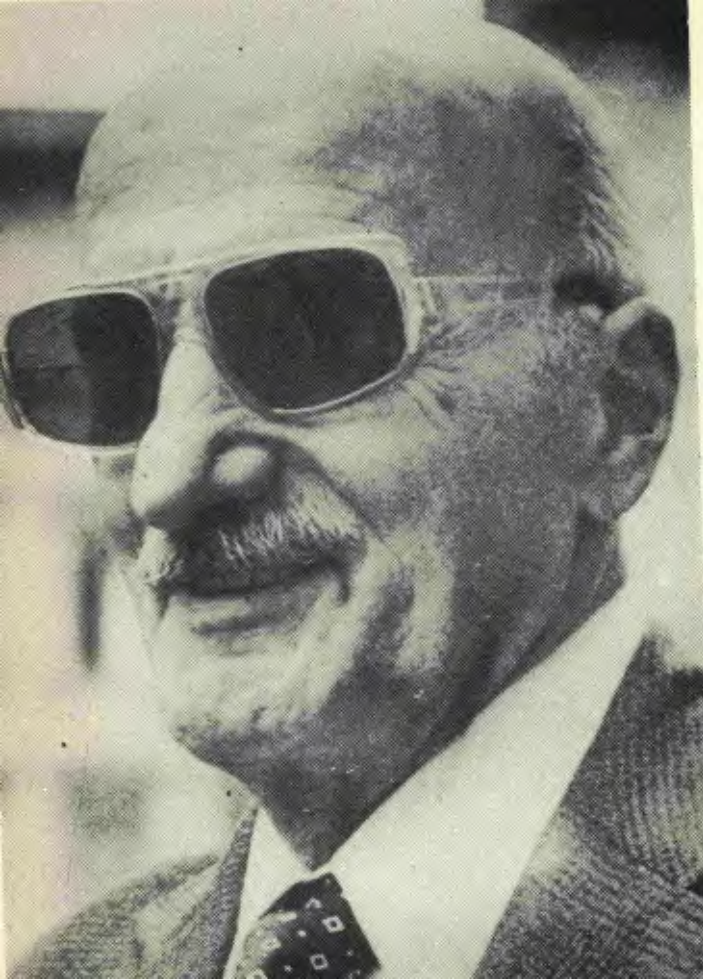


A Short Biography

**İ. Bilen -
Years of
struggle 1**

AN İŞÇİNİN SESİ PUBLICATION



Dedicated to Comrade İ. Bilen,
who has always held high the banner
of struggle, on the occasion
of his 76th birthday!

INTRODUCTION

Because of conditions of severe illegality and repression under which the Communist Party of Turkey has been forced to work for more than 50 years combined with the liquidationist activities of the opportunists, little was known outside Turkey about this Party, its history of struggle and the life and role of its General Secretary, Comrade I. Bilen.

Comrade İ. Bilen has become the General Secretary of the TKP in May 1973. Changes were made in the opportunist leadership which left the Party in the dark during long years of repression. The Party was put on a Leninist course. The maturing revolutionary situation in Turkey and the rebuilding and strengthening of the TKP itself since May 1973 have placed this Party at the head of a rising working class and revolutionary movement, have made the demand for "Freedom to the TKP!" the focal point and central demand of the

democratic, anti-fascist struggle. Comrade Bilen played a central, determining role in this development.

The publication at this time – in both Turkish and English – of the biography of Comrade İ. Bilen has great significance. For Communists and revolutionaries of Turkey, Comrade İ. Bilen represents the Leninist leader without which there can be no Bolshevik Party, no victory in the revolutionary struggle. Comrade Bilen's life represents years of bitter, unrelenting struggle to set the Communist Party of Turkey on a Leninist road of struggle, on Leninist ideological lines, years of struggle against imperialism, the bourgeoisie, the opportunists and liquidators who tried to destroy the party.

The translation of "Years of Struggle" presented many difficulties. First, those encountered in any translation from Turkish, a language that is in a stage of rapid change and development. Second, and most important, those difficulties arising from the style and language of the biography itself. The lively style and colourful imagery, which express a militant, revolutionary spirit and which made the biography a work of art in the original Turkish, are not easily transposed into the English language.

Comrade Bilen's life is inseparably bound with the history of the world communist movement. He became a member of the TKP under the direct influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution. He was studying in Moscow, at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, at the time of Lenin's death. He was a member of the Bolshevik Party. For many years he worked in the Comintern. He saw the Second World War and the defeat of German fascism by the Red Army. He is a standard-bearer of proletarian internationalism.

Comrade Bilen embodies in himself the character of a communist, a Bolshevik. He has devoted the whole

of his life to the Leninist, revolutionary struggle.

This biography is more than the life of one man; for Comrade Bilen's life is one with the fighting history of the Party.

One of the main slogans of the revolutionary struggle in Turkey is "Long live Comrade Bilen!". This slogan was advanced on the basis of objective historical evidence of the role Comrade Bilen has played and is playing in this struggle. "Years of Struggle" confirms this evidence once again.

Long live the Leninist TKP!

Long live the TKP's Leninist leader, Comrade Bilen!

**A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF COMRADE I. BILEN,
GENERAL SECRETARY OF
THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF TURKEY**

Comrade I. Bilen was born on the 18th of October 1902 in Rize. His father was a naval officer-instructor. Comrade Bilen grew up, not in Rize, but in the Kasımpaşa-Kulaksız area of Istanbul. On completion of his secondary education he entered the lycée and at the same time attended motor mechanic courses in the evenings. After this, he started work in a motor repair factory in the dockyard.

It was the years 1917-1918. The Great October Socialist Revolution which broke out in Russia shook the world. The sultanate, the contemporary ruling circles and the Unionist government which had been allied with Germany rather than the other imperialist groups, emerged from the First World War in defeat. Enver and his followers deserted the people and the nation. Terrible devastation followed. The country tumbled into the abyss. The imperialist invaders, the armies of the

Entente swept into Anatolia and occupied Istanbul. In one sense, the First World War was a war to divide the semi-colonial Ottoman Empire between imperialist groups and states. This dividing turned into murderous plunder. The British, French, American, Italian and Greek armies each occupied one part of Turkey. This situation evoked a strong reaction among the people, the masses, among the different strata of the population, the workers and working people in particular.

One by one, definite districts of Istanbul came under the control of the British, French and Americans. The dockyards and the factory where Comrade Bilen worked were seized by the British. Under these circumstances and particularly in this factory, Comrade Bilen came face to face with both exploitation and the yoke of foreign domination. These two factors, in particular when combined with the impact of the Red October Revolution which delivered the first devastating blow against capitalism, imperialism and the colonial system, gave an impulse to Comrade I. Bilen's inclination towards class consciousness, an inclination which is peculiar to the working class. This was an inexhaustible source for the development of a communist.

In finding his way as a communist militant and in joining the Communist Party of Turkey, Comrade I. Bilen was helped by his cousin Mehmet Aruz. Aruz had participated in the October Revolution and the Civil War and joined the Bolshevik Party. In 1919 he headed a large group of communists sent to Istanbul by Mustafa Suphi. This group played an important role in the war against the invaders for national liberation and independence. Moreover this group contributed concretely to the development of the TKP, for the most part in Istanbul. Aruz's pseudonym was "Papa Mehmet".

1908 – Revolution without the masses

I. Bilen had not yet started primary school at the time of the 1908 bourgeois revolution. This revolution was influenced by the 1905 bourgeois democratic revolution which had exploded in Russia. In Turkey, as well, the bourgeois revolution was abortive. The bourgeoisie was weak. It opposed the development of the revolution and involvement in it of the people, the masses. From the first days, the bourgeoisie chose the path of collaboration with the sultanate, the feudals and landlords. Rather than destroy the old state apparatus, the bourgeoisie strove to adjust it to serve its own interests. It established a constitutional sultanate and a parliament. Turkey's semi-colonial status remained as before. The "General Debts Consortium", a state within a state, maintained its rule. With no exceptions, the Unionists rapidly adhered to the path of collaboration with imperialist groups and foreign capitals.

As emphasised by Lenin, this bourgeoisie was weak and accomodating and did not rally the masses for genuine independence. Furthermore, it was hostile to the proletarian struggle emerging in the Ottoman Empire.

The school years of Comrade I. Bilen coincide with such a complicated period, a period when the new was in conflict with the old, when the working class and its struggles were just beginning to take shape. These contradictions were apparent in the schools as well. Students were made to shout, "Long live my sultan!" and to sing, "Long live freedom, justice, equality and brotherhood". Nevertheless, despite this, the old retrogate education system based on religion was collapsing. Mathematics, geometry, physics, chemistry, basic sciences were taking priority in the classrooms. I. Bilen

never did well in the religious courses. He finished school with the highest marks.

Giving voice to "Justice, equality and brotherhood", the bourgeoisie established the most unjust, most unequal system, a system which accorded no recognition to brotherhood or anything else. Such was the policy it pursued. The bourgeoisie engaged in terrorist attacks against the worker and peasant movements, barbaric oppression and annihilation of the national minorities. It incited chauvinism as much as it could, setting Turks, Lazes, Kurds, Armenians, Arabs and religious sects one against the other. Throughout the country, it let loose horrifying massacres of the Armenians. Thirsting for blood, it drove Turkish soldiers to death on battlefields from Galicia to the deserts of Yemen and Basra for the benefit of imperialism. Millions of people were driven from their homes and native lands. The people died of starvation. The produce of Anatolia, wheat, cotton, and much else besides, flowed to Germany. The Great War multiplied the wealthy. The life of the youth, the people of that period, became a hell. I. Bilen shared this hell with the people. These things aroused in him feelings of hatred for unjust, imperialist wars.

What was the way out of this impasse, the road to liberation? The answer to this question was the giant beacon of the Red October Revolution whose glory and inextinguishable rays showed humanity the road to liberation. Great October achieved victory and, just as to the workers and working people of all countries, it was showing to the people of Turkey also that the road to liberation was the road of struggle for national independence and socialism.

Lenin read to the whole world the first decree of the revolution: the Decree on Peace. He exposed the secret agreements that were concluded by the imperial-

ists to divide the colonies, including Turkey, among themselves, and tore up those agreements to which the Tsar had been a party. The revolution gave unconditional recognition to the right of all nations to freely determine their own destiny. It gave land to the peasants.

This call was of deep concern to our people as well. War for peace and national liberation was imminent. In some areas guerrilla war against the invaders had begun. From the very beginning, the communist organisations and groups that had been formed took their place alongside the people's forces which had taken up arms. The fire spread. Long before Mustafa Kemal arrived in Samsun, 50,000 guerrilla bands had spread throughout Anatolia and were fighting against domestic and foreign enemies. It was the growth and extension of this people's movement that led the national bourgeoisie to join the war against the imperialist invaders. In this way a broad national front against the imperialist enslavers took shape in the country. The concrete form of this front was the "Kuva-i Milliye"*

Founding of the TKP -- a new historical stage

The Communist Party of Turkey was founded under the direct influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution and in the flames of the National Liberation War. The First Congress of the TKP was convened on the 10th of September 1920. This congress gathered all the communist groups under the same roof. There were 75 delegates from 15 organisations. The congress adopted the programme, rules, strategy and tactics of the party and elected the Central Committee. The Political Bureau, various sections, the President and General Secretary of

* "Kuva-i Milliye": The National Independence Forces.

the party were announced. Thus, with the founding of the TKP, the struggle of the proletariat of Turkey, and alongside it the national liberation war, entered a new historical stage. The working class of Turkey was taking into its hands a weapon of a type, a Leninist organisation. The TKP took the decision to participate in the national liberation war in an organised and armed manner.

The founding of the TKP and the gradual turning of the national liberation war into a democratic revolution frightened the bourgeoisie. The latter aimed to hold political power in its hands, to impose its hegemony. It did not exclude the possibility of future collaboration with the big landlords and the comprador big bourgeoisie internally, the imperialist financiers externally. The composition of the National Assembly which was formed out of the old Ottoman Assembly of Deputies is significant in this respect. Later, in the period when the London conference was approaching and the imperialists were endeavouring to subject Turkey to the yoke of Sevres, the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie and the politicians of the time were quickly exposed. This immediately confirmed the class character, cowardice, perfidy and deceitfulness of the bourgeoisie. It is only the fact that it is subjugated to imperialism which brings it into conflict with imperialism. The fact that it is the exploiting class brings it into conflict with the working class and the masses of the working people. According to a pre-arranged plan, the bourgeoisie withdrew its army units from various sections of the front at one of the most critical points of the liberation war. These forces, under the command of Ismet İnönü and Refet Bele, were driven against the guerrilla and popular units.

These units were shot in the back. Close on this,

at the beginning of the year 1921, the legal party in Ankara was suppressed, its leaders arrested. The bourgeoisie turned them over to the "Courts of Independence", locked them away in dungeons and sent them into exile. Mustafa Suphi and the members of the TKP Central Committee and Political Bureau were ambushed on the night of 28-29 of January 1921 and drowned in the dark waters of the Black Sea.

This brutal attack by the bourgeoisie left deep traces among the people, particularly among the workers, in the ranks of the TKP and in the party organisations. It aroused feelings of hatred and repugnance towards the bourgeoisie. It was a heavy blow to a party that had just begun to develop. Recovery was not easy. The party revived only at its Second Congress which was convened in Ankara in 1922.

Comrade Bilen enters the ranks of the party

Comrade I. Bilen's entry into the Communist Party of Turkey coincided with such a difficult period. The underground operations of the Istanbul organisation of the party were many-sided. A special section had been established under the leadership of "Papa Mehmet". This section included a number of separate subordinate groups as well as individual members. Some were engaged in kidnapping, others in trailing agents, members of the group known as "Friends of England", and those collaborating with the French, Americans and Greeks. Some were distributing leaflets and statements written in English and French among foreign military units stationed in Istanbul. However, the principal duties of this section were: 1) to find arms and ammunition and transfer them to Anatolia; 2) to provide means of transportation and ensure the transfer of these weapons;

3) to set up striking groups and bands.

The factory where Comrade Bilen worked was small. However, from many aspects, it was an important foothold. 1) The workers had close relations and ties with motorboat keepers, drivers and disarmed sailors who were wandering idly around and patronising cafes in the Dockyards, Kasımpaşa and Golden Horn areas, sailors who were waiting for an opportunity to take revenge on the enemy. 2) The majority of the workers were young. Most of them had not completed primary or secondary school and most of them nourished an unconcealed hostility. One good aspect was that they had the romanticism of youth. 3) There were a few communist foremen who had participated in the Red Spartacus uprising in Germany in 1918-1919.

The Golden Horn Committee, and also the special section of the party, gave importance to this factory. The youth group was active everywhere. Gradually it began to adopt a revolutionary road and take on a revolutionary form. Because he was close to "Papa Mehmet", Comrade Bilen was the leader among these youth. He carried out every task given by the party. This group became a small, highly disciplined guerrilla team, acting as a striking force in the city. Among their many duties were the smuggling of appeals to Indian soldiers and the beating of extreme reactionaries.

When smuggling weapons to Anatolia, the most urgent task was the securing of roads over which the weapons would pass. One of these roads was through Izmit, Geyve and Akyazı, another was through the Bosphorus, Kandıra, Sakarya and Adapazarı. At the time, these places were held by Anzavur and his followers.*

* Anzavur was a reactionary who staged a pro-Greek rebellion.

The special section of the party established an armed guerrilla team made up of young, vigilant workers close to the party in the factories of the Golden Horn. At the head of these was a non-commissioned officer named Kürt Süleyman who had fought against counter-revolutionaries and the "White Army" in the Soviet Union. Comrade Bilen was a member of this group. It was the winter of 1920. 18-year old Bilen was wounded in the course of a clash near the Geyve strait and returned to Istanbul. After recovering, he again took part with his unit in clashes in Kandıra and along the river Sakarya. The group moved around a lot conducting raids and fighting its way from one end of Anatolia to the other and back to Istanbul. The grave of the machinist Hayrullah, one of I. Bilen's friends at the factory, is on the island of Kefken. He refused to surrender to the enemy a motorboat loaded with weapons. The bullet-riddled body of another friend, the machinist Kara Ahmet was carried away by the turbid waters of the Sakarya.

Having experienced the flames of war, Comrade I. Bilen became even closer to the party. In March 1922 he became a member of the TKP. His membership was accepted by the Golden Horn Committee of the Istanbul party organisation.

Second Congress of the TKP – the opportunists desert the struggle

It was a very difficult situation. The country was under mounting attack from the puppet sultanate government in Istanbul on the one hand, from the imperialist invaders on the other. The Ankara government maintained its repression. To fill the party with active members, to become organised and establish

organisations among the workers, became questions that could not be denied or postponed.

The Golden Horn Committee assigned Comrade Bilen to organisational and propaganda work. He began this task in the basic organisation at the factory where he worked. This task in no way resembled that of pelting that friend of England, the chatterbox and thick-set Sait Molla, with dried onions in Cebeli-Keresteciler. Nor did it resemble the job of putting a sack over the head and carrying away the British soldier guarding the Hasköy entrance of Dockyards. This work demanded knowledge, Marxist knowledge. However, the young Bilen had seen only pictures of Marx, Engels and Lenin in the Comintern journal, "International". Moreover, the journal obtained was in French. Comrade Bilen was skilful in slipping these journals across the Bosphorus and through the control of the British. However, he could not read their contents.

At that time there was no Marxist literature in Turkish. There was the journal "Aydınlık" whose language was dry and unintelligible. At the beginning the journal was published by the legal "Worker-Farmer Socialist Party". This party was a collection of petty-bourgeois socialist intellectual groups, a nest of opportunism. The party had links with the TKP. Among its members were the like of Atif Kansu who later became the secretary of the Republican People's Party; Nizamettin Ali who became the RPP's economic expert, a defender of capitalism and the bourgeoisie; and patented opportunists like Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer). It was very difficult to gain anything out of a journal published by these people. There was Maxim Gorky's "Mother". However, "One flower does not a summer make". There was a sincere and unshakeable belief in the working class, its struggle, the victory of this struggle, commun-

ism. The summer flowers, the bright ideals of Red October opened the eyes and hearts of the proletariat and people of Turkey. They were inspired by the blood and fire of the struggles of the working class, the struggles of the peoples for national independence and liberation, above all by victory upon victory of the new world in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. The life-and-death war against the imperialist invaders was continuing on fronts that stretched from Antep and Çukurova to Sakarya. It was approaching the final decisive moment.

The Second Congress of the TKP was held in Ankara on the 15th of August 1922 under very complex and very difficult conditions.

The police carried out provocations and burned down the hall where the Congress was scheduled to meet. Although the Minister of the Interior had previously granted permission, when the time came for the Congress to begin, it was banned. The meetings of the Congress were semi-legal, semi-illegal. Representatives and delegates from the Comintern and some fraternal parties participated.

The Şefik Hüsnü Değmer group which held the leadership of the Istanbul organisation refused to participate in this extremely important, this supreme forum which would and did determine the activities and policy of the party in this period. This group sabotaged the Congress. Such an event exposed the real nature of the petty-bourgeois, careerist, opportunist groups in the party, their jealousy of Mustafa Suphi and their desire to be at the head of the party.

The behaviour of the Şefik Hüsnü group evoked protests in the Istanbul organisation, the Golden Horn Committee and among the party members. Among those protesting was the party organisation of which

Comrade I. Bilen was a member. Discussion and criticism of this event continued for some time. Such a reaction was justified. It was imperative to struggle against anti-Leninist, divisive and opportunist trends. In spite of these, the successful conclusion of the Ankara Congress, in particular the historical decisions and measures that were taken, were welcomed and supported in Istanbul, in the party organisations, and among party members. The party called on all communists, all organisations, the whole people, to battle on the front lines to ensure decisive victory over the enemy. This was a struggle to ensure the position of and respect for the party, the place of the working class in this war, its leadership and hegemony. To stay away from the Congress was tantamount to sabotaging and deserting from this struggle.

In the fifteen days that followed the Second Congress, the Great Field Battle began. The enemy was thoroughly crushed, and, on the 9th of September, thrown into the sea at Izmir. Defeat of the enemy, the imperialists, in only nine days was not the work of the Supreme Commander alone. In this we can see a concrete illustration of what spectacular feats the people, all national forces, the working class can perform. The lands under occupation by the imperialists and the troops of the Greek King Constantine, who was nothing but a tool in their hands, were seething. The people pursued the enemy with whatever they could find, whatever passed into their hands. Before the cavalry of the "Kuva-i Milliye" reached Izmir, the people, the workers at the Halkapınar factories, had taken up arms, driven out the enemy, cleared them out of Konak Square. Among these were communists, friends of I. Bilen like Defterdarlı and, from the Golden Horn, Suphi, whose party name was Şakir. They had established the

party's first basic organisation in Izmir while the city was still in the hands of the enemy. Later, this organisation became a provincial committee.

12th September 1922 –

The TKP is banned but the fight goes on

The events, this uprising of the people, the communists' implementation of Congress decisions with their blood, the tendency towards turning the victory over the enemy into a democratic transformation, into a revolution, frightened the whole of the bourgeoisie which wanted to preserve all of the fruits of the struggle and victory for itself. The victorious bourgeoisie further exposed its teeth, its claws. Three days after the victory, on the 12th of September 1922, the Communist Party of Turkey was banned by the Prime Minister, Rauf Orbay, an ally of the English. The order came from the top, from Mustafa Kemal, Supreme Commander and President of the Assembly. The landlords and compradors, all sections of the bourgeoisie encountered no great difficulty in uniting against the working people, the working class and the Communist Party. This prohibition, such open repression immediately after the victory, clearly showed in what direction the bourgeoisie having seized political power and sovereignty was heading, what it wanted to do. With this, the bourgeoisie was 1) declaring and guaranteeing that it would not touch the landlords, capitalists and compradors, their private property, rights of ownership and their system of exploitation, that the latter would be protected and defended. 2) It wanted to show that it was ready to reach an agreement and establish close relations with imperialists and foreign capitals. 3) It announced once more, both abroad to the foreign capitals and financiers, and at home to the landlords, the masters, the wealthy,

the exploiting classes with which it had established a partnership, that it stood firm against communism. The bourgeoisie was making clear that it meant to maintain its repression of the Communist Party, that it had no intention of abandoning the dark methods of the bloody night of 28-29 January.

The Central Committee of the TKP protested and resolutely condemned the government's banning of the party. It told public opinion, the people, what the bourgeoisie hoped to attain by this prohibition. This protest, beginning with the words: "To the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey", is an historic document. It was signed by Salih Hacıoğlu, the General Secretary of the party, by the Red Trade Unions, the member responsible for the Bureau of the Youth Union, the Chief of the Women's Branch Section, and from the Political Bureau, Sadrettin Celal (Antel). The protest letter gave particular emphasis to the following striking events:

"Bourgeois gentlemen, ... those who achieved victory over the European imperialists were the workers and poor peasants of Turkey ... those who ensured the establishment and prevented the dispersal of the national government were the workers and impoverished peasants of Turkey ... There is no class which showed more self-sacrifice in the 3-year long armed struggle in Anatolia – in the Kuva-i Milliye war – than the workers and peasants ... For this they sacrificed all their possessions, their children, their blood and their lives ... You, you did nothing but utter empty, lying promises ... Once you sat on the throne you established on the backs of the workers and peasants, you forgot all your promises. It became clear that you are liars ... You attempted to smother the voice of the organisation of the workers and peasants of Turkey. That organisation

is the workers' and peasants' party. It will live as long as those classes exist... The Communist Party is an international entity. It is the arm of the international proletarian army in Turkey. As long as this international army exists, you cannot destroy this party ... it will always stand firm. The banning of our party ... is connected with your efforts to bargain with the European imperialists. The communists are exposing to the people the hidden face of your policy, throwing your masks to the ground ... We, the communists of Turkey, shall not be silent. We resolutely protest your unjust and barbarous attack..."

Preparation of cadres — Comrade Bilen is sent to Moscow

The alignment of class forces, the political balance in the country, was changing. The class struggles were entering a new period and a new stage. The last Ottoman sultan and the puppet government in Istanbul were packing their bags. The people had fought but the bourgeoisie had seized power. The workers and peasants, the broad masses, had come out of the struggle empty-handed. Still, the intoxicating air of victory was making heads spin, especially those of the middle strata. The same atmosphere was having its effect in the TKP as well, among members of intellectual and petty-bourgeois origin. Some of them exposed themselves, firstly, the opportunists.

The Central Committee's protest against the Assembly and the government found a positive and eager welcome in the party, among the members and among the workers. This was a call to rid the party of old, obsolete methods, a call to be on the alert. It was essential for the party to outline a new strategy and

tactics, to apply new methods of struggle, new forms of organisation. The party passed to secret, underground, illegal activities. It was necessary to educate, prepare and adjust comrades accordingly. In one sense the Istanbul organisation was already semi-underground. It maintained the existence of the "Worker-Farmer Socialist Party" for a while longer.

It was in this situation that the Central Committee took the decision to send Comrade I. Bilen to the Soviet Union, to the "Communist University of the Toilers of the East" in Moscow.

Comrade I. Bilen crossed the Black Sea in a motor-driven sailboat. He acted as mechanic on this vessel. With him was an old Bolshevik named Kalakov from Bukhara. He knew Turkish and had come to Turkey to observe and learn the situation of the TKP. The two stepped on Soviet land at Sevastopol. Knowing the way, they left the boat, with captain and crew at the harbour and boarded a train. Moscow, give us your hand!

On the road they passed through areas where a bitter civil war had raged. They came to the Perekop pass. Budyonny's red riders had crossed this narrow, dark strip of land. Here the commanders and soldiers of the Red Army had performed a miracle never before seen in the war. In this offensive the Red Army drove Wrangel, the counter-revolutionaries, the remnants of Tsarism, the imperialists supporting them, and the French into the sea. I. Bilen had seen those who escaped via the Crimea, generals, relics of the "white army", survivors of a lost battle, in Istanbul. They were exiles. At first they marched around with swords and epaulets, chasing women in Beyoglu, from the Tunnel to Taksim. But this arrogance did not last long. Some of these same officers ended up selling chocolate on these streets, swords dangling from their waists, braid sagging from

their shoulders to their chests.

By thoroughly crushing the counter-revolutionary white army, by driving the imperialists out of Soviet territory, by liberating the Crimea and the Caucasus, by sweeping away the Mensheviks, Tashnaks and Musavatists, the Red Army rendered the greatest aid to the national liberation struggle of the people of Turkey. Moreover, the young Soviet government and Lenin himself had spared weapons, ammunition, medicine and money, whatever they had, from the Red Army and given it to the people of Turkey, to the neighbour fighting against imperialist invaders. At that time the guerrillas and soldiers used to say about the Russian rifles: "It brings a cry from where it hits", – it brings victory. And so it was. The people of Turkey will never forget this aid.

CHAPTER II

October, Lenin and the Bolshevik party had achieved their greatest victory. The October Revolution entered its sixth year. Momentous battles had been fought. They were won and the victory achieved through the immeasurable sacrifices of the working class, due to the fact that the working peasants, millions, had taken their place alongside the working class, due to the worker-peasant alliance.

The victory was great. So too were the deep wounds suffered by the country. The red giant was nursing its wounds. The Bolsheviks, the party of Lenin, millions of people had begun the struggle to rebuild the country, to establish a society of a new type. Along the roads, bridges blown up during the war, devastated railways and stations, overturned telegraph poles, railway depots and factories were being restored. But many places still had their graveyards of railway carriages and locomotives.

First impressions of Moscow

Moscow. The train pulled into Kursk station. The passengers spilled out onto the platform. The station was teeming with passengers and other people, the majority wearing soldiers' cloaks and boots and carrying sacks across their shoulders. The Soviet people bore on their backs the traces of the battles which had raged with blood and fire for four years.

In the square outside the station stood a row of one-horse carriages. The drivers' outfits were somewhat different. Their flowing, pleated fur coats and fur caps creased down the middle distinguished them from everybody else. Some of the people getting into these phaetons had a smarter appearance. Their boots were shiny and the collars of their coats lined with fur. These were the Nepmen.

I. Bilen understood nothing of the voices and conversations going on around him. He and Kalakov also got into a phaeton. Kalakov placed on his head the fez he had brought with him from Istanbul and turned the tassel to the front. Crowds of children, all of them dressed in rags, followed behind them. Whistling and laughing, they mocked Bilen and Kalakov from behind, shouting "Turetski sultan". The children were orphans, their mothers and fathers swept up by the war. Many of their number, battered by cold, sun and winds, died of starvation. They travelled from one town to another, hiding in, under or on top of freight cars, sleeping in the train stations. The people called them "besprizorni."*

* besprizorni: Russian for orphan.

The Soviet government showed a special concern for them, gathering them up in homes for care and education. It was not easy to control them, but the Soviet state and the Communist Party overcame this difficulty as well.

Bilen and his friend booked into a hotel called "Paris". It was nationalised, had a new service and was clean. Previously it had been frequented by aristocrats, merchants and the rich. Bilen saw Moscow for the first time together with Kalakov's wife. She was a Tartar who mixed Turkish and Russian in her sentences. In a sense, she was Bilen's first Russian teacher. She too had participated in the Civil War and was a member of the party. She told Comrade Bilen about the street battles which had taken place in Moscow during the first days of October. The bullet holes on the walls in the heart of the capital were still fresh. They walked to the place where Pushkin Square is now located. On the October days, an artillery battery had opened fire on counter-revolutionaries heading towards the Kremlin. A bullet had passed through a tram post. Bilen had an early start on his lessons in Soviet history. The "class room" was lively. The smoke of past events lingered in the air.

Pushkin Square was not like it is today. The statue of Pushkin stood opposite to where it stands today, on the other side of the street. The square was called "Strastnaya Ploshad". There used to be a convent here, its tower and chapel surrounded by fortress walls. The place is totally different now. Behind the "Russia" cinema is a side street called "Putinkovski" which is no more than 100 metres long. On this side street there still stands today a four-storey building, previously a high school, which housed the "Communist University of the Toilers of the East - CUTE" (KUTV). I. Bilen studied here. It was here that he first met Nazım Hikmet

and many other comrades.

The Communist University of the Toilers of the East

The University was a mixed bag. How many nationalities, peoples there were! Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Indians on the one hand, Uzbeks, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kirgiz, Turkmens, Georgians, Abkhasians, Chechens, Circassians, Tuvalians, Persians and Azerbaijanians, on the other. The group from Turkey was also a mixed bag. One of the first free verses Bilen heard from Nazım Hikmet was about CUTE. It was called “Putinkovski”

“Mayakovsky,
Leman,
Artin,
Ali,
Papuli,
Jan, Guliev
clunk-clunk it goes on.
RSFSR, KUTV, Narcomnas.
The engine at Putinkovski hums
Its sound cannot be heard here
but in the East resounds!”

The costumes worn by students at the University were in various ethnic, national styles and colours. The Dagestanians and Caucasians would attend classes with pistols and daggers around their waists. The Uzbeks, Turkmens and Bukharans wore flowing trousers and long silk jackets. The girls’ belts dangled at their waists. Many languages were spoken. But everyone communicated with each other in one tongue – Lenin’s mother tongue.

This home of communists science and education moulded all these colourful national cadres and revolutionaries with the ideals and principles of proletarian internationalism. The Soviet government and the Communist Party had established this University in a very difficult period. In 1921 the Red Army had smashed the enemies. The armed and unarmed counter-revolutionary forces which remained from place to place were being wiped out. Most important was the struggle for the recovery of the motherland and the overcoming of ruin and devastation, the struggle for the transition from capitalism to socialism. There were no easy paths for this difficult struggle which had come to the fore.

It was in such a period that the party of Bolsheviks, the Soviet government, the working class and Soviet people showed such self-sacrifice in expressing their generous proletarian internationalism towards the world revolutionary process and the struggles of the peoples for national independence, their struggles against imperialism, colonialism, reaction and oppression. They undertook all the expenses of the University.

A commune had been formed in the University. Aside from the work of preparing meals, most of the work of the commune would be done by the students themselves, organised in teams and taking turns. Discipline and order were also self-enforced. Each group had a party committee elected at its own meetings. Presiding over them was a Party Committee of all the communists at the University. This Committee functioned in harmony with the Rector and Executive Board of the University. It was no easy task to impose discipline on and educate the many students who came, some from capitalist countries and abroad, others from the various Eastern regions of the Soviets, all with different levels of consciousness, knowledge and

education, different customs and backgrounds.

Moscow under the New Economic Policy

I. Bilen had entered a new world, a new atmosphere. The political, social and natural climate of Moscow was totally different. Lenin was alive but ill. Comrade Bilen did not get the opportunity to see him. Only one and a half years later he would file past the immortal Lenin's coffin, part of a human torrent, in the freezing cold, at 40 degrees below.

A week after he entered the University, Comrade Bilen went shopping with an Azerbaijani comrade. There were few state or cooperative shops, only free markets. They rushed into one of these. There was a dense crowd and people were bargaining hard. These markets were called "tokuchka" or flea markets. In some ways they resembled Mahmutpaşa.* I. Bilen bought a blue straight-collared worker's shirt with close white buttons that did up the side to the shoulder, as well as a Russian cap. This Russian worker's outfit was attractive and soon became fashionable at the University.

NEP – the New Economic Policy was in force. This policy was applied during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. It was a link in the chain. Lenin had already elaborated the principles, the foundations of this policy in 1918, in his work "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Power". The armed intervention of the imperialists and the Civil War had forced the Communist Party and the Soviet Government to introduce an extraordinary, special economic policy. Everything was directed to the front-line, towards the

* Mahmutpaşa is the name of the flea market district in Istanbul.

aim of defeating the interventionists and counter-revolutionaries and achieving victory. Wheat, food, clothing, all went to this cause. This policy was given the name "war communism". It was discontinued on Lenin's initiative in 1921, at the 10th Congress. The peasants were granted the right to market freely what remained of their goods after tax had been deducted. The principal aim of the NEP was to restore the vital trade link between town and country; to establish a strong, stable and negotiable monetary system; to strengthen the worker-peasant alliance and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In 1924, a radical monetary reform was introduced and worthless currencies withdrawn from circulation. The "million figure" banknotes given to students as pocket money disappeared, never to be seen again. Students were now paying 10 kopeks for a slice of cake they use to eat for a million. The Nepmen and the middle-men bourgeois faded away, passed into the recesses of history. The Soviet economy gained vitality and embarked on a road of rapid development.

There were changes also in life at the CUTE. No one wore a dagger or a pistol around their waist any longer. Ethnic, regional and national costumes were only to be seen on special occasions. Wearers of neckties were increasing. Nevertheless, the school retained its specific characteristics.

The Chinese were numerous and quiet. Constantly reading, they were dilligent and held frequent meetings. They exercised a discipline peculiar to themselves. They were constantly drawing and writing hieroglyphs with their thin, bamboo-brush pens. The Japanese on the other hand were quite different. There were a number of quarrelers among them. Some would look down on the Koreans and Chinese. Generally, the majority of

foreign students were of intellectual or petty-bourgeois origin. The Indians would communicate in English among themselves. The Iranians talked about their ancient Persian poets, spoke loudly and read poetry.

The Turkish group at the CUTE

The group from Turkey was sizeable. Its composition was mixed. Only one of the early comers to this University was of peasant stock. He came from Haymana, had been a prisoner of war, joined the Red Army and fought in the Civil War. The rest, male and female, were all intellectuals. Among them were such degenerates as Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and Vala Nurettin. Nazım was also one of the first comers. But he was different from the others. The group included most of the national minorities living in Turkey: Kurd, Greek, Armenian, Arab and Laz. They came from different regions and provinces. Those who came from Ankara differed from those who came from Istanbul. There were even differences among workers. There were those who, in the most arduous and critical days of the liberation war, went from Istanbul to Ankara to work in the arms factory there. With simple machine tools, and without defusing them, they related artillery shells so as to enable their use in guns of different calibre. On the other hand, the students coming from Istanbul also included some who had not participated in the national resistance, some who were not even members of the party. These had come to the University via the legal "Worker-Peasant Socialist Party". These types were, in a sense, "converts". They caused much trouble, both to the TKP and to the University administration. Later, it emerged that there were many provocateurs and police spies among them.

Both among the workers from Anatolia – Ankara and those from Istanbul, there were men who had been sent to Germany during the First World War and had there taken up arms in the Spartacus uprising. There was also a group of about 15 persons who had taken part in the revolution and civil war in Russia, fought in the Red Army, volunteered for the “Red Regiment” organised by the TKP, attended a course at the Party School, and joined the Bolshevik Party.

Upsurge of anti-Marxist, opportunist tendencies in the TKP. The “Akaretler” Congress

The Turkish section at the University was comprised of workers, peasants, intellectuals and soldiers, as well as some declassed elements. This composition reflected the level of social development and process of class differentiation prevailing in Turkey at the time. The working class stood on the threshold of a new stage, both quantitative and qualitative. It was only after the liberation, after the imperialist invaders had been driven out of the motherland, that the workers of Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, Zonguldak, Ankara and Eskişehir were released from isolation from each other. The fact that the largest centres of the working class, cities like Istanbul and Izmir, had fallen into the hands of the invaders during the liberation war, had facilitated the seizure of power and hegemony by the bourgeoisie. The subsequent banning of the TKP created further difficulties.

This whole process, all these factors, caused varying reactions among the middle strata, the petty bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia. While the illusions of some were shattered, others began to construct new ones. The arrogant, selfish attitude of the bourgeoisie,

its opposition to a democratic revolution, and the increased repression against the progressive forces, the working class in particular, indicated the approach of a new stage in the class struggle.

The 1923 "Economic Congress" in Izmir showed who was going where. The bourgeoisie was hoisting sail into the capitalist wind and steering westward.

These developments and events were, to a certain extent, also reflected within the TKP and among the students at the University. Ideological conflicts had begun. It was precisely during this period that anti-Marxist, opportunist tendencies and views broke loose. The proponents of these views and tendencies accelerated their efforts to take over the leadership of the party.

Salih Hacıoğlu, who was elected General Secretary at the 2nd Congress in Ankara in 1922, was in prison. Some members of the Central Committee were forced to leave the country, others were forced to go underground. Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer) and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir's groups had no difficulty in reaching an agreement. Taking advantage of the circumstances described above, and in violation of the Party Rules, they convened the 3rd Congress at Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Değmer's house in the Akaretler district of Istanbul on the night of December 31, 1924-1925. Members of the Istanbul organisation, and most of these from the "Worker-Peasant Socialist Party", were in the majority at the Congress. Family and friends were also in attendance. The agenda for this "intellectual congress" – to quote Şefik Hüsnü – was vague. More importantly, the decisions reached at the 2nd Congress were never referred to. The most topical, urgent questions facing the party were not brought before the Congress. The bourgeoisie had established its rule, seizing power and

the government. A bourgeois republic had been established. A new phase in the life of society had begun. The TKP needed a new Programme, new strategy and tactics. It was necessary to reorganise the party in accordance with concrete conditions, to reorganise it from top to bottom in accordance with principles of long-term illegal work. What were to be the immediate and long-term strategic aims of the party? These questions were either not discussed at all or totally botched.

The minutes of the Congress, its reports and resolutions, all the material, remained with Dr. Şefik Hüsnü. Through raids and arrests, these subsequently passed into the hands of the police. Only fragments of certain events are at all known.

The fact that the Congress contravened the Rules, that intrigues and tricks had been contrived, could not be concealed. The speech by Sadrettin Celâl (Antel) sheds light on this. Sadrettin Celâl accuses the instigators of these tricks of being “devoid of character and moral values”, of “contriving intrigues” and being double-dealers.

White-washing the bourgeoisie. Betrayal by the opportunists.

At the meeting, and during the preparations for it, the opportunists gave special attention to distorting the events surrounding the barbaric murder of Mustafa Suphi and his comrades. What they said and propagated was designed to denigrate these honoured revolutionaries who had laid down their lives for the liberation of the people of Turkey and for communism. They tried to slander them as adventurists. “The situation was one of confusion”, they said. “The government, not even

Mustafa Kemal, was in full control”, they said... “Mustafa Suphi didn’t heed the warnings”, they said.

This was tantamount to absolving the bourgeoisie of guilt. The source of these rumours could be traced back to the anti-communism fanned by the bourgeoisie. It was pure deception. As we know, the Ankara government, the reactionary quarters, staged this bloody Black Sea tragedy in accordance with a “special plan” drawn up previously. The successive stages of this plan were implemented within a month. First, artillery, infantry and cavalry units were withdrawn from the front. Acting under the command of Ismet (Inönü)* and Refet (Bele), these units attacked the guerrillas and the people’s units from behind along selected sectors of the front. The guerrillas were caught between two lines of fire. Such were the means by which the bourgeoisie established its rule – by blood, fire and treachery. The next step was the arrest of Communist Party leaders in Ankara. They received heavy prison sentences and were sent to dungeons in Çankırı and inner Anatolia. Finally, Mustafa Suphi and his comrades were drowned in the Black Sea by the lackeys of Çankaya,** Topal Osman and his gang. Thus did the bourgeoisie stab the progressive forces and the people in the back in the most crucial, life-or-death days of the liberation war. Such was the way it opposed the democratic revolution – with guns, swords and rifles.

None of these facts were mentioned at “Akaretler”. It is pertinent to emphasise another important point: from the very beginning, two opposing viewpoints, tendencies had done battle in the party. Şefik Hüsnü

* Ismet İnönü became President and Prime Minister of Turkey after the death of Mustafa Kemal.

** Çankaya: The presidential palace in Ankara.

and his followers were wallowing in the mire of opportunism. Their lack of principles, their position contrary to Marxism-Leninism, could not but lead them into the bourgeois mire. And so it was.

After the “Akaretler” meeting, Şefik Hüsnü and Ş. Süreyya Aydemir established themselves as Secretary and Political Bureau member respectively. Later, at the Vienna Conference in 1926, Şefik Hüsnü once again brought Vedat Nedim Tör,* whom he regarded as his faithful disciple, to the post of Secretary of the Central Committee. The opportunists, police spies and petty-bourgeois intriguers joined forces with pan-Turkist, ex-military servicemen like Ş.S. Aydemir. These people were alien to the working class and its struggle, alien to the TKP. They did not recognise such a thing as the hegemony of the proletariat. Their indifference and hostility towards Marxism-Leninism, their insistence on tacking the working class movement and the Communist Party onto the tail of the bourgeoisie, their insistence especially on hiding the TKP from the masses, all stemmed from this, from opportunism. Subsequent events fully exposed this fact. At the trial of more than 50 communists at the Istanbul Criminal Court in 1927, Şevket Süreyya openly declared his opposition to the party: “The Communist Party is unnecessary”, he said. At the same trial, Vedat Nedim Tör boasted of having turned the party, communists, over to the police. The bourgeois newspapers gave their statements full coverage.

* Tör later became a high-ranking government official.

The struggle against opportunists and factionalists in the Turkish group at the CUTE

Since the day of its founding, the TKP has fought relentlessly, both against the imperialists, the bourgeoisie and reactionaries, and against all manner of opportunists, deviationists, factionalists, anarchist elements and police spies within the party. Between the years 1923-1925, the gang of splitters and wreckers in the Turkish section at the Communist University in Moscow revolted. They were receiving inspiration, as well as secret instructions, from the Şefik Hüsnü leadership. At their head were Şefik Hüsnü's younger brother and Kerim Sadi. Neither was a party member. They began the "secret" publication of a journal which was similar to "Aydınlık"* and bore the same name. They attacked the "Wall Newspaper" published by the Party Committee. Kerim Sadi** was elevated to the position of "ideologue" and ringleader of this gang of renegades. They did not allow a moment's peace in the students' residence. At night, they would wrap up their "guru" in white bed sheets, construct a "throne", and carry Kerim Sadi on their shoulders, chanting and raving like madmen. If anyone tried to interfere, the ringleaders would threaten them with a razor blade. Kerim Sadi went so far in this buffoonery, that one day they came from the lunatic asylum and took him away. Later, he was packed off to Turkey.

Besides this group, another group emerged, this

* The present day "Aydınlık" is the organ of the Maoist group led by Perincek.

** Kerim Sadi is presently engaged in setting up one of the many fake "communist" parties that are coming onto the scene today.

one calling itself the “workers’ opposition”. They too held “secret meetings”, engaged in factionalism, and attacked the Party Committee. They had taken Şefik Hüsnü as their prime target. Nevertheless, their position was fundamentally wrong. They attacked the Comintern. Theirs too was a splitter attitude devoid of principle. It was necessary to draw a distinction between these two groups. Among the “workers’ opposition” were party workers who, although they had fallen victim to demogogy and had a low level of consciousness, were nevertheless there for serious study. It was necessary to rescue them from their wrong positions, from sinking into the mire. This was the beginning of a struggle to eradicate these groups, these deviationist trends, a struggle which never let up. In this struggle, I. Bilen remained faithful to Leninist principles always. When the time came, he fought.

The emergence around 1924 of anti-party groups within the Turkish section at the CUTE was no coincidence. Most had a low level of consciousness, knowledge and fighting experience. The social origins and minds of some inclined towards petty-bourgeois trends. Moreover, this was the period when the Trotskyists were brazenly and recklessly overstepping the boundaries. The Bolsheviks, the Communist Party, were waging a wide-scale and arduous struggle against them. This struggle was raging in all its intensity at the CUTE. The Trotskyists were also inciting the anti-party groups in the Turkish section.

Following the death of Lenin, Trotsky began to come more and more frequently to the CUTE. He made ostentatious speeches. He was a demagogue and a phrase-monger who expected applause. Trotsky’s followers at the University were a tiny minority. Sometimes fights would break out. Those who could not match words

with the provocations of the Trotskyists would often “reply” with their fists. I. Bilen wasn't always able to restrain himself from such actions.

The University offered courses ranging from one to three years. Those who were successful in their studies were allowed to complete the full course. In the first course, I. Bilen both studied the language and followed the curriculum with the aid of an interpreter. Subsequent courses he completed in Russian. The first two years were difficult. Language aside, the lessons were not easy. Alongside the lessons, there were sports. Comrade Bilen swam well and played left-forward for the football team. On one occasion, Nazım Hikmet broke Comrade Bilen's leg while attempting to hit the ball. In addition, there was an amateur choir and theatre group founded by Nazım and the film director, Ek. Ek later produced the film “Mustafa”. This group visited factories and workers' clubs, performing folk dances and such plays as “Machine” and “Strike” by Nazım Hikmet. Neither play required an interpreter, for the audience understood everything. The dialogue was clear: “Stop!... Brake...Accumulator, dynamo, motor... a billion volts... Marx... Lenin...” The plays received much applause. On one occasion, Mayakovsky was also present. When, “Your turn to speak, comrade mauser!” was said in the play, the audience nearly brought the roof down...

I. Bilen was most enthusiastic about the lessons on the founding and the history of struggle of the Bolshevik Party. The philosophy classes were the scene of heated debate. In the political economy classes however, everyone was more restrained. The teacher of Leninism was an old Bolshevik, a member of the Central Committee. He was a tall, blue-eyed Russian with a turned-up nose who suffered from tuberculosis contracted in exile in Siberia. When he recounted the Lena strike and the

tsarist government's bloody massacre of the workers, his eyes would flare up in anger and sorrow. And recounting Lenin's assessment of this massacre, his eyes would ripple like the blue sea. His style of speech was lively. When quoting from the works of Lenin, he would place the quotations in their proper context. He attached special importance to the principals of Leninist methodology and detested stereotypes. He would recount step by step what arduous and continuous battles Lenin, the Bolsheviks, the Communist Party waged against anti-Marxist, deviationist trends, against the splitters, liquidators, Mensheviks, Trotskyites, wreckers, "God-Seekers" and Machists; the early struggle against the Narodniks, the struggle against anarchists, renegades, agents of imperialism, Kautskys and social democrats, socialists who served as the right arm of the capitalists and propped up capitalism.

I. Bilen was elected secretary of the party committee of the Turkish section, as well as member of the University Party Committee. This was a period which saw the most intense struggle against the factionalist groups at the University. Within the Turkish section, there emerged a majority which adhered to the line of the Comintern, the line of the Party of Lenin, the University Party Committee and the Section Party Committee. Gradually the idlers and wreckers were eliminated. A stable, working, disciplined party collective was formed. The "Wall Newspaper" was also of help in this respect. I. Bilen was its editor. In this way, he began learning to write articles and gained plenty of experience in combatting the opportunists.

The Fifth Congress of the Comintern Criticism of the "legal Marxists" in the TKP

The summer months of 1924. The warm weather had set in. The Comintern convened its Fifth Congress. The Bolshoi Theatre was filled to overflowing with 500 delegates from 40 countries and 50 parties, plus invited guests. I. Bilen and a friend who had recently come to the CUTE from Ankara were among the "guest delegates". Bilen was wearing a loose white Tolstoy shirt. It was his first time to participate in such a forum of world communists.

The immortal Lenin was not present. This was the first Comintern congress without Lenin. It was opened by Vasil Kolarov. The delegates rose to their feet to stand in silence to the memory of the great Lenin. The next day, this stand of silence was repeated in Red Square in front of the Lenin Mausoleum, together with the workers of Moscow who filled the Square. The Congress then resumed its sittings in the Kremlin, in what is now the palace of the Supreme Soviet.

This Congress has gone down in the history of the world communist movement as "Leninism and the Comintern". This was the beginning of a world-wide assault by the communist parties against Trotskyism. Trotsky was also present at the Congress, displaying himself at the dais on the opening day. His desire to claim for himself a share of the love and respect the delegates felt towards the Red Army did not pass unnoticed.

The principle of Bolshevisation of the communist parties took first place in the theses and documents of the Congress which gave great emphasis to the following slogans and Leninist principles: Consolidate the iron,

collective unity of the parties! Loyalty to Marxist, revolutionary principles! Democratic centralism! Deep into the masses! To become mass parties! This last slogan was repeated again and again.

The TKP delegation consisted of three members, one of which did not have the right to vote. This was an advisor in the Comintern at the time. His name was Ahmet Cevat (Emre). He was a chauvinist who had spent the years of the liberation war in the Caucasus. He had found his way to join the party and in 1922 participated in the Second Congress of the TKP held in Ankara, again as an “advisor”. A Cretan who knew several languages, Cevat was the mentor of the Şevket Süreyya Aydemir group. Upon his return to Turkey, he left the party, later becoming a Republican People’s Party MP and hanging his hat up in the Assembly.

The head of the TKP delegation to the Fifth Congress of the Comintern was Vanlı Kâzım (Kip), a worker-machinist who had come from Istanbul. In general he was good. However his knowledge of Marxist theory was weak. Later, he succumbed to the pressures of the Şefik Hüsnü and Aydemir groups.

At the Congress, one of the Soviet delegates, Comrade Manuilsky, criticised the “Aydınlık” journal and that wing of the TKP. In his speech, he said that that wing of the party was sliding towards “legal Marxism”, that instead of defending the interests of the working class, it was supporting the position of the bourgeoisie. He gave special emphasis to the fact that Lenin had delivered a crushing blow to the “legal Marxists”, the Struves, in Russia, to the fact that these were the solicitors of the bourgeoisie.

Comrade Kâzım wanted to reply to this in his report. It was a hesitant, inconsistent speech. He could neither reject or deny the criticism, nor could he face

the truth. There is another important event that must be discussed. The head of the delegation did not say a single word about the TKP's Second Congress held in Ankara in 1922. This did not pass unnoticed. Obviously, they were preparing for "Akaretler".

For I. Bilen, the Congress hall became a university lecture room. This continued for three weeks. He saw many old communists and Bolsheviks. Among them was a Mohican, a survivor of the Paris Commune and its barricades. He was a tall, slim, well-built Frenchman. One could call him the Commune's unfading flag of red and fire.

Another delegate who caught the eye was a South African communist. He was as black as could be and his teeth were snow-white. He was tall. He had been a worker in the gold mines. The long hall where the sessions of the Congress were held was not like it is today. This black comrade would enter the large room next to the Presidium. Here he would either sit on the Tsar's throne or stretch himself out on the enormous, embroidered velvet bed, and have his picture taken in various poses.

I. Bilen and his friend's visit to the Congress came to an end with a somewhat over-impulsive "mini-event". The Congress ended with the Moscow organisations of the party seeing the delegates off with picnics or visits to factories. Everyone was taken somewhere. The delegates from Turkey went to a picnic organised by the Krasnapresnaya district committee. The picnic was held in a forest called Serebrenniybor – Silver Pine Grove – on the outskirts of Moscow. Tents had been set up. There were Germans, Italians, Frenchmen, Russians, factory workers. The forest was lively. It was a nice picnic. The most lively among the German comrades was comrade Greta Vilda, at the time the secretary of

the German Komsomol organisation. A few years later, once again in Moscow, this time to study at a different university, this comrade married Reşat Fuat Baraner.* In 1932, she was arrested, tried and imprisoned in Turkey for having worked with the Communist Party. Together with her communist friends, she took a valiant part in hunger strikes. She was deported when an amnesty bill was passed on the 10th anniversary of the Republic.

At the picnic in the Silver Pine Grove was a cheerful, smooth-voiced Italian woman comrade. She had escaped from a prison cell in Italy by making a hole in the ceiling. Showing her plumpish body, she would say, "How did I get through such a narrow hole with this body? It was like being born again". Then she would roll in laughter and start to sing "Avanti Popolo"...

Fires were lit with pine branches. Workers' marches and songs of the struggle were sung in different languages. It rained, then became sunny. A rainbow formed a bridge in the sky. Evening. Stars slid across the sky and the guests slowly began to take to the road...

The Russian comrades had brought truckloads of beer. This was one of the sources of cheer. Three of the guests from Turkey got into one car. One of them was goat-bearded Ahmet Cevat. I. Bilen and the comrade who had come from Ankara took him in their middle. They were singing loud folk songs. The engine was humming away. The two comrades were tearing at the goat's beard of the one they had taken in their middle...

* Reşat Fuat Baraner: (1900-1968) An unforgettable fighter for the cause of the working class, Reşat Fuat Baraner was for many years a member of the Political Bureau of the TKP and a Secretary of the Central Committee. He was one of the closest Comrades-in-arms of Comrade I. Bilen.

Leaving aside the humorous aspect of “plucking the beard”, this was in fact a reflection of the struggle being waged against elements advocating opportunism in the party, elements alien to the working class and hostile to its ideology. In one sense, this could be regarded as an indication that the struggle against those dragging the party into inactivity and collaboration with the bourgeoisie would be a very hard and prolonged struggle.

The 5th Congress of the Comintern, its historic resolutions, were the focal point of struggle. It would take a struggle to Bolshevise the communist parties, to set them on a Leninist road of struggle. I. Bilen and his friend returned to their studies at the University with these questions in mind, with thoughts of finding solutions to them, of making the TKP such a party. For days they explained to their friends their impressions of the Congress, the questions in their minds, and the criticisms made at the Congress of the leadership of the TKP. Discussions continued without let up. A sore spot was being touched. The struggle to protect the party against splitters, liquidators and factionalists, to bring the party to the masses, was on the agenda.

CHAPTER III

In that period, the concrete struggle and the discussions within the party centred on one outstanding issue: The TKP or the “Worker-Farmer Socialist Party”? Marxism-Leninism or opportunism? Opportunists, the Şefik Hüsnü clique were striving to replace the TKP with the legal socialist party they had formed, to take the road of “legal Marxism”. They were centred around the editorial board of the journal “Aydınlık”. The atmosphere at the 3rd Congress, held in the Akaretler district of Istanbul and the questions that were included on the agenda showed their attitude and position. Discussions focussed on the question of either “learned” intellectuals or workers, rather than on the question of setting the party on a Leninist, revolutionary course. The opportunists preferred the petty-bourgeois, the intellectuals, and ascribed importance to forming cadres

from these. They were wallowing in the mire of opportunism. The overwhelming majority at the Congress were petty-bourgeois intellectuals. They gave no consideration to, or analysis of, the questions to which the working class and the broad working masses were awaiting a solution. Completely forgotten amidst factionalist intrigues and empty chatter were the basic questions of developing the Party's strategy, tactics and programme of action according to the new stage and new conditions.

Roots of contemporary efforts to distort the history of the TKP

Thus, the roots of contemporary efforts to replace the TKP with petty-bourgeois, defeatist, Maoist, Trotskyist, all manner of anti-Leninist parties, can be traced right back to the 1920's. Those who strive to distort the Party's history of struggle, to turn events upside-down, reject the TKP and deny the facts, have their roots in this mire. For example, they never say a word about the 2nd Congress of the TKP convened in Ankara on the 15th of August 1922, and about its historic significance. They pass, skip over, this event in silence, regarding the 3rd Congress, held in Akaretler, as the Party's Second Congress. This is no coincidence. There is more to it than that. Present day Maoists, centered around "Aydınlık", regard the congress in Akaretler as the first congress of the Party. They cleave to the second programme of the Party, which has since been changed. That programme contained theses counter to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, especially in regard to the stage, theses that were put in a stereotyped and sectarian manner. One of these was the thesis of "Establishing a Soviet-style worker-peasant government".

There are more than a few people sounding off about the founding of the TKP and its course of development with no documentary evidence or proof of any kind. They distort the facts and tell lies about the history of the Party. For some, it has become a major source of income. Topçuoğlu, for instance, has written and published nothing but repetitions of the fabrications of Mustafa Börklüce. Yellow Mustafa (Börklüce) was a shady provocateur who secreted himself within the Party for a long time, consciously spreading rumours that would be useful to the police. Referring to the lies of Borkluce, Topcuoglu ascribes roles to persons who never attended party congresses or took part in the leadership of the Party, in the Central Committee or the Political Bureau. He has them deliver speeches in the congresses. For example, Comrade I. Bilen was not present at the Congress in Akaretler. He could not have been. He had not yet finished university, had not yet returned to the country. Moreover, at that time, he was not a member of the Central Committee. Yet the fake "historian" makes I. Bilen speak in an utterly nonsensical manner. Such is the disrespect for people and events that characterises those who distort the history of the TKP.

Rebellion in Kurdistan Mounting repressions against the TKP

Comrade I. Bilen finished his university education and returned to his native land. It was summer. The political atmosphere in the country was tense. The bourgeoisie had increased its persecution of the forces opposing it, of the working class, communist movement and trade union movements in particular. It was driving

the mechanism of repression hard.

The process of differentiation within the bourgeoisie, the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the big landowners, the rural landlords, the friction between that section of the bourgeoisie which held political power and that which could not participate in this power or in the government, had burst out in either open or concealed form. The imperialists, foreign capitals were striving to fortify anew their positions in Turkey. The British had put into action their plan to seize control of the oil fields in Mosul.

Only two years had passed since the establishment of the republic. Pro-sultan elements had not been thoroughly dislodged. The old Unionists who had established a partnership with the Sultan and imposed their dictatorship on the country for 10 years, the compradors who had supported them, were still hanging on.

It was in such a period that the uprising in the East, in Kurdistan, began. The Ankara government seized this opportunity to send units of the army against the Kurdish people and to launch another attack against the Communist Party. This came two months after the Party's 3rd (Akaretler) Congress. The government immediately took repressive measures and passed the "Preservation of Public Order" Bill. It attacked the Communist Party, activated the "Courts of Independence" and made large scale arrests among communists and trade unionists. The "Independence Court" in Ankara sentenced 34 communists to long terms of imprisonment. Among those sentenced were members of the Central Committee. The Party suffered another heavy wound.

The bourgeoisie whipped up a storm of chauvinism. It organised a pogrom, a large-scale repression against

the Kurdish people, carrying it out by blood, fire and bullets. In this way, the aim of the bourgeoisie came out into the open: just as from its first step, the bourgeoisie had not spared blood or arms to prevent the emergence of a democratic revolution from the national liberation war, so too was it now using blood and fire against the striving of the Kurdish people to determine their own destiny, to win the democratic right of equality. Army units were burning villages and massacring the people. They did not touch the property of the landlords, take the villages out of their hands or abolish the surviving remnants of rural servitude. In no part of Turkey did the bourgeoisie lay a hand on the property of the landlords. It defended them. True, it hanged Sheikh Said and others, the instigators of the insurrection in Kurdistan. It could not have done otherwise. A bloody bargain was obvious. There was a struggle over the division of political power between the bourgeoisie and big landlords. The bourgeoisie was keeping most of the power for itself, allocating little to its partners.

Bourgeoisie, Kurdish reactionaries and opportunists against the Kurdish people

From the beginning, the bourgeoisie had chosen to bargain with the Kurdish feudal landlords. It invited the landlords of Meco and Diyar to participate in the first Grand National Assembly which was formed from the old Ottoman parliament. But never, since the establishment of the Assembly, did it ever allow the true representatives of either the Turkish or the Kurdish peasants, the true deputies of the working class, to set foot into the Assembly. Moreover, with the "Civil Law" that it enacted later, feudal landownership was

transformed into capitalist landownership.

The process whereby the bourgeoisie maintained political power together with the big landowners proceeded at times in a bloody manner; on the whole however, it took the form of mutual concessions. The bourgeoisie and the sultans had no need of “Hamidiye Regiments”.* They were an obstacle to their rule. They therefore hanged the sons of Kürt Hüseyin Pasha for their participation in the Sheikh Said insurrection. But they also gave recompense for this. For example, they helped Mahmut Kepoğlu, whose father was hanged in Diyarbakir for his role in the Sheik Said insurrection, to become a Justice Party MP. This is not the only case. In the Parliament today, there are more than 160 deputies, members of various bourgeois parties, having such Kurdish origins. Among them we see Abdullatif Ansarioğlu, who has ten thousand “disciples” – armed men. These armed “disciples” are hand-in-hand with the commandos of Türkeş. In 1976, they opened machine-gun fire on Kurdish and Turkish youths in Ergani. The landlord Yüsri Güldoğan from Çüngüş supports the Nationalist Action Party. He too is hand-in-hand with Türkeş. When he shoots people, no one asks for an account. One of the big landowners, Cevheri, is the deputy president of the Justice Party. Mehmet Turgutlu, a well know Kurd, is a member of the Nationalist Action Party, one of Türkeş’s men, a fascist. Doctor Hikmet Yurtsever from Bingöl is a Justice Party MP. Süleyman Bey from Kığı and Kazım Bey from Karlıova are also members of the Justice Party. Rıza Eryılmaz from Ağrı is a member of the Republican People’s Party. Kamuran Inan comes from Bitlis, from a family of

* The “Hamidiye Regiments” were regiments of select Kurdish troops established by Sultan Abdul Hamid.

sheikhs. For ten years he was the representative of Turkey in NATO. He is now a Justice Party senator. Muhittin Mutlu from Bitlis is a member of the National Salvation Party. Ferit Melen became prime minister during the 12 March period, after Erim, the "sledgehammer". Kinyas Kartal rules the city of Van. He has 25 thousand "slaves". In 1977, after he had turned 80, this feudal landowner acted as caretaker president of the crippled National Assembly for months. Mahmut Bucak, a member of the Justice Party, is the tyrant of Urfa. Hamido (Fendoğlu), a fascist from the Justice Party...*

After the 1925 insurrection, a special administrative organisation, the "General Inspectorate", was established over Eastern provinces and areas densely populated by Kurds. This organisation had the character of a general governorship. Security, the secret service, police and gendarmerie, as well as mobile "punitive" squads were at its disposal, together with the 9th Army Corps, airplanes, cavalry, artillerymen, judges and prosecutors – all the means of repression. Later, these Eastern provinces were declared a "forbidden zone". This repression, this ruthless oppression, continued for many years, even after the "General Inspectorate" was abolished. It is still continuing today.

One of the duties of this special administration system, this special organisation, was to weld firmly together the Kurdish feudal landowners and rural masters with the Turkish bourgeoisie. Since 1925, there have been more than 20 large-scale uprisings in various forms. But each time a sheikh or tribal chief has seized the leadership, not to back up the true aspirations and

* Hamido (Fendoğlu): the reactionary mayor of Malatya who was recently assassinated as part of a fascist provocation.

demands of the Kurdish people, nor their struggle for liberation from the hands of feudal lords, landowners, exploiting parasites and the bourgeoisie, their struggle to determine their own national destiny and obtain democratic equality of rights, but rather to oppose these. In most cases, the Kurdish landowners and rural lords conducted provocations and incited the peasants, the people, against one another, in order to solve the contradictions and local quarrels among themselves. At times, both the bourgeois governments and the landlords have created these provocations so as to use them in bargaining, as a lever to reach agreement. A fresh example: in 1976, a big disturbance erupted in the Tuzluca village of Hakkari province as a result of provocations between two enemy lords, one the chief administrator of the town, the other the prosecutor. The fascist-style Demirel government carried out a sanguinary repression in the region. 18,000 peasants left their homes and took to the mountains.

In 1925, the bourgeoisie conducted its attack against the TKP simultaneously with its massive, sanguinary repression of the Kurdish people. What was the position, the attitude of the party, the leadership of the time, in the face of this bloody event? How did it evaluate the event? Its evaluation was inconsistent, contradictory and incorrect. It called the event outright "reaction" and left it at that. In this way, the leadership of the party regarded the people as one with the Kurdish landlords, put them both into the same category. Making no distinction between landlords and people, it ended up by supporting the bourgeoisie and its position. On the other hand, the party leadership demanded the "confiscation of the lands of the Kurdish landlords". But this slogan was equally abstract, equally out of touch. It gave no consideration to the demands of the

Kurdish people, nor did it take a stand against national oppression and the bloody massacre. The position adopted by Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and the like was nothing but support for the bourgeoisie. Their policy of tailism, their opportunism merged with chauvinism, could give no other result. The only thing they said at their trials was that the lands of the Kurdish landlords should be confiscated. But they said not a word about confiscating the lands of all landowners in Turkey, about carrying out a radical land reform, abolishing the remaining feudal relationships, and giving land to the peasants. In short, the opportunists showed that they had forgotten, had shelved, the programme of the TKP.

Economic and social crises. Intensification of the class struggles

After the establishment of the republic, various economic, political, social, cultural and national crises, various problems brought by capitalism, came to the surface one after the other, influencing the social structure.

1) The comprador section of the bourgeoisie maintained the line of strengthening its position, of expanding its ties with foreign capitals. 2) Foreign capitals and companies retained their places. 3) There had been no radical democratic reform. 4) The old state apparatus was adjusted to meet the demands of capitalist development. No more. 5) There had been no land reform; instead, the lands of the peasants, public and state-owned lands in particular, were being plundered. Members of parliament, governors, commanders of the army, all had a hand in this. Leaders of the state and the government became big landowners. İnönü was among them. This plunder accelerated with immigration and the

exchange of Turkish and Greek minorities between Turkey and Greece. 6) The process of exploitation of workers and working people ran neck and neck with the growth of capital. Concentration, accumulation and centralisation of capital went forward rapidly. The process of exploitation and accumulation of capital proceeded in a barbarous manner. 7) The working class was gradually approaching the threshold of a new stage, both in quantity and quality. In numbers, it had passed the 300,000 mark. From the point of view of organisation, it remained dispersed. There were efforts to form trade unions and federations. Turkey's industrial structure was very weak. Banking had been established, but the "İşbank", for example, was expanding primarily in the fields of trade and commerce.

In this period, class struggles were becoming more severe; friction and disputes among the ruling circles and within the bourgeoisie itself were growing steadily. Extreme reaction, fanaticism and enemies of the republic were showing themselves here and there. These who opposed the introduction of the hat, defenders of the black shroud and veil, were grumbling. The bourgeoisie hoped to pass off such superficial "changes" imposed by force and threats as a radical democratic revolution. The masses of the people, however, were demanding first and foremost democratic rights; the peasants, land; the workers, basic rights and an advanced democratic order. The struggle to drive the imperialists out of the motherland and to abolish the sultanate necessitated the establishment of a democratic order. The bourgeoisie opposed this. It did not come to pass.

There was discontent among the masses of the people, especially among the middle strata. This discontent, fear, irresolution and bewilderment among the petty bourgeoisie had become much more intense

with the new repressions and terror. The victorious conclusion of the liberation war against the aggressive imperialist forces on the one hand, the fact that the people came out of the war empty-handed on the other, together with the rising wave of terror, had also accelerated the process of differentiation within the intelligentsia. Moreover, the bourgeoisie had a need for certain intellectual cadres and experts. For this reason, it had begun to pursue a "carrot and stick" policy towards the intelligentsia, both petting and slapping them.

Opportunist indolence

This was the political atmosphere prevailing when I. Bilen returned from the University. The party leadership existed only in name. Those imprisoned in 1925 had been sentenced to one year. Nevertheless, they had not been released, they were still in jail. In the Central Committee of the party, comrade Hamdi Şamil (Alev) was responsible for organisational work. The secretary of the party was Vedat Nedim. Opportunist indolence had led to impotence and more indolence in the leadership. A large number of comrades had returned from the University. Some had become drivers or porters, some had gone to Zonguldak, others to the lead mines in Balya-Karaaydın. Some had settled down in their parents' homes. The majority had stayed in Istanbul. It had fallen to I. Bilen to go to Adana.

I. Bilen had two friends from the University, both workers in Istanbul. One was Hüsamettin Özdoğu, the other Suphi – "Şakir". They were both originally from Halkalı, and had both worked in factories in Istanbul during the liberation war. Hüsamettin was told to go to

Izmir, Şakir to Eskişehir.

There is a proverb that goes: "When told to migrate, the tailor replied, 'My needles are on my collar' ". The situation of these three comrades was the same. First of all, they had to change their clothes to fit in with the fashion of the day. It was summer. They bought round straw hats. They bought shoes. Hüsametdin began to bargain with the salesman. The salesman said, "Five liras, sir". Hüsametdin insisted, "Won't you take four roubles?" He came to himself only after a pinch from Bilen. They came out of the shop shaking with laughter and walked towards Gulhane. The wind swept away Hüsametdin's straw hat. They burst out laughing. The three friends came to an understanding and agreed on a password among themselves. Having different trains to catch, they embraced and parted.

Neither I. Bilen nor his friends were able to receive any practical directives from the Central Committee or the Party's Organisation Bureau in regard to the policy and tactics of the party at that period, about the urgent and daily struggle. They were told to "Go, organise, work!" They were shown some unclear and uncertain addresses by various "sympathisers" whose reliability had not been ascertained. The names and addresses were those of "John Does".

During the two weeks that he stayed in Istanbul, I. Bilen looked for his old friends from Halic and the factory. He found the "earless" ("Kulaksız") Salih in Baltalimanı. From him he learned that the Circassian Osman was working as an engine driver on the Adana-Yenice railway. Most importantly, with the aid of Kulaksız, he obtained an identity card under the name of Kasim Benekli. From that day onwards, Bilen ceased to use his own surname. Even he himself does not know how many

pseudonyms he has used.

On the way to Adana

With his new “identity” card in his hand, complete with photograph, and 25 liras in his pocket, Comrade Bilen spent 22 liras for a ticket from Haydarpaşa to Adana. He was going to use the remaining three liras, bit by bit, for food. The Haydarpaşa railway line and station triggered a chain of memories. During the First World War, there had been a terrible explosion at Haydarpaşa. An ammunitions depot had blown up. The flames reached to the sky. Even in Kasımpaşa-Kulaksız, all the windows had broken. The people had panicked. Bilen had watched the explosions and the fire from Okmeydanı. The residents of that quarter had rushed to these fields... Fear... Death... Imperialist war... Such was the gift, the sultan and the followers of Enver* had brought to the people of Istanbul.

The Haydarpaşa-Adana railway was part of the BBB – the Berlin-Bosphorus-Baghdad railway. German imperialists had drawn one line of their “Drang nach Osten” policy across Turkey with these iron rails. A German railway company had taken control of the line constructed in Haydarpaşa... Old workers never cease to relate: The 14th of September 1908. The workers on the Haydarpaşa-Eskişehir and Baghdad lines go out on

* Enver Pasha: prominent leader of the Young Turk movement which became the “İttihad ve Terakki” (Union and Progress Party). After 1908, became Minister of War and Chief of General Staff. Pulled Turkey into World War 1 on the side of imperialism. Fled the country after the defeat and attempted to organise a Pan-Turkist movement in Central Asia. There died.

strike. Forming a "workers' association", they take their demands, in written form, to the government, to the German Embassy, the Deutsch Bank and the directorate of the company. The government dispatches army units against the striking workers. The Minister of Gendarmes, Sami Pasha, guards the gate of the railway directorate in Haydarpasa like a watchdog. In the Kadikoy and Golden Horn districts of Istanbul, there are demonstrations in the factories...

The train is departing. The "third class" carriages are very lively. Bilen found a seat and sat down. The passengers' costumes were varied. Caps and hats stood out. Most of the passengers had turned cap vizors to the back of the neck. The peasants are easily identifiable by their saddle-bags, bundles and sacks. The *nouveau riches* are betrayed by their swollen bellies... There is a police control point just before Derince. In Izmit, the control is a bit tighter. It went on like that until Adana. Bilen's "identity" card was perfect. His appearance was orderly. The passengers were changing at each station. How tanned were the people of the steppes! A thin, blue-eyed, stern-faced passenger of medium height was talking about the liberation war. His memories were fresh. The blood shed on the hills that he pointed out had not yet dried. "Altıntaş, Afyon, Kütahya". He was counting his peasant comrades-in-arms who had fallen at the front line. Pointing to a thick-set man with a flabby stomach who was wearing a wide belt, he said, "These people were the grave-robbers in those days. They still are today". The speaker continued, "We suffer and long for those lands while these men enjoy them." This outspoken, unshaven man with a prickly beard was going to Ankara...

The man was explaining that he had been taken to court on account of the land, an arable field. He says,

“I won't let Çapur take my share! I didn't let the foreign savages take it! For that I fought them in Sakarya!” Unbuttoning his striped cotton shirt with a violent motion, he showed the deep scar on his chest...

The scars, the memories of the liberation war, are still very fresh. The passengers talk incessantly about the details, the events of this war, events which seem isolated from each other, but cannot really be separated. Eventually, the conversations return to daily life, to drought and water, arable lands and crops, advance sales, prices and the market, to the harvest and the forest, teams of oxen and single horses. The conversations are mixed and pass over to events in Istanbul and Izmir, to Ziya Hurşit, Kara (Black) Kemal, Karabekir, the Pasha, the Gazi.* When standing beneath the gallows, Ziya Hurşit is said to have remarked, “Tell gazi pasha that if he has any letters to send to his father, I'll take them”. It is clear that some see him as a hero. Others curse him. The majority do not get involved in the discussion. Some ask, “Don't you see that the Çapanoğlu** and Karabekirs were behind it?” A dark man with a pointed nose peered out from beneath heavy eyebrows at all those taking part in the discussions.

The Konya plain. The steppes. Silence fell. Sun. Heat. At the Konya station, police held the train doors

* Ziya Hurşit and Kara Kemal, old Ittihatçı (Unionists) plotted to assassinate Mustafa Kemal, failed and were hung in Izmir. Kâzım Karabekir Pasha, commander of the eastern army, supported Mustafa Kemal. He personally arranged the murder of Mustafa Suphi and 14 other leaders of the Communist Party of Turkey in 1921.

** Çapanoğlu is the name of an old feudal family involved in 17th century rebellions against the Sultan. Their name passed into general use. “There is a Çapanoğlu behind it”, means that, “there is more behind it than meets the eye”.

open, checking the identity of all those getting in or out, searching the saddle-bags of some. Konya – the lair of reactionaries. The wanted Unionists and Abdülkadir's band can be hiding here. So says one of the passengers. At the beginning of the liberation war, Delibaş* and the reactionaries raised a revolt here. Army units sent from Ankara were unable to cope with these, with the supporters of the sultan. Some deserted, others surrendered. Only the people's units, horsemen, guerrillas, defeated the followers of Delibaş. This event frightened the –bourgeoisie. To this day, it and its historians accuse the horsemen, the units of the people, of harshness, of having stolen the property of the insurgents... The bourgeoisie takes under its wing feudal landowners and rural lords who defend private property, private ownership of the land, even if the latter raise their hand against the bourgeoisie's own power and rule.

A dark, tanned, slim soldier who had been on leave is returning to his regiment. He is telling a fellow passenger how they had fun with a girl in Meram vineyards. The two puff up and laugh now and then. Now the soldier begins to complain about military service.

The Çumra canal is stretched out over the bone-dry plain. Is this the canal brought to life by Sabahattin Ali?** The canal where blood flowed? Some of the passengers carry in their saddle-bags gourds filled with water, others have jugs...

* Delibaş, a supporter of the sultan, took up arms against the people during the liberation war.

** Sabahattin Ali, a famous writer and member of the Communist Party of Turkey, was murdered by the Turkish government on the pretext that he was trying to cross the border into Bulgaria in the 1950's.

The plain came to an end. The Taurus mountains look down from above. Ulukışla is left behind. The train descends a slope through the steep mountains. Pozantı. This name is often mentioned among drivers. Their brothers are buried here. During the First World War, German trucks with heavy iron wheels passed through here carrying loads of arms. Many drivers whose brakes failed hit the rocks and plunged into the ravine below. They lie there still... The train is winding and turning like a gigantic snake. Dashing in and out of tunnels. The sharp and peremptory whistle of the locomotive bounces and breaks against the steep rocks. A station we have not seen before. Nomad women are selling buttermilk (ayran) in copper buckets. The passengers are rushing forward...

Çukurova! When descending or looking down from the Taurus mountains, this plain resembles a broad, deep, enormous dinner tray, a meal table for factory owners, rural lords, the rich. For workers and day-workers, however, a boiling cauldron, a hell... The sun is an intense yellow, the heat deadly. Breathing is difficult. It is the middle of summer. The plain is boiling, steaming. Clouds of dust are rising from the plain and the roads. The sky is yellow. The earth is white with cotton fields. The earth is ever so green. The day-labourers in the fields are withered and thin... For them, the earth is iron, the sky is copper...

CHAPTER IV

It is late in the day. The train is heaving. Twilight is slowly falling. The train enters the station and the passengers get out. Police and gendarmes are checking identity cards. Some of the passengers are getting into phaetons. Others, I. Bilen among them, are proceeding on foot. He is carrying a tiny little suitcase — with nothing in it. Between the station and the city, between Demirkopru and Taskopru, lies a desert-like area called the “Sands”.

One shoulder of the city leans towards the Seyhan river. The shore is dotted with old mansions... It is an old city. On its outskirts are new factories and workshops, most of them separating cotton seeds and producing cotton seed oil. Factory chimneys are few and far between... The streets and roads of the city are a total confusion. The houses and shops are squat. The rich and the poor are segregated. So too are the streets

and houses. The roofs of the houses are flat, covered with earth. Each has its bower, its tent "open to sky" where everyone goes at night. Some people have spread carpets, others sheets, still others sacks over wooden "beds", some of whose four sides are open. It is as if the rich and the destitute sleep side by side in these "tents of the sky", so to speak.

First experiences in Adana

I. Bilen looked for a place to stay. The night was suffocatingly hot. He went to an inn in Abidinpasa, an inn that in one way resembled cafes in the Topane district of Istanbul where down and outs would pass the night. A chair and quilt cost one kurus, a "sofa-bed", five. Leaving his bag with the inn-keeper, Comrade Bilen went out to the street. A sharp smell hits the nose. Clear: the municipal system is not functioning, the drainage system is in ruins. A municipal park has been opened recently overlooking the river. It is tiny but at least it is cool, and there are no smells... There is a water pump. Its water is bitter... Adana's water is hard.

I. Bilen worked out his "budget" in his head. He could hold out all right for two weeks. It was becoming late, so he returned to the inn and stretched out on the "bed". He had fallen asleep when someone prodded him: "Your identity card? Let's see it!" said the policeman standing at the bedside. There was a search. The policemen were holding torches to the faces of those from whom they were demanding identity cards. Those who could not produce identification were taken away. The search squad was led by a plain-clothes policeman of medium height, dark, sporting a felt hat and a "mucous" moustache. The man seemed a bit too fancy for his height. Peering out from beneath frowning eyebrows

he was scrutinising his surroundings. After examining Bilen's identity card, he returned it – "Here you are".

Everyone had awakened. The inkeeper reassured them: "Relax. There is nothing to worry about. The superintendent gentleman has assured me. We get on well. They are looking for one of the 150".* The superintendent's name was Ramazan. He was from Branch One.

A few months later, I. Bilen met this same superintendent again. He was living in a side street in the Çarçabuk district. The house stood in a garden, in a secluded place among orange trees. Other tenants stayed in the other side of the house. These were two well-dressed young bachelors who worked in the Exchange. It was mid-day. There was a knock at the door. I. Bilen stuffed the papers he was holding, into his "secret place", got up and opened the door. He came face to face with the plain-clothes policeman he had met at the inn. The man stuck out his head, looked into the room, but did not enter. He said that he was inspector Ramazan and that he was coming from police headquarters. He asked I. Bilen who he was, where he worked, and what job he did. I. Bilen presented a wallet in the name of Kasım Benekli and a card bearing a photograph, the description "Chief mechanic" at the Şinasiler cotton mill and a stamp as big as a horseshoe. The superintendent examined the two documents carefully and then handed them back. "Don't worry. Sorry to disturb you. Your neighbours wrote to headquarters saying that a stranger was staying here. You never know about people", he

* The 150 – a group of intellectuals and prominent former members of the old İttihat ve Terakki Party (Union and Progress Party) who opposed Mustafa Kemal and for that reason were exiled.

said. And he left, giving a wave...

However, if this "keen" superintendent had entered suddenly without knocking, the "Chief Mechanic" would have been in a real mess. He had been sitting on the portable bed preparing a statement to be issued by the Adana Provincial Committee about a strike of workers at an American-owned factory. I. Bilen had escaped a great danger and had learned a good lesson. His behaviour was in total contradiction with the rules of conspiracy...

On the day after his arrival in Adana, Kasım Benekli went out and began to walk the city. They say that the "roaming wolf is stronger than a sitting lion". Bilen walked from one end of the main street to the other. He saw the covered market and looked into the shops, into the butcher's, where black flies hung like a cloud over specimens of meat that had been hanging from hooks out in the open since early morning. Smoke and aroma swirled into the air from the grills and braziers of kebab houses. One-storey shops with low ceilings and mud floors... The speech of Adana people has its own local characteristics, peculiar to itself. Many phrases are unintelligible. He entered a cafe across from the post office and sat down. Some of the customers were drinking ayran (buttermilk) He asked for "a glass of ayran". The waiter stared at him and walked away. He didn't come back. It was only when Kasım heard the waiter order "garsanbac" from the buffet and saw him bring ayran to a table, that he realised that the local name for ayran was "garsanbac". He too ordered a "garsanbac"...

Three people were sitting at a table. Most of the people entering the cafe greet and speak to them. The three are swearing too much. Both their praise and their curses are extremely exaggerated. Their dress and

behaviour distinguish them from the other customers in the cafe. One wears boots, another shoes with high rounded heels – shoes that resemble those worn by members of the Istanbul fire brigade. They sat with legs crossed, caps tilted to one side, prayerbeads in hand... They got up, their long flowing trousers sweeping the floor as they walked. Their loose black jackets were slung over their shoulders.

This type of farmer was emerging as distinct from the old traditional landowners in that period, after about 1925. Some of them rent the land from big landowners like Mete. These capitalist farmers, tied to banks and agricultural-grain exchanges, ploughed the land with tractors and employed agricultural workers. They dominated the “Farmers’ Union” in Çukurova. Many of them became factory-owners by opening cotton mills. Later, they established big agricultural monopolies like “Cukobirlik”. By way of domestic and foreign banks, as well as Marshall “aid”, they became tied to America and the “World Bank”...

I. Bilen too left the cafe. It was noon. People and cars were few and far between. On one corner stood a shop selling cigarettes, fruits, newspapers, books and stationery. It was difficult to tell whether it was a general store or a fruiterers. Bilen bought a copy of “Hakimiyet-i Milliye”. There was no window or shop-window in the store. A brochure among the baskets of peaches and oranges caught Bilen’s eye. It dealt with the condition of workers and day-labourers in Çukurova. It was written by Hilmi Uran, at that time, the Inspector of the Republican People’s Party. Cukurova was under his jurisdiction. Uran was close to the “liberal” wing of the bourgeoisie, a little to the “left”. Later, he became a big farmer. The owner of not even a handful of land previously, he became the owner of lands that extended

over 5,000 acres. They say in Çukurova: “Thrust a stick into the soil and it sprouts”. These lands are for such as him, the land is in their hands...

Putting the brochure and the newspaper he had bought under his arm, Bilen walked towards the river looking for shade. Even the shade was burning. He went to the Taşkōprü but did not cross the bridge. Instead, he set out in the direction of the waterfall below. The trees and the shade here seemed as cool as the water itself. Giant water-wheels were turning, throwing half the water into the troughs, the other half back into the river. The water-wheels were turning as slowly as the wheels of an ox-cart, but with much more grinding noises. “Adana’s new resident” – Kasım Benekli, sat next to an arch in a vineyard, under a tree whose branches were intertwined with vines.

Two women are watering a vegetable garden. Both are bare-footed, wearing white head-scarves and worn, baggy, black trousers. Their faces are tanned. On the edge of the vegetable garden, where velvet round egg-plants grow side-by-side with large red tomatoes, stand rows of trees. Vines are wound around the branches, stretching to the top of the tree. The branches of the trees hang loosely, untidily, in large, yellow bunches. The river is calm. The water is lukewarm...

Bilen glances at the newspaper in his hand. It tells about the events in Dörtyol. The essence of the events, what happened, is not told openly. Some people had “set up an ambush on the road” ... “Shots were fired” at a car. The gendarmery and units of the army “are conducting a search”. Hilmi Uran has gone to Dörtyol...

That night at the inn, some people were talking bits and pieces at a time when the peasants of Dörtyol were suffering. Looking at the way the Ankara newspaper was foaming at the mouth, it is clear that the

event is no “small thing”. The searches along the road and at the inn must be connected with it. Why the tight control of identity cards?...

To stay at the inn was full of risks... After sunset, when the shadows were becoming dark, I. Bilen set out on the road to “Demirköprü”. He looked for the home of his old friend, the mechanic Çerkez Osman. Behind the station, at the side of a repair shop, stood a row of Gecekondus.* Don't look for anything like street. It is the middle of a desert. The gecekondus are “palaces of tin”. The “foundation” of some of the “houses” has been built on railway sleepers. These gecekondus were constructed of stones, mud, flattened paraffin cans, boards from packing crates, iron and bricks – whatever was available. People are carrying water from the river. Children are heading towards the river with earthenware jugs and oil drums.... Smoke is coming out of some of the chimneys.... Toilets are God's fields.... The majority of the people living in this quarter are clearly railway workers.... Directly across from these gecekondus are more orderly company flats. Further on are tiny residential buildings.... The railway is in the hands of a French company.... That it had established a scale of relative discrimination among the workers can be seen even from outside, from these houses....

Bilen had no difficulty in finding his friend's house. The latter was living in one of the flats with a small, well-kept yard and garden. Çerkez Osman was sitting in the shade in front of his house. He had pulled the official company cap to one side. His thick black hair was spilling out of it. When he saw his old friend,

* Gecekondus are shanty towns that have grown up on the outskirts of all major cities in Turkey. They are called “gecekondus” (gece=night) because they are built in one night.

he seemed bewildered at first. Then he got up and opened his arms. And, just as at every previous meeting, he shouted, "Gojepese!" – Circassian for welcome. They embraced and he invited Bilen in. They entered and Osman called for his wife – "Hanim!" He immediately added that he had married a Circassian girl and introduced his wife. She was straight and slim. They sat down. The wife left them alone...

Towards an organisation

Bilen immediately warned his friend, telling him that his name was Kasim and not to make a blunder. Osman seemed a little bewildered. They reached an agreement quickly. First, Kasım would go to the inn and take Bilen's tiny suitcase. Then they would have a long discussion about what they would do. That is what they did...

Bilen could stay at most one night in this house. The first job was to find him a place to live. Osman undertook this task. In the repair shop there was a foreman he knew well. This man was also Circassian. They could find a room in his house. The foreman lived in the Old Station district, close to both the factories and the city...

Bilen and Osman had been members of the same organisation in Haliç (The Golden Horn). They had been in the same guerrilla group. Osman knew the Adapazari and Düzce districts. He had been the unit's guide. He was very sensitive, very touchy. He would boast about his courage, but he could not hide his cowardice...

That night they talked until dawn. The job of mechanic on the railways was a very difficult one. Osman could come home only one day out of two. The job involved a lot of "travelling" – a lot of coming and

going. Since there was no organisation of any kind in his region, Osman had been all alone. However, both in Adana and Mersin, as well as in Tarsus and Ceyhan, there were workers on the railways with which "one could come to grips". Osman told that among the people he knew in the city of Adana itself, there was a driver who could be trusted. He said that he would introduce him to Bilen. In one respect, the discussions of that night were one of the foundation stones of the Çukurova committee of the TKP.

During the years of the liberation war, around 1922, an illegal, underground TKP organisation had been established in Çukurova, in Mersin. It had taken the form of a committee, the founders of which were led by comrades Salih Hacıoğlu and Affan Hikmet.* Also in Mersin, a Federation of Red Trade Unions was established and went into action in 1922-1923. Later, semi-legal, semi-socialist, semi-communist groups sprang up in Çukurova. Some of their members were workers and intellectuals who had been in Germany in the First World War and had participated in the Spartacus uprising. One of the groups published a legal newspaper. This group was led by a man called Ata Çelebi. In 1924, the Trade Union Federation opened a branch in Adana. It was closed during the arrests of 1925.

Thus, the political lay-out of Adana of those days was not completely unripe for TKP activities. However, many people had been intimidated by the recent terror, many, it seemed, unnerved by the recent searches and tight identity control. Two events in Çukurova in recent months had given the bourgeoisie and the government an

* Salih Hacıoğlu and Affan Hikmet were founding members of the Communist Party of Turkey. Salih Hacıoğlu was elected general secretary at the Second Congress in 1922.

opportunity to add to the terror. One of these events took place in Dörtyol, the other in Adana.

Capitalist landowners consolidate their holdings

Ali Saip, one of the biggest landlords in Çukurova, takes by force the orange groves out of the hands of many small peasants in Dörtyol. He claims that he “inherited” these lands from his “ancestors”. The peasants oppose this crass bullying and open fire on the cruel feudal lord’s car. The government immediately dispatches units to put down the peasants. There are large-scale arrests. The peasants who can escape take refuge in the mountains and other places. Ali Saip is one of the “Three Ali’s” of the “Supreme Courts”, one of the tyrants known as “Ali the sword – Ali the bald – Ali the grocer”. Absolute despots, it was these three who imposed heavy sentences on communists. It was they who found ways of implementing the dictatorship and rule of the bourgeoisie according to the book. At the same time as he was seizing peasants’ orange groves in Dörtyol, he was one of those telling imprisoned communists in the “Independence Court” at Ankara: “You want to give land to the peasants. Here is ten years in prison I give for each of you”. These three Ali’s became very very wealthy. Ali the sword became a banker. When Ali Saip married off his son, he weighed his bride down with gold and gave her a trousseau loaded on forty camels. The wedding feast lasted forty days and forty nights, just like in the tales of a thousand and one nights.

One of the Çukurova landlords who made rapid progress in his career was Avni Pasha. This man was an old gendarme officer who filled his belt with gold during the massacre of Armenians. During the liberation war, when the people were fighting and shedding their blood

to liberate the motherland from the enemies, this gendarme officer was occupying the lands of Armenian peasants whom he had killed or driven out of Incirlik in Adana. After the liberation, he said that all the lands of Incirlik belonged to him. He drove the Turkish peasants away from these lands as well. He established a farm and built a mansion. He surrounded his property with high walls. Armed guards and a team of "protective" watchmen defended the estate, and later the pasha. The pasha's farm was modern, employing tractors, combines and agricultural workers. He had close ties with the banks and the exchanges. He lived in a white mansion in Adana, on the banks of the river, very close to Taşköprü. He travelled to his estate in a car flanked by guards. His son studied at the American college and completed his education in America. He married his daughter to Ismail Hakkı, Commander of the Çankaya Defence Regiment. This pasha had powerful backing. Now it is the estate of such a powerful, influential bourgeois landowner pasha that is attacked. In the armed conflict there are dead on both sides. Several times, the pasha's car is fired upon...

These events took place in the period when I. Bilen came to Çukurova. At that time there were sharp conflicts between the landlords and the bourgeoisie, vicious battles to extract concessions from each other. They were engaged in a struggle to assert their hold on the political power, to divide it and establish a balance between themselves. They were at once fighting and embracing each other. The contradictions and conflicts between capitalist farmers and big landowners continued incessantly. Capitalist farmers like Fazıl Mete, Yakup Güçlü, Musabali, Karabucak, Remzi Bucak and Mustafa Sengül were gradually asserting a stronger influence...

Gathering information...

Factories were light industrial works, most of which had appeared very recently. Their quantitative development was also very recent. From the point of view of quality and organisation, they were weak. The railway workers had an "Association" but it had nothing more than a nameplate. Textile workers, workers in cotton mills and cotton-seed oil factories had no organisation at all. Tractor mechanics had made an attempt, but their organisation was nothing.

I. Bilen settled in the Old Station district. He met with Osman twice a week. Once Osman brought with him a dark man of medium height. That is how Kasım Benekli met the mechanic Şevket at Kumluk. They sat on the bank of the Seyhan river. The mechanic Şevket was a native of Adana. They had not been living in rented quarters. In 1916, Şevket went to Germany as a worker-apprentice. He worked in a factory in Hanover and was able to carry on simple conversations in German. He had read and distributed "Kurtuluş", published by Etem Nejat and his followers. He returned to Turkey in 1920, breaking his ties with the "Kurtuluş" group. He could speak well. Nevertheless, although on the surface, he could see the level of the working class movement in Turkey. He says he is a communist. Stresses that, not knowing any organisation, he had discussed this subject only with close friends. Two of his friends are tractor mechanics, one Avni Pasha's driver. They agreed to meet in Papazınbahçesi the next day.

Şevket left. Osman and Kasım parted. In Istanbul, Hamdi Şamilof-Alev had spoken about the pasha's driver. The latter had come to Adana towards the end of 1924 and stayed there for a short time. For the moment,

Kasim Benekli did not know whom he had met or whom he was to meet apart from Osman. Thus he had to proceed with caution. Still, it could be said that he had found a lead...

Within two weeks, Kasım had been able to find a place to live as well as a lead towards being able to establish an organisation. However, he had not been able to find a job. It was not good to loaf or to wander about aimlessly. Conspiracy demanded that he find a position, establish himself, in one place. It was impossible for a stranger to find work by going from factory to factory. It could only be a coincidence. He went to Salih efendi's cotton mill near Taşköprü in Karşıyaka. Ox-carts loaded with cotton stood in a factory courtyard that resembled a roofless barn. A plump man with rolling eyes and a Kayseri accent was weighing something on a great heavy scales. This man was the founder of the future Sabancı holding, Ömer Agha, father of the Sabancı's. He was illiterate – a typical Kayserite...

In the district where Kasım was staying, a French-Turkish firm was building a cotton-seed oil factory. Almost all the construction workers were Hungarians. These workers had a meeting place – half restaurant, half beer house, part tavern – where they ate meals and, in the evening, drank beer. It was run by an old Greek from Crete called Barba. He had a wife and lived above the tavern. Kasım gradually became a customer of this place, of Barba. Some of the Hungarians came here with their families. They were quiet. They appeared to be organised. They minded their own business. Their speech, their language, resembled the Turkish spoken in Kastamonu. So it sounded to the ear. Some of them could speak a little broken Turkish. It did not take the Hungarians long to become interested in Kasım's solitary visits to Barba's tavern. At first they were reserved. They

began with "Hello, how are you?" Then they began to approach with single phrases like, "You don't seem to be a native of these parts". And Kasım would ask, "Are there no jobs in Hungary? You've come such a long way". He learned the reason why they had come this far. They had participated in the Soviet Revolution which broke out in 1919. The Soviet Republic, which had been able to hold out for four months, had been crushed by the counter-revolution. Many had died. Those who survived, those who were able to escape, had been dispersed to foreign lands. They had wandered from one country to another. Towards the end of 1923 they appeared in Turkey, here, in these parts. They were political refugees. It took some time to arrive at an understanding with this refugee group; still, it was not difficult... Some of them considered themselves socialists, some communists. They had heated discussions among themselves. One of them had been taken prisoner by the Russians during the First World War. Later, he had participated in the Great October Revolution. He had met comrade Bela Kun and had learned Russian. Kasım did not say a word about knowing Russian or about having seen the Soviet Union. He always carried a Turkish newspaper in his hand or his pocket. The name of the Hungarian who knew Russian was Yanosh. So he said. Who knows? Perhaps he too had an identity like that of Kasım Benekli...

Kasım had learned a lot through the Hungarians and Barba. He was able to evaluate the colours, the features, of the surroundings in which he lived. He saw that Barba had connections with the police. The Hungarians saw this as well... It seemed more convenient for their purposes to play it cool. The Hungarians were squeezing information out of Barba... Kasım had begun to make use of this information as well... Hungarian

communists were reliable. They maintained their secret organisation apart. But they behaved straightforwardly and honourably in solidarity with the TKP. They held high the principles of proletarian internationalism...

Kasım was gradually becoming accustomed to his surroundings. The speech no longer offended his ears. The style of work, manner of walking and behaviour of the people of this region contradict each other. They walk slowly. When taking a step forward, they roll from one side to the other. They fold their hands at the back. The majority of them hold prayerbeads in their hands. The beads bounce against their buttocks. They invariably pull their caps to one side. There are many unemployed, drifters. These live mostly in the old districts. Local people who play back-gammon and drink ayran in the cafes...

The position of the middle strata

The city has its own characteristic inner life, traditions and customs. Capitalism is not concerned with such traditions and customs. It breaks the ones which do not conform. Capitalism imposes its own laws and norms. The old resists. The new overcomes. An artisan is one thing, a worker is another. A neighbourhood grocer with his makeshift counter is one thing, a department store owner who displays his wares in shop windows is another. The manager of a bar is one thing, the owner of a coffee shop who makes coffee on a primitive coal stove is another. So too are the civil servants. Bankers, employers, factory owners and stock-brokers are different from all of these. And then there are the feudal landowners!...

The middle strata are the victims. They are being crushed and dispersed. They are flocking to the factory

gates. They are worried, alarmed, ill-tempered. Most are furious. Those who have lost their homes and tiny old shops either strike out randomly or, bitter towards fate and the world, pine away and die. Some of these fall into opium dens, or into prison...

In the middle of the city, next to the post office and the "Masonic Lodge", one person pulls out his revolver and shoots another in broad daylight. The murdered man is one of the city's landowners. He is both a building contractor and a usurer, a profiteer who owned a cotton-seed oil factory. The man who shot him is a coppersmith, one of the established craftsmen of the city. He had a house, a shop and a tiny vineyard just outside the city. He has sent his son to a trades school. "Let my son be a man", he said. His son Celâl finished the school as a mechanic. The coppersmith father can no longer support the home with his old craft. He mortgages all his property, whatever he has, to find money, a little from the bank, a little from the landlord. He buys a German-made tractor, a "McCormick", which is in widespread use in Çukurova at the time. He and the landlord become partners. They begin farming, but this does not last long. The coppersmith cannot pay his debts. He loses his mortgaged property, his house and his shop. The landowner seizes the tractor. And the coppersmith attempts to solve these problems with bullets, by shooting the landlord. He is sent to prison. Now he is serving time in the Konya prison, having narrowly escaped execution...

Building of the Adana Provincial Committee of the TKP

Kasım went to the meeting in Papazınbahçesi. He met three persons instead of two. The mechanic Şevket pointed out a short blond man whom he called,

“Driver Ragıp”. Then he introduced a tall, pock-marked young man: “This is Celâl. He too is a mechanic. The three of us are natives of Adana. We are from the same district and know each other from childhood. We share the same views. Let us talk and we shall tell more about ourselves”. Celâl’s story was interesting. The driver Ragıp had grown up an orphan. His father had died in the liberation war. He too had been educated at a trades school. He had lived with his mother. Every day, he had been driving the pasha back and forth to his Incirlik estate. He had stayed at the farm from time to time, had had quite a lot of free time. It was proposed that, in order to speak of more fundamental matters, they meet in a vineyard outside the city. The guard at the vineyard was Celâl’s brother. According to what was said, this man was one of the “toughs” of Adana. The Adana “Independence Court” was clamping down on groups that were upsetting Adana’s rich men, groups which could be characterised as anarchist organisations. The court hanged a few of their members. Celâl’s brother escaped the noose, and hid in the vineyards. A guard...

One month after arriving in Adana, comrade Kasım was no longer alone. The Adana Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey was formed at the beginning of the year 1926, in a vineyard house on the bank of the Seyhan river. The members were: the Circassian railway mechanic, Osman; a teacher of physics and mathematics at a trades school, Haydar; the driver Ragıp; and the mechanics Şevket and Celâl. In accordance with the party rules, Kasım Benekli was to remain the leader of the Committee. Şevket was chosen secretary. The Committee made a division of labour. Kasım was to work professionally. Right at the beginning, it was declared that there was a need for

short, popular pamphlets of small size, on the party, trade unions, youth, conspiracy, the general political situation and developments in the world and in Turkey. A place, the means, paper and money, they said...

A basic organisation of the committee was established rather easily in the railway repair workshop. This became the most stable basic organisation or cell of that period. The repair workshop was the scene of year-round work. The cotton mills do not work continuously. When the cotton is picked from the fields, its seed separated and baled, the mill comes to a stop until the next season... The workers are thrown onto the market for seasonal workers. They look for another job. If they can find one, they work...

The condition of the agricultural day-labourers

The condition of the workers in the factories and fields of Çukurova is terrible. The life of temporary field workers and cotton pickers especially, is slavery.

Adana's Taşköprü is "famous". At each end are markets for day-labourers. Anyone who does not know about the slave markets of the Middle Ages or earlier times, should come here. Like the bridge itself, the slave market was handed down from the Romans. On Sundays and Tuesdays, this market turns into a human torrent, a pandemonium. These are the days when farm stewards come and hire day-labourers. The stewards choose them as they would flocks of sheep, drive and lead them just like cattle drivers. The master of the farm does not bargain with the day-labourers himself. There are middlemen called "envoys" for this. Their dress is quite distinct. On their backs they wear something half raincoat, half overcoat. In their hands, they carry an umbrella with a thick, black handle. They wear long

boots made of ox-hide. Some of them, the most ruthless, have taken to wearing cork hats, symbols of colonialism. These envoys are as merciless as the landlords, as cruel as the gendarmes. They appropriate 10-12% of the wages of the workers they bring. The workers are hired on a weekly basis and paid at a rate determined by a "commission" under the supervision of the "Farmers' Union". It includes no representative of the workers. Among its members, who are almost all big farmers, are the mayor and the president of the Exchange.

The day-labourers, these field workers, work according to "rules" handed down from the slave owner, Ibrahim Pasha. They get up at daybreak and go to the fields, returning from work when the sun goes down. They sleep and live in hutches that resemble mole hills. The only thing that enters the stomachs of the day-labourers is muddy water — "diluted" ayran and a plain wheat mash. They burn and shake with malaria. Death mows them down. Lands adjacent to village and farm roads in Çukurova are day-labourers' grave yards...

Kasım went and saw the day-labourer market, and then to the lowlands with his mechanic friends. They roamed the villages and fields. Kasım wanted to learn about the life and condition of the agricultural workers, the day-labourers working in the cotton fields. For the most part, these temporary, seasonal workers flow into Çukurova from the eastern provinces. Oppressed, dispersed and unorganised, they live in darkness. Ideas of unity and of establishing a trade union had just recently begun to grow among those workers employed on the farms year-round. Mechanics working on tractors, threshing machines and combines had just begun to awaken. They too were unorganised. It would be very difficult to raise these masses, peasants, sharecroppers and day-labourers, to work among these barbarously

exploited and mercilessly oppressed masses. This difficult struggle has faced the TKP and the communists up until the present day... However, the situation today has changed greatly. The agricultural workers have gained much experience through their struggles, both quantitatively and qualitatively, from the point of view of numbers and consciousness and, to a certain degree, organisation. They have trade unions – that means an organised struggle. Bringing the peasants behind them, agricultural workers are taking part in demonstrations and protest marches, in the political struggle. During these marches, the slogan, “No to NATO!” is being raised. The long struggle waged by the TKP under the most severe conditions and most heavy repression is reflected in this slogan...

Establishing basic organisations among the workers

During the first months, committee meetings were held “in the open air”, at night. This had its advantages and disadvantages. Everything was done hastily – “portable”, so to speak. The members took turns as look-outs. Yet, before the committee stood grave tasks, demanding discussion and solution. It was decided that a place in the vineyards would be more suitable from the point of view of conspiracy. Such a place was found, but later rejected. Subsequently, a press was set up there. For meetings, a house that offered easy entrance and exit to strangers, and would not attract attention, was rented in the city. A family in which both husband and wife were teachers moved in as tenants. The two had just recently joined the party. One of the committee members, the teacher Haydar, had known this couple for many years, since school days. They seldom used the house, only for the most important meetings...

The activities of the party were gradually righting themselves. A basic organisation was established among the railway workers, specifically, in the repair workshop. Later, this cell took the name "Railwaymen's Committee". This committee established contacts and relations with railwaymen from Mersin to the Syrian border. Much later, it played an important role in 1927 strike. Another cell was formed in the "Driving School", a private school. The cell was led by a comrade named Ali Şahin, who was involved in the trade union movement and was also the founder of the school. He was respected and loved among the workers, mechanics and drivers. He had joined the party recently, but he was fulfilling his party duties with initiative. Later, there was a change in the Provincial Committee and Ali Şahin became a member. He was a talented organiser... The cell that was formed among teachers was based on his trades school...

The main question was to enter the factories. There was a textile factory that employed 1,500 workers at that time. It subsequently became one of the Sumerbank* enterprises. In this factory, as everywhere, there were many women workers. The workday was ten hours. It was extended to twelve whenever the manager demanded. Wages were low, 10-11% went in fines. This was ruinous for the workers. Some of the foremen and workshop supervisors were guild masters. Such things as health protection and accident prevention were almost non-existent. Transmission and conveyor belts would tear away arms, hair and skirts, grab the worker and mutilate him. There were many children working in this factory as well. Most of the cotton mills and textile

* Sumerbank: A state monopoly enterprise specialising in textiles.

factories employed them. The workers were unable to collect themselves due to exhaustion, long working hours and malnutrition, because they were kept in terrible darkness. The struggle against this entire situation was becoming at once more imperative and more difficult. Orhan Kemal* describes these terrible conditions very well in his works. He had worked in these factories and from here became first, a member of the Communist Party, and then, a member of the Adana Provincial Committee...

The first steps were difficult. Kasım had not been able to find a job immediately. He was a professional, but here too there was a contradictory situation: he could not remain idle. Moreover, he had to live on something. He could not become a burden on others. Yet, when he took a job, important party business was left standing. He could just barely pay his rent. But he couldn't live without food. In a secluded place in the district of Çarçabuk, there was a makeshift flour mill and bakery, a primitive structure handed down from who knows what age. This is where Kasım went when he was very hard up. Here he would eat warm pide with fresh sesame oil. The horse that powered the flour mill would shake his tail and pass wind...

Exposure of a provocateur. First publications of the Adana Provincial Committee

He had learned what factories and workplaces there were and their locations. There was one enterprise called the "Russians' factory" which produced cottonseed oil and soap. One of the partners in this factory is

* Orhan Kemal: A widely-read communist writer

the provocateur, Mehmet Emin. This man travels between work and home in a Ford. A plain-clothes man is beside him at all times. The provocateur is obviously afraid. He does not admit everyone into his office at the factory. He never takes his hat off, even in the car. He has shaved off his moustache. He is dark and evil looking. He was together with Mustafa Suphi and the comrades. He knew about the death trap prepared by Ankara. On the night when Mustafa Suphi and 14 other comrades were thrown into the sea, the governor of Trabzon gave a feast in his honour. He was a disgusting creature. It was spread all over Adana that this factory-owner was a vile provocateur, an agent of the police and the secret service. The party committee deemed it useful to expose to everyone the enemies of the working class and the people, to inform the public about traitors, about their identities, crimes and betrayals. This provocateur was flooded with letters. It was not long before he disappeared from Adana.

The exposure that had been carried out was correct. However, this provocateur had not been denounced to the whole of Adana and Turkey, to everyone. This could have been accomplished by publication – through statements, announcements and posters. The need for secret publishing activity and a secret press made itself sharply felt. The committee discussed this question many times and decisions were taken. However, it was not able to put these decisions into practice.

Until the establishment of a press in the vineyard, various practical activities were undertaken. It was necessary to provide ideological training for new party members, sympathisers who had been won to the party, for basic organisations that had been established or were in the process of being established to explain them the party, its policy and programme,

strategy and tactics, structure and founding. It was not enough to spread the principles and ideals of Marxism-Leninism by word of mouth. The conducting of propaganda, the spreading of these principles, demanded written publications. A programme was drawn up: to print small, pocket-size pamphlets and publish appeals, statements and announcements in connection with important events.

The means of printing were primitive: sapiograph. Instead of this steklograph was used. This was something like lithography. A sheet of glass or a large mirror was used as a base instead of marble. This method was tried but wasn't practical. "Pat" type sapiograph was more practical. It was something like jelly rapidly melted in hot water, poured into a tray where it solidified immediately to become like smooth polished marble. Write whatever you want on white paper with China ink and then transfer this onto the "Pat." It becomes something like onion skin and would easily print about hundred copies.

The first pamphlet published was "Lenin and the Communist Party". It was small: one and a half formats. It described the founding of the TKP and Leninist principles. The preparation of this pamphlet had been a difficult test for I. Bilen. He didn't have the works of Lenin at his disposal. Shortly afterwards came the pamphlets: "Lenin and the Trade Unions", and later, "Lenin and Youth".

These publications enlivened the committee, the very inexperienced members and sympathisers, the basic organisations that had been or were in the process of being established. The possession of such lively materials which could provide answers to questions troubling the minds of party members also served to prevent dry, stereotyped propaganda...

The pamphlets published were written by hand, moreover, in the old alphabet. Not everyone could write the old Ottoman script. There were those whose writing was neat and legible; however, conspiracy and secrecy disallowed this. Difficulties were of many kinds. At that time, it would not have been correct to buy a typewriter from a shop in Adana. There was only one shop that sold them and in such things everyone knew everyone else. One person was entrusted with this task. The son of one of Adana's rich men, of Arab origin, had opened an office. Having eaten up the capital given to him by his father, he sold the office. The brother of an Arab communist had secretly bought the office's typewriter at a low price and was now selling it. The typewriter was not put into use at once. It "laid low" for a while...

The Arab minority lived in a separate district in Adana. They were called "Fellah". They had their own customs, norms and traditions. It was an introverted and close-knit community. They fought and knifed each other. The rich, the landlords, and the working people lived side by side. There were youths called "Arab lads". Among them were mechanics, drivers and factory workers. It was through this channel that the party entered the Arabs' the "Fellahs" district. In the same way, a while later, Kasım met the owner of Adana's famous kebab house, Diyap agha,. He was godfather at the "circumcision feast" of this fat man's grandson. The kebab house was right in the centre of the city. It was frequented by officials, policemen and local landowners. In this respect, it was a place to obtain "information", gossip...

Work and struggle in the cotton mill

Autumn in Adana. The rains came. The earth-

covered roof of the one-storey house where Kasim lived collapsed and the room was flooded. The house belonged to a Greek-Cypriot engineer who was in prison. His wife and two children lived in the other rooms. They were crying in fear. It was dawn by the time they could be calmed down. The place had become a swamp.

Kasim was no longer on his own. He had support. Party activities were increasing. With the help of his Hungarian friends, Kasim had begun work in a factory. But he could not get enough sleep. He worked the day shift at the factory. Immediately after work in the evening he had either a meeting, an appointment, or an article to write. He lost weight. Nevertheless, he no longer suffered from hunger or lack of money as had been the case previously. The cotton mill where he worked was new. He baled cotton. The machinery consisted of a set of large Swedish diesels. The electric dynamo, everything, was there. The engines, transmission belts and especially the ventilators which sucked the dust out of the storerooms were unbearably loud. People were going deaf. The factory worked on two shifts. There were three mechanics and two assistants. Two of the mechanics preferred not to work the night shift. The two could not stand each other. One was a seaman, a ship's engineer. The other hailed from Tophane. Both had "socialist" pretensions. They wore overalls and ties. Towards Kasim, they were reserved. He did not argue with them. But neither would he allow them to bully the assistant mechanics. Kasim often worked night shifts. This suited his work as it left him free during the day. The two mechanics spent most evenings gambling in the salons of the "Community Centre". These "socialists" were remarkable.

The director of the factory was a short man named Şevket, an engineer and native of Adana. He had studied

in Germany. He was an open fascist. He had a flashy sports car and a foul mouth. At night he would come to the factory drunk. He would abuse anyone who got in his way, slap and swear at the workers. In the warehouse were Pomak* workers shifting cotton with wooden forks. They were well-built young men, refugees. The director tormented and swore at them. These giant men would cry. They would come and pour out their troubles to "Kasim the mechanic". "It is better to die", they would say. Kasim would say: "Fight him!" One night, the director was making the rounds of the warehouses. The Pomaks leaned on their wooden forks. The director walked over to them. He was looking for trouble and he found it. The lights went out and the roar of the ventilators became louder...

The director was not seen for two weeks. When he did return to work, his face and eyes were still covered with bruises. To those who wished him a speedy recovery, he said that he had "been driving too fast" ... After this "trimming", the man became more "polite". In general, the atmosphere of the factory changed. The Albanian guards watched their step. Even the lame grocer from Kayseri no longer fiddled openly with the scales. He stopped writing "two" instead of "one" in his charge book, stopped selling sausages with maggots. The fat mechanic stopped making "Gudula" Hasan, whose job it was to lubricate the machines, run here and there like a coffee boy. He had become more "understanding"...

"Gudula" Hasan was a Cypriot, a tall, grey-haired man who spent all his wages at Barba's tavern. He would drink and hit his head with his fist. "Gudula" meant doorknocker. That is why this nickname was given to

* Pomak: Bulgarian moslem.

him. He got on well with Kasım. He was a bit of a Diogen, a “philosopher”. He had no truck with god. He admired Neyzen Tevfik and repeated his jingles: “You have no mother, no father, you look like a bastard to me, god” – mimicking the sound of prayerbeads with his tongue. He was a rascal. He knew the factories, their owners, foremen, workers, and a bit about the police. He was on good terms with the workers in the textile factory and knew what went on there. He used to go out drinking with the weavers. He was a regular “fount” of information...

Kasım did not stay in the factory long. Little time remained for party work. In this factory there were scarcely any elements the party could get its teeth into, elements that could be won to the party. The electrician Akif was a positive type. The fitter Hamit was bold. There were also two pressers. These workers had close relations with the workers in the railway depot and repair workshop. The factory was right next to the railway station...

After Kasım left the factory, the fitter and the electrician joined the party...

Publicising the TKP. The opportunists recoil.

Kasım is called to Istanbul.

The party organisation was developing. The Tarsus committee was established. It was the same with Mersin. There were now active party members all along the railway: in Ceyhan, Osmaniye, Bahçe and towards Kadirli. A development among the teachers was apparent. It was different with the bourgeois intellectuals. They looked down on other intellectuals and the rest of the petty bourgeoisie. The luxurious

life of the children of the rich was infuriating the petty bourgeois intellectuals. This friction was accelerating with the process of class differentiation...

In Mersin, the dockers and railway workers went on strike against the company. Their wages were very low and their hours of work unlimited. Most importantly, both the companies and the government opposed the establishment of workers' unions, workers' unity. The Mersin dockers were fairly conscious. They were aware of the need to establish a trade union, to go on strike. The task of the day was to evaluate this mood, take advantage of it and go deep into the masses. The Adana Provincial Committee issued a statement explaining the situation and calling the workers to joint solidarity. The statement was typewritten and duplicated on a primitive stencil. Most importantly, the statement was signed by the Adana Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey. Public opinion, the masses, the people, were being informed about the party. The repercussions and impact of this varied. The workers reacted in one way, the police another. The reaction of Vedat Nedim, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and others like them, members of the Central Committee, was the most despicable. Now they recalled the Adana organisation which, until then, they had neglected, to which they had given no directives, no recommendations, no advice. They called Comrade Kasım to Istanbul at a time when the Adana committee was under fire. The police were searching everywhere. A secret security team arrived in Çukurova from Ankara. Searches were being conducted in Mersin. Investigations were continuing. The party committee was striving to take advantage of its action, its bold step forward, as well as to avoid capture. It took the necessary measures...

The investigations yielded no result. However, the

fence sitters, cowards and wavering elements were being exposed. This initiative to make the party known brought vitality into the party organisation. It aided the process of sorting the rotten from the sound within the party. The Provincial Committee of the party decided to publish a secret monthly journal, its own press organ. It put this decision into practice. The name of the journal was "Projector". It was small. Issue number one gave first place to the events in Mersin, a prelude to the famous railway workers' strike which exploded in 1927..

It was essential to take certain measures in the committee. First, a top-secret alternate group was formed. This group was to direct the committee in the case of raids and arrests. Osman Çerkez was appointed leader of the group. He left the committee. The group was made up of three members. Osman knew the others, but they did not know each other. A password was established among them. No one other than Kasim was involved in this work. Osman moved to Islahiye... A basic organisation – cell – had been established at the Adana railway depot. Its secretary was the boilerman Ismail... The committee gave special importance to this cell. Kasim Benekli participated in its meetings from time to time under a different name. The meetings took place in the open air, most often on the banks of the Seyhan river. At night, many people came here to swim in their long underwear. The communists did the same. Neither the police or anyone else suspected a thing. The meetings were productive and took place in very cool surroundings...

A letter from the Central Committee was read in the committee. A short report was prepared and an account of activities presented. It was stated that a Çukurova-wide party conference was being prepared by the Adana organisation, the Provincial Committee.

The questions that would be discussed at the conference were enumerated. Particular emphasis was given to the initiative to inform the people, the masses, about the TKP. The report opposed opportunism, indolence and lack of principles.

Kasım Benekli coded the committee's report, hid it under the cover of a suitcase and boarded a train. Istanbul, give me your hand, he said...

CHAPTER V

CONFRONTATION

Kasım Benekli was travelling in comfort on the train this time. He had bought a first-class ticket and had settled down in a velvet seat. Apart from his "identification" papers, he also had with him a "reference" from the factory where he worked. He had had a double bottom inserted in his tiny elegant suitcase just in case. The important documents and pocket-size pamphlets published by the committee, he had mounted into this secret compartment.

There were no searches on the train as there had been the previous year. But still the passengers coming from southern and eastern provinces were being observed. The searches and probes conducted by punitive expeditionary forces in Kurdistan were continuing.

The train was delayed. It arrived late at Haydarpasa station. The passengers nearly missed the last ferry.

The "tobacconist" at Galata Bridge had shut his kiosk. This created problems. Kasım had no other meeting point. There was Tahtakadısı street in Kasımpaşa but that would not do either. It was nearly midnight. He headed for Kurtuluş (Tatavla). There, he knocked on the door of a Greek comrade, the carpenter Zachariades. This comrade was extremely cautious in matters of conspiracy. He was a veteran party member. He more or less knew of the situation of the Istanbul organisation of the party. He took Kasım to the home of another party member, also a carpenter. Kasım knew this comrade as well. His name was Kolloumenos. He had a brother. One of the brothers was on the Beyoğlu District Committee. They were both self-sacrificing. The older brother was later executed by fascists in Greece, together with the communist poet Beloyannis.

Kasım gleaned some information and clues from the carpenter comrades concerning the work of the Istanbul organisation of the party. The main topic of conversation was the present situation of the party. What he learned was that the party leadership, the Central Committee, had sunk even deeper into the mire of opportunism.

The government had made some changes in the penal code. To complement this it also declared a suitable "amnesty" from which the imprisoned communists also benefitted. Thus, the group convicted by the "Independence Court" in Ankara in 1925 were released from prison a year later. The bourgeoisie was further clearing the way for reconciliation with the country's reactionary forces, compradors and landlords. At the same time, it was applying "carrot-and-stick" tactics towards the progressive-minded section of the intelligentsia. This tactic indeed proved effective with vacillating elements who preferred to sit on the fence.

Many of those who were released from prison left the party for good. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and his ilk from the opportunist group had again settled into the Political Bureau. They were engaged in efforts to bring the party completely under their control.

However, a process of regeneration had begun within the party, throughout its structure. Resistance was growing against opportunism and indolence. New party committees were being formed in the provinces. These committees were going deep into the masses, forging ties with them through activity, and entering the factories. The Eskişehir, Adana, Izmir, Istanbul, Ankara, Balıkesir, Izmit and Samsun party committees had developed tremendously. All of these committees were striving to inform the workers, peasants, people, the masses, the public about the TKP. The Central Committee and the Political Bureau were tied to these party organisations only by cotton-thread. The provincial committees were adhering to the party rules, exercising their proper authority. They applied strict discipline and conspiracy. They did not bow before the leadership of the opportunist clique in the Central Committee or its policy of tacking the party to the tail of the bourgeoisie, of isolating the party from the working class and the masses.

The Central Committee had no organ, no newspaper. This vacuum was filled by the publications of the provincial committees. The Central Committee was incapable of offering the committees any direction or advice. The Political Bureau issued only verbal instructions and orders, and then only rarely. The Central Committee remained outside the struggle, outside political life. It was a parasitic tumour which stunted the growth of the party.

Vienna Conference of the TKP, 1926

Party Conference had been convened in Vienna, in 1926. Ways had been sought to develop the party, to forge ties with the masses, to revitalise it and rescue it from indolence and passivity. Proposals were made and resolutions passed. Heading these resolutions was that regarding the establishment of basic organisations – cells in factories, work-places and neighbourhoods everywhere possible, and the formation of district and provincial committees. It was resolved to base these organisations on revolutionary, Leninist principles; to strengthen the ideological struggle; to propogate the policy of the party among the masses; to clearly show the party's strategy and tactics, explain them to the working class and make them its property. This demanded a press, publications, active propaganda and agitation. The question of publishing an organ of the Central Committee was discussed at length at the Conference. The Conference endorsed Lenin's precept that a newspaper is not only a means of collective propaganda and agitation, but, moreover, a collective organiser. Among the delegates, Nazım Hikmet, Baytar Mehmet and Hamdi Shamilov, had been particularly insistent on this point. There were two other important resolutions passed at the Conference: one was to prepare the party's new programme in accordance with the recommendations of the Second Congress held in Ankara in 1922; the other, to hold a Congress, to prepare this supreme forum.

Opportunists cast aside Conference decisions

These constructive decisions, taken at the Vienna Conference were cast aside on the insistence of Şefik Hüsnü Değmer and by the hand of the provocateur Vedat Nedim Tör, who at this same conference became Secretary of the Central Committee. Vedat Nedim and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, this group, worked consciously and methodically to sever the party from the masses, to hide it from the public, the people. Their tactic was to turn the party into a purely nominal entity. Such an attitude, such a “party” suited the bourgeoisie well. When the bourgeoisie released the Aydemirs on an amnesty, it was also entrusting them with such a mission. These agent-provocateurs who occupied the Central Committee did not want even the party’s name to be made known to the people.

In that period, opposition to the opportunist leadership, conflict with the Vedat Nedim-Şevket Süreyya clique, centred on this question of making the party known. The opportunists were furious with the provincial committees for putting their name to the statements they issued. “They are exposing the party”, they said. Even more malicious and despicable, they raved, “You are informing on the party to the police”. The conflicts became so severe, went so far, that this fundamental question was referred to the Comintern. In this situation, Şefik Hüsnü Değmer could no longer defend the Vedats. The Comintern sent a representative to Turkey to investigate the matter on the spot. This comrade, called Kitaigarosky, vindicated those who had been fighting against the opportunist leadership. This conflict continued in different forms, even after the

Vedat Nedims were expelled from the party. It was a bitter struggle. It is not easy to tear up the roots of an opportunist leadership.

At a time when the struggle against the Vedat Nedims and the efforts to make the party known to the masses had turned into open conflict, the instructor-adviser comrades responsible for the provincial committees were summoned to Istanbul. Kasım Benekli came from Adana, Aziz-Hüsametdin Özdoğu from Izmir, Şakir-Suphi from Eskişehir, Seyfi from Ankara, others from different provinces. Seyfi, a worker had been elected to the Central Committee from Ankara at the Second Congress. In loyalty to the party, self-sacrifice and keeping communist morality clean, he was an example to all.

There were differences of opinion, disputes, in the Central Committee. Salih Hacıoğlu had been pushed aside. The Central Committee members were very shallow in their Marxism. The level of some had eroded. It turned out that there were degenerates and police agents among the members taken into the Central Committee by the Şefik Hüsnü wing at the 3rd Congress. "Mother" Mahmut of Hemsin was one of them. This man knew Kasım, I. Bilen, from the 1920's and the days of the liberation war. As guerrillas, they had ransacked Mahmut's uncle's mansion in Maltepe. Mahmut's uncle was an agent of the head of British Intelligence in Istanbul, Colonel Maxwell. He used the mansion for these purposes. "Mother" Mahmut would seize every opportunity to swear at his uncle. But this was also a ploy. Mahmut was Vedat Nedim's most faithful servant. He did not know Kasım's surname however. He was an official with the Anatolia railway company and worked under the German director of Haydarpaşa station. He was a danger for the party in general, and for

I. Bilen in particular. Bolshevik "Papa" Mehmet had alerted Kasım to this danger.

Confrontation with the Political Bureau

A week had passed since Kasım's arrival from Adana. Comrade Hamdi Şamilov Alev was head of the Organisation Bureau of the Central Committee. One day, he said to Comrade Kasım, "We are going to the Political Bureau". They went to an old, long, wooden mansion in Kadırğa. Who knows by which pasha, which "nobleman" it was built. Kasım was met at the door by two heavy-set men. They were two brothers whom Kasım knew from Moscow, from the university. They were sons of a wealthy family, well-built and tall, but empty-headed, faint-hearted and showy. Around about 1920, they had left Istanbul for Anatolia. On route they had changed course and headed for the Caucasus. Adventurists. They had stayed in Azerbaijan where they joined the party. They had come to Moscow, to the University, in this way. On their return to Turkey, they had moved into daddy's mansion. They were smartly dressed. They wanted to show off their "nobility". The older of the two brothers was called Fahri, while the younger's name was Şadan. They both called Kasım by his party name at the University. The elder one had not quite assimilated the "noble" role. He still used "Comrade". The younger one, Sadan, had become a "bey".

It was obvious that Hamdi Şamilov was not on his first visit to the mansion. He had no difficulty in finding his way through the ante-rooms and corridors. The wooden staircase of the mansion creaked a lot. The upper floor, like the one below it, was gloomy. They came to a fair sized ante-room with cushions strewn on

the floor, a huge stove and narrow sofas. Someone was perched on the corner of a sofa. He rose. He was stout and had a puffy face. He grinned, "Ohh! Are you here too Comrade Marat...", he said. This person was someone called Hüseyin Sait. He was a Crimean. He had joined the Bolshevik Party around 1919 and had come to Turkey. He had known Mustafa Suphi. He was an intriguer. He later severed his ties with the party altogether and became a middle-man and a millionaire. It later transpired that he had abused his authority in the party. He had connections with Mehmet Emin and Süleyman Sami, who had betrayed Mustafa Suphi to Ankara. Why had he come to the mansion today? Why was he mouthing "Comrade Marat... Comrade Marat..." all the time?...

This man too knew Kasım from the University. Moreover he was aware that "Papa" Mehmet and he were cousins. But he did not know the name Kasım. And unless they had told him, he could not know where Kasım had gone after the University and what he was doing.

As for the name Marat, this has been the party name of Comrade I. Bilen since 1923. I. Bilen has used scores of names and surnames. On one occasion, when he was arrested and brought before the Chief Prosecutor of Istanbul, his file had revealed 36 different names and surnames. Bilen was not surprised. The prosecutor was unable to confirm any of the aliases he had listed. Bilen had not fallen into police hands for some time. They were looking for him. In 1927, during a raid on a comrade's home in Çamlıca, a photo of Bilen passed into the hands of the police, a portrait with a Panama hat, dark glasses, no beard or moustache. The police were showing this photograph to every communist they captured, or rather every arrested person they suspected

of being a communist. Some made up a name for it to escape torture; others because they could not bear the torture; still others, knowingly, to stave off trouble. And some just confirmed the name given by the police. In short, no one could have sorted through these names.

The name Marat was given to Comrade Bilen by Nazım Hikmet. At the University, portraits of revolutionaries hung on the walls of the lecture halls. In one, there were the portraits of Robespierre, Danton, Marat, the leaders of the Great French Revolution. Nazım later put these names into verse and summed it up in the poem, "The Great Revolution": "Long live Marat!... born, dying, reborn life!"

At the mansion in Kadırga, they ushered Kasım into a fairly large room, with latticed, bay windows. The floor was carpeted. Two figures were seated at a bow-legged, oval table. Samilov sat on a chair to one side. The two figures at the table were Vedat Nedim and Şevket Süreyya. This was Kasım's first encounter with Vedat Nedim. His gaze and stance reminded one of a rat. Aydemir's eyes were bleary, as usual. Kasım knew him well. The bleary-eyed one was licking his lips. This was a habit of his. It was as if he was oiling his lips before speaking. Vedat Nedim was very chic. He was like a toy. Arranging his tie, he jerked as if he was tickled. Then he pulled himself together and began his empty threats. Without stuttering he said, "Comrade Marat, what's this you've been doing? You are trampling on party discipline. Who gave you permission to issue statements and sign them the Adana Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey? What is the meaning of this? This is anarchy. This is a violation of secrecy..."

He huffed and puffed. The bleary-eyed one took over. Licking his lips he said, "You have been calling

us mensheviks. What is our menshevism? We'll see about that. You are living outside the run of events, outside reality. A harmonisation, a stabilisation is beginning to take shape in today's society. The people are in need of a respite. How else will the working class be able to gather itself together? We should be making preparations without raising a clamour here and there, without provoking all and sundry against our organisation. We must wait. He who does not know how to wait, who gets impatient, will stumble. What you are doing is to provoke the police and the government against us..."

The bleary-eyed one was really foaming at the mouth. His eyes became even blearier. Hamdi Şamilov was smoking one cigarette after another, running his fingers through his spiky hair. He did not know what to say or do. The other two, the one took up where the other left off. Şamilov managed to say, "Let's see what he has to say".

Comrade Kasım was in no predicament. It was no difficult to reply to the accusations. The situation demanded that he not lose his temper. It was necessary to be at once collected and bold. Their questions were sly, designed to provoke. But one incontrovertible fact had become perfectly clear: that these opportunists in the leadership of the party were determined to force the workers' movement, and first and foremost its party – the Communist Party, under the control of the bourgeoisie, to tack it on to the tail of the bourgeoisie, leave it impotent. This was the reason they were clinging to the party like horseflies and ticks. They wanted to take the fortress from within. To be more more specific, they were the agents of the bourgeoisie.

As far as being cowed was concerned, they were cowed. In their defection to the bourgeois camp, they sought to drag the Communist Party behind them.

Comrade Kasım answered each accusation in turn. In the first place he invoked the party rules and the decisions of the Vienna Conference. "The party rules have not been violated. The rules have been abided by. They give committees the authority to issue calls and statements. The principles of secrecy have not been compromised by informing the working class, the labouring masses, the entire people and public about the TKP. There is no question here of indiscipline. Where did you come up with these things? What anarchy? If you claim that the police do not "know" the TKP, that they are not "aware" of it, then either you are "deceiving" yourselves, or you are deceiving the working class, the people, the public. If a party does not function, does not inform the people of its existence, then it is "non-existent". Either that, or it means the police are "no longer interested" in it. That would be to defend police agents..."

Vedat Nedim's pale complexion had turned a bright red. The bleary-eyed one was furiously licking his lips. Kasım continued, "Party organisations are not established in the sky. They are established in factories, workplaces, villages and towns. Nothing is accomplished "outside" of society, reality, socio-political life. You talk about some sort of "harmony" and "stability" in today's society. There are no such things in today's capitalist Turkey. There is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. There is class struggle. There is a battle between the working class and the bourgeoisie. There is resistance among the people against the attempts of the imperialists to fortify anew their old positions in our country, against the compradors who support them. Where is the "harmony" in this? The government is passing new laws. In order to strengthen its political and economic situation, position, the bourgeoisie seeks to

guarantee “tranquility” through the ‘Establishment of Public Order Act’, and its own development through the ‘Encouragement of Industry’ and ‘Chambers of Commerce and Industry’ Acts. It is buttressing the labour law in parliament. It does not want to accord the worker his lawful rights, his democratic rights. Do you want us to be silent in the face of this? The tradesmen’s guilds are being abolished by new laws. The abolition of the guild system is a good thing. But should we not oppose the measures and laws which seek to oppress the tradesmen and craftsmen? If the Communist Party, if we do not defend these strata, these masses who are losing their shops and flowing into the working class, who will? In the Golden Horn, the boatmen and bargemen are fighting with the police and soldiers sent against them. There has been shooting on both sides. Yet you, the Central Committee, with your talk about ‘tranquility’, shut your ears to this shooting, shut your eyes to events. And then you are angry that they call you ‘mensheviks’. With your attitude, it is surprising they don’t call you ‘degenerate mensheviks’...”

In accordance with the rules, the party committees wanted to hold their conferences. But the Vedat Nedims would not hear of it. The argument, discussion became even more heated. They told Kasım, “With your conduct you cannot go to Adana. If you are to go anywhere, it is to the Control Commission”.

Kasım Benekli slammed the door of the mouldy-smelling mansion in Kadırga as he left. The air was cold. He headed for Kumkapı by way of Akbıyık. Why had he taken such a round-about route? He was hungry. He wanted to eat grilled mackerel at the “Vineyard Tavern” in Kumkapı.

The Struggle Continues

The Tör-Aydemir group “rolled up their sleeves”. They sent the elder son of the mansion in Kadırğa to Adana. Immediately afterwards they set about making “delicate calculations”. They adopted “divide-and rule” tactics. They appointed Aziz (Hüsamettin) secretary of the Istanbul Provincial Committee. Both ploys yielded results they had not expected. The “nobleman” that they sent to Adana returned hurriedly, within a week of his departure. The Adana Committee had not been indulgent, had refused to recognise him. These developments were reflected in the Central Committee. Friction increased. The electrician Nuri was appointed to the Organisation Bureau. Nuri was a worker from the Ankara organisation. He too had joined in with the Spartacists in Germany. He was pompous. He also had his own “delicate calculations” with regard to the opportunist groups. He sought a reconciliation with Husamettin. Apparently, he had been engaged to Husamettin’s sister at one point, while he was in Ankara. But the engagement was broken off when in 1925 he was sent to Konya prison by an “Independence Court”, only to be released through the “amnesty” a year later. Now, he no longer wanted any hard work. Neither did he take a definite stand against the opportunists. He maintained a vacillating attitude in the Central Committee.

At that time, the Istanbul Provincial Committee was publishing an illegal newspaper called “Alev” (Flame). It was fairly second-rate. It wasn’t worth the labour or the paper that went into it. Husamettin asked Kasım for assistance. For Kasım, it was a thousand times

better to do this kind of party work than to remain idle, than to be a "pavement engineer".* Kasım took on this responsibility, together with two cunning comrades from the Beyoğlu District Committee. Writing articles posed no problem. At the beginning, the main difficulty was to find a place and tools: a typewriter and a printing machine. A typewriter was found, but stencils and a duplicating machine could not be found immediately. Writing by hand was eliminated. In the new format, the heading, "Organ of the Istanbul Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey" was put under the title "ALEV". The struggle to inform the masses about the party was continuing. "Alev" was printed in a very primitive way. Nevertheless, the printing side and the distribution side had to be completely separated. This was done. This work was of a preparatory nature for an illegal all-Turkey newspaper in the future. Two years later, in 1929, the newspaper "Komünist" (Communist), organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey, was launched. This was in the same form, same size as the present-day "Atılım". "Komünist" was printed on a proper press. Its secrecy was well maintained, considering the means and techniques of the day. By then Kasım had worn out a few more names and surnames. He had become a bit more experienced in the business of secret printing.

On the insistence of the Adana Committee, and also with the idea of getting rid of him, they sent Kasım to Adana once again. In the meantime, Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer) had not felt at ease. He had wanted Comrade Kasım to be punished. Later on he presented a written motion to the Central Committee calling for "Marat's

* This is a Turkish expression meaning "idler." "Pavement engineer" = walking the streets.

expulsion from the party” for having called tradesmen, craftsmen, the disintegrating middle strata, to unity of action, unity in the struggle, with the working class. But he was unable to get away with this, either in the Central Committee or in the Comintern. This fact is significant from the point of view of showing who the standbearers of opportunism were.

With this name, Kasım would no longer be safe on his return to Adana. But to return with a different name would have created an even more complicated situation. He adopted a “double-identity.” Hasan Çamlı suited his purposes. Like Kasım Benekli, Hasan Çamlı was also abroad.

At this time, Kasım was involved in an “incident.” Two years previously, in 1925, the party had published the “Communist Manifesto” legally. Predicting beforehand that the government would have them confiscated, they had stored, hidden the copies away in various places. One such depot was the warehouse belonging to the cobbler Nuri. It was in an ancient cellar left over from Byzantine times, in Mahmutpaşa. A day before his departure, Kasım, or call him Çamlı if you will, went to pick up a fairly large parcel from Nuri’s “warehouse.” Nuri was a native of Istanbul. He was thin and a bit of a cynic. He had a nice, attractive, often thought – provoking language. He liked to philosophise. But the philosophising would disappear when he described the hell that was the Dardanelles. A shell had buried him alive at Arburnu. When they dug him out the stars were clustered in the sky. Nuri had met Bolshevik Papa Mehmet around 1920. They had always got on well. He had harboured the urban guerrilla units. His present warehouse had then been a munitions depot. Later, he had joined the TKP. Nuri explained how he had stored the Manifesto and how, in his own words, he “had read

through the blessed thing but could not quite understand it". It was a little bit difficult for Nuri to read and understand. Moreover, its Turkish translation was highflown, mincing Arabic, Persian and French expressions and terms. Kasım wanted to help Nuri through this difficulty. They began talking and the hours passed. It struck midnight.

Kasım left the shop, and Nuri alone with the Manifesto under a gaslight. From the top of Mahmutpaşa he headed for Nuruosmaniye, past the Covered Bazaar. The Fire Zone. Walls in ruins. Suddenly a figure sprang up in front of him. The man was of average build. He had a gun in his hand. "Hands up," he said. Kasım's mind raced "Is he a policeman, or just a bum?" The man's voice was hoarse. When Kasım lifted his hands, the parcel under his arm fell to the ground with a crash. The man was like a shadow. He bent over to pick up the parcel. Some time ago Kasım had done a little boxing. In 1920, at the Tunnel in Istanbul, he had received a bad punch on the nose from some American sailors. This punch had led him to learn how to box. When the shadow bent over, Kasım delivered a sharp "chop" to the man's right wrist... Then he smashed his chin with his left fist. The shadow collapsed to the ground. The gun in his hand landed few metres away.

Kasım picked up his parcel and stuck his "booty", the pistol into his pocket. He walked away. A faint, hoarse voice could be heard behind him: "Police...police ...help..."

The man was a green bum. The barrel of the pistol had not been loaded. There was a cartridge in the charger, but the capsule was corroded. He had pulled the trigger, but the pistol had not fired. It is not for nothing that they say: "A loaded gun frightens one person, but an empty one frightens two". Nonetheless,

it was Kasım who profitted from the “incident” that night.

As soon as Kasım arrived in Adana, he presented the “booty” he had worn on his waist to Arab Süleyman. Comrade Süleyman was heavy built. The Browning pistol disappeared in the palm of his hand. “Many thanks”, he said. But he shook his head as if to imply: “What are we going to do with this toy?”