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To cite this article: Vahram Ter-Matevosyan (2015): Kemalism and Communism: From Cooperation to Complication, Turkish Studies, DOI: [10.1080/14683849.2015.1081071](https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2015.1081071)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2015.1081071>



Published online: 25 Sep 2015.



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Kemalism and Communism: From Cooperation to Complication

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ABSTRACT *Although scholars have examined different aspects of bilateral relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union, many aspects of the relationship remain to be studied and contextualized. This article examines how the Kemalist transformation in Turkey and particularly the ideology of Kemalism were seen and interpreted by Soviet actors between the 1920s and 1960s. Initially viewed as an ally in the struggle against the West, Kemalism was later treated mainly negatively by the Communist regime. However in the 1960s, with the rise of leftist politics in Turkey, the Soviets revisited Kemalism with more favorable interpretations. Looking at these shifts through the lenses of Soviet diplomats, Communist party functionaries, and scholars helps us to understand the underlying dynamics.*

Introduction

Most scholars hold the view that the term Kemalism, with its ideological connotation and interpretation, was first used in 1929 and soon thereafter became widespread in Turkey. According to some observers, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, one of Mustafa Kemal's close associates, was the first person to promote the term. Others argue that the linguist Ahmet Cevat introduced the term in the journal *Muhit*.¹ Others assert that Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, the then Turkish Justice Minister, intensively advanced the term Kemalism.² In 1930, Josef Washington Hall argued that it was Westerners and interviewers of Kemal who "branded the movement 'Kemalist', as if he was some rebel upstart. He [Kemal] resented the term as he did not wish to establish 'Kemalism', but a new Turkey, nor did he wish to incite the resentment of the Nationalists."³ Enver Karal also claims that Western authors were the first to use the term "Kemalism."⁴

In this regard, it is noteworthy that scholars of the republican history of Turkey have not studied Soviet historiography on Kemalism in much detail. Most of the standard analyses in this field have focused on either bilateral relations between Turkey

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and the Soviet Union (SU) or on the domestic revolutionary transformations in Turkey.⁵ However, since the beginning of the nationalist resistance movement in Turkey, the Communist (Bolshevik) party functionaries of Soviet Russia and the Caucasian republics (Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan⁶) closely followed developments there.⁷ The reports sent from Moscow's diplomatic mission in Turkey contain valuable insights concerning the ideological layers of the Kemalist reforms.⁸ A number of prominent Soviet scholars also closely followed the domestic transformations of Turkey, greatly contributing both to the field of Turkish studies and the research on Kemalism. For instance, as early as 1928, Vladimir Gurko-Kryazhin, the editor of the academic journal of Soviet orientalists, *Novyj Vostok* (New Orient), discussed all the primary and secondary sources produced since 1919 dealing both with Turkey and with the Kemalist movement.⁹

Soviet interest in the Turkish transformation had multiple rationales. One of the most important ones had to do with the fact that for the Communist leadership, Turkey's struggle against the "imperialist France, England and Greece" made the Ankara government a natural ally of Soviet Russia as both fought against "the same enemy,"¹⁰ hence shared "the same kind of hostility."¹¹ The incorporation of the Soviet dimension into the study of Kemalism requires a certain degree of caution though. Most of the statements, articles, reports, and books, especially those published after the mid-1920s, pursued clearly discernible ideological interests and followed the official Communist party course, which was meant to trace the class-oriented nature of the Turkish transformation and retain Turkey as a friendly nation. This article's goal is to trace the views and explanations of Soviet observers of Turkey, which provide valuable information and analysis about the ideological dimensions of the Kemalist transformation.

Early Soviet Efforts to Interpret Kemalism

Soviet approaches to Kemalism were one of the first efforts to trace its ideological premises. As early as 1921, in most of the titles dedicated to Turkey and its internal developments, different Soviet authors (diplomats, journalists, and politicians) used the term Kemalism. For example, a report prepared on February 7, 1921, by the head of Information Department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (PCFA) of Soviet Armenia defined Kemalism in the following way:

After the General war armistice [Mudros] Turkish official intellectuals, army officers, and clergy were faced with being left out on the streets. By being officials for generations they were incapable of another job. Therefore, these layers, pursuing the intent of promoting their class interests, founded Kemalism—taking advantage of the discontent and hatred accumulated in the Turkish nation against the Entente. In order to deceive the Russian Revolution and national masses, they adopted the outer mask of the Bolshevism—red crescent, frontal part of the hat, red flag and the title minister instead of commissar.¹²

This rather vague and functionalist definition of Kemalism contains no reference to its ideological content. However, it was one of the first efforts to come up with a working definition for the new regime.¹³ A week later, on February 13, 1921, the same department issued another report about the Kemalists who were referred to in a different manner: “nationalist” (*milliyetçi*), “national” (*millîçi-s*), “the government of Anadolu [Anatolia],” “the government of Angora [Ankara],” “Millî (national) state.”¹⁴ These generic descriptions were also common in the writings and memoirs of Soviet Armenian intellectuals and politicians of the 1920s, which will be briefly discussed below.

Georgij Astakhov, the head of the Press Bureau of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic’s (later, the SU’s¹⁵) Plenipotentiary Representation in Turkey from March 1922 to November 1923, published a series of articles about the transformation of the Kemalist Turkey both in the journal *Novyj Vostok* and in different Soviet periodicals, which later were reproduced in a book.¹⁶ His work was one of the first Soviet efforts to produce knowledge about the domestic reforms and foreign policy problems of the Kemalist regime between the period 1922 and 1924. Apparently, the Soviet diplomat was tasked to provide a periodical account of “one of the defining periods of the Turkish revolution,” which he coins as “one of the greatest historical events of the contemporary period . . . having a revolutionary significance.”¹⁷ Although at that time the Kemalist movement had more practical objectives (e.g. to win the war against the Greeks and overcome domestic political cleavages), Astakhov tried to separate the ideological and political layers out of it.

From a daisy-vague form with a chaotic content, the Anatolian national movement is gaining a more distinct appearance . . . If two-three years ago one could observe the synthesis of all possible tendencies—from vulgar pan-Islamism to almost communism, now from this chaos a new state with a democratic-bonapartist political system was being crystalized.¹⁸

Astakhov does not provide a clear definition of Kemalism. However, his efforts to come up with a description of different manifestations is noteworthy. His approach to the “ideology of Kemalism” implied the existence of the “revolutionary energy” in Mustafa Kemal’s different speeches, the strong personality feature, the presence of economic ideals and “theoretical foundations” elaborated by different intellectuals of the time—Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Yusuf Akçura, and Ziya Gökalp.¹⁹

Semyon Aralov, the first Soviet ambassador to Turkey²⁰ between 1922 and 1923, decades later admitted that,

the transfer of the Kars province along with the city of Kars and other regions to Turkey elevated the morale of the Turkish nation, instilled in it a sense of serenity for the eastern regions and trust in the Soviet Union as a kind neighbor of the revolutionary Turkey and its sincere friend.²¹

He saw the primary objective of his mission to combat external and domestic reactionary forces aiming to undermine mutual trust between Turkey and the SU.²² He also recollected one of his conversations with Mustafa Kemal held in 1923. Aralov seemed to be excited to hear from Mustafa Kemal the following intention: "Let's hope to join to our friendly family other Eastern nations too: Iran, Arab nations . . . It is my dream. I am not sure whether it is feasible or whether I would live up to it."²³ Mustafa Kemal further assured Aralov that Turkey's friendship with the Soviet Russia was the most sustainable, the most robust; it was also, according to Mustafa Kemal, "the foundation of Turkey's politics in the international relations."²⁴ "We are not allowed to depart from each other," he went on. "This is my firm conviction and my maxim to the coming generations."²⁵

In 1926 Konstantin Youst (Feoktistov), the head of the Press bureau of the SU's Plenipotentiary Representation in Turkey between 1925 and 1929, reported from Turkey about the revolutionary deeds of Mustafa Kemal, describing the overall atmosphere in the country and the attitude of people toward their leader. He presented a mythical image of Kemal dominating among the Turks. The personality of Kemal was equated with "Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius as well as with Washington, Lincoln, Luther, Peter the First and Lenin."²⁶ Here Youst used the term *Kemalism*, interestingly enough, to refer to the counter-revolutionary zeal of the Kemalist elite's drive against the Pan-Turkist circles.²⁷ Most likely, he used that term to refer to the general spirit of unity dominating among the Kemalists. In 1927, Kitajgorodskij, a Soviet historian of the Middle East, coined the Turkey of the 1920s as "the kingdom of *Kemalism*,"²⁸ where the Kemalist ideologues were doing their utmost to defend the rights of the new bourgeoisie. In the spirit of the Communist Party, he urged "the red diplomacy" of the SU to acknowledge the true face of Turkey for taking appropriate measures for insuring its loyalty toward the SU.²⁹

In 1927, Vladimir Osetrov, a historian of Turkey and Iran, who used the pseudonym of *Irاندوست*, wrote an article "The essence of *Kemalism*" in the party's official press.³⁰ He described *Kemalism* as an "authentic mass revolution," which was a specific type of Eastern revolution following the Western pathway. At the same time, he distinguished two characteristics of *Kemalism* which had made it a unique case: its revolutionary and counter-revolutionary concepts.³¹ *Irاندوست* also envisioned the fate of *Kemalism* in the following way: "the future of *Kemalism* depends on its anti-imperialistic character, otherwise the possible compromise with imperialism would mean the crisis of *Kemalism* and its program."³²

In 1927, *Bekar Ferdi*, a pseudonym of one of the Turkish communist leaders Şefik Hüsnü, who worked under the close supervision of the Soviets and published extensively in the Communist Party press, described the Republican People's Party (RPP) of Mustafa Kemal as the party of the Kemalist cause, which brought the national bourgeoisie to power at the expense of forced measures directed against possible opposition forces.³³ In another piece that he produced the same year in the official mouthpiece of the Communist International (ComIntern), *Ferdi* argued that Kemalists took a wrong turn when they fully trusted the Western powers, which promised a rosy future for Turkey but, in reality, they took Turkey toward the "capitalist path."³⁴ At

the same time, Ferdi was hopeful that the increasing repression by the Kemalists would make “the Turkish working class to take advantage of the revolutionary propaganda” and, with the support of the communists, rise against the bourgeoisie in which they included both the Kemalists and, interestingly, the Unionists.³⁵ Two months later, in June 1927, the same author proposed a set of policy proposals and analytical insights concerning the similarities and differences between the Turkish and Chinese revolutions. Ferdi expressed his belief that the Chinese communist leaders would draw necessary lessons from the mistakes of Kemalism which started off as a national democratic revolution but later on was hijacked by the ideas of the bourgeoisie and capitalism.³⁶

A year later, in 1928, Irandoust published another book to decode the main transformative features of Turkey³⁷ in which he used plainer terminology to describe the agencies of the newly founded state. He used the terms like “Kemalist Turkey” and “Kemalist movement” as names to describe the nature of the revolution that had been carried out from 1918 to 1920 by “Kemalists,” the rank-and-file of the ideological revolution.³⁸ He also continued the dominant fashion among Soviet observers to ascribe theoretical dimensions to Kemalism. Another interesting component that Irandoust presented was the prevailing trend among the Soviet Communist revolutionaries to transform and project the Kemalist brand of revolution into China, by pinpointing the existing socio-political similarities in both countries. He went on to mention that rather interesting case is counterpoised by another trend in the international mass media, particularly in the Japanese media, which repeatedly applied the term “Kemalism” to generalize counter-revolutionary movements of the Chinese generals (Chiang Kai-shek and Phin Yui-sen), who, by acting under the guise of anti-imperialism virtually served the needs of the Chinese bourgeoisie.³⁹

In the beginning of the 1920s, some prominent members of the Communist Party, including Yevgenij Zinovyev, a member of the Politburo, were particularly vocal in the comparison between China and Turkey, anticipating a relatively calm development for China, following the example of Turkey.⁴⁰ Ilan Butayev, another expert of Ottoman Turkish history, put Turkey, Persia and China on the same level of analysis, describing them as “dependent, but sovereign countries of the Orient.”⁴¹

Mikhail Godes, an expert on the history and economy of the Middle East, discussed that view in his book and vehemently opposed that line of reasoning. Godes famously claimed that all the comparisons between Chinese and Turkish revolutions are superficial, hence, a Kemalist revolution for China is impossible.⁴² However, while criticizing any overgeneralizations and artificial parallels between different revolutions, he adds that many nations in the Orient greatly resemble pre-revolutionary Turkey in terms of their social structures and international standing. Based on that thinking, he claims that Kemalism, as a pattern of revolutionary development, can appeal to many national-revolutionary movements. Particularly, he mentioned the example of Persia, which could borrow the important features of the Kemalist revolution.⁴³

In this regard, it is interesting to present the content of a diplomatic cable sent from the Soviet Ambassador, Yakov Sourits, to the PCFA of the SU, concerning the non-

official visit of the Chinese Nanking government delegation to Ankara in March 1928. The ambassador reports that Chiang Kai-shek sent that delegation in order to “study Turkey and borrow the experience of Kemalism” (*opit Kemalizma*) as well as advocate the existence of similarities between “Chiangkaishism” and Kemalism. According to the ambassador, the delegation left a “disgusting impression on İsmet-paşa [İnönü]” and an “unpleasant” one on Şükru Kaya, the Interior Minister.⁴⁴ In spite of these impressions, the Turkish government, however, shared its insights on how the Nanking government should proceed—“finish the capitulation regime, expel foreign armed forces and value the friendship with the SU.”⁴⁵ The Soviet ambassador’s cable reflected the SU’s general displeasure toward that delegation too, which may indicate that if the SU was interested in exporting Kemalism to China, it was certainly true of the Nanking government, which were supposed to be recipients of that approach. Also, once again we witness that in official Soviet communications the term Kemalism has long been in circulation as a generic term to describe the Turkish development model.

It is interesting to observe that within a short period the SU became critical toward the Kemalist Turkey as the initial enthusiasm retreated. Dmitrij Yeremeyev, one of the renowned scholars of the Soviet Orientalist school, provides reasons for the Kemalist movement initially being viewed as “progressive and democratic” in the 1920s. He argued that Kemalism was seen positively because it included “large masses of the Turkish nation and was under the influence of the October revolution” and because it excluded the chauvinistic and reactionary forces. However, once “the Kemalist revolutionary war was over,” pan-Turkic movements, namely chauvinistic and reactionary forces, being tolerated by Mustafa Kemal, reemerged and distorted the spirit of Kemalism. The SU interpreted this shift as an aggressive trend.⁴⁶

Thus, based on the analysis above, since the mid-1920s the Soviet leadership became more outspoken in its criticism toward Turkey. At least two reasons can explain the change of approach. In spite of promising start, the Kemalists turned toward the Western model of development, which, starting at least from 1925, was heavily criticized by some circles in the SU. Later, the rise of aggressive rhetoric in Turkey of certain movements, especially of the radical nationalists, racist and pan-Turkist orientation, generated more animosity toward Turkey as they were largely seen as irredentism by the Soviets and a threat the Turkic nations living in its territory.

Nonetheless, what bears emphasizing is that, the Communist leadership, party functionaries and scholars tried to trace ideological premises in those developments and thereby provided working definitions of Kemalism long before the term was circulated in the official Turkish political terminology. Another possible explanation for the use of the term had to do with the Turkish previous experience of ideological projects like Turkism, pan-Turkism, and Turanism, which were familiar concepts for the late Imperial and early Soviet periods. Therefore, some circles in the SU saw Kemalism as a continuation of some of these political and ideological trends. The Soviet leadership also held the view that the Turkish political and intellectual elite possessed

sufficient skills and experience to produce a new ideological framework for the development of the newly formed Turkish nation-state.

Against this background of searching for a *modus operandi* with the Kemalist regime, the SU undertook an important academic and symbolic initiative at the end of the 1920s. Two years after Mustafa Kemal delivered his famous 36-hour speech in 1927, Soviet Turcologists decided to translate the speech into Russian. The first volume was published in Moscow by the printing house of the PCFA of the SU in May 1929. It took another five years, however, to complete the next three volumes. They contained a foreword, footnotes, comments, maps, and notes, which provide valuable information not only about that particular initiative but also make the reading of the text much easier as compared to Turkish publications. In other words, it was an effort to provide a complete history of Kemalist Turkey through 1927. Another interesting feature of that academic venture was the title of the book. The original Turkish title “*Nutuk*,” which is generally translated as “Speech” in European languages or as “Great Speech” in Turkey, was translated as “The Road of the New Turkey” (*Put’ novoj Turtsii*). The foreword published in the first volume claimed: “until this moment there is no single work in the European literature, which would provide the complete picture of the Turkish national-freedom movement,” neither does it exist in Turkey.⁴⁷ It mentioned, however, that in parallel to the Russian version, the *Nutuk* was simultaneously being translated into French, German, and English.⁴⁸ This Russian translation served as a primary source for many generations of scholars in the field of Turkish studies in the SU. The first volume of the German translation of Kemal’s speech, however, was already published in 1928 and its title (*Der Weg Zur Freiheit*) was also different from the original and Russian translations.⁴⁹ These “recollections” or “memoirs” of Mustafa Kemal, as Soviet scholars referred to them, while interesting, insightful, and well written, were also criticized. Gurko-Kryazhin claimed in 1928 that one might get an impression as if “the political program of Kemal . . . was an irretrievable value, which was created as a result of political intuition, some kind of prophesy.” Whereas, in reality, he went on, Kemal’s program-speech was “temporarily adopted to situational circumstances.”⁵⁰

Domestic development in Turkey were closely followed by not only the central authorities in Moscow, but also in those Soviet Republics which had historical disputes with Turkey. In the beginning of the 1920s, Soviet Armenian communist functionaries were able to monitor transformations in Turkey. However, after the consolidation of the Soviet system, they were not in a position to pursue an independent agenda different from Moscow. Meanwhile, those Armenian intellectuals and former members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) (which ruled the short-lived Republic of Armenia between 1918 and 1920), who left Armenia after its Sovietization, voiced their own interpretations of Kemalist Turkey. Their primary motivation was to keep following the developments in and around Turkey, trying to find answers to questions concerning Turkish-Armenian relations and post-war transformations in Turkey.

Two of these authors stand out for the depth of their analyses. Rouben (Rouben Ter-Minassian), one of the prominent members of the ARF and former Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, authored an article in 1928 published in two parts, which provided a comprehensive account of Kemalism and the Kemalist transformation in the 1920s. He challenged the dominant perception of the time that Turkey was undergoing a revolution. He argued that true revolutions do not happen without resistance, whereas

the Angora [Ankara] government adopts one revolutionary law after another ... without facing a real resistance. Therefore, it is not a Turkish revolution, but a coup carried out by Kemal and the Kemalists. That is why, it is accurate that what happened is named either “Kemalist” or “Kemalist movement,” which is dear to Kemal himself, but not to Turks and Turkey.⁵¹

Understandably, he was skeptical about the future of Kemal’s reforms, describing the reality in Kemalist Turkey as “an empty word and insubstantial box ... which probably will serve as a coffin both for Kemalism and Turanism.”⁵² Shahan Natali (Hakob Ter-Hakobyan), a prominent member of the ARF, openly defied the dominant perception among Armenian émigré intellectuals and former leaders of the ARF, who, in line with Rouben’s approach, questioned the viability of the Kemalist Turkey. For instance, in a book published the same year as Rouben’s, Natali expressed views which were in a stark disagreement with Rouben’s claim arguing the following

... the Turkish national ideology is not a novice enterprise, it is fifty years old and is in a stage of maturity. It is not the making of a few minds, but the life of a few generations. That is why Mustafa Kemal is not an ordinary man, but represents the entire collective and a forty-twenty years old young nation. It is a not an academic exercise, but a marching labor with checked and balanced steps.⁵³

Different Facets of Soviet Approaches Between the 1930s and 1960s

Between 1921 and 1935, Kemalist Turkey and the SU signed a number of treaties,⁵⁴ which were not only mutually beneficial but also mutually legitimizing. In spite of clearly observable Soviet skepticism toward Turkey and vice versa, the period between 1929 and 1935 was marked as a “revealing one” as both states intensified political, economic, and cultural exchange.⁵⁵ The SU not only extended economic aid to Turkey, but also provided loans to implement the Turkish Five-year development plan that was designed based on consultation with Soviet experts. In 1932, İnönü visited the SU, which was reciprocated by the visit of Clement Voroshilov, head of the Soviet army to Turkey.⁵⁶

Both the Mosul dispute with Britain and the Great Depression of 1929 pushed the Turkish government to undertake counter measures. Some circles within the Kemalist elite interpreted the latter as a fatal outcome of the Western development model.

Because the SU escaped the crisis due to its model of state control over the economy, the Turkish ruling elite was inspired from that experience. Especially those in the elite who visited the SU and had a better understanding of the Soviet economic system and had a major say in adopting the Soviet model of economic planning.⁵⁷ In 1930 the government became more outspoken about its intention to play a greater role in the economy, which could be explained as one of reasons of introducing of the “etatist” principle in the party program. Although the Soviet model was never entirely embraced in Turkey, some of its features visibly affected the Turkish economic policies. The SU, however, was very well aware that Turkey pursued its own development path. In 1932, the Deputy Head of the PCFA of the SU, Lev Karakhan, in a letter to the Soviet ambassador to Persia, Petrovskij, mentioned that “the Kemalists aspire to have a self-supporting path of development (neither capitalism, nor communism).” The same report also mentioned that because of considerable implications of the economic crisis “the government of Ismet [İnönü] was under criticism because of his poor handling of country’s economic affairs.”⁵⁸

It is also interesting to examine how the Soviet observers interpreted the power relations within Turkey. Kross, a Soviet observer of Turkey, confirms that by the end of the third decade within the Kemalist revolutionary circles a few factions emerged which caused certain deviations from the general politics of the mid-1920s.⁵⁹ The right wing (or pro-Western section) of the Kemalists demanded more resolute involvement of the Western model in state building of Turkey. The Left demanded more of a state role in the economy and in the daily life of the country. The Pan-Turkist circles were also active by initiating efforts for making Kemalism an official ideology and a scientific doctrine by establishing, among other institutions, the Museum of the Kemalist Revolution and the Institute of Turkism. The more orthodox section of the Kemalists wished to rely upon the peasants and the Anatolian petty-bourgeoisie as trustworthy resources for promoting the policy of nationalism, republicanism, and laicism.⁶⁰ Earlier Ferdi also had contended that after five years of independence, factions appeared within the ranks of the RPP as well, which was manifested in the increasing dissatisfaction of the masses. As a result, more people were leaving the party than joining it.⁶¹ In this regard, Godes argues that the RPP never became a mass political party as it nominally had 2000–3000 members, but the number of real active members throughout the entire country did not exceed 500 people.⁶²

After the mid-1930s, technical and financial assistance to Turkey was suspended, which was followed by a new period of interpretation of Kemalist Turkey. In the decades that followed the Soviet criticism of Kemalism became more robust. Kemal was presented as a “reactionary tyrant . . . who ruled by means of a unique mixture of terror and social demagoguery, a special Turkish brand of ‘national fascism’ or ‘agrarian Bonapartism’.”⁶³ In November 1938, Kemal died and İnönü replaced him as president. Although in various occasions İnönü assured the Soviet leadership about Turkey’s commitment toward friendship with the SU, the reality was somewhat different. Aralov claims that after İnönü invited the former opponents of Kemal, Kazım Karabekir, Hüseyin Rauf and Fuad Cebesoy to return to Turkey, “a

struggle was unleashed against the friendship between Turkey and the USSR.”⁶⁴ In his memoirs, Aralov became particularly critical toward Turkey, especially when describing events after 1941, particularly when Turkey concentrated its armed forces near the Caucasian border with the SU. He stated:

This was a disgraceful and perfidious response of the Turkish government to the frank assistance of the USSR during the most difficult and dangerous times of Turkey. Simultaneously, it was also an outrage upon the memory of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.⁶⁵

With the deepening of cooperation between Germany and Turkey, the SU started to treat Kemalist regime as “an appendix of the German fascism.”⁶⁶ Particularly, during World War II (WWII), the SU was openly critical about the rising irredentism among both the radical circles of the Turkish government and the intellectual elite. Moreover, in 1944, V. Krimskij, a contributor to the journal “Bol’shevik,” openly defied the dominant view at the time that the manifestations of expansionism in Turkey should be identified exclusively as pan-Turkism. For him, pan-Turkic organizations in Turkey, in reality, “present unrestricted fascist-Nazi intelligence in Turkey, which Hitlerists created long before WWII.”⁶⁷ He also drew parallels between the fascist practices in the Nazi Germany and Turkey arguing that all the attributes existing in Germany were also widely observed in Turkey (including inciting ethnic cleansing, persecution of ethnic minorities, propaganda of notorious ethnic supremacy ideology, nationalist radicalism, irredentism, anti-communist campaigns, and burning of books of progressive Turkish writers).⁶⁸

Relations between two countries remained tense until the end of the 1950s. After WWII, the American influence in Turkey visibly increased, which disturbed the Soviets. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall plan, and Turkey’s membership in NATO, in particular, caused the SU to react with strong criticism, the core of which was the Soviet suspicion that Turkey was losing its sovereignty in the face of mounting American pressure. Throughout that period, different Party functionaries and scholars from the SU continued to heavily criticize the ruling Turkish regime and its ideology. For instance, Anna Tveritina, one of the renowned experts in Turkish studies in the SU, viewed the ruling Kemalist elite of Turkey as “a coalition of bourgeoisie and landlords which completely impoverished the nation because of its reactionary nature.” “As a result,” she argued, “the ideology of Kemalism was transformed from national-chauvinism toward national treachery because of its anti-popular and anti-national character.”⁶⁹ She saw no difference between the RPP, which ruled Turkey until 1950, and the Democrat Party (DP), which came to power in May 1950. For her, both parties “appear to be advocates of the predatory ideology of pan-Turkism, misanthropic racism and chauvinism, they implement a policy of national treason and act as agents of imperialism.”⁷⁰

In 1952, Ivan Samilovskij, a career diplomat, a former Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan, and former Chief radio-broadcast editor and Head of the Department of Broadcasting to countries of the Middle East of the Soviet State Radio Committee

presented yet another negative image of Kemalism.⁷¹ Understandably, many of his insights and perspectives reflected official policy line as he held a key position in the Soviet propaganda machine. He described the Kemalist ideology as an expansionist one, which received “a green light” from “the US imperialists” to control parts of the territories of Lebanon, Syria, and its city of Aleppo. According to Samilovskij, in all possible ways the USA encouraged “cranky aspirations of the Turkish rulers to restore the former Turkish Empire.”⁷² Ambassador Aralov interpreted Turkey’s choice of the USA and NATO as “a breach of the National Pact and the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The independence of Turkey . . . was lost and trampled down.”⁷³ For most of the time, those authors used the identical terms and descriptions to illustrate their criticism toward Turkey.

As in previous decades, in the 1950s two particular principles of Kemalism, nationalism, and populism, were heavily criticized in Soviet circles. The first was attacked on the basis that it promoted “specific national characters” which had no historical bases. It was particularly criticized for its racist nature and for its objective of forceful Turcification of national minorities.⁷⁴ It was also interpreted as a principle which promoted expansionist and pan-Turkist tendencies in Turkey, thereby creating a fertile ground for further empowerment of fascism in Turkey.⁷⁵ The principle of populism was attacked for its unconvincing argument about the “absolute equality” within Turkey. According to Tveritina, that principle was distorted and unattainable given the deeply rooted social inequality in the country.⁷⁶ Against this background, Samilovskij claimed that the Turkish working class is slowly getting rid “of the poison of Kemalism and chauvinism and of the influence of the DP and RPP.”⁷⁷

On June 28, 1960, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev wrote to General Cemal Gürsel, the leader of the first military intervention in Turkey, expressing his hope that the new government of Turkey would remain committed to its initial statements and be loyal to the principles of Atatürk. Khrushchev also added that if the new government of Turkey implemented its post-intervention promises “we all will see how the Soviet-Turkish relations will return back to the level of genuine good-neighborly relations and true friendship,” that both Lenin and Atatürk established.⁷⁸ It is obvious that the Soviet leadership was unequivocally upset with the government of the DP and hoping to restore relations with Turkey after its ouster by the military. In the same vein, a few months after the statement of Khrushchev, the Institute of International Relations published the memoirs of Semyon Aralov, the former Soviet ambassador to Turkey. The foreword of the book, written by D. Yuditskij, the chief editor, contained more elaborated insights about the Soviet expectations from the new government of Turkey. It once again confirmed that previous governments of Turkey distorted “the progressive reforms of Atatürk” and “turned them towards the path of reaction.” As a result, the foreword continued, “people of Washington”—Bayar, Menderes, Zorlu, Polatkan, “betrayed the legacy of Atatürk . . . causing a huge damage to the Turkish nation.”⁷⁹

The relations between the two countries improved in the 1960s, resulting in reciprocal official visits of high ranking officials. This shift also changed the overall approach of Soviet scholars toward Kemalism and its legacy. During the 1960s

one could observe a slightly modified Soviet approach toward ideological development in Turkey. The harsh rhetoric and outward criticism of Kemalism of the previous decades were replaced by expectations from the rising Turkish leftist movements. The interpretation of some Soviet scholars about the diversification of the Kemalist discourse slightly differed in that it claimed that the existing need for the metamorphosing Kemalism was more widely demanded than ever before. Many Soviet observers were particularly encouraged by the proliferation of socialist movements which altered the former definitions of the key principles of Kemalism by attaching new interpretations to each of them that were reminiscent of Soviet ideological standpoints. The Soviets were particularly positive about the “Manifesto of 150” adopted in 1962 by 150 leading Turkish intellectuals.⁸⁰ This manifesto openly rejected the former Kemalist claim about the “classless nature” of Turkish society and thereby challenged the Kemalist principle of populism.⁸¹ To the Soviet observers, all the “leftist” movements acknowledged the authority of Atatürk and named themselves Atatürkists. However, the leftists claimed the need to have “an updated Kemalism” or more developed version of it, which they named Atatürkism.⁸²

The analysis provided by the Soviet Turkologists in the 1960s contained insightful explanations about the reasons of the mixed terminology concerning the domestic ideological developments in Turkey in the 1920s. For instance, in 1968 Esmeralda Gasanova admits that Soviet scholarship could not produce an exact definition of Kemalism.⁸³ She also clarified that when the Soviet party functionaries used the word Kemalism in the 1920s, they primarily referred to the socio-economic content of the Kemalist revolution. In addition, all the fashionable terms of the time (Kemalists, Kemalist movements and Kemalist Turkey) were empirical determinations of developments in Turkey.⁸⁴ This explanation of Gasanova, however, again downplays the political and ideological expectations that the Soviet Communist party leadership sought in transformations in Turkey.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the Soviet perspective of Turkish ideological transformations from the 1920s until the 1960s. From the outset, Soviet Russia, later on the SU, was hopeful that in Kemalist Turkey they could obtain a loyal ally in the fight against the West and in the pursuit of exporting Communism to the Muslim world. Although disappointed in both of these aims, the Soviets followed the ideological evolution in Turkey quite closely and were even able to produce conceptualizations of Kemalism much earlier than the Kemalist elite did in Turkey. Throughout the 1920s, the Soviet literature on Turkey was replete with efforts to frame the Turkish development model within a frame of Kemalism. Thus, the Soviet efforts were the first deliberate steps to conceptualize Kemalism. These trends continued in later decades as well, however, the Communist regime and Soviet scholars failed to influence the Kemalist regime to the extent they anticipated. Moreover, during certain periods of mutual animosity the SU was exceedingly critical of Kemalism and the Turkish development model seeing it either as “an appendix of

fascism” or “the patrimony of the imperialist West.” The SU was particularly critical toward Turkish leadership and its ideological shift starting from the mid-1930s which continued until the beginning of the 1960s. The Communist party functionaries and academics were in line with the official state position when interpreting or examining domestic ideological transformations in Turkey. Therefore, most of them were utterly critical toward Turkish leadership and its alleged distortion of the Kemalist legacy. After the first military intervention in 1960 and with the rise of leftist movement in Turkey in the 1960s, the SU changed its attitude. During this period, Soviet scholars also revisited many of the earlier conceptualizations of Kemalism.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Giritli, “Superiority of the Kemalist Ideology,” 125.
2. Kieser, “Ethno-nationalist Revolutionary,” 26.
3. Hall, *Eminent Asians*, 296.
4. Karal, “Principles of Kemalism,” 11.
5. Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, Chapters 4 and 5; Danilov, “Kemalism and World Peace,” 103; Melnik, *Turcija*; Kuznetsova, *Ustonovlenie Sovetsko-Tureckih otoshenii*; Moiseyev and Rozaliyev, *K istorii sovetsko-tureckih otoshenii*; Miller, *Kratkaja istorija Turcii*; and Akal, *Mustafa Kemal*.
6. Before the formation of the Soviet Union in December 30, 1922, three South Caucasian Soviet Republics were de facto free in conducting their foreign policies.
7. Ferdi, “Evolutsia Kemalizma,” 30–8; Kross, “Vnutrennee polozhenie Turtsii,” 57–66; Irandoust, *Dvizhushie sili*; Youst, “Pisma iz Turtsii,” 174–86; and Butayev, *Natsional'naya revolyutsia*.
8. *Dokumenty Vneshnoi Politiki*.
9. Gurko-Kryazhin, “Vozniknovenie nacional'no-'svoboditel'nogo dvizhenija,” 268–75.
10. Gurko-Kryazhin, *Istoriya revolyutsii v Turtsii*, 126–7.
11. Danilov, “Kemalism and World Peace,” 117.
12. *Hayastani Azgayin Arkhiv*, 7.
13. The Soviet regime was established in Armenia on December 2, 1920.
14. “Doklady zavedujushego,” 225.
15. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formally established on December 30, 1922.
16. Astakhov, *Ot sultanata*.
17. *Ibid.*, V, VI.
18. *Ibid.*, 63.
19. *Ibid.*, 65, 67, 73.
20. Semyon Aralov was preceded by Sergey Natsarenius, who represented Soviet Russia’s interests in Turkey for six months (May 1921–January 1922).
21. Aralov, *Vospominaniya sovetskogo diplomata*, 213.
22. *Ibid.*, 214.
23. *Ibid.*, 215.
24. *Ibid.*, 217.
25. *Ibid.*, 218.
26. Youst, “Pisma iz Turtsii,” 174.
27. *Ibid.*, 184.

28. Kitaygorodskij, "Zametki o Kemalistskoi Turcii," 50.
29. *Ibid.*, 48, 50.
30. Irandoust, "Sushnost Kemalizma," 62–9.
31. *Ibid.*, 63–4.
32. *Ibid.*, 68.
33. Ferdi, "Evolucia Kemalizma," 30–8.
34. Ferdi, "Kemalizm na relsah," 30–1.
35. *Ibid.*, 39.
36. Ferdi, "Kitajskaya revolucia," 33–7.
37. Irandoust, *Dvizhushie sili*.
38. *Ibid.*, 5.
39. *Ibid.*, 6.
40. Godes, *Chto takoye kemalistskij put'*, 4–5.
41. Butayev, *Natsional'naja revolucia*, 202.
42. Godes, *Chto takoye kemalistskij put'*, 4–5, 109.
43. *Ibid.*, 38.
44. *Telegramma polnomochново predstavitelja SSSR*, 242–3.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Yeremeyev, "Kemalizm i panturkizm," 62–3.
47. Kemal, *Put' novoi Turcii*.
48. *Ibid.*, XII.
49. Kemal, *Der Weg Zur Freiheit*.
50. Gurko-Kryazhin, "Vozniknovenie Nacional'no-svoboditel'nogo dvizhenija," 274.
51. Rouben, "Noragouyn Turkian," 156.
52. *Ibid.*, 166.
53. Natali, *Turkizmy Angoraen Paku*, 33.
54. "Treaty of Friendship" or "Moscow treaty" signed on March 16, 1921; "Friendship and Neutrality Treaty" signed in 1925; "Naval agreement" signed on March 8, 1931; "Treaty on economic cooperation" in 1932.
55. Hirst, "Anti-Westernism," 37.
56. *Ibid.*, 38, 43.
57. Özdalga, *I Atatürks spâr*, 31.
58. *Pismo zamestitelja narodnogo komisara*, 344–5.
59. Kross, "Vnutrennee polozhenie Turcii," 57–66.
60. *Ibid.*, 59–61.
61. Ferdi, "Evolutsia Kemalizma," 35.
62. Godes, *Chto takoye kemalistskij put'*, 35.
63. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union*, 105.
64. Aralov, *Vospominaniye sovetskovo diplomata*, 219.
65. *Ibid.*
66. Tveritina, "Ot nacional-shovinizma," 79.
67. Krimskij, "Panturkisti," 79.
68. *Ibid.*, 80.
69. Tveritina, "Ot nacional-shovinizma," 79.
70. *Ibid.*, 79.
71. Samilovskij, *Turcija*.
72. *Ibid.*, 12.
73. Aralov, *Vospominaniye sovetskovo diplomata*, 220.
74. Tveritina, "Ot nacional-shovinizma," 80–1.
75. Samilovskij, *Turcija*, 67.
76. Tveritina, "Ot nacional-shovinizma," 81–2.
77. Samilovskij, *Turcija*, 68.

78. Interestingly, that letter of Khrushchev to Gürsel, as well as the latter's response dated on July 8, 1960, was made public only on September 2, 1960. *Izvestija*, September 2, 1960.
79. Aralov, *Vospominaniye sovetskovo diplomata*, 11. Foreword of Yuditskij.
80. Gasanova, "Ob ideologicheskikh osnovah," 33.
81. *Ibid.*, 33.
82. *Ibid.*, 33.
83. *Ibid.*, 25.
84. *Ibid.*, 25.

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