat Party's platform and support base lent itself to the anti-communism of the emerging Cold War order. In addition to the Turkish state having the incentive to cooperate with the United States for military and economic assistance, the religiously conservative and commercial base of the Democrat Party reviled communists. With an emerging commercial class following the economic recovery from World War II, communism represented a threat to their businesses and livelihood. Many of these Islamists supported Adnan Menderes for his comments on the

¹⁴³ Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 103.

¹⁴⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 316.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 317.

importance of Islam to Turkey, and the apparent drift away from laicite (laiklik). The more conservative Islamic elements of Turkey, seeing religion and state as inherently connected (din-ü devlet), opposed secularism. Within this context, Kemalism represented an internal threat to the nation's morals and Soviet inspired, or directed, communism as an external menace.¹⁴⁶

Moreover, with Turkey committing troops to the war in Korea, and facing high casualties, anti-communism acquired a stronger nationalist connotation. With many Turks directly fighting against the spread of communism in Korea, the communists became not only a theoretical enemy, but a literal one as well. These factors had a multiplying effect, contributing to the expansion and popularization of anti-communism and anti-Soviet sentiment in Turkey. One American foreign service officer serving in Turkey during this period summarizes the Turkish view of Soviets with a quote from a young Turkish diplomatic counterpart who said, "I know that you don't want to use the atom bomb, but give us a bomb, and we'll drop it on the Soviets."¹⁴⁷ Regarding the local communists, another foreign service officer highlights the Turkish state's willingness and effectiveness in crushing the domestic communist movement during this period stating, "We didn't have the communist problem that we had in Iran. They weren't around us; the Turks took care of them in their own way. Thank goodness for Turkey. Turkey is a keystone there. We better take care of Turkey. They took care of us, and let's take care of them."¹⁴⁸ Within this political *milieu*, the left entered a new

¹⁴⁶ Gavin D. Brockett, "Provincial Newspapers As A Historical Source: Büyük Cihad And The Great Struggle For The Muslim Turkish Nation (1951–53)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41:3 (2009): 447, doi:10.1017/s0020743809091545.

¹⁴⁷ "Daniel Oliver Newberry. Economic/Commercial Officer Istanbul (1952-1956)," in *American Diplomats In Turkey: Oral History Transcripts (1928-1997)*, ed. Rifat N. Bali (İstanbul: Libra, 2011), 121.

¹⁴⁸ "Lewis Hoffacker, Economic Officer. Istanbul (1953-1955)," in Bali, *American Diplomats*, 134.

period of hostility and uncertainty, with communists and suspected communists, at risk of severe physical and legal reprisals.

5.3 Anti-Communism in Action – Communists and the Legal System

There was very little tolerance of communism during the Democrat Party era. Even carrying leftist material or voicing vaguely socialist opinions could lead to severe punishment. During the early years of Democrat Party rule, numerous incidents concerning Turkish communists, or suspected communists, appear in the Turkish press, and subsequently in CIA and Radio Free Europe (RFE) reports. According to one RFE report, Zorlu Abdullah, a cook at the Soviet Embassy was tried and convicted for spreading pro-Soviet propaganda. This document states, “Turkish security agents had been following this man, and when sufficient proof of his subversive activities was on hand he was caught red-handed in the act of lecturing on the benefits of life in Soviet Russia.” Even mentioning the benefit of life under communism resulted in him receiving three years of prison, without the right to an appeal.¹⁴⁹ Another strange incident includes the May 1954 general election. A Turkish emigrant from Bulgaria wrote on his ballot “Long Live the Communist Party.” According to a RFE document, security services had taken him into custody within 48 hours. While the results of this case are not included in the document, Kemal, the Bulgarian *émigré*, claims to have “dropped

¹⁴⁹ “Former Cook of Soviet Embassy Arrested for Propaganda”, 8 October 1952 [Electronic Record]. HU OSA 300-1-2-26323; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: General Records: Information Items; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. <http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/osa:aa99d8fe-a068-4676-ba97-41d35abef2f9> [Last accessed: 6 June, 2017]

the pamphlet into the ballot-box while suffering a nervous crisis.”¹⁵⁰ With even these minor incidents leading to swift and often harsh retribution, those working on behalf of the communist party faced real risk.

5.4 The Communist Exodus

From the late 1940's onward, most of Turkey's prominent communists had been either imprisoned or forced to flee. While some used illegal methods to escape the country, others attempted to legally acquire passports and relocate to more friendly countries in the communist and non-communist world. In her memoir's *Roman Gibi* (Like a Novel), Sabiha Sertel describes the bleak state of affairs:

Administrative circles were in preparation for the election. The Democratic Party, which promised to bring democracy, freedom and peace to the country, was also struggling with the People's Party to share seats in parliament. Both of these parties were in agreement, in regards to foreign policy, about selling the country to the Americans. Those wishing to sell the country were apparently nationalistic and patriotic. For our defense of the people's well-being and our national independence, we were incriminated. Those attempting to conceal their crimes attacked the progressives incessantly. Those like Sabahattin Ali, one of Turkey's greatest novelists was murdered. The journals Marko Paşa'lar (Marko Pashas), Zincirli Hürriyet (Chained Freedom), Nuhun Gemisi (Noah's Ark) were closed and their owners were laying in jail.¹⁵¹

The flight of these communists became somewhat of a public spectacle with the information of their departure appearing in numerous newspapers. While some newspapers could describe this with more neutral headlines such as “The Leftists have begun to Exit Our Homeland (Solcular memleketimizi terk etmeğe başladılar),” others

¹⁵⁰ "Turkish Ethnic from Bulgaria Votes for Non-Existent Communist Party during Turkish General Elections", 1 June 1954 [Electronic Record]. HU OSA 300-1-2-46992; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: General Records: Information Items; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. <http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/osa:ae132b7c-7f38-4523-a5ca-4a1254da02ae> [Last accessed: 6 June, 2017]

¹⁵¹ Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, 351.

could be much more hostile.¹⁵² With Cold War tensions growing increasingly volatile, these newspaper articles were often highly vitriolic with one Istanbul newspaper using the title “The Snakes are Being Purged! (Yılanlar Temizleniyor!)” This article featured the names of communists attempting to leave, such as Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, even their daughter, as well as other well-known individuals such as the author Aziz Nesin. This article moreover published pictures of the individuals leaving, putting them potentially in even greater danger.¹⁵³

With the case of the Sertels, it appears that while life had been very dangerous for them in Turkey, they did not consider leaving until the 1950 elections. After the destruction of the *Tan* printing house, Zekeriya Sertel had begun a series of other business ventures such as an advertising agency named “The Technical Advertising Bureau” (Teknik Reklam Bürosu). Rather than selling assets in an orderly manner, the political situation had grown so hostile that they were forced to leave in a hurry. The urgency of the Sertels’ flight can be seen in the way in which the family disposed of their domestic Turkish assets. Rather than making the arrangements to sell their businesses and property beforehand, the Sertels were forced to work through several lawyers for months after their flight in order to sell and transfer assets.¹⁵⁴

The Sertels decided to leave Turkey after a series of traumatic events which made open political involvement impossible and the safety of the family precarious.

¹⁵² “Solcular memleketimizi terk etmeğe başladılar” [The Leftists have begun to Exit Our Homeland]. Zekeriya Sertel Papers, Collection ID ARCH01988, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁵³ “Yılanlar Temizleniyor!” [The Snakes are Being Purged!] Zekeriya Sertel Papers, Collection ID ARCH01988, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁵⁴ The International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam has a folder of these legal contracts as well as the correspondences between Zekeriya Sertel and his lawyers. Potential researchers should be aware that the handwritten correspondences are written in the Arabic script.

While their near escape from lynching displayed the unsafe political climate for the left in post-war Turkey, the murder of their friend and colleague, Sabahattin Ali reaffirmed this danger. Sabahattin had published with *Tan* as well as the leftist satirical journal *Marko Paşa*.¹⁵⁵ While attempting to flee to Bulgaria, Sabahattin was apparently captured and murdered by the Turkish state. With their political activism made nearly impossible, and their near death accompanied by the murder of their friend, life in Turkey was no longer a viable option. As Sertel states:

It'd been like that for a while. One day in 1948 I learned that Sabahattin Ali was killed at the border while escaping to Bulgaria. This news shook us all deeply. We all loved Sabahattin. On the one hand was the burning ache in our hearts of losing such a sweet and dear friend. On the other, was the realization that the political terror against the left had progressed to the point in which they would kill a man. So now, not only our rights and freedoms, but our lives were also in danger. Who could ensure us that one day the police would not put a bullet through our backs and end us?¹⁵⁶

While some communists attempted to leave Turkey legally, obtaining passports and finding accommodations, others were forced to leave due to unforeseen circumstances and a new round of legal repression. One notorious example of this is the case of the Turkish poet, Nazim Hikmet. While serving in the Navy, he was caught trying to organize a communist cell, and was convicted of “conspiring with more than one person to encourage acts of military insubordination (minimum sentence five years), inciting a revolt against army discipline (minimum of ten years); and causing a mutiny (mandatory death penalty).”¹⁵⁷ While originally sentenced to 15 years in prison, a retrial resulted in a new sentence of 28 years.¹⁵⁸ When he was eventually freed in 1950, his attempt to get a passport to visit Eastern Europe resulted in him being

¹⁵⁵ Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, 253.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁵⁷ Göksu, Timms, and Yevtushenko, *Romantic communist*, 145.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 147 and 156.

conscripted into the military, despite his long prison term and medical exemption.¹⁵⁹ With the help of a friend, he managed to escape Turkey through the Black Sea, being picked up by a Romanian vessel before being granted asylum in the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁰

5.5 Eastern Bloc Activism

While in exile, many Turkish communists continued their activism. This was done primarily through activism among the Turkish populations of Eastern Europe, the creation of illicit Turkish-language leftist literature, and Turkish-language radio propaganda. In 1951, shortly after Nazim Hikmet's escape from Turkey, he was given the task of travelling throughout Bulgaria, espousing the benefits of life under communism, and highlighting the many downsides of life in Turkey. This "tour" was intended to boost morale and to decrease the number of Bulgarian Turks attempting to defect to Turkey.¹⁶¹ According to one Radio Free Europe report containing a letter from a Bulgarian Turk to Turkey, during one of these "talks", Hikmet stated:

Dear comrades, the Turkish minorities in Bulgaria are being deceived by the capitalists. The standard of living in Turkey is very low. A kilo of bread costs 5 Liras. Those emigrated to Turkey are suffering from hunger. They are not given any jobs, no matter how highly educated they are; and they are obliged to sell their belongings in order to buy food. The government ignores the emigres in Turkey and offers them no help. I beg you in the name of Humanity, my friends, not to commit the crime of going to Turkey¹⁶²

In such speeches, Hikmet additionally indirectly attempts to counteract anti-communist propaganda such as Radio Free Europe. With Nazim Hikmet being such a well-known

¹⁵⁹ Göksu, Timms, and Yevtushenko, *Romantic communist*, 244-6.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

¹⁶¹ Somel and Başaran, "Engagement of a Communist Intellectual," 87-88.

¹⁶² "Turkish Poet Hikmet Nazim in Bulgaria", 3 January 1952 [Electronic Record]. HU OSA 300-1-2-13420; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: General Records: Information Items; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. <http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/osa:6c70a105-c7ea-4d89-834e-a90e3f810ae8> [Last accessed: 6 June, 2017]

figure, he was an ideal individual to utilize to combat Western propaganda. By convincing Bulgarian Turks that life was even worse in Turkey, and that the radio broadcasts were lies, the state used Hikmet as a stabilizing force.

As many eastern European countries were near Turkey, the transmission of their radio broadcasts could be received by Turkish listeners. Although many today are aware of Radio Free Europe, and their anti-communist propaganda transmitted to Eastern Europe, many Eastern European radio stations had Turkish-language programs intended to challenge the Turkish government and counteract American influence. These Turkish-language sections of Eastern European radios formed several cadres. According to a 1962 Turkish Communist Party report examining the activities of the party since the early 1950's, the Turkish communists had active radio broadcasts coming from Budapest, Moscow, Bucharest, Sofia and Leipzig.¹⁶³ There is very little material on these radio stations, and further research is needed to understand their activities, organization and impact. In 1962 the Turkish Communist Party held a conference in which the party groups presented short overviews of their activities as well as self-criticism and suggestions on how to improve efficacy. As it appears that there is little documentation of the party's activism abroad during this period, the reports from this conference offer important insights into the activities, organization and the structure of these cadres as well as their broadcasts. A subsection of a report labelled "A Short History, From August 1952 to October 1956" mentions that broadcasts in the early 1950's began poorly. The early cadres operating in Eastern

¹⁶³ "The Budapest Group's Proposals (Budapeşte Grubun Teklifleri)" In *1962 Konferansi: TKP MK Dış Bürosu* [The 1962 Congress of the TKP MK Foreign Bureau], by TÜSTAV (İstanbul: Tüstav, 2002), 120.

Europe lacked radio experience and thus the quality of the programs paled in comparison to their work in the late 1950's. This report also mentions the problem of communication between the various cadres and the Turkish Communist Party leadership. This document states, "Our party group was not in contact with the upper echelons of the Party, as required."¹⁶⁴

The American government was aware of the political activities of these communist exiles, and monitored their activity. According to William A. Helseth, an American political officer serving in Ankara in the late 1950's, the propaganda was the most aggressive from the late 1940's to the late 1950's. The Turkish communists, however, sought to follow the Soviet line, and thus when the Soviets attempted rapprochement, the Turkish communists followed the party line. As Helseth states, "...Turkish Communist Party and Soviet propaganda had transitioned from "brandishing the sword" to a "campaign of smiles."¹⁶⁵ This shift in approach in 1960 represented a critical juncture, as with the overthrowing of Adnan Menderes, a staunch anti-communist, the possibility of improved Turkish-Soviet relations returned. The most influential of these radio stations leading up to the coup was Bizim Radyo.

¹⁶⁴ "The Budapest Group's Short Work Report (Budapeşte Grubun Kısa Çalışma Raporu)" In *1962 Konferansı: TKP MK Dış Bürosu* [The 1962 Congress of the TKP MK Foreign Bureau], by TÜSTAV (İstanbul: Tüstav, 2002), 112.

¹⁶⁵ "WILLIAM A. HELSETH, Political Officer. Ankara (1957-1960)," in *American Diplomats In Turkey: Oral History Transcripts (1928-1997)*, ed. Rifat N. Bali. (İstanbul: Libra, 2011), 232-233.

5.6 Bizim Radyo

Bizim Radyo (1958-1961), was one of many Turkish-language programs broadcast from Eastern Europe. What differentiates this radio program from other programs was the comparable independence of the project from the control of the host governments. While in some stations, the socialist governments would essentially hand the Turkish communists transcripts, Bizim Radyo was a group project in which they wrote their own transcripts. While this Turkish language station was founded in Leipzig in 1958, throughout the late 1950's, this program was sometimes additionally broadcast from several Eastern European cities including Budapest.¹⁶⁶ Nazim Hikmet served an important role on this radio program, acting as a host, commenting on Turkish politics and critiquing the Menderes government. Additionally, considering that Nazim Hikmet was a Turkish celebrity because of his poetry and writings, Bizim Radyo had a much broader popular appeal. Bizim Radyo additionally incorporated a cadre of Turkish communists and leftists, many with experience in the media. For example, Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, who had published numerous newspapers, periodicals and magazines, alongside their young daughters, worked to produce the broadcasts. According to a Turkish Communist Party report, this station played a key role in communicating their message to the broader Turkish public, gauging this effect on the large volume of mail received from Turkish listeners.¹⁶⁷ Rather than adopting a purely Marxist ideological stance, Bizim Radyo attempted to appeal to a broader audience, criticizing the Menderes regime using the language of Kemalism and adopting a 'united front' strategy, working with non-communists to achieve their political goals. This can

¹⁶⁶ Göksu, Timms, and Yevtushenko, *Romantic communist*, 302.

¹⁶⁷ TÜSTAV, "The Budapest Group's Proposals (Budapeşte Grubun Teklifleri)," 131.

be seen directly in their slogan “united liberation front.”¹⁶⁸ By adopting this strategy, the communists, while few in Turkey, could appeal to the liberal opposition, as well as others who felt marginalized by the increasing authoritarianism of the Menderes regime.

Unlike much of the earlier propaganda from the Turkish communists that critiqued government policy, yet remained largely supportive of the government itself, Bizim Radyo was extremely critical of the government, and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, often referred to as “the little dictator” (küçük diktatör). These broadcasts accuse Prime Minister Menderes of betraying the legacy of the Independence War by selling Turkish sovereignty to the Americans. In one broadcast from July 4, 1958, Nazim Hikmet states:

When the Republic was declared, and laws against foreign capital were issued, the Assembly was a giant (büyükü)... Afterwards, why was it dwarfed (cüceleşti)? Because, laws have been passed, and treaties have been accepted which sell our national independence away for dollars. So, are there, or are there not, honorable and patriotic deputies in our dwarfed assembly? Of course there are ... and out of fear, the government has changed the Assembly's by-laws. Turkey's little dictator Mr. Menderes has completely undermined the power of the National Assembly with a tyrannical barracks style of discipline.¹⁶⁹

By selling Turkish sovereignty to the Americans, and turning Turkey into a de facto colony, these radio broadcasts highlight the tangible effects of this on the average working class Turk. In a July 13, 1958 broadcast, a speaker operating under the name “Silva”, states:

The other day at a workers' congress meeting, one of the workers said that we are living like the Indian poor. This analogy is quite accurate, albeit with one error. The destitute Indians were strolling in just a shirt and underwear in a British colony. Us, while claiming to be in an

¹⁶⁸ TÜSTAV, “Budapeşte Grubun Teklifleri [The Budapest Group's Proposals],” 131.

¹⁶⁹ Üstat, “Büsbütün Yok Olmaktan Kurtulmak İçin [To Get Rid of By Destroying Completely]. July 4, 1958. Üstat (Nazim Hikmet),” in *Bizim Radyoda Nâzim Hikmet*, by Anjel Açıkgoz (Istanbul: TÜSTAV, 2004), 25.

independent nation, have degenerated to the state of Indian slavery. Adnan Menderes' colonialism has made us visitors in our very own home.¹⁷⁰

While this may appear to be somewhat tame criticism in a mature democracy, such criticisms in Turkey of the government could result in the closure of the news outlet or even prison.

5.7 Conclusion

By the end of the 1950's student demonstrations in conjunction with dissatisfaction among junior officers in the Turkish military provoked a military coup, one in a long line of military interventions that have continued to this very day. These student protests were, at least in part, a response to the increasing authoritarianism of the Menderes regime, and foreign propaganda broadcasts criticizing state policy. Could the hostility to the Turkish communists by the Democrat Party as Turkey entered NATO and committed troops to the Korean War mark the overthrow of the Menderes era? What is known is that the hostility of the Democrat Party forced these communists out of the country and into the hands of the Soviet Union. In Eastern Europe, these communists, continued their activism. After their vicious treatment by the Turkish government, in which many communists were murdered or jailed, the discourse of moderate changes to Turkish foreign policy came to an end. Working under the auspices of the Soviet Union, radicalized by their experiences, these Turkish communists adopted an even harsher stance against the Turkish government, calling the president a dictator and demanding an end to the regime.

¹⁷⁰ Silva, "Mektup [Letter]. July 13, 1958. Silva," in *Bizim Radyoda Nâzim Hikmet*, by Anjel Açıkgoz (Istanbul: TÜSTAV, 2004), 40.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to elucidate the discourse and experience of the Turkish communists as Turkey entered the Cold War. The literature on communism in Cold War Turkey often treats the phenomenon as a product of the 1960's. While it is correct that the radical left expanded greatly during this time, an examination of the 1945 to 1960 period explains the popularity of the radical left and is essential in understanding the ideology, aims and radicalism of the Turkish communists. As Turkey entered the Cold War, the Turkish Communist Party attempted to adapt the Moscow line to conditions in Turkey by challenging the partnership with the United States as running counter to the path set by Ataturk. According to the left, this partnership with the Americans would cede Turkish sovereignty, lead to the economic exploitation of the Turkish people and would result in Turkey being dragged into wars by the warmongering American imperialists. While the Turkish communists offered only moderate criticisms of the state, pointing out the error of their ways, concerns over Soviet expansion, a domestic hatred of communism and American concerns over Soviet penetration caused the government to arrest and silence known or suspected communists. The attempt to crush the Turkish communists using legal pressure forced many of them abroad, especially to communist Eastern Europe. This repression backfired, as it proved that the state could not be coaxed into changing its course. The attempt to crush the left additionally drove them into the hands, and service, of the same communist states that the Turkish government feared they were working for the entire time. Such a process radicalized the left, transforming them from voices of moderate opposition, to a revolutionary element within Turkey. In essence, the fear of

Turkish communist collusion with the Eastern Bloc made Turkish communist activism even more aggressive.

By utilizing the communist's journals and incorporating the personal writings of the Turkish left themselves, this thesis has contributed to both the national history of Turkey, and broader history of the Cold War. However, much more research is needed to better understand the history of this period in Turkey. Further research is needed to understand the relations between the Turkish Communist Party leadership and Moscow. How dependent were the communists on Soviet financial and material support? To what extent did the Turkish communists set their own political agenda, to what extent were orders given from Moscow? Additionally, a closer look at the Turkish communist broadcasts coming from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe would improve our understanding of the counter-narratives in opposition to the propaganda produced by the Turkish government during this turbulent period. With the publishing of memoirs and the opening of archives, a quote by Winston Churchill comes to mind, "Now is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

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