

Bülent Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920–1991: Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). 118 pages of text + 42 pages of appendices and illustrations, ISBN 0-415-34849-8.

Bülent Gökay's study is a judicious and balanced survey of Turkey in the interplay of Soviet foreign policy and Komintern policy. Gökay draws on archival sources in Russian (from the Party and Foreign Ministry archives for the 1920s), in English (from the British Foreign Office between the 1920s and 1970s) and in Turkish (from the Institute of Social History in Amsterdam; Turkey's official archives were closed to him). Gökay matches these sources adroitly with wide reading in the Turkish memoir, historical and political science literatures. The treatment is chronological: eight 15-page chapters cover the diplomacy and political history of the period between 1920 and 1991.

Gökay's main thesis is uncontroversial. He thinks the Turkish case shows the consistent pragmatism of Soviet foreign policy, though he concedes the rhetoric of internal Soviet foreign policy discussions in the 1920s are just as ideologised as the Komintern's ECCI resolutions and *Pravda's* public positions. Again and again, Gökay argues, the USSR put pragmatic security and trade interests before assisting the development of Communism in Turkey, even to the point of the Soviet government accepting the murder (off Trabzon in January 1921) of the first leaders of the Turkish Communist Party. A near-continuous policy of arrests of Turkish Communists and fellow travellers has since applied in Turkey. Gökay argues Soviet policy in the 1920s toward Turkey – after the Baku Congress for Peoples of the East (September 1920) – paralleled the disasters of policy toward China in the 1920s. The Komintern required local communists (till 1928) to accept the reality of nationalist (Mustafa Kemal or Chiang Kai Shek) leadership of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles which the Komintern judged might later take on socialist objectives.

Gökay does not blame Moscow alone for the consistent failure of Turkish communism. He writes from a perspective sympathetic to the Turkish socialist workers' movements (*İşçi Partisi*) which emerged in Turkey (and among Turks in Germany) in the mid 1970s, and points out their greater success in reaching out to the Turkish (but not Kurdish) masses with trades unions, with May Day marches, and with better articulated (*Bağımsız Türkiye*) policies on NATO membership, on human rights, on corruption, on US bases and on associated CIA, military

and Rightist conspiracies (the coups of 1960 and 1973, and shootings in 1977 and 1980). Excepting the tragic prescience of Nazim Hikmet, the great Turkish communist poet living in exile, the exiles in the *Türk Komünist Partisi* are seen as too subservient to Moscow: a club of intellectuals ‘remote from the reality of the land in which they were trying to establish a just system’ (118). Till the creative backwash of political crises of 1968 and of the invasion of Cyprus in 1974–75, Turkish communists dutifully complied with Moscow’s line, Gökay argues, whereas their comrades in China changed tack after their repression in Wuhan and Shanghai.

The best chapter of the book is the early chapter relating to the first decade of both the Soviet era and the Turkish Republic. Gökay offers a close reading of Lenin’s pragmatic policy on Kemalism (and initially on Enver Paşa), and of Mustafa Kemal’s skilful use of substantial Soviet aid even as he was determined not to enter into any public partnership with communists in the building of Turkish nationalism and secularism. Later chapters lack the depth of the first. They contrast narratives of policies and events – chapter by chapter, each dealing first with Russia, then with Turkey in the one era, though with barely a comparison. The two societies are assumed to differ.

While Gökay’s narratives of political history are always informative, the deeper contrasts remain unexplored. I would have liked Gökay to explain why these two societies, in responding to the same world crisis of imperialism, took such similar (secularising and one-party-state) and yet such different (nationalist and communist) trajectories. He explains how and why Turkey stayed out of World War II, but not why Turkey’s politics (since the coup of 1980 unravelling) has been much more Euro-oriented, creative and responsive to public opinion than has been evident in most of the former states of the USSR (since the abortive coup of 1991). Were not Soviet communists just as ‘remote from the reality of the land in which they were trying to establish a just system’?

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