



PSIR 335 - Formation of Modern Turkey

Instructor: Dr. Selin Akyüz



Communist Party of Turkey (1920)

Doğukan Çağlayan - 32759258012

CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Introduction	3
Communist Party of Turkey (1920)	3
The First Congress of the Communist Organizations in Turkey	4
Reflection of Baku Congress in Ankara	5
Green Army	5
Turkish Communist Party (official)	5
Information about my research	6
Mustafa Suphi	6
Second Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey	7
Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party	8
Third Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey	8
Menshevik Orientation	9
Between 1928-1945	10
Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey	10
Decision Against Fascism and Decentralization	11
Conclusion	11
Bibliography	13

Abstract

The aim of this study is to provide information about the Turkey's first Communist Party. Firstly, it will start with information about the date of establishment. Then the founder will be told and information about the assassination will be given. The most important part will be how the post-assassination party program has changed. In addition, the difficulties of the party will be explained.

Key Words: Turkish Communist Party, Mustafa Suphi, Turkish Communist Party (official), Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party, Mensheviks.

Abbreviations:

TKP: Communist Party of Turkey (1920)

TİÇSF: Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party

Introduction

With the October Revolution of 1917, communism was no longer a dream. Tsarist Russia was scattered instead of the Soviet Union was established. The October Revolution had affected Turkey like the entire world. Among those who were first influenced were names such as Mustafa Suphi. These people are united under the name Communist Party of Turkey. The aim was to carry out the great communist revolution in Turkey. However, this request was first blocked by the imperialist occupation and then by the Ankara Government. Some of the founders were killed and others imprisoned. But the party never gave up its goal.

Communist Party of Turkey (1920)

In many ways, 1920 was a turning point in the history of the East. It is no coincidence that the most important resistance against the imperialist powers' policy of colonizing the East for centuries began in this period. Having succeeded against the tsarist forces supported by the Western imperialists in their civil war, Soviet Russia began to produce new policies for the Eastern peoples in order to put an end to the sovereignty of Western imperialism in the East.¹ The imperialist forces began the occupation of Turkey after the Armistice of Mudros. The Turkish nation started a great struggle for independence and dignity under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Under the leadership of Mustafa Suphi, the "Turkish Communist Organization" was established in Russia, the majority of which were Turkish prisoners. In the struggle for independence against the invaders; Soviet Russia, which emerged as a threat against Western imperialism, was seen as the only alternative to receive external support and assistance.² Therefore, organizations acting on behalf of Turkey from the beginning, they felt the need to establish a relationship with the Soviet Union.³ Turkey Communist Organization's formation was also caused by this requirement. Under the influence of the October Revolution and the country was occupied by the imperialist invaders had appeared in various communist organizations in Turkey. The foreign organization headed by Mustafa Suphi and the organizations in Istanbul and Ankara wanted to convene in Ankara. However, the Ankara government did not allow the congress to be held. Consequently, it was decided to hold the congress abroad. The government of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan agreed to hold the

¹ Yavuz Aslan, Birinci Dođu Halkları Kurultayı(1-7 Eylül 1920- Bakü), İstanbul, 2007, p.20.

² Yavuz Aslan, Türkiye Komünist Fırkası'nın Kuruluşu ve Mustafa Suphi, Ankara, 1997, p.49.

³ Aslan, Dođu Halkları Kurultayı, p.200.

congress in Baku. In July 1920, the Turkish Communist Organization announced a congress in Baku in September.⁴

The First Congress of the Communist Organizations in Turkey

There seems to be some confusion about the name of the Congress. Congress takes its name from the minutes. Published in Baku in 1920, the First Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey name is used. However, the actual name of the congress 'The First Congress of the Communist Organizations in Turkey' should be. This was clearly stated in the congress invitations.⁵

Why should not be the First Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey? Because one of the purposes of collecting the congress was to set up the Communist Party of Turkey. It is logically impossible for a congress of a party that is not yet there. Already the party was officially created by this congress, the program and the constitution was made by this congress.

Anatolia, Istanbul and group operating in the communist Soviet territory and brings together 75 delegates representing 15 organizations and institutions of this center was established with Turkey Communist Party congress unites under one administration. At the congress, the program and regulations were adopted. The National War of Independence, the land problem and working within the peasantry, the question of nationalities, women's movement issues such as important decisions were made.⁶ The Central Committee was elected. Mustafa Suphi became the chairman and Ethem Nejat as the general secretary. Thus, Turkey Communist Party was the sole representative of Turkish communists.⁷

⁴ Yeni Dünya (Bakü), 22 Temmuz 1920.

⁵ Azerbaycan Komünist Partisi Merkezi Bürosuna gönderilen kongreye davet yazısı aşağıdadır:
 AKP Merkezi Bürosuna 9 Eylül 1920
 No.1389.

10 Eylül Cuma günü gündüz saat 4'te Merkezi İşçi Kulübünün binasında Türkiye Komünist Teşkilâtlarının Birinci Kongresi açılıyor. Kongrenin açılışına sizin temsilcilerin iştirak etmesini rica ediyoruz.

Başkan Mustafa Suphi
 Sekreter Lütfi

(Azerb.Cum.SPİHA, F.1, Op.1, D.98, L.29).

⁶ "Türkiye Komünist Partisi 58 Yaşında", Ürün Sosyalist Dergi, sayı 51, Eylül 1978, p. 29.

⁷ Yavuz Aslan, "Yeni Belge ve Bilgiler Işığında Mustafa Suphi'lerin Türkiye'ye Dönüşü", 1920-1921'ler Türkiye'si ve Mustafa Suphi'lerin Dönüşü Sempozyumu, İstanbul, 2005, p.105.

I. Reflection of Baku Congress in Ankara

A. Green Army

The Green Army Society emerged in May 1920. At that time, the conservative circles of Istanbul accused the National Struggle Movement with Bolshevism and tried to make them "infidels".⁸ Therefore, an association called Green Army was established in Anatolia in order to prepare an environment conducive to the compulsory cooperation with the Soviets by saying that the Bolshevism was nothing but the application of Islam, by using the same weapon in front of the masses and especially the soldiers.⁹ The Green Army Society was a secret organization, since the government was not established by giving an official declaration, but it was not without the knowledge of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, it was already established by people from his close circle.¹⁰ However, when the Circassian Ethem joined the organization in Ankara on his way to suppress the Çapanoğlu uprising or on his return,¹¹ a serious armed force fell into the hands of the Green Army,¹² necessitating Mustafa Kemal Pasha to stop the activity.¹³ The Green Army was definitively dissolved in the autumn of 1920. Shortly after Mustafa Kemal's orders, Communist Party of Turkey was founded. Some members of the Green Army played an active role in the party.¹⁴

B. Turkish Communist Party (official)

The establishment of the Turkish Communist Party (official) may be related to the military-strategic situation of the 1920's eyes. Until then, the Turkish forces had failed to show any presence. If the fronts were withdrawn, the Assembly Government might have had to take refuge in Eastern Anatolia and be under the influence of Russian power. As Lord Kinross thinks, it is possible that Mustafa Kemal Pasha would deal with such a situation and as a Turkish party, he would have established the party to provide some independence in the administration against the Soviets.¹⁵ Mustafa Kemal, through the Communist Party of Turkey, sought to win the support of the Soviet Union. However, Turkey Communist Party's life lasted only three months and was closed in 1921.¹⁶

⁸ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar 1: 1908-1925*, İstanbul, 2000, p.286.

⁹ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk II*, p.467.

¹⁰ Atatürk, *Nutuk II*, p.468.

¹¹ Atatürk, *Nutuk II*, p.468-469.

¹² Niyazi Berkes, *Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 1964, p.441-442.

¹³ Atatürk, *Nutuk II*, p.471.

¹⁴ Mete Tunçay, *Mesai: Halk Şurular Fırkası Programı*, Ankara, 1972, p.18.

¹⁵ Lord Kinross, *Atatürk: A Biography of Mustafa Kemal, Father of Modern Turkey*, 1965, p.285.

¹⁶ Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar 1: 1908-1925*, p.315.

Information about my research

I'll do my research on the Communist Party of Turkey and movements. I will use the party's magazine (Ürün Sosyalist Dergi) as the basis for my research. I think that the 1920s will badly affect the resources I can find because of war and impossibilities. I think I will solve my problem by using books written at missing points. With the murder of Mustafa Suphi and his 14 comrades, the Turkish Communist movement will never be the same.¹⁷ After this murder the Communist Party of Turkey was declared illegal, and some members have been arrested. I'm analyzing how the murder and illegal declarations had an impact on party movements. I will learn about the party view during and after the war. The communist movement in Turkey is usually an illegal structure. One of the reasons may be the Communist Party of Turkey. To declare the country's communist organization illegal has increased its commitment to communism. Hence my research question is: How did the declaration of the Communist Party of Turkey illegal change the party policy and movements? The reason why I choose this question is to learn the reason behind the fact that illegal structures often come when communism is mentioned.

Mustafa Suphi

At the Baku Congress, the leaders of the TKP, Mustafa Suphi and Ethem Nejat, started preparations to move to Anatolia and participate in the War of Independence. When the preparations were completed, they left for Ankara. Mustafa Suphi, before arriving in Turkey he has reached an agreement with the government in Ankara¹⁸. In his letter, Mustafa Kemal Pasha stated that he and his friends' only purpose was to ensure national independence and that they were happy to see Mustafa Suphi and his friends work for the same purpose. In Mustafa Suphi's answer, the common goal is defined as the liberation of the country from slavery and poverty. Mustafa Suphi and his friends first went to Kars and then to Erzurum.¹⁹ However, Erzurum could not be entered due to the events and went to Trabzon.²⁰ Due to the demonstrations against him in Trabzon, Suphi and his comrades were asked to be sent to Batumi with an engine to return to Baku. Thereupon, Suphi, his wife and 14 friends were put on an engine and set out for Batumi. However, with another engine immediately behind them,

¹⁷ George Harris, Türkiye'de Komünizmin Kaynakları, İstanbul, 1979, p.10-11.

¹⁸ Tunçay, Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar 1: 1908-1925. p.565-569.

¹⁹ Kazım Karabekir, İstiklâl Harbimiz, İstanbul, 2008, p.909-910.

²⁰ Karabekir, İstiklâl Harbimiz, p.978-979.

Faik reis and his friends caught up with them by night towards Sürmene and killed them and threw them into the sea.²¹

These heavy attacks prevented the war of liberation to remain under the control of Ankara and prevented it from turning into a radical revolutionary movement against imperialism and capitalism.²²

*Communism has certainly not been a mass movement and has not succeeded. Nevertheless, during the early stages of the struggle for independence, there was, at one point, almost an end to the communists' attainment of power. At that time, the communist leaders managed to establish a special relationship with the important partisan troops that constitute the main military power of the Anatolian revolution movement. These forces, which were influenced by the communists, had such an attitude of defiance and defiance against the Ankara regime that Atatürk had to establish his own official Turkish Communist Party in an effort to control and align this burgeoning communist movement.*²³

Second Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey

On August 15, 1922, the second congress of TKP, the leader of which was physically abolished, was held in Ankara. Even at such a critical time in terms of national struggle that had not yet won a decisive victory over the invading Greek armies, the Ankara government banned the congress and embarked on large arrests. Workers and communist delegates from the factories were prevented. The delegation of the French Communist Party, who came to watch the congress, was shot. Despite all this, the congress continued to work secretly in Küçükkesat vineyards and held five sessions.²⁴ The current developments and the policies of the TKP were discussed in five sessions.

*The Kemalist bourgeoisie's policy of reconciliation with imperialism and the practice of terrorism on the working peasant masses was exposed.*²⁵

It was decided to give priority to the completion of the national liberation war, to ensure the unity of all political groups against the imperialist occupation, while the party maintained its independence in order to protect the interests of the workers and peasants, and

²¹ Tunçay, Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar 1: 1908-1925. p.343.

²² Muhsin Salihoğlu, 1920'den Günümüze TKP - 1, Ürün Sosyalist Dergi: Sayı:15, 15 - Eylül - Ekim 2003, Retrieved from: <https://urundergisi.com/makaleler.php?ID=256>. Accessed December 17, 2019.

²³ Harris, Türkiye'de Komünizmin Kaynakları, p.10-11.

²⁴ Muhsin Salihoğlu, TKP Tarihine Bakış, Ürün Kitap Dizisi:3 - 10 Eylül 1997, Retrieved from: <https://urundergisi.com/makaleler.php?ID=91>. Accessed December 17, 2019.

²⁵ Salihoğlu, 1920'den Günümüze TKP - 1.

opposed the bourgeoisie's attempts to reconcile with imperialism. The new central committee was elected and Salih Hacıoğlu was appointed general secretary. Approximately three weeks after the congress, on September 12, 1922, the Ankara government banned TKP, which had been legally operating until then.

Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party

The communists working in occupied Istanbul published *Aydınlık* magazine in June 1921 after the closure of TİÇSF (Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party) and *Kurtuluş* magazine in March 1920. The magazine was stopped by the British after a while. In May 1922, the journal was allowed to re-publish.²⁶ In November 1922, the sultanate was abolished and Istanbul passed political control of the national government. On 15 April 1923, TİÇSF resumed its activities as the legal arm of TKP. Only 15 days later, on May 1, 1923, the party's statement was distributed on the pretext of "betraying the homeland". The bourgeoisie wanted to direct the working class by gathering it around a nationalist center. The bourgeoisie, who could not tolerate even the smallest sign of democracy, was accused of betraying the communists, who formed an independent labor union in Istanbul. The order of oppression and terror of the bourgeoisie was now for the communists in Istanbul. Even though the Communists were acquitted at the end of the trial, the repression continued and the TİÇSF was dissolved in 1924.²⁷

Third Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey

The third congress of the TKP, which was tried to be crushed since the day it was founded, was also secretly gathered in Istanbul Akaretler under this pressure environment. The congress, which aimed to determine the orientation of the TKP under the new conditions in which political independence was obtained by ending the imperialist occupation and the power passed into the hands of the national bourgeoisie, was held on New Year's Eve connecting 1924 to 1925.²⁸ It was decided to prepare a new program at the congress and the outline of this program was determined. Şefik Hüsnü was appointed as the general secretary.

²⁶ Kerem Yıldırım, TİÇSF'nin bıraktığı devrimci miras: Aydınlanıcılık: Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Sosyalist Fırkası 97 yaşında, 22 Eylül 2016, Retrieved from: <https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/ticsfnin-biraktigi-devrimci-miras-aydinlilcilik-1>. Accessed December 18, 2019.

²⁷ Salihoğlu, 1920'den Günümüze TKP - 1.

²⁸ TKP 65 Yaşında: Türkiye Komünist Partisi'nin Savaş Tarihinden Sayfalar, TÜSTAV- Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 1984, p.56-57. Retrieved from: <http://www.tustav.org/yayinlar/kutuphane/TKP-kutuphanesi/TKP-65-yasinda-1985.pdf>. Accessed December 18, 2019.

Two months after the Third Congress, in March 1925, he founded the bourgeoisie open dictatorship, which passed the Law of Takrir-i Sükûn (Ensuring Silence), citing the Kurdish rebellion led by Sheikh Sait.²⁹ The legal organs of the party *Aydınlık* and *Sickle-Hammer* were closed. Instead of these closed journals, the local *Yoldaş* newspaper of Bursa was published on 23 April 1925 with a new content. However, it was immediately banned. On the occasion of May 1, 1925, a large arrest was initiated on the brochure published by the Association of Workers and the leading communists were taken to Ankara and sentenced to heavy penalties in the independence court. Sefik Hüsni, Nazım Hikmet, Ali Cevdet and Hasan Ali Ediz, who were not captured, were sentenced to 15 years in absentia.

Menshevik Orientation

In May 1926, with the initiative of Şefik Hüsni, a party conference was held in Vienna to eliminate the irregularities caused by the arrests. The draft of the second program of the TKP was adopted. Vedat Nedim was appointed as the secretary of the organization in order to carry out the work in the country under the leadership of Şefik Hüsni, who worked under the management of the Comintern. Vedat Nedim period was a period of full Menshevik orientation. The Vedat Nedim administration attempted to impose on the party a line of inaction away from Leninist principles. This provoked a reaction in the party's local organizations. There was intense debate within the party about the definition of the Kemalist power, the role of the party and the principles of organization. Vedat Nedim and his deputy Şevket Süreyya gradually moved backwards and started defending a complete liquidation program.

It was decided to establish a new provisional central committee with the approval of the Comintern, which found that this situation jeopardized the party's existence. Vedat Nedim and Şevket Süreyya brought the Menshevik lines to the point of cooperation with the police and handed the party documents to the police.³⁰ In this widespread arrest campaign known as withholding of 1927, 48 people from the party's Istanbul, Adana and Izmir organizations were brought to court. In addition, 6 people including Nazım Hikmet and İsmail Bilen were tried in absentia. 30 people were convicted of forming a secret organization.³¹

²⁹ Salihođlu, 1920'den Günümüze TKP - 1.

³⁰ Haluk Şilan, Türkiye Komünist Hareketinde bir Sıra Neferi: Şoför İdris, *Gelenek Dergisi*: Sayı 54, Mayıs 1997, Retrieved from: <https://gelenek.org/turkiye-komunist-hareketinde-bir-sira-neferi1-sofor-idris/>. Accessed December 19, 2019.

³¹ Salihođlu, TKP Tarihine Bakış.

They declared Marxism-Leninism invalid and argued that kemalism was the only valid ideology. Later, in 1932, they published Kadro magazine. They were the flagship of the kemalism they presented as the third way against socialism and liberalism, and they embraced the theory of worshiping chiefs, glorifying the state, and Turkish nationalism.³²

Between 1928-1945

1928 and 1929 witnessed two new arrests for the TKP. In 1929, there was a disagreement within the TKP that resulted in a split on the attitude to be taken against the Kemalist power. The new central committee, which was convened at a congress convened by party members who opposed reconciliation with the bourgeoisie and proposed a more leftist line of struggle, was not accepted by the Comintern. Nazım Hikmet, including the aforementioned opposition group was expelled from the party on charges of trotskyism. The opposition did not recognize this decision and continued its activities by considering itself as the main party.³³

Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Turkey

In 1932, the fourth congress of TKP was held in the Golden Horn district in Istanbul.³⁴ The 4th Congress convened with the revision of the reports, programs and regulations on the party's situation and political platform, for the approval of the new working platform and the election of the new central committee. Decisions were taken in order for the party to conduct works in accordance with the confidentiality conditions. A new and temporary central committee was elected. The expulsion of Vedat Nedim Tör and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, who betrayed the party, was officially approved.³⁵

The TKP, which became more regular after the fourth congress, responded to the work of the Turkish bourgeoisie with four major communist arrests in the same year. The government also made arrests in 1933, 1934, 1935 and 1936 in order to extinguish the struggle of the communists under heavy conditions with great courage and sacrifice.³⁶ During this period, the party made special arrangements to take advantage of even the smallest legal means and tried to correct the tendencies of sectarianism in the way it worked. İsmail Bilen

³² İsmail Bilen, TKP 5. Kongresi Açılış Konuşması, Ürün Sosyalist Dergi: Sayı:22, 22 - Ağustos - Eylül 2007, Retrieved from: <https://urundergisi.com/makaleler.php?ID=1588>. Accessed December 19, 2019.

³³ Mete Tunçay, Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar-II 1925-1936, İstanbul, 1992, p.76.

³⁴ TKP 65 Yaşında: Türkiye Komünist Partisi'nin Savaş Tarihinden Sayfalar, p.59-63.

³⁵ TKP 58 Yaşında, Ürün Sosyalist Dergi: Sayı:51, Eylül 1978, p.31-32. Retrieved from: http://tustav.org/yayinlar/sureli_yayinlar/urun/sayi_51_Eylul_1978.pdf. Accessed December 19, 2019.

³⁶ Salihoğlu, TKP Tarihine Bakış.

was the secretary of the organization until the end of 1937, when he was appointed as TKP representative in the Comintern.

Decision Against Fascism and Decentralization

At the seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935, the world communist movement adopted a new orientation to stop the worldwide fascist danger, highlighting the "united front against war and fascism". With this decision, which was called the decision of decentralization, it was thought that the Turkish government could be drawn more easily to the line of friendship with the Soviet Union and to stay away from the fascist states. Based on this so-called decentralization decision, the TKP adopted a new policy. This policy was announced by the party document from August 20, 1936 Statement of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Turkey. According to the document, our national independence is again in great danger. The main source of this danger is the intense confusion and tensions of the international situation after Hitler's fascism prevailed in Germany, and this great state scattering provocations to ignite an imperialist war at any time.³⁷

The new line did not lead to any softening in the state's attitude towards the communists. In 1938, a major communist arrest was made. Many TKP members, including Nazım Hikmet and Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, were sentenced to heavy sentences. During the Second World War, the pressures on the TKP became more intense. TKP members and executives who carried out an intense exhibition campaign against fascism were subjected to tortured inquiries and confined to dungeons.³⁸

Towards the end of the Second World War, TKP entered a period of revival and expansion, benefiting from the national and international conditions that became available when it became clear that fascism would be defeated in 1943. The number of members of the party and organizational units increased. While more intensive activities were carried out within the mass organizations, the party started to establish new mass organizations by its own initiatives; began to produce political and cultural publications.

Conclusion

From what I have seen in my research, TKP is undergoing many changes since it was declared illegal. Particularly, the difficulties exerted by the Ankara government did not scare the communists. Despite the killing of the party administration, the closure of the party and

³⁷ Tunçay, Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar-II 1925-1936, p.252.

³⁸ Şilan, Türkiye Komünist Hareketinde bir Sıra Neferi: Şoför İdris.

the arrests, TKP tried to return to legal politics. Although they referred to the Ankara government as bourgeois in their journals, they never rebelled. I think the underlying reason for this is the difficult conditions the country was in during those years. The TKP administration could never have preferred an imperialist occupation. Therefore, their priorities were on the independence of the state and the people. They even took the risk of working together with the Ankara government. But they seem to have received an unwanted response in return. But they tried to solve the problem by trying not to take an illegal attitude no matter what.

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