

CURRENTS IN YOUTH MOVEMENTS OF TURKEY

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Students have long been an active political force in Turkish Society. In the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, riots and demonstrations by the İstanbul medrese students (softa) frequently threw the capital into turmoil.

Ever since Atatürk (Founder of the Turkish Republic) students had considered themselves as the ultimate guardians of Atatürkism and had risen in instinctive protest against any private or official threats against the Kemalist Revolution.

Mustafa Kemal's (Atatürk) six day speech from October 15 to 20, 1927 to the second Congress of the R.P.P. was his summing up of the Nationalist movement since he disembarked Samsun on May 19, 1919. This speech also looked to the future, ending with an exhortation to Turkish R. Youth to defend national independence and the Turkish Republic. Atatürk's oft quoted statement "Oh Turkish Youth, the protection of the Republic and the Country's independence is your first and sacred duty" was accepted as a political creed and has since been memorized by countless Turkish Students and inscribed on public buildings and monuments.

Atatürk has chosen the youth as the successors and defenders of the Turkish Republic because no other weapon was then available to him and because he did not want to alienate the Turkish young people. He could not overtly use the army because of his frequently enunciated belief that politics must control the gun, not the opposite. He could not use party or government organizations because they could become the foremost targets of his purge. He could not use, then unorganized workers and peasants.

On several occasions in the 1940's the Turkish students had stoned and broken into newspaper offices which followed a leftist or a pro-Communist line. Similarly as guardians of Turkey's national interests, they had sparked the notorious disturbances in Istanbul during the London negotiations on Cyprus which slipped from their hands. September 1955,

The Military Revolution of May 1960, brought Turkish Students to international prominence when the overthrow of the undemocratic and corrupt Menderes regime was initiated by the revolt of University students in Ankara and Istanbul.

Nevertheless less drawn principally from middle-class families whose instinct for orderly government was strong and who were committed to the existing order, the Turkish Students had in general remained respectful of governmental authority and immune from involvement in daily politics. The resurgence of religious practice and the spread of spiritual reaction in the 1950s disenchanted them with the Democrats. But even so in May 1960 they acted only after the tide of opinion, even in their homes, had turned against the government because of threats to political freedoms and multi-party system.

In 1960's a new term has entered the social and political science language- "Confrontation Politics". Some who play this new political game are authentic desperados or middle-class students acting out a fantasy wish of revolution. The purpose is to prod and incite a dormant, insensitive society into recognizing its moral failures. The young semi-anarchists or political forces behind them have no expectations of creating new electoral majorities and small expectation of persuading large numbers of people. Shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 there appeared tendencies within the Communist movement opposed even by Lenin and Trotsky, which led to a strategy of constant assault; endless demonstrations unremittingly offensive, indeed a precursor of confrontation politics.

Some ultra-left German Communists even gave this strategy a name "The theory of electrification"; through reckless self-sacrifice, the party would electrify the masses into revolution. These

German Communist electrifiers mainly caused the rise of Hitlerism and they helped the Nazis to come to power.

Taken simply as a syndrome of going into the streets (what has been called the theory of permanent Demonstrations) the politics of confrontation would not be a very serious matter. Far more serious is the "political outlook" which inspires confrontationist acts; is developed by Herbert Marcuse, the claim here is that society can be shaken into change if shaken at all, only through attacks by marginal groups, the outraged poor, alienated hippies, rebellions students. In his writings particularly in (one Dimensional Man 1964) which have made him a hero of the New Left Herbert Marcuse makes a critique of society and tries to show that contemporary society is a repressive society in all its aspects and that any change would require a total rejection, a perpetual confrontation. This is- I think- the contact between his books and the world wide student movement;

Many students who join in civil disobedience direct action and other forms of obstructive protest see other tactics as necessary catalys of social reform, in an age when conventional methods have proved inadequate in this connection I would like to point out that the people studying or simply observing student revolts have been struck by certain recurring pattern of action and internationally common styles in the rhetoric of confrontation almost in all democratic countries.

In the beginning the revolt almost always has the same two features: there is only a very small but well organized minority of troublemakers and mostly they have no legitimate grievances. The small minority with no legitimate grievance starts out by selecting an issue. Curiously almost any old issue will do. But it must be an issue that can be somehow related to a sacred topics; In the US these sacred topics are! the war in Vietnam and racial justice. In Turkey, Cyprus, independence, sovereignty, underdevelopment, land and tax reforms, anti imperialism, anti capitalism etc... The issue has to be one on which the University authorities cannot give in (Because generally it is not victory Radicals want it is the battle). Thus the University authorities become the target of the protest. The number

of demonstrators will grow and the mass media will pick up the leaders and dignify the uproar. Mario Savio in Berkeley, Daniel Cohn-Bendit in Paris and Mark Rudd at Columbia were people that the TV people (Because they were more telegenic) chose to present as leaders. TV also dignifies the proceedings; it is true that if you are at a demonstration at noon, you can go home and watch yourself on the 6 o'clock news.

The next stage is to force the University administration to call the police. There will be wide spread revulsion. The masses of students, even sympathetic professors will become active in the protest; The original issue will have been forgotten the list of students and faculty demands grows to include the reorganization of society. Professors opposing the protest will be accused by a kind of (left Mc-Carthyism) to be in favor of the war, lackeys of imperialism and capitalism or simply the "CIA agent" But what demonstrators perceive as the highest idealism looks from outside like an "imbecilic dogmatism." (Columbia- Racist Institution). But how does it work? What is the fuel by which the mechanism functions? The unique feature of the present situation in the Universities is the pervasive dislike and distrust of authority; Students hate their governments, police forces and university administrations. But six thousands years ago an Egyptian priest carved on a stone the lament. "Our earth is degenerate..... children no longer obey their parents" Impatience and antipathy for authority have always been hallmarks of youth.

But it is needless to say that I reject the view that ascribes all campus disturbances primarily to a conspiracy of student revolutionaries, that demonology is no less false, than the naive radical doctrine that attributes all wars, racial injustices and poverty to the machinations of a so-called capitalist and militarist "establishment". Part of the responsibility for the disturbances rest upon the revolutionaries consciously seeking to subvert and destroy the university. But their total number is small. In examining the conditions of student life which make for unrest at the universities it is important not to overlook the fact that the universities themselves are in a state of transition where they face exceedingly complex yet fundamental issues concerning their functions (The role of University in Society) and curriculum.

The lack of accepted answers to such basic questions also promotes student dissatisfaction and unrest.

The university leaders agreed that racial injustice, the war and threat of more wars, poverty amid plenty are legitimate causes to anger young and old alike. But no one can deny that there is among the students a small segment who are destructive and bent on radicalizing and dominating rather than improving the campus. Today's students argue that their form of pressuredirect action confrontations sit-and (in some cases) physical violence- applied at points of institutional weakness, is a legitimate political tool comparable to the other forms of pressure (Subrosa power techniques) shimal - large political contributions, covert lobbying, favoritism and the like-effectively aplpied by those who would lead society astray.

The social protest of the 1960's In Democratic Societies takes also the form of a "Equality" revolution. The liberty has become the ideology of the more fortunate. Those who ask for more equality are not opposed to liberty of course; what they want is sufficient equality so that they too, can enjoy the liberty now virtually monopolized by a "bappy few." The main belief of most protesters is that there can be equality, democracy and autonomy of enough people want them.

Youth is questioning the whole basis of souety creating a crisis in society. Therefore, Ibelieve the that term (crisis of youth) is incorrect.

Social protest is needed yet we must try to make certain that the methods we use to fight against injustice do not give the opponents of liberty an occasion for destroying both the struggle for justice and the procedures of liberty.

The education of Turkish University Studnts suffered during the past year and was interfered by boycotts (sit down) strikes and sit-ins demonstrations, seizure of buildings for various reasons. Exam procedures, entraile exams, visits of the sixth fleet, Anti-Americanism'n; dozen of students of the Middle East Technical University when American Ambassador Komer and President of the METU Kemal Kurdax were having lunch at the University over turned the Ambassador's car and turned it. January 6, 1968.A

quick calculation proves that University Students had spent three months out on the streets demonstrating. It is a fact that with the exception of few faculties neither the Istanbul University, nor the Ankara and the Middle East Technical Universities have been able to conduct regular classes. The Hecettepe University of Ankara which had stayed out of boycotts until now, finally followed suit.

The government decision to make changes in the TRT bill was taken as sufficient reason by the students of the Political Science Faculty's Journalism Institute to boycott their classes. They said that the government plans to control and use pressure upon the autonomous Radio Administration.

But especially in February 1969 bloody incidents took place in Istanbul between two extremist groups; the one, calling themselves Nationalist and the other defining themselves as anti-Imperialist's. Demonstrations and protest marches initiated by the visit of the Sixth Fleet to Istanbul and the provocations of the leftist group goaded the rightists into counter action. Therefore when the rightist group gathered at Taksim Square the two groups were left to work out their disagreement with stones, knives and sticks. The riot police caught between the two groups almost 20 thousand in number, were helpless and finally stopped the fighting with the use of tear gaz (smoke bombs).

It is well known that one aim of confrontation politics is the "polarization" of society. This means that by constant assault the activists (radical extremists) hope to drive a segment of the liberals into radicalism. There upon the "mushy middle" of the country will be broken up and we can then look forward to an apocalypse, with two extremes hardened and ready for a final conflict.

Years of systematic effort exerted by those who were trying to use the youth for their own petty political ambitions have finally succeeded and today the leftists, the rightists, the communists, the commandos have come face to face, fighting each other on every possible opportunity. One day this group, the other that that group, under various pretension invade schools, hurl Molotov cocktails and injure each other with stones, sticks and even guns. Then riot police raids the Universities upon the appeal of the school administ-

rations to discover unbelievable amount of weapons and pictures of the guevara and Ho Chi Minh. A University is essentially a free community of scholars both teachers and students, dedicated to the pursuit of truth and knowledge solely through reason and civility. Any sizeable group left to pursue disruptive demonstrations, can destroy either the University by repeatedly disrupting its normal activities or the University freedom by compelling the authorities as a last resort to call the police in order that its activities may continue. The vital decision rests with the liberal and reform minded students; they can save or destroy the institution. It is an irony that today the threats to the values of University autonomy in Turkey defended in the 1950's by students comes not from autocratic administration or from fascist corps, but from the student mob. What is at stake now is the freedom to teach, to inquire and to learn..

The advocates of confrontation politics seem also undisturbed by the fact that they are setting precedents which could lead to a major crisis for democracy; if it is permissible for left wing students to seize buildings, why may not neo fascists do the same thing.?

The politics of confrontation bears an inherent drift toward "antidemocratic elitism" Electoral processes are declared irrelevant, majorities mere formalities. This desperate elitism dismisses the people as boobs and assigns the task of history to a self appointed vanguard.

The whole thing reminds one of Dostoyevsky's "The Possessed" also of George Orwell's caustic remark that a certain kind of "infantile leftism" is playing with fire on the part of people who don't even know that the fire is hot. It is the reason why even Lenin in his (Left Wing Communism; An infantile disorder) explains why compromise, and even retreat is sometimes necessary.