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Mustafa Kemal and Turkey in the Correspondences of Soviet Bureaucrats (1918-1922)

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Abstract

Capitalism and socialism has been the most common ideologies in the world history geographically. While capitalism feeding from a system based on proprietary property and colonialism caused the French Revolution of 1789, socialism putting forward collective property, economic equality, and community brought about the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Capitalism dragged Europe into the First World War in 1914 called "war of sharing the world". Since the most important regions which were desired to be shared by the countries which were the responsible for starting the First World War were in the borders of the Ottoman Empire, it was evaluated that early years of 20th century were years troubling for the history of Turkey. The citizens and administrators of the state became a focal point of the events of political and economic. The Treaty of Sevr (1920), which it aggravated the situation in Turkey and affected all ideas, movements, and ideologies, was signed at this period.

One of the open-minded personalities to new ideologies in the Ottoman Empire bureaucracy was Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who is the founder of the Republic of Turkey. Even if the National Struggle movement, which were similar with the French Revolution of 1789 and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and

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started by Mustafa Kemal Pasha was affected by both ideologies of that period, it was different them. Researches based on only European, which was related to the Kemalist movement has been carried out so far. However, it is undeniable that Russian archives are of great importance on Kemalist movement. Those archives consist of unpublished correspondences, and several intelligence texts of Soviet Russia related to the National Struggle movement besides.

In this study, the documents related to Mustafa Kemal Pasha and Turkey contained in the various correspondences of Soviet Russia between 1918 and 1922 were investigated. Moreover, Mustafa Kemal Pasha was also compared with Lenin and Mustafa Kemal's view against Soviet Russia and Lenin's thoughts towards the National Struggle movement were evaluated. Lenin's ways of obtaining information and the nature of his intelligence were queried. As a result, it was seen that Soviet Russia had an accurate and in-depth knowledge about Turkey which was newly getting established and the leaders of the states of Turkey and Soviet carried out strategies in direction of national and common interests in foreign policy.

Keywords

Mustafa Kemal Pasha, Socialism, Kemalists, Russia, Turkey

Introduction

As a result of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Tsarist regime, which kept the Russian Empire alive, was overthrown, and Vladimir Ilyic Lenin began to direct new Russian state in the form of Soviet administration. Lenin, who needed successful and talented staff, also benefited from the Tsarist statesmen when needed. Although it was not easy to strengthen the new state and new regime during First World War, Lenin and his team were able to overcome difficulties with diplomatic maneuvers. The Soviet Russia administration first decided to withdraw from First World War unprivileged and without compensation and reported it to the warring states; and then tried to make an agreement with states, which were close to the Soviet Russia. Thus they began to carry out the Sovietisation program in various regions of Russia. Before Bolshevik power, the Communist Party local organizations, which were

founded by support of Bolsheviks in various regions was converted into a branch of the Soviet Centre with the power of the Bolsheviks in Moscow. Telegrams, letters, encrypted information and news were sent by those organizations to the Central Committee and Foreign Affairs.

In this historical period, the Community of Union and Progress in Ottoman state had control over Turkey. This fact continued until the Mondros Armistice. Heavy conditions of the armistice deeply affected people and bureaucracy of the Ottoman Empire in a negative way. Because of the heavy conditions, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who first discerned disadvantages of the Mondros Armistice started the National Struggle movement. Mustafa Kemal Pasha who was well-known by several states due to his success of the Gallipoli Wars was a recognized leader by Russia anymore.

In Istanbul, even if the Committee of Union and Progress seemed to govern the state, the people begin to struggle for independence against internal and external forces with the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. At the same time, although Bolshevik administration, which was in power fighting against imperialism declared its support to Mustafa Kemal Pasha, it kept to contact with the members of the Committee of Union and Progress to take advantage of them.

Mustafa Kemal and Communism

In Anatolia, as known, principles of the National Struggle movement starting in the lead of Mustafa Kemal Pasha were announced to the public opinion by Amasya Circular published in 1919, then approved by the last Ottoman Parliament on Erzurum and Sivas Congresses. Thus the first step of the National Struggle movement was achieved, which it was named "Misakimilli". This movement was a struggle against strangers who attacked the state. The main target of the National Struggle movement was to protect the state rather than becoming a spokesman of any political thought. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who leaded the struggle with the similar national feelings skilfully made the political maneuvers against the states, which faced with some problems due to the effects of First World War. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was also wary of the Soviet Government, which came to power after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia. Ankara Government and Soviet Government, which united to struggle together against the imperialists contacted with each other in a short time to support each other.

However, the expectations of those governments from each other completely were different. The targets of Ankara Government were to build good ties, to cooperate, to get weapons support, and to struggle against the Western imperialism, which was the common enemy of them. On the other hand the Soviet Government was thinking about that the National Struggle movement was struggling against the Western imperialism, at the same time was considering that it was an awakening of the Islamic society. As seen from the declaration that was published for the Labour Day on 1 of May, 1919, they planned to build a communist regime in Turkey1. Additionally, the policies carried out by First World War Allies against Russia and Turkey were also effective to strengthen the ties between them. The Bolsheviks which tookover of the management with the defeat of Russia in First World War immediately declared a "Peace Decree" in which Bolsheviks wanted the warring states to end the war and to bring to a democratic peace in a way of without annexation and compensation². Soviet administration subsequently was able to affect the warring states by revealing the secret treaties of tsarist and by becoming in a peace attempt with Germany respectively³. Somehow those positive politics carried out by Russia supported the National Struggle movement in Turkey. The Brest-Litovsk negotiations starting as a result of the peace calls of Russia included in the conversations between L. Kamenev, who was effective on the Russian delegates and Zeki Pasha offered by Enver Pasha, who was an expert on military affairs in which Kamenev's reported that Russia was ready to withdraw from Anatolia and according to the Brest-Litovsk negotiations signed on March 3th, 1918, that the regions of Batum-Kars-Ardahan was given Turkey back by being given up the claims of tsarist Russia on Turkey provided a proper cicumstance for the National Struggle movement on the Eastern Front⁴.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha who carefully followed political developments and situation of the region tried to develop the relationships with the Bolsheviks and also did not thought about that cooperating with them was a threat for Turkey. His thoughts could be understood from his letter which was written to 15th Army Corps Commander Kazim Karabekir Pasha (June 23th, 1919). He was emphasized in his letter that the Bolsheviks were also accepted in Kazan,

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¹ Haluk F. Gürsel, Tarih Boyunca Türk-Rus İlişkileri, İstanbul 1968, pp. 182-183.

² Akdes Nimet Kurat, Brest-Litovsk Müzakereleri ve Barışı, Belleten, XXXI/121-124, Ankara, 1967, pp. 376.

³ Fahir Armaoğlu, 20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi (1914-1980), Cilt I, Ankara, 1992, p. 132.

⁴ Selma Yel, Brest-Litovsk Barış Konferansında Sovyet Rusya'nın Ermeni Politikası, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi, Cilt XVIII, Sayı 54, Kasım 2002, p. 836.

Orenburg, and Crimea whose people were Muslims and reported that they were not interested in the efforts disrupting of the state regulation. The rest of his letter was of great importance in terms of his considerations against the Bolsheviks in which it was expressed that if the Bolsheviks were getting strengthened we needed to be impartial, thus Entente forces would leave our state, whereas our state would be exposed to be invaded by the Bolsheviks. He also emphasized that we did not need to wait for the Bolsheviks' offer, and added that why we did not sent a couple of persons to Russia to meet with Bolsheviks. If we succeeded, not only we would prevent the Bolsheviks attack but also the Bolsheviks would contribute us to remove the Entente forces from our states⁵.

In all fields such as administration, state, awareness of boundary, culture, education of the struggle leaded by Mustafa Kemal Pasha, nationalism was the main target, as seen from his statement of "communism does not recognize the border but we are a national border"⁶. In his speech in the Turkey Grand National Assembly, he underlined that the struggle which he was leading was never on the same line with principles of the Bolsheviks in his statement as following: "When we decided to save presence and independence of our state, we kept our thoughts and trusted our power. We did not need any advice and did not do anything by being deceived. Our thoughts and principles, as known by everyone, were not principles of the Bolsheviks and we did not impose the principles of Bolsheviks to our nation". In the rest of his speech, he said that we were nationalist according to everyone, however, our nationalism was not overweening nationalism. He also expressed that we respected the nations living with us and recognized the realities of their nations⁷.

In mentality of Lenin, who was founder of the Soviet administration and leader of Socialist, universal socialism and universal communism were more valuable rather than concepts of nation, state, and borders. Ideas of Lenin such as protection of national values, defence of the motherland were defined as "chauvinist actions" in his all works⁸. This mentality which succeeded in coming to power in Russia began to established a regime in all state, which was in accordance with the "Soviet" system and in line with the principles of the Communist Party. The most important institution of the Soviet regime was the

⁵ Kazım Karabekir, İstiklal Harbimiz, 2. Baskı, Cilt I, İstanbul, 2008, p. 61.

⁶ Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, I-III, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 5. Baskı, Ankara, 2006, p. 136.

⁷ Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, a.g.e., p. 96.

⁸ V. I. Lenin, Sosyalizm ve Savaş, Eriş Yayınları, 2003, p. 18.

Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom), which head of council was Lenin. Main target of this regime was to make a world revolution⁹.

While Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who struggled against the enemies which invaded the state was a hero soldier, however Lenin was a person, who took over the administration by taking advantage of current weak situation of the state, which was defeated in war. Mustafa Kemal Pasha expressed his thought at several meetings before First World War started. On the other hand, Lenin said in his meetings that if any state was defeated in a war, since protests cropped up around the state and added that we needed a war to be defeated. Whereas Mustafa Kemal Pasha always desired to win the war, which his state was involved in, not to be defeated¹⁰. While Mustafa Kemal Pasha always struggled for his state against the enemies by using his experiences of the wars and military information in a heroic way, Lenin, not getting a military training, did not even do military service, which every citizen had to do. At that period, according to Russian military rules, military service was not compulsory for the citizens whom they were the only boy in their families or the only boy making a living for their families. Those who were used to exempt from the military service were recorded as militia groups (until 40 of age) and only called a soldier in the event of war. Based on the Russian sources, Vladimir Ulyanov called Lenin was also recorded in the militia groups, therefore he was able to be called a soldier in the event of any war. Likewise, while he was at the age of being a soldier, he was the only boy who was interested in his family, which was included in a widow mother, two sisters and one brother¹¹. The revolutions of those historical personalities called Mustafa Kemal Pasha and Lenin, whom their principles were different from each other also showed difference from each other. Turk Revolution was a radical change covering lifestyles of society rather than a political, social and economic revolution¹².

The political preference of the Turk revolution clearly explained the differences. Mustafa Kemal Pasha never respected the communist and fascist regimes. He preferred multiparty parliamentary democracy. He also indicated that in order to succeed the modernization we needed having a national identity. Whereas, during the years of the National Struggle movement, two-thirds of the world were had been exploiting. According to Mustafa Kemal

⁹ Akdes Nimet Kurat, Türkiye ve Rusya, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990, pp. 325-326.

¹⁰ Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, Türk İnkılap Tarihi, III. Cilt I. Kısım, Ankara, 1991, p. 29.

¹¹ V.A. Perfilov, Jizn Vladimira İliça Lenina: Voprosı i otveti, Ulyanovsk, 2012, pp. 65-66.

¹² Enver Ziya Karal, Atatürk ve Devrim, Ankara 1980, p. 48.

Pasha, the most important reason of exploitation was those societies were deprived of the national self. Because education and training were not national qualities in the exploited states, which strengthened the society ties¹³.

The relationships of Turkey and Russia were negatively affected by their new regimes, which even if those issues were not noteworthy. While the purpose of the revolutionaries was the pluralist democracy in Turkey, on the contrary it was not in Russia, and the fundamental principles of the regime has been started applying since 1919¹⁴.

Mustafa Kemal and Turkey in the Soviet Correspondences

Sevices of communication, postal, intelligence and police had already been established in Russia. Those services which operated under the Ministry of Interior during the Imperial continued their activities with different definitions after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Post Revolution, the name of the service Postal of Telegraph was changed as Postal and Telegraph People's Commissariat (Narodnıy Komissariyat poçta i telegrafov), but its working activities were getting waeakened due to important events occured early years of 20th century¹⁵. Even if its operates got better after 1920, the communitions among the soviet administrators mostly were mostly carried out by intelligence and secret agents. The roots of Russian Intelligence Service has based on Okhrana founded in the tsarist period. After the Bolsheviks came to power, Okhrana was abolished by suggestion of Dzerjinski, and Çeka (Çerezvçaynaya Komisiya po borbe s kontrrevolyutsiey i sabotajem-ÇK) was established instead of Okhrana. Ceka which was officially gone into operation in 1918, has occurred the roots of the KGB (State Security Committee), which is the Soviet Russian Intelligence Service¹⁶.

Several official correspondences carried out by Soviet administrators through those services could be reached from the Russian State Archive of

¹³ Ergün Aybars, Atatürk ve Devrime Bakış, Atatürk Yolu Dergisi, Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü, Cilt 02, Sayı 07, 1991, p. 449.

¹⁴ Saime Yüceer, Atatürk Dönemi Türk-Rus İlişkilerinin Siyasi Boyutu, Atatürk'ten Soğuk Savaş Dönemine Türk-Rus İlişkileri I. Çalıştay Bildirileri, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara, 2011, p. 62.

¹⁵ Bolşaya Sovetskaya Ensiklopediya, Cilt 34, Moskva, 1955, p. 328.

¹⁶ E. Boyacı, İstoriya Şpionaja, Cilt 1, Moskova, 2003, p.12; Mehmet Atay, Rusya Gizli İstihbarat Servisleri: KGB'nin Kısa Tarihi, Avrasya Dosyası, İstihbarat Özel, Cilt 8, Sayı 2, 2002, pp. 309-328.

Socio-Political History (RGASPI), which is located in Moscow. The documents which has been held in the archive mentioned-above are of great importance for both history of Turkey and Russia. As a result of our investigations in this archive in 2014, we reached numerous documents including in the National Struggle movement, the Caucasus and Turkey, the Armenian Question, the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, etc. Translation of selected documents among them was done by us. We were also interested in the letters and the telegrams exchanged between Ankara and Soviet governments, upon help request of the Ankara government.

Difficulties of helping the Kemalist movement in political terms were expressed by several Soviet administrators at that period. In the Congress of the Peoples of the East held in Baku in September of 1920, Grigori Zinovyev who was the head of Communist International voiced both difficulties of efforts of Turkey for the benefit of the Soviet administration and difficulties of helping of the Soviet administration to Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Turkey. The rest of his speech, Zinoviev emphasized that we had to support the call of Mustafa Kemal Pasha to workers and farmers to struggle against the exploiters¹⁷.

In the letter dated September 27, 1920 written by Chicherin who was the Soviet Foreign Affairs Public Commissioner to Lenin said that "According to the western radio, Kemalists were in poor conditions due to inadequacy of their military materials. Defeat of the Kemalists would result in the victory of the Muslim fanaticism supported by Antanta. Moreover, for the purpose of spread of holly walk against us, it was also possible to re-emergence of the Sultan in Asia Minor. It would reach to start the movement of Muslim which was highly anti-revolutionary, the loss of Baku, even Turkestan, and even serious danger in our Eastern regions. Therefore, the continuation of the presence of the Kemalists was highly important for us, and weapons had to be sent them" ¹⁸ was printed, which illustrated the thoughts to the socialist leader.

Ankara administration and Soviet administration, which easyly contacted each other for different purposes, were highly meticulous in diplomatic relations. This approach style was clearly seen from the letter dated 22th November 1922 sent by Chicherin to Molotova¹⁹: "In the commission is connected

¹⁷ Mehmet Saray, Atatürk'ün Sovyet Politikası, İstanbul, 1987, p. 95.

¹⁸ RGASPI, Rusya Devlet Sosyo-Politik Tarih Arşivi, Fon 159, Sayı 2, Dosya 57, varak 003.

¹⁹ The real surname of Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov (1890-1986), who relied on political and diplomatic intelligence among Soviet rulers, was Skryabin. Molotov, who received his first education at Kazan school, became a member of the Communist Party in 1906. He has been in various posts after the Revolution. He became member of the Politburo

with Turkey, Comrade Sokolnikov²⁰ Sokolnikov, one of the essential obligations of the Moscow treaty (being claimed and now this purpose allocated sums in Thilisi) agreed date (March 16) was quite a scary proposition put forward, such as non-payment. Turkey has been informed by its spies in this regard. For what To fool the Turkish peasants and artisans who believe in us, to disgrace ourselves against all the peoples of the East, to make me disgrace in the face of the Eastern peoples like a person signing the covenant, to ruin them in the political direction, to ensure they do not believe us again²¹.

Although politically importance of helping to Turkey was emphasized by all administrators of the Soviet government at correspondences, some analyses were also done about Kemalist movement and its leader. Semyon Ivanoviç Aralov who was the ambassador of Soviet Russia to Ankara (1922-1923) wrote the thoughts of Lenin who was the head of Soviet administration related to Mustafa Kemal Pasha in his memoirs: After his embassy to Turkey was decided, when Aralov and Georgy Vasilyevich Chicherin who was the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the Soviet government visited Lenin, Aralov was comprehensively advised by Lenin. During meeting, Lenin described Mustafa Kemal Pasha as a good organizer, a talented leader, a clever statesman, despite of not socialist²².

Besides Soviet administratiors enough knew to describe the leader of National Struggle movement, they predicted how political, social and economic structure of Turkey went and they even foresaw what kind of regime would establish in future. In the letter written by Chicherin who was the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the Soviet government to Lenin in 1920, Turkey was evaluated from this perspective. The text in the letter is as follow: "Rapprochement with the Turk National Centre was the able to strengthen our politics in the East. The National Centre had not been divided into the parties yet and the internal political

in 1926, Secretary of the Moscow party committee in 1928-29, and Sovnarkom in 1930-1941. Molotov, who devoted his entire life to socialism, died in 1986 without seeing the dissolution of the Soviets. For more information Bk. V.N. Volkova, Vyaçeslav Mihailoviç Molotov, Nauçno-Tehniçeskie Vedomosti SPBPU. 2 (219), 2015, pp. 213-217.

²⁰ Grigori Yakovleviç Sokolnikov (1888-1939) is Lenin's gun friend. He was responsible for financial affairs in the Soviet administration, and in 1923 he was appointed as the First Financial Affairs Commissioner of the Soviet Union. Sokolnikov, who has been in various positions, such as Assistant Public Affairs Minister for Foreign Affairs, was arrested and imprisoned in 1936 and killed in 1939 by his cell mate.Bk. G.Ya.Sokolnikov, Finansovaya Politika Revolyutsii, I. Cilt, Moskova, 2006, p. 5-8.

 ²¹ RGASPİ, Rusya Devlet Sosyo-Politik Tarih Arşivi, Fon 159, Sayı 2, Dosya 57, varak 095.
²² S.İ. Aralov, Bir Sovyet Diplomatının Türkiye Hatıraları, Çev. Hasan Ali Ediz, I. Cilt, İstanbul, 1997, pp. 45-46.

program had not prepared. It probably would be the Republican regime. They explained that Turkish nation consisted of peasants and petty-bourgeoisie. Those who persecute them were bureaucracy, high-ranking pashas, and speculators. Capital belonged to the West, the bourgeoisie largely consisted of Armenians and Greeks. Timar System whose principles was based on the Ottoman Empire was cancelled by Mahmud II. The management of large lands by individuals had been partially improved since then. But the owners of property also would probaly to be dismissed. There was no any environment for the communism, whereas it was proper for the Bolshevism, and the people hated from Western capital and local oppressors.

... The Soviet Republic could be established there, but it was not our one. Because each peasant liked his own territory, and communism dissemination would be possible very slowly. I did not expect any benefit from such a half Sovietization'' ²³.

The analysis done by Soviet Foreign Affairs was partly correct. Likewise, Mustafa Kemal Pasha gave a statement to reporter of Petit Parisien correspondent in Bursa in 1922 as following: "We were neither Bolshevik nor Communist; neither one nor the other. Because we were nationalists and we respected our religion. In summary, type of our government was a democratic government"²⁴.

The Soviet administration was rigoerous for the Turkish society within borders of Russia. The Soviet administration first took precautions by voicing the political targets of movements of Turkism and Turanism against the Turkish society. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who discerned those plans warned the Soviet administration and added that he never allowed such an action since it would harm the Turkish cultural unity. Mustafa Kemal Pasha never gave up the politics whom he followed neither in the years of National Struggle nor in the following years to build the unity of the Turkish World²⁵. On the other hand, as much as Soviet Russia was worried about Kemalizmin spreading in those geographical areas, it was concerned about the Turkism movement which occurred among the Central Asian Turks²⁶.

Among the documents, the anxiety was clearly explained in the letter sent by the Yerofyev was President of the Press Bureau of Tiflis to Chicherin and all

²³ RGASPİ, Rusya Devlet Sosyo-Politik Tarih Arşivi, Fon 159, Sayı 2, Dosya 57, varak 001 (1).

 <sup>(1).
&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Utkan Kocatürk, Atatürk'ün Fikir ve Düşünceleri, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara, 1999, p. 221.

²⁵ Selami Kılıç, "Atatürk'ün Büyük Özlemi Türk Dünyasında Kültür Birliği", Atatürk Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, Atatürk Dergisi, Cilt 3, Sayı 1, Erzurum, 2000, p. 54.

²⁶ Yüceer, a.g.m., p. 105.

the politic bureau comrades in December of 1920. The letter continued as following: "The newspaper date 31 of December, Ankara and Moscow knew their intentions well and they were thinking about that their temporary interests were uniting them. The purposes of Mustafa Kemal Pasha were not limited with Turkey, whereas Azerbaijan, Dagestan and North Caucasus were included in his considerations. In other words, the struggle of Kemalism and Bolshevism would occur in a short time. Mustafa Kemal was obviously starting playing the role of the Muslims living in the Soviet Republics. The Russian-Armenian-Turkish Conference to be held would be turned into a general struggle."²⁷

As seen from the statements above, Mustafa Kemal Pasha's unity politics for the Turkish World were noticed by Russian agents and the Soviet administration was informed immediately before the agreements.

Conclusion

The conditions of the First World War caused the revolutions and the developments in two neighbouring Eurasian states.

Turkey Government and Soviet Government founded as a result of revolutions did not exhibit enemy relations as in the time of the empire. However, they completely were, in the essence, different from each other. Geostrategic natures of the region and historical periods made them strategic ally. The leaders of the new governments also had different ideas and characteristics in terms of purpose, understanding and belief. It was seen from results of the study that both leaders knew each other well and properly developed politics. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who was close to the Bolsheviks whereas did not allow their politics to enter the state said advised that our politics was not to confront these two nations anymore.

Today, despite the complex relations among the states, friendly relationships between Turkey and Russia are welcomed by the peoples of two states, whose roots going to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Lenin.

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²⁷ RGASPİ, Rusya Devlet Sosyo-Politik Tarih Arşivi, Fon 159, Sayı 2, Dosya 56, varak 046.

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