

THE NATIONAL QUESTION

IBRAHIM KAYPAKKAYA



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

Collection “Colorful Classics” #17 (English)

A collection directed by Christophe Kistler

Contact — flpress@protonmail.com

Paris, 2020

ISBN: 978-2-491182-15-1

Printing:

- 1st printing: 100 copies
- 2nd printing: 50 copies
- 3rd printing: 200 copies
- **4th printing: 300 copies**



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Since the beginning of the Foreign Languages Press, it has always been on our minds to reprint *The National Question by Ibrahim Kaypakkaya*. Written in 1972, this document continues to carry critical importance in current times to help understand and analyze national liberation movements.

But this task was easier said than done. There have been some translations of Kaypakkaya's works, done in the 80s and 90s in Greek, German and even English in booklet form, but the first translations released by a publishing house were done in German only in 2011 (under the title *In stürmischen Jahren*, published by Zambon). This translation, however, contained only a handful of (mostly short) documents and did not include *The National Question*. In May 2013, this lack was corrected when comrades from the German organization Trotz Alledem released *Unser Zorn wächst wie das unendliche Meer. Programmatistische Schriften*, a compilation of: *Critique of the TIIKP's program*, *On Kemalism*, and *The National Question in Turkey*. We also know of at least one attempt, started in 2015, to make a compilation that would have also included the *General Criticism of the Safak-Revisionism*, which was advertised on the website kaypakkaya.de

As for English, as far as we know, there has been only one translation published in July 2014 by Nisan Publishing. It was a happy surprise to see that this translation included both the shorter documents

published by Zambon, as well as the longer ones published by Trotz Alledem. We know that some comrades, at least in France and India, have used this book as a basis to translate some Kaypakkaya works into their own languages.

We have used the Nisan Publishing translation of this document as the basis in publishing this edition of *The National Question*. In doing so, we realized that the first English translation contained some mistakes. The version of the text in this book is a corrected one. Below, we describe the issues we addressed.

Literal Translation

The Italians says “*Traduttore, traditore,*” meaning that a translator always betrays the original meaning of a text a little. We noticed that the Nisan Publishing translation was very literal in many places, probably to try to remain as true to the original text as possible and prevent unfortunate cases of wrong translations of expressions or terms.

In our opinion, a translation should try to reflect what the author wanted the reader to understand rather than the exact words or expression s/he used in his/her own language. This is why we rewrote some sentences to try to convey the meaning of the original Turkish word or phrase in a more natural sounding way in order to make it more understandable for comrades studying this book.

Milliet and Ulus

Kaypakkaya uses two different terms in this book, both of which are translated into English by the word “nation.” However, they actually have different histories and meanings.

The word “milliet” is a Quranic word that was broadly used during the Ottoman Empire period. It referred to an ethnic group with a common religion. For example, the “rum milliet” were people from the Balkans who were orthodox, and the “ermeni milliet” were Armenians who were oriental orthodox. Each of the *milliet* had different rights based on their religion, and a different hierarchy, etc., which led—with the introduction of capitalism in Turkey—to simply understand them as different nations.

The word “ulus” originally had more of a geographical or tribal meaning, which became—with the establishment of the Republic in Turkey—the preferred word to express the concept of “nation.” The spread of the use of this word is mostly due to the politics of secularization of Mustafa Kemal as a “less-religious” replacement for “milliet.”

In Kaypakkaya’s time, these two terms were used interchangeably. However, Kaypakkaya played with their historical differences. For example, in Chapter 7, Kaypakkaya wrote: “Turkey is today one of the **multinational** states. In Turkey, only the Kurds constitute a **nation**.” While this translation is completely accurate in its translation, it appears contradictory. In Turkish, however, Kaypakkaya uses “milliet” in

the first case and “ulus” in the second, meaning that Turkey is a country with multiple *milliet*, or different religious ethnic groups, but that only the Kurds constitute an *ulus*, or “nation” as defined by Stalin.

In this edition we have attempted to translate this idiomatic nuance more clearly.

Missing Quotes and Paragraphs

The first English edition was missing several quotes and full paragraphs. For example, in Chapter 2, in lieu of the quote of Stalin was written “Check the quote from Stalin (it’s easy to do!),” which was actually a note from the translator. More glaring, eight paragraphs of the last chapter were missing in what was probably just a layout issue.

To correct these errors, we returned to the original text (using the *Selected Works* published by Umut Yayimcilik in 2004) to include those missing quotes and paragraphs.

Footnotes

On the different Turkish editions of this text, there has only been one footnote in Chapter 2 as well as one endnote regarding the text correction. We decided to include more of them to give more information and context regarding particular events or people to whom Kaypakkaya quotes or refers, in order to facilitate a better understanding for those who are not familiar with that time in Turkish history.

Finally, we would like to thank the translators of Nisan Publishing for their hard work. The German translation of *Trotz Alledem* has also been of tremendous help, especially for their footnotes. As the founder of one of the most important Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties, Kaypakkaya's works are important for study both in Turkey/North Kurdistan as well as in imperialist countries and in the world. We hope to see more of his work published in English in the future.

The Publishers

A SHORT HISTORY OF İBRAHİM KAYPAKKAYA

İbrahim Kaypakkaya was born in 1949 in a small village close to the city of Çorum. A student of physics, he was attracted to left politics during his university years and became a member of the clandestine TİİKP (Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey) led by Doğu Perinçek. This Party was a direct split from the main leftist party at that time called the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), which had fallen into electoral politics and reformism, while TİİKP supported a democratic national revolution line and was pro-Chinese (this party was also the first Turkish party to be officially recognized by China).

Kaypakkaya realized that the TİİKP was more revolutionary in form than TİP, publishing for example translations of the works of Mao. It also had a journal using the revolutionary slogans from the Chinese Cultural Revolution. However, it was in essence a rightist reformist Party, that maintained a chauvinist line on the Kurdish question because of the influence of Kemalism.

During several months, an intense line struggle raged in TİİKP. Finally, Doğu Perinçek's solution to resolve the line struggle was send a comrade to assassinate Kaypakkaya. The attempt did not work, as the attempted assassin was actually a supporter of Kaypakkaya. But shortly after this incident, İbo decided to split from TİİKP and found a party in April 1972 based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, called the Communist Party of Turkey Marxist-Le-

minist (TKP-ML). It immediately founded a people's army called the Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey (TIKKO) and began a people's war in Dersim, the region that Kaypakkaya saw as having the best conditions to start a revolutionary movement.

Kaypakkaya was captured in January 1973. Despite being tortured every day for over three months, he did not reveal anything about the internal structure of TKP(ML) or the names of any of his comrades. He was executed on the night of May 18 of that year. He said, for the revolution you "give your life, but don't give your secrets."

The National Question in Turkey

December 1971

1. THE THESES OF SAFAK REVISIONISM ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

“The big bourgeoisie, forming an alliance with the feudal landlords, have implemented a policy of national oppression and assimilation against the Kurdish people.”¹

“The Kurdish population numbering six million in our country has raised the flag of struggle against the bourgeoisie and landlords’ policy of national oppression and assimilation. It has stood up to the serious torture and oppression to which the pro-American governments have resorted. The struggle embarked upon by the Kurdish people for democratic rights, the equality of nations, and for self-determination is developing rapidly. All of Turkey’s workers and peasants support this struggle. The racist policy of imperialism to pit the peoples of Turkey against each other to crush them is bankrupt, and the links uniting the people on the revolutionary path are becoming stronger.”²

“Our movement declares that it recognizes the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination, and, if it wishes, to establish its own State.

“Our movement... works for the determination of the destiny of the Kurdish people towards the interests of the Kurdish workers and peasants.

“Our movement will pursue a policy of aiming to

¹ *Draft Program*, Article 10

² *Draft Program*, Article 25

unite the two fraternal peoples in Turkey possessing equal rights in a democratic peoples' republic.

“Our movement will wage a struggle against the reactionary ruling classes (of all nations) and their divisive policies that encourage animosity towards the revolutionary and fraternal of the Turkish and Kurdish peoples.”³

“The Marxist-Leninist movement is the most unyielding defender of the Kurdish people's right to self-determination and will struggle for the destiny of the Kurdish people determined to be in the interests of the Kurdish workers and peasants. In addition, the Marxist-Leninist movement will pursue a policy aiming to bring about the uniting of the two fraternal peoples in Turkey, possessing equal rights in a democratic people's republic.”

“We will defend unyieldingly the Kurdish people's right to self-determination.”

“Kurdish People's right of self-determination (and subsequent liberation) cannot be separated from the struggle for a land revolution based on the poor peasants or the struggle against imperialism.”⁴

“The policy of national enmity being implemented against the Kurdish people.

“Struggle against national oppression of the Kurdish people...

“We must insistently continue to defend the right

³ *Draft Program*, Article 52

⁴ *The political situation in the World and in Turkey following the March 12 [coup]*

of the Kurdish people to self-determination.”⁵

These are almost all the theses on the national question put forward by the organization formerly known as the Proletarian Revolutionary “Aydinlik”⁶ (PDA), now known as the Safak Revisionists, in the new period – that is, since martial law was declared on April 26, 1971. We shall not dwell on the line followed prior to martial law, as almost everyone concerned with the movement knows that an intense Turkish nationalism, a ferocious dominant nation nationalism bequeathed by the ideology of Mihri Belli⁷, was influential. Now, more subtle and decep-

⁵ *Regarding the question of establishing red political power*

⁶ Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik (PDA) or Proletarian Revolutionary Enlightenment, was the name adopted by a group led by Doğu Perinçek that split from Aydınlik (Enlightenment), a journal promoting the struggle for national democratic revolution. It served as the principal organ of the TIIKP (Revolutionary Workers’ and Peasants’ Party of Turkey), the first pro-Chinese party in Turkey, founded in 1969. Ibrahim Kaypakkaya wrote several articles for it. It was published from 1970 to 1971, after which it was replaced by the newspaper *Şafak* (Dawn). Ibrahim Kaypakkaya led a split from TIIKP in 1972 to found the TKP-ML (Communist Party of Turkey—Marxist-Leninist), criticizing Perinçek’s group for, amongst other things, its nationalistic-Kemalist positions and its reactionary standpoint on the national question.

⁷ Mihri Belli was the leader of a fraction of TIP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi—Workers’ Party of Turkey) that advocated for a national democratic revolution achieved through a military coup before proceeding to the socialist revolution. He was with Perinçek at the founding of the journal *Aydınlik*

The National Question

tive forms of nationalism have been developed that must be struggled against and refuted.

Let us consider these theories:

(Enlightenment). After Perinçek's split, the journal became known as *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* (Enlightenment Socialist Journal) and became more and more rabidly anti-Maoist.

2. TO WHOM IS NATIONAL OPPRESSION APPLIED?

According to Safak Revisionism, national oppression applies to *the Kurdish people*. This is to not understand the meaning of national oppression. National oppression is the oppression imposed by the ruling classes of ruling, oppressing and exploiting nations on the downtrodden, dependent subject *nations*. In Turkey national oppression is the oppression applied by the ruling classes of the dominant Turkish nation on *the entire Kurdish nation*, not just the Kurdish people, and also not solely on the Kurdish nation, but on *all minority subject nations*.

People and nation are not the same things. The concept of people today covers the working class, poor and middle peasantry semi-proletarians and the urban petit bourgeoisie. In backward countries, the revolutionary wing of the national bourgeoisie, which takes its place in the democratic popular revolution against imperialism, feudalism and comprador capitalism, is also included in the popular classes. However, the term *nation* includes all classes and strata, including the ruling classes. "*A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.*"⁸ All classes and strata that speak the same language, live in the same territory, and are in the

⁸ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter I

same unity of economic life and psychological formation are included within the scope of the nation. Within these are classes and strata that are enemies of the revolution and counterrevolution, just as there are classes and strata in the ranks of the revolution and whose interests are served by the revolution.

The term people has, in every historical epoch, meant those classes and strata whose interests are served by the revolution and take their place in the ranks of the revolution. The people are not a community that emerges in a particular historical epoch and then disappears, but are a community that exists in every historical age. However, the nation has only emerged along with capitalism "in the age of the rise of capitalism."

At an advanced stage of socialism, the nation will disappear. The meaning of the term people changes at every stage of the revolution, whereas the term nation is not linked to stages of the revolution.

Today Kurdish workers, Kurdish poor and middle peasants, urban semi-proletariat and the urban petit bourgeoisie that will join the ranks of the national democratic revolution are all included in the concept of *Kurdish people*. Apart from these classes and strata, the other sections of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and Kurdish landlords are also included in the concept of *Kurdish nation*. Certain smart aleck well-read persons claim that landlords cannot be part of a nation. They even claim that, since there are landlords in the Kurdish region, the Kurds do not yet constitute a nation. This is a dreadful demagoguery and sophistry.

Don't the landlords speak the same shared language? Don't they live in the same territory? Are they not part of the same unity of economic life and psychological formation? Nations emerge at the *dawn of capitalism*, not when it reaches the ultimate limit of its development. When capitalism enters a country, when it moves into a region to a certain degree and unites the markets in that region, communities that *possess the other characteristics of being a nation* have then become a nation. If this were not the case, we would need to consider that all the stable communities in all backward countries and regions in which capitalist development is limited are not nations. Until the 1940s, a strong feudal division existed in China. According to this rationale, it would have been necessary to have refuted the presence of nations in China during that time. Until the 1917 Revolution, feudalism was powerful in the broad rural regions of Russia. According to this understanding, it would have been necessary to refute the existence of nations in Russia. In Turkey, for instance, during the years of the Liberation War, feudalism was stronger than today. According to this logic, it would be necessary to accept that there were absolutely no nations in Turkey during those years. Today, feudalism exists in economically backward oppressed parts regions and countries of the world, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, to varying degrees. According to this rationale, it would be necessary to refute the existence of nations in these economically backward regions and countries. It is abundantly clear that the

theory that claims that the Kurds do not constitute a nation is nonsense, from beginning to end, contrary to the facts, and harmful in practice. It is harmful on account of the fact that such a theory is only of benefit to the ruling classes of the oppressing, exploiting and dominant nations. They will thus find justification for the national oppression and cruelty that they inflict on oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the privileges and inequality that they provide for themselves. In this way the struggle that the proletariat should wage for the equality of nations, and the ending of national oppression, privileges, etc. will come to naught. Nations' right to self-determination will disappear. The colonization of backward nations by the imperialists and their interference in their internal affairs and blatant disregard for their right to self-determination is legitimized by the argument that "they do not constitute a nation." In the same way, in multinational states, all manner of oppression and tyranny of the dominant nation towards the subject nations is legitimized. Those that claim that the existence of landlords makes it not possible to talk of a nation are acting as mouthpieces for imperialism and dominant nations. Those who claim that the Kurds in Turkey do not constitute a nation are doing the same for the Turkish ruling classes. As we know, the Turkish ruling classes also claim that the Kurds do not constitute a nation. By defending the privileges of the Turkish ruling classes, they are despicably sabotaging the confidence, solidarity and unity of the toiling popular masses belonging to various

nationalities.

A community living in entirely feudal conditions cannot of course be classed as a nation. But in today's world where does such feudalism exist? Capitalism quietly entered the life of oppressed Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, uniting the markets there to a certain degree, achieving common economic life and opening the way to the formation of nations. There are today in very limited areas of certain regions of the world *tribal* communities that have not become nations, but these are so few as to not merit a mention.

To summarize:

It is abundantly clear to all who have not been affected by ferocious Turkish chauvinism that in Turkey the Kurds constitute a nation.⁹ Kurdish workers, poor and medium peasants, semi-proletarians, urban petit bourgeoisie, the entire Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords are included in the scope of the Kurdish nation.

National oppression is not only implemented against *the Kurdish people*, but the entire Kurdish nation, except for a handful of large feudal landlords and a few big bourgeoisie who have entirely coalesced

⁹ This article was written in June 1972 at a time when the fascism of the March 12 Martial Law was at its violent height. Martial law had been officially declared in Diyarbakır and Siirt, but in reality it was implemented in the entire Kurdish region. The Martial Law headquarters in this region was in Diyarbakır.

with the Turkish ruling classes. The Kurdish workers, peasants, urban petit bourgeoisie and small landlords all suffer from national oppression.

The real target of national oppression is the bourgeoisie of the oppressed, dependent and subject nation, for the capitalists and landlords want to own the wealth and markets of the country without rivals. They wish to retain the privilege of founding a state. They want to ensure “linguistic unity,” which is absolutely necessary for the market by banning the other languages. The bourgeoisie and landlords belonging to the oppressed nation are a significant obstacle to these ambitions, for they wish to possess their own market, control it as they wish and exploit its material wealth and the labor of the people.

These are the strong economic factors that have the bourgeoisie and landlords of the two nations at each other’s throats for this reason the bourgeoisie and landlords of the ruling nation engage in ceaseless national oppression, which targets the bourgeoisie and landlords of the oppressed nation.

Today, the fascist martial law authorities have filled Diyarbakir Prison with democratic Kurdish intellectuals and youth who are the spokesmen of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords. Today, small landlords and a section of Kurdish religious figures are in dungeons, or are being sought to be packed into dungeons.

As for the handful of large landlords, their flatterers and the few large bourgeois, they have for a long time been in alliance with the Turkish ruling classes.

All manner of privilege is open to them, as it is to the Turkish ruling classes. The army, gendarme and police are also at their service. Kemal Burkay¹⁰ put it like this:

The feudal lords have abandoned their old claims to sovereignty; they have given up their obstinate insistence on being the sole ruler of certain small kingdoms. Instead, they have established cooperation with the bourgeoisie. In the economic and political spheres, landlords, religious leaders, even sheikhs, are involved in commerce; they work their land with tractors, and they also have the lion's share of bank credit. They are also becoming local councilors, mayors, MPs and ministers. Political parties are at their command. Now, there is not a Sheikh Said¹¹ pursuing the cause of the

¹⁰ Kemal Burkay was a Kurdish politburo member of the TIP. He published several theoretical articles studying the economic situation and history of the Kurdish nation. In 1974, together with other cadres of TIP, he led a split to form an independent Kurdish party called the Kurdistan Socialist Party.

¹¹ Sheikh Said was the leader of the first Kurdish rebellion in the history of the Republic of Turkey in 1925. Most of its fighters were part of a clandestine Kurdish organization called the "Azadi." The propaganda surrounding this rebellion was deeply religious (Sheikh Said calling it a "jihad to protect Islam"), but its goals were fundamentally nationalist, i.e., to establish a free Emirate of Kurdistan and protect

“Emirate of Kurdistan,” but there are “assistant professor sheikhs” who undertake roles such as group spokesman in parliament... Now, there is no Seyit Riza¹² ruling the mountains of Dersim, but there is his grandson who receives significant amounts in commission on the transportation of chrome ore from the same mountains to İskenderun, from there to Italy and then to America. And the eastern feudal remnants now get on very well with the bureaucracy. Since then, they have become accustomed to ties and felt hats.

The points made by Kemal Burkay are correct in regards to the large landlords and a few large bourgeois and the sycophants, but are absolutely not correct in regards to all the “*feudal remnants*” and the entire Kurdish bourgeoisie, as he wishes to indicate. The small landlords and a very large proportion of the Kurdish bourgeoisie suffer the national oppression of the Turkish ruling classes. They also suffer persecution by the large Kurdish feudal leaders. A handful

Kurds from forced assimilation. He was captured and hanged following the defeat of his rebellion.

¹² Seyit Riza was the leader of the 1937-1938 Dersim Rebellion. The rebellion took place in the mountains of Dersim, and was crushed using artillery and aerial bombing with an estimated 80,000 people massacred. This massacre is considered the first genocide of the Republic of Turkey. Like Sheikh Said, he was captured and hanged.

of large landlords get significant tribute from small landlords through coercion and persecution. The reason small landlords and the Kurdish bourgeoisie feel anger towards the large feudal landlords and their hangers on comes down to these two reasons. The reaction displayed by Kemal Burkay is also due to this. Kemal Burkay mentions a homogenous “Eastern people,” aside from the “feudal remnants” integrated with the “Turkish bourgeoisie,” while expertly disguising the fact that it includes the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords. (I mean the entire people apart from backward elements such as landlords, religious figures and collaborationist bourgeoisie.) In this way, the contradiction between the Kurdish proletariat, semi-proletariat, poor and middle peasantry and the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords is ignored. The class objectives of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords are shown as if they are the same as those of the proletarian elements and the poor peasantry.

For now, let us state the following in summary and move on: Kurdish workers, along with semi-proletarians, poor and middle peasants, the urban petit bourgeoisie and the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords are all subjected to national oppression. These classes make up the ranks of the Kurdish national movement. All these classes that unite against national oppression have, naturally, their own aims and goals. We shall point out later which of these we shall support and how far we shall support them.

In claiming that national oppression is only applied to the Kurdish people, the Safak Revisionists fall into one of these two errors: either the term *Kurdish people* is being used correctly and the entire Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords are not included in this, in which case the national oppression being implemented against the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords is being obscured, thereby indirectly approving this oppression, leading to the line of Turkish nationalism or, the whole Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords are being included in the concept of the Kurdish people, in which case the class oppression suffered by the Kurdish people in addition to national oppression is being obscured, the national movement is being portrayed as the same thing as the class movement, and in this way the line of the Kurdish nationalists is being adopted.

Moreover, apart from the Kurdish people there are minority peoples that do not constitute nations and national oppression is applied to them in the form of prohibiting use of their languages, etc. The Safak Revisionists leave this point entirely aside.

3. WHAT IS THE AIM OF NATIONAL OPPRESSION?

According to the Safak Revisionists the aim of national oppression is “to intimidate the Kurdish people.” “The pro-American administrations have embarked on severe injustice and oppression *in order to cow the Kurdish people*” [my emphasis]. Certainly one objective of the pro-American governments is to cow the Kurdish people. In fact, the aim of their oppression is to cow the Turkish people, Kurdish, Armenian, Greek, Arab, Laz, etc. – all the people of Turkey. But is this the aim of national oppression? If this were the case, how could the oppression of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords be explained? What meaning would banning Kurdish have? If this were the case, what difference would there be between the oppression of the Turkish people by the pro-American governments and the oppression of the Kurdish people? The pro-American governments also wish to cow the Turkish people and they engage in severe torture and oppression for this purpose. The martial law tribunals are full of hundreds of revolutionary Turkish workers, peasants and intellectuals. After the events of June 15-16, hundreds of Turkish workers suffered torture at the hands of the police. Turkish peasants who occupied land were beaten to a pulp in police stations. The leaders were thrown in jail. In that instance, the aim of the pro-American government was not to “cow the *Kurdish people*.” This was a policy implemented by all reactionary govern-

ments against all toilers regardless of nationality. Beyond this, “oppression and torture” is carried out against the entire Kurdish nation (except for a handful of large feudal lords), not just the Kurdish people and not just to “intimidate” but to realize a more fundamental objective. What is this objective? This objective, in the most general terms, is to dominate the material wealth of all of the country’s markets without competitors, to gain new privileges, extend existing privileges to their limits and utilize them. For this purpose the bourgeoisie and landlords of the dominant nation, in order to conserve the political borders of the country, expend great efforts to prevent, at any cost, regions where different nationalities live from splitting off from the country. One of the necessary conditions for commerce to develop to the broadest degree is linguistic unity. With this aim in mind the bourgeoisie and landlords of the dominant nation want their language to be spoken in the whole country and even use coercion to force its acceptance. In the words of Comrade Stalin: “Who will dominate the market?” This is the essence of the matter. The slogans “national unity,” “the indivisible unity and integrity of the State, its land and people,” and “territorial integrity” are an expression of the selfish interests of the bourgeoisie and landlords and their desire to dominate “the market” unconditionally.

Comrade Stalin adds:

But matters are usually not confined to the market. The semi-feudal, semi-bour-

geois bureaucracy of the dominant nation intervenes in the struggle with its own methods of “arresting and preventing.” The bourgeoisie – whether big or small – of the dominant nation is able to deal more “swiftly” and “decisively” with its competitor. “Forces” are united and a series of restrictive measures is put into operation against the “alien” bourgeoisie, measures passing into acts of repression. The struggle spreads from the economic sphere to the political sphere. Restriction of freedom of movement, repression of language, restriction of franchise, closing of schools, religious restrictions, and so on, are piled upon the head of the “competitor.” Of course, such measures are designed not only in the interest of the bourgeois classes of the dominant nation, but also in furtherance of the specifically caste aims, so to speak, of the ruling bureaucracy.¹³

The national oppression used by the bourgeoisie and landlords of the dominant nation for the “market” and by the dominant bureaucracy for “caste objectives” go as far as the usurpation of democratic rights and mass slaughter (that is, genocide). There are many examples of genocide in Turkey. The oppression of the toilers of minority peoples in this

¹³ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter II

way acquires a doubled quality. Firstly, there is the *class oppression* utilized against *the toilers* in order to exploit and suppress the class struggle. Secondly, there is the *national oppression* implemented for the above-mentioned objectives against all classes of minority nations and nationalities. Communists have to distinguish between these two forms of oppression, because, for instance, while the Kurdish bourgeois and small landlord oppose the second form of oppression, they support the first. As for us, we are opposed to both forms of oppression. In order for national oppression to be removed we support the struggle of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords, but, on the other hand, we have to struggle with them in order to end class oppression. The Safak Revisionists portray national oppression and class oppression as one and the same. There are two possibilities: either the Safak Revisionists do not include the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords within the concept of the Kurdish people, using this concept correctly, in which case they are reaching a conclusion – by denying the democratic content of the struggle of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords against national oppression – that will be useful to the cause of Turkish nationalism. Or, the Safak Revisionists include, erroneously, the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords within the concept of people, in which case they are ignoring the struggle of the Kurdish workers and other toilers against the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords, thereby assisting the cause of Kurdish nationalism. One of the

two! In both cases, the unity of Turkish and Kurdish toilers is sabotaged and their struggle harmed.

It is of the utmost importance to separate the class oppression inflicted on the Kurdish people from the national oppression perpetrated against the Kurdish nation. As we have laid out above, the character of the two forms of oppression and their aims are different.

4. THE RACIST POLICY OF IMPERIALISM AND THE RACIST POLICY OF THE INDIGENOUS RULING CLASSES

The Safak Revisionists confuse two different things – the racist policy of imperialism, and the racist policy of the indigenous ruling classes – with one another. They talk about “the racist policy of imperialism aiming to create enmity between the peoples of Turkey to crush them.” It is apparent that imperialism wishes to create hostility between the peoples of Turkey and crush them, and that it wants to take advantage of every opportunity to achieve these vile ambitions.

The policy of racism in Turkey is a policy of the indigenous ruling classes, a policy of the most politically reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie and feudalism: the feudal and feudal-bourgeois tendency. Because of its character, the policy of racism is even the enemy of a consistent bourgeois democracy. The most extreme representative of this current in Turkey is the Hitler-clone Türkeş¹⁴ and his Party. The racist policy and support for it also exists substantially in

¹⁴ Alparslan Türkeş was the founder of the neo-fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and of its clandestine armed wing, the Grey Wolves. Since the end of the 60s, the Grey Wolves have led an armed opposition against the growing communist revolutionary movements, assassinating different leftist leaders and leading operations of terror against (among others) the Kurdish, Alevi and Armenian populations.

the AP¹⁵, MGP¹⁶ and CHP¹⁷ and other similar parties. The racist policy is a policy of crushing, subduing and eradicating the other nations and peoples. In Turkey, those who pursue a racist policy towards the Kurdish nation and other minority nationalities are these feudal and feudal-bourgeois classes and

¹⁵ Adalet Partisi (Justice Party), or AP, was the ruling party at the time when Kaypakkaya wrote this document. This party was a reformation of the Democratic Party that was overthrown by a coup in 1960 and was the main opponent to the Kemalist CHP. The Party had some support from the Kurds, not because they were progressive on the Kurdish question, but more because of a historical hatred for CHP, seen as the party that led a bloody repression against the Kurds.

¹⁶ The Millî Güven Partisi (National Reliance Party) was a right wing split of the CHP that disagreed with the progressive transformation of the Party into a social-democratic one. Anti-socialist, the party tried to return to its Kemalist roots. At the time of Kaypakkaya, the Party had a handful of MPs in the parliament. In 1973, it merged with another party to form the “Republican Reliance Party” and supported the Justice Party in elections. It progressively lost its minor popularity and was finally disbanded in 1981.

¹⁷ The Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People’s Party) was a party found in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal “Atatürk,” the so-called “founder of the Republic of Turkey” and its 1st President. In “On Kemalism,” Ibrahim Kaypakkaya described the ideology and regime of Mustafa Kemal as being a “military, fascist dictatorship” that was necessary for the transformation of Turkey from “a colonial, semi-colonial, semi-feudal structure to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal structure.” While CHP’s ideology has always been Kemalist, since the 60s it has been affiliated with the Socialist International and is usually seen as a social-democratic party.

their political parties and governments. Imperialism, when it suits its interests, will encourage and support the racist policy of these classes, and, when it doesn't suit its interests, may oppose it. For instance, US imperialism, which is dominant in Turkey, having bound the Turkish ruling classes to it, has an interest in encouraging and supporting Turkish racism and it carries out this duty (!) willingly and to excess. For example, Soviet social-imperialism is not dominant in Turkey, it opposes Turkish racism, but in Pakistan it unhesitatingly incites racism against Bangladeshis. As for Turkey, if tomorrow the US cannot possess the whole of it, if it is able to break off a piece, there is no guarantee that it will not support a reactionary Kurdish nationalism or racism under its control, in the guise of supporting nations' right to self-determination or the liberation struggle of an oppressed nation.

The racism policy pursued by imperialism itself is something entirely different. The rubbish peddled by the fascist Hitler, claiming the German race was the most superior in the world, created to rule the world, the "great state chauvinism" of US imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism, their belittling of the world's oppressed peoples and nationalities and their shameless interference in their internal affairs, and their interventions – these are the manifestations of the racist policy of imperialism.

The Safak Revisionists have confused things. Who do they want to rescue by concealing the racist policy of the Turkish ruling classes?

Racism is not something brought in from out-

side, but it may be supported from outside. There are classes and layers on which racism relies. When it suits imperialism, it encourages and supports the racist policy of these classes. These classes and layers do not exist just among the Turks, but also certainly among the Kurds. As we mentioned above, let there be no doubt that when it suits it, imperialism will not hesitate to incite and support them. It is for this reason that the struggle to be waged against racism is first and foremost a struggle against these classes and layers, and one of the most important tasks of the proletarian movement is to expose them to the toiling people. Also, in relation to this, to expose the racist policy promoted by imperialism itself: to expose how it has shamelessly instigated and supported racism between various nations, and to spread “the international culture of democracy and the global workers’ movement.”

Therefore, it is not solely the “racist policy of imperialism” that is failing, needs to fail and will entirely fail, but the racist policy of imperialism and indigenous reaction.

The wondrous formulation set out above will only serve to assist domestic racists, and to blunt the awareness of the proletariat...

5. THE CHAMPIONS OF NATIONAL OPPRESSION IN TURKEY AND THEIR ACCOMPLICES

The real champions of national oppression in our country are the large comprador Turkish bourgeoisie and landlord class. US imperialism backs their policies of national oppression and racism and encourages them. But the Turkish medium bourgeoisie is also complicit in this crime of national oppression with more insidious and subtle methods. In the words of Comrade Lenin: “The liberals approach the language question in the same way as they approach all political questions—like hypocritical hucksters, holding out one hand (openly) to democracy and the other (behind their backs) to the feudalists and police.”¹⁸

Look at Dogan Avcioğlu¹⁹, Ecevit²⁰ and all our opportunists! Look at Mihri Belli, H. Kivilcimli²¹.

¹⁸ Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, Chapter I

¹⁹ Doğan Avcioğlu was an MP from CHP. His analysis was that Turkey’s foreign policy had been controlled by the United States from 1947, and that the solution was a national democratic revolution from a “socialist Kemalist” point of view. He participated in the coup attempt of March 1971.

²⁰ Bülent Ecevit was the general secretary of CHP from 1966-1971 and 1972-1980. He oriented the Party on a social-democratic line. He was the prime minister of Turkey several times.

²¹ Dr. Hikmet Kivilcimli was a Central Committee member of the clandestine Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) until its liquidation. He spent over 12 years in jail for his communist ideas. His ideas were similar to those of Mihri

How they fit this definition of Lenin's. While on the one hand they oppose the feudal cudgel of government, saying it is useless, on the other they cannot resist recommending more subtle, polite methods of national oppression. D.Avcioğlu attempted to defend the repression led by a commando that even the rabid, fanatical Turkish chauvinists who have firmly grasped the feudal cudgel have not dared to do, publishing a vile article entitled: "A Commando Officer Gives an Account" (Devrim newspaper). He defends the repression thus:

The soldiers search women. A detector is used in the searching of women. It is not true that everyone apart from the landlord is publicly beaten. The allegations that the people have been made to strip and crawl on the ground en masse are baseless. But people have been made to obey orders to lie down and get up. It is also true that suspects in places where weapons and fugitives have not been handed over have been threatened with being forced to strip, along with their wives, and exposed, which is an effective method. But this has not gone beyond a threat.

In response to the crude chauvinism and vile

Belli: support to the "progressive officers" of the army in view of making a "revolutionary coup." Today, a tiny part of the Turkish left continues to uphold his ideas.

accessory to the crime of D. Avcioglu and others, M. Belli and other similar people raise high the banner of Turkish nationalism (attempting to mask it with Marxism-Leninism) in a more clandestine way (but, again, obvious) and deem this to be “the historic tasks of socialists.”

M. Belli, who even finds a positive aspect in the racist Turanian fascism²² of Türkeş, says the following regarding the Kurdish question:

We have stated for ethnic communities in Turkey, in particular for the Kurds, that we see it is necessary for there to be a centralized, secular, revolutionary republican government education in order for there to be mother tongue and cultural education.... for the fraternity between Turks and Kurds, which has historical roots, *and the national and territorial integrity of Turkey to be sabotaged in whatever way, would result in an outcome contrary to the real interests of both the Turks and the Kurds and consolidate the situation of imperialism in this region of the world.* [my emphasis]

Is this not dominant nation chauvinism? Isn't

²² Turanism is a racist and colonialist ideology claiming that the Turks are the origin of all other nations and the origin of all languages of the world. It advocates for conquest and racial cleansing in favor of the Turks and is upheld by the MHP and the Grey Wolves.

appearing to be in favor of the equality of nationalities while in reality only recognizing the privilege of founding a state to the Turks and removing the Kurds' right to found a state with demagogic bourgeois slogans such as "national unity" and "territorial integrity," advocating the most blatant inequality between nationalities and the privileges of the Turkish bourgeoisie? Socialists are opposed to the smallest privilege for any nation or any inequality. However, in Turkey it has always been the privilege of one nation, the Turkish nation, to establish a nation-state and this is still the case. We, as communists, just as we defend absolutely no privilege whatsoever, also do not defend this privilege. We defend, and continue to defend, with all our might, the right of the Kurdish nation to found a state. We respect absolutely this right we do not support the Turks' privileged position vis-à-vis the Kurds (or other nationalities); we teach the masses to recognize this right without hesitation and to reject the right of founding a State being the privileged monopoly of any single nation. Comrade Lenin says:

If, in our political agitation, we fail to advance and advocate the slogan of the *right* to secession, we shall play into the hands, not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the feudal landlords and the absolutism of the *oppressor* nation.²³

²³ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter IV

Our medium national bourgeoisie and social opportunists, while on the one hand give the impression of being opposed to privileges, on the other insidiously and jealously embrace the existing privileges that are in favor of the Turkish bourgeoisie. These hypocritical merchants, while extending an open hand towards democracy, reach out with their other hand (behind their backs) to reactionaries and police agents, with ferocious and fanatical Turks nationalism and feudal racism abetting their crimes.

In the same way that it is erroneous to suggest that national oppression is only perpetrated on the Kurdish people, it is also incorrect to state that national oppression is only applied by the government of the comprador bourgeoisie and landlords. The Turkish medium bourgeoisie and their representatives of a national character (Dogan Avcioğlu, the İlhan Selçuk²⁴, and Turkish nationalists in general following in their footsteps) and opportunists who are not in the least different (M. Belli, H. Kivilcimli, Aren-Boran²⁵ opportunists and more insidiously the Safak Revisionists) are accomplices to the enactment

²⁴ İlhan Selçuk was a journalist of *Cumhuriyet* (Republic), one of the main Turkish newspapers. He took part in the 1971 coup attempt, supporting the ideas of a national democratic revolution through a military coup.

²⁵ Sadun Aren and Behice Boran were two of the top leaders of TIP. Their faction supported a reformist line of a slow transition to socialism. In the TIP's 1966 congress, they strongly opposed the national democratic revolution faction led by Mihri Belli and Doğu Perinçek and expelled them, making them the majority in TIP.

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of national oppression by the Turkish comprador bourgeoisie and landlords. Without a struggle with the insidious nationalism of these people, without eradicating the traces of this nationalism, reciprocal confidence, unity and solidarity between workers and toilers belonging to various nationalities cannot be achieved.

6. “POPULAR MOVEMENT” AND NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The Safak Revisionists, who claim that national oppression is only applied to the Kurdish people, and that the objective of national oppression is to intimidate the Kurdish people, view the *Kurdish national movement* developing against national oppression as a *popular movement*. [my emphasis] “The *Kurdish people* have raised the flag of struggle against the policy of severe national oppression and assimilation.” “The *Kurdish people’s* struggle for democratic rights, the equality of nationalities and self-determination...” [my emphasis]

However, popular movements and national movements are two entirely different things. A popular movement is the name given to struggles waged in every historical period by oppressed classes against higher classes that oppress them, both for partial demands and in order to overthrow these governing classes. A popular movement is *a class movement of the oppressed masses*. There have been popular movements since the first epochs of history. In the age of imperialism and in our age when “imperialism is headed for wholesale collapse and socialism is moving towards victory throughout the world,” popular movements are uniting with the politically aware leadership of the proletariat and progressing towards the definite liberation of the masses from exploitation and oppression. However, a national movement is firstly based within a historical area with clear boundaries.

As Comrade Lenin indicated, national movements in Western Europe cover a rather clear period, roughly between 1789 and 1871. "It is this period which is the period of national movements and the formation of national states." As for Eastern Europe and Asia, national movements only commenced in 1905.

Secondly, the natural tendency of national movements is towards the formation of national states. Towards the end of the 1789-1871 period, Western Europe had been transformed into a system of established bourgeois states, and these states (except Ireland) as a rule are states with a national integrity (Lenin). The natural tendency of the national movements beginning in Eastern Europe and Asia around 1905 was also towards the formation of national states.

The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey and China, the Balkan wars—such is the chain of world events of *our* period in our "Orient". And only a blind man could fail to see in this chain of events the awakening of a *whole series* of bourgeois-democratic national movements which strive to create nationally independent and nationally uniform states.²⁶

Why is the natural tendency of national movements towards the formation of national states?

²⁶ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter III

Because national movements emerged together with the development of capitalism. And they moved towards meeting the needs of capitalism.

Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speaks a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer.

Therefore, the tendency of every

national movement is towards the formation of national states, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilized world, the national state is typical and normal for the capitalist period.

[...] States of mixed national composition (known as multi-national states, as distinct from national states) are “always those whose internal constitution has for some reason or other remained abnormal or underdeveloped²⁷

Thirdly, “...[I]n its essence it, a national movement, is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is to the advantage and profit mainly of the bourgeoisie.”²⁸

Comrade Stalin also said:

The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, repressed on every hand, is naturally stirred into movement. It appeals to its “native folk” and begins to shout about the “fatherland,” claiming that its own cause is the cause of the nation as a whole. It recruits itself an army from

²⁷ Lenin, *Right to Self-Determination*, Chapter I

²⁸ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter II

among its “countrymen” in the interests of... the “fatherland.” Nor do the “folk” always remain unresponsive to its appeals they rally around its banner: the repression from above affects them too and provokes their discontent. Thus, the national movement begins.

The strength of the national movement is determined by the degree to which the wide strata of the nation, the proletariat and peasantry, participate in it.²⁹

After Comrade Stalin analyzed the conditions under which workers and peasants joined the national movement and after saying, “The class-conscious proletariat has its own tried banner, and has no need to rally to the banner of the bourgeoisie,”³⁰ he continues:

From what has been said it will be clear that the national struggle under the conditions of rising capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves. Sometimes the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing the proletariat into the national movement, and then the national struggle externally assumes a “nationwide” character. But this is

²⁹ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter II

³⁰ *Ibid.*

so only externally. In its essence, it is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is to the advantage and profit mainly of the bourgeoisie.³¹

As Comrade Stalin immediately adds: “But it does not by any means follow that the proletariat should not put up a fight against the policy of national oppression.”³² No, the conclusion to be drawn from this is that a popular movement and a national movement are not the same thing.

If we summarize, a popular movement is a class movement of the oppressed and exploited masses. And in essence it always carries the mark of oppressed masses it exists in every historical period, and today popular movements have moved towards realizing the ultimate liberation of the masses by uniting with the leadership of the class.

National movements emerged in the conditions of a *rising* capitalism. In the West it was during the period between 1789 and 1871, whereas in Eastern Europe and Asia this began after 1905 and in places still continues. National movements always bear the mark of the bourgeoisie and it is the natural tendency of every national movement to establish states with national integrity that best correspond to the needs of capitalism.

The movement today in Kurdistan of Turkey, which is “developing rapidly,” is both a Kurdish

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

national movement led by the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords and also a class movement – that is, a *popular movement* of the oppressed and exploited Kurdish workers and peasants – increasingly showing a predisposition to unite with a communist leadership. The former of these only aims to end the national oppression of the Turkish ruling classes and at the same time seize control of the “internal market” on behalf of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords, while the latter opposes both the exploitation and oppression of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords, and national oppression and the policy of oppressing nationalities. The Safak Revisionists portray these two entirely different movements, as regards to their character and objectives, as one and the same.

7. THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL MOVEMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND ASIA

We have already mentioned the fact that national movements in Eastern Europe and Asia only began around 1905 and that the natural tendency of these movements was towards the formation of national states. The period when national movements began in Eastern Europe and Asia was the period when imperialism was formed, trade took on an international character and when the contradiction between international capital and the international working class became prominent.

Between 1905 and the end of the Second World War, national states (some of them multinational states) were formed in Eastern Europe and Asia and colonies generally took on a supposed independent condition. However, in reality a new form of dependency spread, with semi-colonized countries taking the place of colonies.

The 1917 Great October Socialist Revolution ended the period of old-style revolutions under bourgeois leadership throughout the world, opening the period of new-democratic revolutions under proletarian leadership and the period of socialist revolutions. The bourgeoisie began to fear popular movements all over the world. For this reason, national movements in Eastern Europe and Asia were unable to go beyond changing the colonial structure into a semi-colonial structure, conserving the semi-feudal structure intact. The bourgeoisie and landlord classes

established an alliance and collaboration with imperialism.

At the conclusion of the Second World War, with the success of the neo-democratic revolution in China, the seizure of power by antifascist popular fronts with proletarian leadership in Eastern European countries and their immediate transition from democratic popular dictatorship to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the construction of socialism and the regression of imperialism all led to the bourgeoisie in backward countries becoming even more terrified of revolution.

In this new period, when imperialism is headed for complete collapse and socialism is moving towards victory all over the world the situation of national movements is as follows:

The task of completing the national and democratic revolution in semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries, that is, the task of liquidating completely imperialism and feudalism, is now on the shoulders of the proletarian class movement. The bourgeoisie no longer has the power or ability to carry out these tasks, which are its own historical tasks. Only a wing of the national bourgeoisie, its revolutionary wing, may take its place as an ally in a united popular front under the leadership of the proletariat. And then only constantly limping and faltering. This is the general, widespread and typical situation for our era.

On the other hand, the bourgeoisie of oppressed, dependent, subject nations and a section of landlords in a small number of old colonies and multinational

states are embarking on national movements against national oppression and with the objective of establishing nation states. These national movements in both these colonies and in subject nations are singular occurrences that have been passed down to our era from the previous period, are not widespread and do not characterize our age, but still have to be addressed by Marxist-Leninists. In both these types of nations the natural tendency of national movements is towards the formation of national states. If anything is certain, it is that these national movements possess a progressive and democratic character. But another certainty is that these national movements, whether they conclude in the founding of a separate state or another form, they will not be able to complete the national and democratic revolution. The task of sweeping away and carrying off imperialism and feudalism in these nations will again rest on the shoulders of the class movement of the proletariat. The proletarian movement in both these kinds of nations must know that on the one hand it has the task of completing the national and democratic revolution while, on the other, it must support the progressive and democratic character of the bourgeois national movement.

Turkey is today one of the multinational states. In Turkey, only the Kurds constitute a nation.³³ In this respect, from the point of view of Turkey's communists, the Kurdish question constitutes the essence (not the entirety) of the national question. Now, let

³³. See introduction.

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us take a look at the development of the Kurdish national movement.

8. THE KURDISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT

National movements in Turkey are not new and are not comprised solely of the Kurdish movement. They began before the collapse of the Ottoman society and have continued until the present day. Bulgarians, Greeks, Hungarians, Albanians, Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, Yugoslavs and Romanians rebelled against the dominant nation of the Ottoman state, the Turkish nation, on numerous occasions. History has, apart from the Kurdish movement, concluded the national movements with a certain resolution. Within today's borders of Turkey, the only national movement that has yet to be resolved is the Kurdish movement. In Turkey, the natural tendency of the national movement has always been towards the formation of states with national integrity. Capitalism, which silently entered the life of Eastern Europe and Asia at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, set in motion the national movements in these regions. The other nationalities within the borders of Turkey separated from Turkey, organizing within national (or multinational) states, in accordance with the development of goods production and capitalism, with the exception of the Armenian movement, which suffered mass slaughter and forced exile in 1915 and 1919.

The Treaty of Lausanne divided the Kurds between various states. The imperialists and the new Turkish government fixed the borders by means of haggling, violating the Kurdish nation's right to self-determi-

nation and ignoring its aspirations and wishes.

In this way, the region of Kurdistan was divided between Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

At this juncture let us make another point: it is undoubtedly an injustice that Kurdistan's *right of self-determination was trampled upon* and torn into pieces by the Treaty of Lausanne. And as Comrade Lenin said on another occasion, it is the task of communist parties to protest this injustice constantly and shame all the ruling classes on this subject. However, it would be foolish to include the rectification of such an injustice in the program, for there are many examples of historical injustices that have long since lost their topicality. As long as they are not a "historical injustice, one which still *directly retards* social development and the class struggle"³⁴ communist parties cannot adopt a position that would divert the attention of the working class from fundamental questions by ensuring their rectification. The historical injustice to which we have referred above has long ago lost its topicality: no longer having a character that "directly impedes social development and the class struggle." For this reason, communists cannot be as foolish or lacking in discernment as to demand this rectification. The reason we make this point is the request of a colleague during the discussion of a draft program to put the unification of the Kurdistan region into the program. The communist movement in Turkey is only obliged to resolve in the best, most

³⁴ Lenin, *The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social-Democracy*, Chapter VII

correct manner, the national question within the borders of Turkey. If the communist parties in Iraq and Iran find the best solution to the national question from the point of view of their own countries, then the historical injustice in question will no longer have any worth or significance. For us to include the unification of the whole of Kurdistan would be unsound for this reason: this is not something we shall determine. It is something the Kurdish nation will determine itself. We defend the Kurdish nation's right of self-determination, that is, the right to establish its own separate state. Whether it will exercise the right or in what way we leave to the Kurdish nation *itself*. Since we shall subsequently return to this point, we shall move on.

The Kurdish movement continued within the borders of Turkey established by the Treaty of Lausanne. From time to time there were uprisings. The most significant of these were the 1925 Sheikh Said Rebellion, the 1928 Ararat Rebellion³⁵, the 1930 Zilan Rebellion³⁶ and the 1938 Dersim Rebellion. In

³⁵ The 1928 Ararat Rebellion was a three year-long war in the extreme eastern part of Turkey, located around the Ararat Mount. Led by the Xoybûn Party, it established a provisional Kurdish Republic of Ararat. The rebellion was repressed by Turkey with the collaboration of the British Empire and France.

³⁶ The 1930 Zilan Rebellion or Zilan Massacre was an offensive of the Turkish State that took place in the Zilan Valley during the Ararat Rebellion. The Turkish State's bombardment killed an estimate of 5,000 to 15,000 people on July 12 and 13.

addition to the “national” character of these movements they also had a *feudal* character. Feudal lords that had had self-rule until that time clashed with the central authorities when the government began to threaten that self-rule. This was the main factor impelling the feudal lords to rebel against the central government. The Kurdish bourgeoisie, wishing to dominate “its own” domestic market, united with the feudal lords desiring self-rule against the central authority in the hands of the Turkish ruling classes. As for the reason for the broad participation of the peasant masses in these movements, it was merciless national oppression. As Comrade Stalin pointed out on the policy of national oppression:

It diverts the attention of large strata from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions “common” to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And this creates a favorable soil for lying propaganda about “harmony of interests,” for glossing over the class interests of the proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers.³⁷

All these reasons united the Kurdish feudal lords, young Kurdish bourgeoisie and intellectuals, and Kurdish peasants against the new State’s ruling Turkish bourgeoisie, landlords and ruling bureaucracy.

³⁷ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter II

The Turkish bourgeoisie, the ruling classes of the new State, and the landlords attempted to spread and revive racism in every sphere. They rewrote history from the beginning, inventing a racist, nonsensical theory claiming that all nations came from the Turks. The source of all languages was also Turkish (!). The Sun Language Theory was manufactured in order to prove this. The Turks were the masters (in reality, the “masters” were the Turkish ruling classes). As for the minorities, they were compelled to obey them. It was forbidden to speak any language apart from Turkish. All the democratic rights of the minority nationalities were usurped. All manner of torture and insult towards them were permitted. Demeaning words were used for the Kurds. Efforts were made to create Turkish chauvinism among Turkish workers and peasants, which were broadly successful. Martial law, declared all over the country, was doubly severe in the East. The Kurdish region was declared to be a “military prohibited zone,” etc. It was inevitable that all this would strengthen oppressed nation nationalism as a reaction to dominant nation chauvinism. It was inevitable that Kurdish peasants would be pushed into the ranks of the bourgeoisie and feudal lords of their own nationality. The Kurdish people, a large majority of whom did not even speak Turkish, in particular the Kurdish peasantry, naturally reacted violently to the officials of the new administration, which oppressed and tormented them like a colonial governor. This just reaction of the peasants inevitably combined with the reaction of the feudal Kurdish

landlords and the Kurdish bourgeoisie. The Kurdish rebellions emerged in this way. Communists support the progressive and democratic aspect of these rebellions against tyranny, the policy of oppression of nations, inequality and privilege, but oppose the wish of the feudal landlords for self-rule and the struggle of the bourgeoisie for its own superiority. They do not defend the privilege and superiority of the bourgeois and landlord class of any nation. In those periods the TKP³⁸ followed an erroneous policy; it unconditionally supported the Turkish ruling classes' policy of national oppression. Instead of uniting the strong and just reaction felt by the Kurdish peasantry to the national oppression with proletarian leadership, it attached itself to the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords, thereby inflicting great harm on the unity of the toiling people of both nationalities. This sowed the seeds of the lack of confidence towards the Turkish workers and peasants among Kurdish toilers.

Those who applaud the suppression of the Kurdish rebellions by the new Turkish State and the subsequent massacres as a "progressive," "revolutionary" movement against feudalism are, pure and simple, incorrigible dominant nation nationalists. This sort of person ignores the fact that the new Turkish State

³⁸ *Türkiye Komünist Partisi*—Communist Party of Turkey was the first communist party found at the time of the Turkish War of Independence in 1920. In 1921, its leader Mustafa Suphi was assassinated together with 14 of its main leaders. The Party was banned in 1922 and continued to exist in clandestinity, but it has never become a big party.

did not only attack the feudal Kurdish chieftains but also the entire Kurdish people, women, children and men, massacring tens of thousands of villagers. They forget that the new Turkish State was friendly towards the feudal chieftains who did not oppose it, supporting and strengthening them. They ignore the significant difference between the factors that compelled the Kurdish peasantry to rise up and the reason that compelled the Kurdish feudal chieftains to rise up. Also, there are so-called “communists” who attempt to defend the policy of national oppression of the Turkish ruling classes based on the allegation that the British were behind the Sheikh Said rebellion. We shall not discuss here whether British imperialism was behind the Sheikh Said uprising. We shall discuss whether the policy of national oppression may be defended on the basis of such an allegation. Let us suppose that the hand of British imperialism was behind the Sheikh Said rebellion. In these circumstances, what should the attitude of a communist movement be? Firstly, to oppose absolutely the Turkish ruling classes’ policy of suppressing and crushing the Kurdish national movement, to actively struggle against this, and to demand that the Kurdish nation itself determine its destiny. That is, to demand that the Kurdish nation decide whether to establish a separate state. In practice, this means a referendum being held in the Kurdish region, without external intervention, with the Kurdish nation itself deciding, in this or in a similar way, whether or not to secede. A communist movement would firstly

have struggled for the withdrawal of all military units sent to suppress the Kurdish movement; the absolute prevention of all manner of intervention; the Kurdish nation making its own decision about its future; and the exposure of the Turkish ruling classes' policy of suppression, persecution and intervention – and would have actively fought against it. Secondly, it would have exposed British imperialism's policy of pitting nationalities against each other and how this harms the unity of toilers from all nations, and actively fought the British imperialist policy of intervention in internal affairs. Thirdly, it would have evaluated the secession of the Kurdish nation "as a whole from the standpoint of the interests of the proletariat's class struggle for social development and socialism" and reached a decision to support or not support secession. If it found not separating appropriate for the class interests of the proletariat, it would have propagandized for this among Kurdish workers and peasants in particular, Kurdish communists would have propagandized for unity among its own people and waged a struggle against those endeavoring to reconcile the struggle against national oppression with that of strengthening the position of landlords, mullahs, sheikhs, etc. In spite of this, if the Kurdish nation decided to secede, Turkish communists would have accepted it and definitely struggled against tendencies opposing the desire to secede. As for Kurdish communists, they would have continued to campaign for *unification* among Kurdish workers and toilers, struggled against imperialist intervention

and struggled with the Kurdish feudal lords, sheikhs and mullahs and the nationalist aims of the bourgeoisie.

If the communist movement decided the secession of the Kurdish nation was beneficial in regards the class interests of the proletariat, for instance, if the possibility of revolution in the Kurdish region was to increase in the event of secession, in that case it would have defended secession. It would have campaigned for secession both among Turkish workers and toilers and among Kurdish workers and toilers. In both these cases, warm and sincere ties would have been established between Turkish workers and toilers and Kurdish workers and toilers. The Kurdish people would have nourished great confidence and feelings of friendship towards the Turkish people and communists. The unity of peoples would have been firmer and the success of the revolution would have been easier to facilitate.

Let us reiterate: those who endeavor to portray the Turkish government's trampling on the Kurdish nation's right of self-determination and carrying out massacres etc. as just and progressive by alleging that British imperialism was involved in the Sheikh Said movement are incorrigible Turkish chauvinists. It is instructive that Metin Toker³⁹, who is today the vilest

³⁹ Metin Toker was a journalist who published a newspaper called *Akis* (Echo). He wrote a book on the Sheikh Rebellion, characterizing it as a conservative and Sunni fanatical movement opposed to the "democratic" and "secularist" reforms of Mustafa Kemal.

defender (and un-appointed advisor) of the gang of pro-American fascist generals, clings to the attribution of “British imperialist involvement” in order to justify the massacres inflicted during that period on the Kurdish nation. It is again instructive that Dogan Avcioglu, who attempts to blatantly defend cruelty of the commando officer that even fascist governments do not have the courage to defend openly, clings to the same allegation. A nation’s right to self-determination cannot be restricted or taken away on account of an allegation that it is, or may become, a tool of imperialism. On the basis of such an allegation, a nation’s “oppression and mistreatment” cannot be defended. Besides, during the period in question, the Turkish government was collaborating with the British and French imperialists. The fundamental watchword of the proletariat regarding the national question is the same in all circumstances:

Not a single privilege for any nation or any language! Not the slightest oppression of or unfairness to national minorities!⁴⁰

⁴⁰ This quotation of Lenin, is not present in his *Collected Works*. In *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, the following sentence can be found that is similar: “[...] no privileges for any one nation or any one language [...] any measure introducing any privilege [...] against the equality of nations or the rights of a national minority, shall be declared illegal.”.

The national oppression of the Turkish ruling classes has continued to the present day. In parallel, the Kurdish national movement has also persisted, with one exception: a section of Kurdish feudal lords has joined the ranks of the Turkish ruling classes. A very small number of Kurdish large bourgeois has also joined the ranks of the Turkish ruling classes. The Kurdish bourgeoisie has strengthened considerably, and the feudal influence on the Kurdish national movement has weakened proportionately. Today the strengthened Kurdish bourgeoisie, intellectuals who have adopted their ideology, and small landlords lead the Kurdish national movement. Despite this, Kurdish workers and peasants are also proportionately less under the influence of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords than in the past. Marxist-Leninist ideas have begun to take root among Kurdish workers, impoverished peasants and intellectuals and are spreading rapidly. Under these conditions, what should the attitude of Turkish communists be to the Kurdish national movement? Now we are moving on to this point and we shall exhibit the erroneous line of the Safak Revisionists, which damages the unity of peoples.

9. THE DEMOCRATIC CONTENT OF THE KURDISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The Kurdish national movement possesses a general democratic content, as one aspect of it opposes the coercion, tyranny, privileges and selfish interests of the ruling classes of the oppressor nation. The removal of national oppression, the securing of equality between nationalities, the removal of the privileges of the ruling classes of the dominant nation, the ending of bans and restrictions on language, equality between nations in every sphere and the recognition of equality in the right to establish a nation-state are all democratic and progressive demands.

Comrade Stalin said:

Restriction of freedom of movement, disfranchisement, repression of language, closing of schools, and other forms of persecution affect the workers no less, if not more, than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations. One cannot speak seriously of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed

down.⁴¹

Let us again recall Comrade Stalin's writings:

But the policy of nationalist persecution is dangerous to the cause of the proletariat also on another account. It diverts the attention of large strata from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions "common" to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And this creates a favorable soil for lying propaganda about "harmony of interests," for glossing over the class interests of the proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers. This creates a serious obstacle to the cause of uniting the workers of all nationalities.⁴²

The policy of national oppression does not even stop with crushing dependent nations, but also in many instances turns into a policy of pitting nations one against the other. In this way, the seeds of enmity are sown among toilers of various nationalities. The ruling classes of dominant nations that "divide" workers and toilers in this way find it easier to rule.

The national movement of the oppressed nation, since one aspect of it is directed towards the policy of

⁴¹ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter II

⁴² Ibid.

national oppression of the dominant nation, serves to secure unity between workers and toilers of various nationalities, the free development of the moral strength of the workers and toilers of the oppressed nation and the removal of obstacles preventing this.

Comrade Lenin says the following:

The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support. At the same time, we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness.⁴³

But in no national movement do the demands of that nation's bourgeoisie and landlords stop at the removal of national oppression and the equality of nationalities. Now let us go to the next point.

⁴³ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter IV

10. WITHIN THE KURDISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT, THE “POSITIVE” ACTION OF THE BOURGEOISIE AND SMALL LANDLORDS AIMING TO STRENGTHEN NATIONALISM

In general in every national movement, and in particular in the Kurdish national movement, the fundamental objective of the bourgeoisie is to secure its own superiority: to dominate the market, to monopolize the mineral wealth in its region, etc., to secure privilege and inequality for its own benefit and to guarantee its own national development. The bourgeoisie and – to the degree they participate in the national movement – the landlords, demand privilege and inequality for their own benefit. They wish to usurp the democratic rights of other nations to their advantage. They wish to implement national oppression towards those who are weaker than themselves. They wish to separate the proletarians of nations from one another with national fences and to ensure that their own proletarians and other toilers unconditionally support their nationalistic aims. They want to replace the democratic international culture of the proletariat with their own national culture, to develop this national culture (that is, the dominant bourgeois culture), to nourish the proletariat and toilers with this culture, and by so doing make them unconditional supporters of their own class ambitions. The bourgeoisie and landlords resist the historical tendency for nationalities to coalesce

and separate from forced assimilation. They resist this natural assimilation and natural disappearance of national differences they resist the unification of proletarians from every nationality in the state in the same organizations, wishing to separate them according to their nationalities and to unite their own proletarians in “national organizations” instead of class organizations in order to further their own class ambitions.

Today it is impossible to fail to notice, alongside the general democratic character within the Kurdish national movement, reactionary ambitions aiming to strengthen nationalism similar to that above. These ambitions are those of the bourgeoisie and the landlords leading the Kurdish national movement.

The Safak Revisionists have entirely put aside the “positive” action of the bourgeoisie and landlords within the Kurdish national movement aiming to strengthen nationalism. According to the Safak Revisionists, the movement developing in Turkey Kurdistan is not a national movement with its progressive and reactionary aspects, but an entirely *popular movement* against a *policy of national oppression and assimilation for democratic rights, the equality of nationalities and their self-determination* (!). Thus, the Safak Revisionists support the nationalist and anti-proletarian ambitions and efforts of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords, sabotaging the unity of the two peoples by joining the Kurdish proletariat and toilers with the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords. The Turkish nationalist line of Safak Revisionism has

become reconciled with Kurdish nationalism.

To sum up, as in all national movements, the Kurdish national movement has two aspects.

The first is its general democratic content, opposing the national oppression, privileges, a monopoly on establishing a State, and repression and persecution of the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords.

Second, the reactionary content aims to strengthen Kurdish nationalism and thus to realize the dominance and privileges of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords.

11. WHAT SHOULD THE ATTITUDE OF THE CLASS-CONSCIOUS PROLETARIAT OF TURKEY BE TO THE KURDISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT?

Firstly, let us point out that the conscious proletariat of Turkey, regardless of nationality, will not take its place under the standard of bourgeois nationalism. Again, in the words of Comrade Stalin:

The class-conscious proletariat has its own tried banner and has no need to rally to the banner of the bourgeoisie.⁴⁴

Secondly, the conscious proletariat of Turkey regardless of nationality, will endeavor to gather the workers and peasant masses around its own flag and will lead the class struggle of all toiling classes. Taking the Turkish State as a basis, it will unite the workers and toilers from all nations in Turkey in joint class organizations.

Thirdly, the conscious proletariat of Turkey, regardless of nationality, will unconditionally support the Kurdish national movement's opposition to the oppression, persecution and privileges of the Turkish ruling classes and general democratic content aiming to remove national oppression and for the equality of nations. It will also definitely and unconditionally support similar movements of other oppressed nationalities.

⁴⁴ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter II

Fourthly, the conscious proletariat of Turkey, regardless of nationality, will remain completely impartial in regards to the bourgeoisie and landlords of various nationalities waging a struggle for their own dominance and privileges. The conscious proletariat of Turkey will never support the tendency within the Kurdish national movement aiming to strengthen Kurdish nationalism and will never assist bourgeois nationalism; it will definitely not support the struggle of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords for their own dominance and privileges. That is, it will only support the general democratic content within the Kurdish national movement and not go beyond that.

I hope that, in order to get a better grasp of the question, the readers will put up with us quoting at length from Comrade Lenin:

The principle of nationality is historically inevitable in bourgeois society and, taking this society into due account, the Marxist fully recognizes the historical legitimacy of national movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apologia of nationalism, it *must be strictly limited to what is progressive* in such movements, in order that this recognition may not lead to bourgeois ideology obscuring proletarian consciousness. [my emphasis]

The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy, and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation, are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxist's bound duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. *This task is largely a negative one.* But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the "positive" activity of *the bourgeoisie* striving to fortify nationalism. [my emphasis]

To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression, end all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle, which is obscured and hampered by bickering on the national question. But to go beyond these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie. There is a borderline here, which is often very slight and of which the Bundists and Ukrainian nationalist-socialists completely lose sight.

Combat all national oppression? Yes, of course! Fight for any kind of national development, for “national culture” in general? Of course not.

The development of nationality in general is the principle of bourgeois nationalism. Hence the exclusiveness of bourgeois nationalism, hence the endless national bickering. [my emphasis] The proletariat, however, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation, on the contrary, warns the masses against such illusions, stands for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege. [my emphasis]

The... proletariat cannot support any consecration of nationalism on the contrary, it supports everything that helps to obliterate national distinctions and remove national barriers it supports everything that makes the ties between nationalities closer and closer, or tends to merge nations. To act differently means siding with reactionary nationalist philistinism.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, Chapter IV

Comrade Lenin continues:

The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. Theoretically, you cannot say in advance whether the bourgeois-democratic revolution will end in a given nation seceding from another nation, or in its equality with the latter in either case, the important thing for the proletariat is to ensure the development of its class. For the bourgeoisie it is important to hamper this development by pushing the aims of its “own” nation before those of the proletariat. That is why the proletariat confines itself so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the right to self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give anything at the expense of another nation.

This may not be “practical,” but it is in effect the best guarantee for the achievement of the most democratic of all possible solutions. The proletariat needs only such guarantees, whereas the bourgeoisie of every nation requires guaran-

tees for its own interest, regardless of the position of (or the possible disadvantages to) other nations.⁴⁶

Comrade Lenin continues:

On the plea that its demands are “practical,” the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations will call upon the proletariat to support its aspirations unconditionally...

The proletariat is opposed to such practicality. While recognizing equality and equal rights to a national state, it values above all and places foremost the alliance of the proletarians of all nations, and assesses any national demand, any national separation, from the angle of the workers’ class struggle.

To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the principles of the two trends. Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, in favor, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But inso-

⁴⁶ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter IV

far as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation.

If, in our political agitation, we fail to advance and advocate the slogan of the right to secession, we shall play into the hands, not only of the bourgeoisie but also of the feudal landlords and the absolutism of the oppressor nation...

The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness...

We are fighting on the ground of a definite state we unite the workers of all nations living in this state we cannot vouch for any particular path of national development, for we are marching to our class goal along all possible paths.

However, we cannot move towards that goal unless we combat all nationalism and uphold the equality of the various nations.

...Propaganda against all state and national privileges, and for the right, the equal right of all nations, to their national state. This (at present) is our principal task in the national question, for only in this way can we defend the interests of democracy and the alliance of all proletarians of all nations on an equal footing.

...The interests of the working class and of its struggle against capitalism demand complete solidarity and the closest unity of the workers of all nations they demand resistance to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie of every nationality. Hence, Social Democrats would be deviating from proletarian policy and subordinating the workers to the policy of the bourgeoisie if they were to repudiate the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of an oppressed nation to secede, or if they were to support all the national demands of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations. It makes no difference to the hired worker whether he is

exploited chiefly by the Great Russian bourgeoisie rather than the non-Russian bourgeoisie, or by the Polish bourgeoisie rather than the Jewish bourgeoisie, etc. The hired worker who has come to understand his class interests is equally indifferent to the state privileges of the Great Russian capitalists and to the promises of the Polish or Ukrainian capitalists to set up an earthly paradise when they obtain state privileges.⁴⁷

In any case the hired worker will be an object of exploitation. Successful struggle against exploitation requires that the proletariat be free of nationalism, and be absolutely neutral, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its “own” national bourgeoisie, that will inevitably cause distrust among the proletariat of another nation it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter V

Let us reiterate:

The Kurdish national movement, as the struggle of an oppressed nation against the ruling classes of a dominant nation is progressive and has a democratic content. We unconditionally support this democratic content. We struggle in a decisive and relentless way against all manner of privilege and inequality that benefits the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords (including the privileged right to establish a state). We also unconditionally support the Kurdish national movement's demands in this regard.

But we also struggle against the reactionary and nationalist ambitions of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords. While fighting against the inequalities and privileges that favor the Turkish ruling classes and the national oppression and persecution targeting national minorities, if a struggle is not waged with the nationalist ambitions of the bourgeoisie and landlords, in this case another nationalism – Kurdish nationalism – will be consolidated, and the class-consciousness of the Kurdish proletariat will be blunted by bourgeois nationalism.

Kurdish workers and peasants will be pushed into the embrace of nationalism, and the unity and solidarity between Kurdish and Turkish workers and peasants will be sabotaged.

The Safak Revisionists, by presenting the Kurdish national movement, which has different elements within it, as a homogenous “Kurdish people's” movement, by portraying this movement as a whole and entirely *progressive*, and by not indicating until what

point and from which aspects it is progressive, and after which points and from which aspects the reactionary ambitions of the bourgeoisie and landlords begin (more correctly, by not differentiating between them), it reaches the above conclusion that benefits the landlords and bourgeoisie. Thus, it is making concessions to the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords to the detriment, in general, of the proletariat of Turkey and, in particular, to the Kurdish proletariat! We are curious as to what the Safak Revisionists will do in the future when the “positive action” of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords makes itself felt more strongly. But it is clear today what they will do! They will unconditionally join the ranks of the Turkish nationalists.

Let us stress this point: Communists always differentiate absolutely between the nationalism of an oppressed nation and that of a dominant nation, between the nationalism of a small nation and that of a large nation.

On this subject Comrade Lenin says:

In respect of the second kind of nationalism we, nationals of a big nation, have nearly always been guilty, in historic practice, of an infinite number of cases of violence furthermore, we commit violence and insult an infinite number of times without noticing it...

That is why internationalism on the

part of oppressors or “great” nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only of the observance of the formal equality of nations but even of an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petit bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view.⁴⁹

Comrade Lenin continues:

For nothing holds up the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice “offended” nationals are not sensitive to anything so much as to the feeling of equality and the violation of this equality, if only through negligence or jest – to the violation of that equality by their proletarian comrades. That is why in this case it is better to overdo rather than underdo the concessions and leni-

⁴⁹ Lenin, *The Question of Nationalities or “Autonomisation”*,
Continuation of the notes December 31, 1922

ency towards the national minorities.⁵⁰

Is what the Safak Revisionists are doing that which is advocated by Comrade Lenin? No, never! The Safak Revisionists are today basically following a Turkish nationalist line, defending the privileges of the Turkish ruling classes. As we shall see, they are trampling upon the Kurdish nation's right of self-determination in a cowardly way and with a lot of demagogy, choosing representatives of Turkish chauvinism as their standard bearers. What they are doing is something that is entirely different from that advocated by Comrade Lenin. On the one hand they follow a dominant nation nationalist line, on the other they are erasing the line between Kurdish workers and toilers and the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords, taking a place with the standpoint of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords. This is not going to the extreme in making concessions and behaving tolerantly towards national minorities against dominant nation nationalism; it is supporting the nationalist ambitions of the exploiting classes of the minority nation in regards to the dominant nation nationalists against the workers and toilers of the minority nation.

Another point: The Safak Revisionists state that the "*Kurdish people*" are struggling "against the policy of severe national oppression and assimilation, for democratic rights, the equality of nationalities and

⁵⁰ Lenin, *The Question of Nationalities or "Autonomisation"*, *Continuation of the notes* December 31, 1922

for self-determination.”

For the Kurdish people to struggle for self-determination means the Kurdish people are struggling to establish a democratic popular administration by overthrowing the ruling classes, for the *people* can only determine their own future by carrying out a revolution. To state that the Kurdish people are struggling for a revolution in an article dealing with the national question really necessitates a nimble brain (!). If the Kurdish nation is being alluded to then what the Safak Revisionists are saying is: the Kurdish nation is waging a struggle for *secession*. For in today's conditions of forced unity, the Kurdish people struggling for self-determination (take note, it is not the right for self-determination) only implies a struggle for secession.

We have stated before that the general tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of states with national integrity, that these states best meet the needs of material production and the needs of capitalism, and that the most powerful economic factors work in this way. The general tendency of the Kurdish national movement, too, is certainly towards the establishment of a state with national integrity. But the general tendency is one thing, and the concrete demands formalized by a national movement are another. Concrete demands do not disregard this general tendency, and every national movement will opt for this general tendency – that is, establishing a separate state as a concrete goal. There are numerous factors that influence this situation. Power relations

at the state level and on the international level, the interests of the bourgeoisie and landlords of different nationalities within the country, the character of national oppression, tactical concerns, etc. All these factors determine the concrete objectives formulated by a national movement. For this reason while the general tendency of national movements is towards the formation of states with national integrity, the concrete demands formulated by national movements vary greatly.

Let us listen to Comrade Stalin:

The content of the national movement, of course, cannot everywhere be the same: it is wholly determined by the diverse demands made by the movement. In Ireland the movement bears an agrarian character in Bohemia it bears a “language” character in one place the demand is for civil equality and religious freedom, in another for the nation’s “own” officials, or its own Diet.⁵¹

The Kurdish national movement in Turkey has yet to openly formulate a demand for *secession*. The demands that the Kurdish national movement have formulated today are freedom for the reading, writing and speaking of Kurdish, radio broadcasts in Kurdish, the removal of obstacles that prevent the free dissemination of “national culture” (in reality

⁵¹ Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Chapter II

the culture of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords), an end to the policy of assimilation, schools offering instruction in Kurdish, the recognition of the right to self-determination, etc. The various reasons we have cited above prevent the Kurdish national movement openly formulating a demand for secession. To state that not the Kurdish people, but the “Kurdish nation is (struggling) for self-determination,” is for this reason, at least for the present, incorrect. While saying this we are not ignoring the strong desire to secede that exists among the Kurdish bourgeoisie and small landlords. However, we are saying that this wish has not reached the stage of becoming an open demand of the national movement. Today, for instance, the national movement in Northern Ireland has openly formulated a demand for secession. And in the past the Kurdish national movement emerged with a demand for secession, etc. Because today the Kurdish national movement has not openly formulated secession does not mean it will not do so in the future. But various forms of reconciliation between the bourgeoisie and landlords of the two nations are possible. Let us not forget that. In Iraq, the Barzani movement⁵² has been content to

⁵² The Barzani Movement refers to an armed uprising led by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Iraqi Kurdistan. Between 1963 and 1975, it controlled a de facto autonomous zone in the northern part of Iraq. Following the Iraq War, during which the KDP forces joined in a coalition with the United States, Iraqi Kurdistan has been officially declared an autonomous region of Iraq.

accept partial autonomy. Moreover, while one wing of the Kurdish national movement advocates secession, another wing may oppose it. For these reasons let us not jump the gun.

12. LET US NOT DENY THE INFLUENCE OF DOMINANT NATION NATIONALISM ON TURKISH WORKERS AND PEASANTS

The Safak Revisionists say that “*all Turkey’s workers and peasants support the Kurdish people’s (!) struggle [against the policy of national oppression and assimilation, struggle for democratic rights, equality of nationalities and self-determination].*” [my emphasis]

The concrete reality here has been sacrificed to fancy phrases. First, let us correct this mistake: Apart from all Turkey’s workers and peasants, *even Turkey’s class-conscious proletariat* will not unconditionally support the struggle “for self-determination.” It will only support secession in a concrete situation when it is appropriate to the interests of the struggle waged by the proletariat for socialism. If it is not, then it will respect the Kurdish nation’s desire for secession and accept it, but will not actively support it. We shall return to this point later.

On the other hand, we cannot claim that “all the workers and peasants of Turkey” support today all the most just and progressive demands of the Kurdish nation. This is merely something that is desired, but is, unfortunately, not true. The consciousness of Turkish workers and peasants has been extensively and negatively affected by the nationalist ideology of the Turkish ruling classes. Dominant nation nationalism has even negatively influenced the views of the most progressive proletarian elements, let alone

the peasantry. That is, it is a specific task of Turkish communists to dismantle Turkish nationalism and to cleanse the workers and peasants of all manner of the remnants of bourgeois nationalism. All determinations that lead to neglect or underestimation of the importance of this task are only harmful from the standpoint of the class struggle. What Comrade Lenin said for Russia has the same validity for us:

Even now, and probably for a fairly long time to come, proletarian democracy must reckon with the nationalism of the Great Russian peasants (not with the object of making concessions to it, but in order to combat it).⁵³

The Safak Revisionists do not this reality into account and cause the communist movement to forget its task of waging a struggle with Turkish nationalism.

⁵³ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter X

13. A PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, A NATION'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

The Safak Revisionists have distorted the most fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism regarding the national question and rendered them incomprehensible. They have distorted the tenet of “nations’ right of self-determination” into a “people’s right of self-determination.” These are two entirely different things. Firstly, a people’s overthrowing of the reactionary classes in power, seizing authority and dominating the State, means, in short, to carry out a revolution, whereas the latter means for a nation to have the right to establish a separate state. The Safak Revisionists are declaring that they recognize the Kurdish people’s right to carry out a revolution (!). Bravo.

What is instructive is that the formulation of a people’s right to self-determination was advocated at one time by Bukharin against Comrade Lenin and criticized for this by Comrade Lenin. Let us read Comrade Lenin’s response to Bukharin:

I have to say the same thing about the *national question*. [my emphasis] Here, too, the wish is father to the thought with Comrade Bukharin. He says that we must not recognize the right of nations to self-determination. A nation means the bourgeoisie together with the

proletariat. And are we, the proletarians, to recognize the right to self-determination of the despised bourgeoisie? That is absolutely incompatible! Pardon me, it is compatible with what actually exists. *If you eliminate this, the result will be sheer fantasy.* [my emphasis]

...I want to recognize only the right of the working classes to self-determination,” says Comrade Bukharin. That is to say, you want to recognize something that has not been achieved in a single country except Russia. That is ridiculous.⁵⁴

Today in Turkey the Safak Revisionists, “insistently,” in their own words, defending the “Kurdish people’s right of self-determination,” are not only being ridiculous, they are also the most expert theoreticians of a fearsome dominant nation nationalism. Today in Turkey, the right to establish a state is a privilege of the dominant Turkish nation. The Kurdish nation’s right to establish a separate state has been usurped. Communists defend absolutely no national privileges. They advocate absolute equality between nations. Certainly they are aware that under the conditions of capitalism absolute equality between nations cannot occur, but they advocate it despite this, even if it is only hypothetical. They

⁵⁴ Lenin, *On the Program of the Party*

oppose all manner of national privilege and inequality in order to secure the unity of workers and toilers from various nationalities and come out in support of the broadest, most progressive and most coherent democracy possible. What are the Safak Revisionists doing? They remove the Kurdish nation's right to establish a state by granting (!) the Kurdish people the right to carry out a revolution. They are insidiously and viciously defending the dominant Turkish nation's privilege to establish a state. This is what is "terrifying" in addition to being "absurd."

14. “A NATIONS’ RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION” MEANS NOTHING LESS THAN THE RIGHT TO ESTABLISH A SEPARATE STATE

The Safak Revisionists, by saying self-determination and, if it wishes, the “right to establish a separate state” see the “right of self-determination” as something different than the “right to establish a separate state.” The above expression would only be correct in the following form: “...the right of self-determination, that is the right to establish a separate state...” For the right of self-determination is, in essence, the right to establish a separate state.

Comrade Lenin stated on numerous occasions that the right of self-determination was nothing less than the right to establish a separate state:

The question of the self-determination of nations over their political fate, i.e., that they become completely free and have the democratic right to separate and found an independent state⁵⁵

Consequently, if we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of nations, not by juggling with legal defi-

⁵⁵ This quote attributed to Lenin and is sourced as coming from *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, page 12. We have neither found it at this place, or in the whole Complete Works of Lenin. The german translation of Trotz Alledem have also not been able to locate the source of this quotation.

nitions, or “inventing” abstract definitions, but by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must *inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.* [my emphasis]

Later on we shall see still other reasons why *it would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning anything but the right to existence as a separate state.* [my emphasis]

...self-determination of nations” in the Marxists’ Programme cannot, from a historico-economic point of view, *have any other meaning* than political self-determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state. [my emphasis]⁵⁶

...Self-determination of nations has been understood to mean precisely political self-determination, the right to form an independent national state...

⁵⁶ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter I

To accuse *those who support freedom of self-determination, i.e., freedom to secede, of encouraging separatism*, is as foolish and hypocritical as accusing those who advocate freedom of divorce of encouraging the destruction of family ties. [my emphasis] Just as in bourgeois society, the defenders of privilege and corruption, on which bourgeois marriage rests, oppose freedom of divorce, so, in the capitalist state, repudiation of *the right to self-determination, i.e., the right of nations to secede*, means nothing more than defense of the privileges of the dominant nation and police methods of administration, to the detriment of democratic methods. [my emphasis]

Social Democrats would be deviating from proletarian policy and subordinating the workers to the policy of the bourgeoisie if they were to repudiate *the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of an oppressed nation to secede...*⁵⁷

Let us state first of all that however meager the Russian Social Democratic literature on the *'right of nations to self-de-*

⁵⁷ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter V

termination' may be, it nevertheless shows clearly that this right has always been understood to mean the right to secession. [my emphasis]

The reader will see that at the Second Congress of the Party, which adopted the program, it was unanimously understood *that self-determination meant "only" the right to secession.* [my emphasis]⁵⁸

As far as the theory of Marxism in general is concerned, the question of the right to self-determination presents no difficulty. No one can seriously question the London resolution of 1896, or the fact that *self-determination implies only the right to secede...* [my emphasis]

...To combat nationalism of every kind, above all. Great Russian nationalism to recognize, not only fully equal rights, for all nations in general, but also *equality of rights as regards policy, i.e., the right of nations to self-determination, to secession...* [my emphasis]

This article had been set up when I

⁵⁸ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter IX

received No. 3 of *Nasha Rabochaya Gazeta*, in which Mr. VI. Kosovsky writes the following about the recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination: “Taken mechanically from the resolution of the First Congress of the Party (1898), which in turn had borrowed it from the decisions of international socialist congresses, it was given, as is evident from the debate, the same meaning at the 1903 Congress as was ascribed to it by the Socialist International, *i.e., political self-determination, the self-determination of nations in the field of political independence. Thus the formula: national self-determination, which implies the right to territorial separation, does not in any way affect the question of how national relations within a given state organism should be regulated for nationalities that cannot or have no desire to leave the existing state.* [my emphasis]

It is evident from this that Mr. VI. Kosovsky has seen the minutes of the Second Congress of 1903 and understands perfectly well *the real (and only) meaning of the term self-determination.* [my emphasis]⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter

What is the meaning of continuing to put concepts in confusion, despite these indisputably clear statements of Lenin? Rendering Marxist literature incomprehensible and messing it up requires great talent!

On the one hand, a nation's right of self-determination is being turned into a people's right of self-determination in the twinkle of an eye (we have seen that a people's self-determination means nothing apart from a people carrying out a revolution, for a people gaining the right to establish a separate state is only possible through overthrowing reactionaries). On the other hand the right of self-determination is deemed to be something apart from the right to establish a separate state.

If we apply the real meaning of the Safak Revisionists' concepts, they are saying the following:

“Our movement declares that it recognizes the Kurdish people's right to (revolution) and, if it wishes, to establish a separate state!”

Thus we have the wonderful solution (!) a Marxist-Leninist movement has brought to the national question. It is clear that this solution (!) means nothing less than defending the dominant Turkish nation's existing privilege to establish a state.

15. SELF-DETERMINATION; RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

“Self-determination” and the “right of self-determination” are different things. “Self-determination” means *secession, to establish a separate state*. However, “the right of self-determination” means, as we have indicated above, the right of secession, *the right to establish a separate state*. What communists defend in all circumstances unconditionally is the “right of self-determination,” that is, the right to establish a separate state. “The right to self-determination” should never be confused with “self-determination,” or, in other words, “the right to establish a separate state” with “establishing a separate state.” Communists in all circumstances defend the former while they defend the latter dependent on conditions. Although, communists uphold the first under all circumstances, the communist movement, in Comrade Lenin’s words, “must decide the latter question exclusively on its merits in each particular case in conformity with the interests of social development as a whole and with the interests of the proletarian class struggle for socialism.”⁶⁰ Comrade Lenin compares “nations’ right of self-determination” to the right of divorce. While the right of divorce is unconditionally defended in all circumstances, a personal question of divorce, as is known, is defended in certain condi-

⁶⁰ Lenin, *Resolutions of the Summer, Resolution on the National Question*

tions, while in others it isn't. In the same way that a family union is a forced union without recognition of the right of divorce, without recognition of the "right of self-determination" the unity of nationalities is also a forced unity. It is not a unity based on reciprocal trust and will. It is a rotten unity based on reciprocal enmity and coercion. Communists cannot defend such a union. They wish and advocate for a sound unity based on reciprocal trust and friendship willingly entered into. Again, communists in general prefer to be organized in large states to being organizing in numerous states, as large states founded in a broad area possess more advantageous conditions in regards to the class struggle, large-scale production and the construction of socialism. However, communists absolutely oppose the organization of large states based on oppression and coercion of nationalities, as we have mentioned above. Unity between nationalities must be a unity based on free will and reciprocal trust. The duty of unconditionally defending the nations' right of self-determination stems from this. And what is the attitude of the Safak Revisionists regarding this important matter of principle? To advocate the people's right (!) to carry out a revolution, and to trample upon nations' right of self-determination. Furthermore, by saying "the Kurdish people's right of self-determination cannot be separated from the land revolution struggle based on the impoverished peasantry and the struggle against imperialism," they are attaching conditions to the right of self-determination. Do not forget that

this nonsensical sentence is the solution (!) the Safak Revisionists have brought to the national question. The revisionists, after criticism, were forced to substitute the word “liberation” for the “right of self-determination,” but this is and has been no obstruction to continuing to defend dominant nation nationalism on the national question.

The Safak Revisionists say:

“Our movement... works for the determination of the Kurdish people’s destiny *in the interests of the Kurdish workers and peasants.*” [my emphasis]

From whichever perspective you look, it is a sentence full of errors! Let us repeat once again, first and foremost, it should be the “Kurdish nation,” not the “Kurdish people,” as the question of Kurdish people’s self-determination is not related to the national question, and is something with no connection to the subject we are discussing. Also, if the Kurdish people determine their own future, it will certainly be “in the interests of the Kurdish workers and peasants.” It would not be possible to be otherwise, as a people determining its own future means a people establishing its own revolutionary state. A people will found its own revolutionary state, that is, determine its own destiny and this might not be “in the interests of the workers and peasants (!).” This is utter nonsense.

“The determination... of the Kurdish people’s destiny” is mentioned. This expression is more erroneous from another viewpoint. Rather than “the determination of its destiny,” it should be “they themselves determining their own destiny.” It is abun-

dantly clear that the expression “the determining of the Kurdish people’s destiny” implies that the determining will be carried out from outside. It means an external force drawing the Kurdish people’s destiny. The Safak Revisionists have turned the national question into a confusion. They have violated whatever is progressive, revolutionary and correct in the concept “nations’ right of self-determination.” They have made unbelievable distortions to this concept, turning it into a form that serves the interests of the dominant nation bourgeoisie and landlords.

If in the above expression “nation,” had taken the place of the word “people” the following two errors would still have been perpetuated in the sentence: “our movement works for the determination of the Kurdish [nation’s] destiny towards the interests of Kurdish workers and peasants.” In this case, too, the fate of the Kurdish people would be determined by “our movement” not by the Kurdish people themselves. Therefore, the most important aspect of the national question, a nation’s right of self-determination, would be taken away from the nation and this fundamental right trampled upon. The above sentence would mean: “Our movement works for a ‘separate Kurdish national state’ in the interests of Kurdish workers and peasants.” It is abundantly clear that this expression takes the right to establish a state away from the nation and gives it to the thing called “our movement.” Secondly, a communist movement never includes the question of whether or not a national state should be established in its program.

It never makes an advance judgment regarding the founding of a separate national state. A communist movement, as we have pointed out above, gives a guarantee of “a nation’s right of self-determination” and puts this in its program. On the question of whether or not to secede, it makes a decision according to concrete conditions.

The Safak Revisionists, as a result, have, in general, destroyed the right of self-determination of nations and, in particular, that of the Kurdish nation. If you destroy this, then nothing will be left of the principle of “equality of nations.” You will not only have extended your hand in friendship to the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation, but also to its police chiefs and fascist generals.

16. WHEN WILL AND WHEN WON'T THE TURKEY'S CLASS-CONSCIOUS PROLETARIAT SUPPORT THE SECESSION OF THE KURDISH NATION?

Regardless of nationality, the class-conscious proletariat of Turkey will address the question of the Kurdish nation founding a separate state from the standpoint of the development of the revolution. If the Kurdish nation's establishing a state will increase the possibility of the development and success of a democratic popular revolution under the leadership of the proletariat in Kurdistan of Turkey, the class-conscious proletariat of Turkey will support secession. If secession will delay and hinder the development and success of such a democratic popular revolution, then the class-conscious proletariat of Turkey will not support secession. Let us suppose that the communist movement developing in our country rapidly puts down roots among the peasantry in Kurdistan – that the struggle for land reform rapidly spreads and the revolutionary movement develops faster in Kurdistan than it does in the Western region. Under these conditions, the Kurdish region remaining within the borders of Turkey will only lead to the hobbling of the revolution by obstructions set up by the State of the dominant Turkish nation's bourgeoisie and landlords. Or let us assume that red political administrations have emerged in various areas of the Kurdish region and that the revolution in the West is developing more slowly. Under these conditions, again, the Turkish ruling classes and their

State's oppression would delay and hinder the development of the revolution in the East. In this case the secession of the East would speed up and strengthen the development of the revolution. This would also add momentum to the revolution in both West and East and certainly positively affect the development of the revolution in other countries in the Middle East. In such a situation the class-conscious proletariat of Turkey, regardless of nationality, would want and advocate for the secession of the Kurdish nation and for the rapidly developing revolution in Kurdistan to attain the possibility of progressing at a faster rate.

On the other hand, if the revolution in Turkey's other regions were to develop at a more rapid rate than in the Kurdish region, and if the secession of Kurdistan were to slow the development of the revolution in this region and consolidate the dominance of feudal lords, sheikhs, mullahs etc. – and if the revolutionary struggle in the East were to be weakened by being deprived of Western support – then in this case the class-conscious proletariat of Turkey, regardless of nationality, would not support secession. If after the success of the revolution in Turkey, a movement for secession under the leadership of the Kurdish bourgeoisie began, the proletariat of Turkey would not support secession, etc.

What we are saying is obviously based on hypotheses but there is great benefit in dwelling on these suppositions in regards to the attitude to be taken by the communist movement: in which conditions

it would support secession and in which conditions it would oppose it. Moreover, these hypotheses relate to real, feasible things, not unreal, impossible things.

17. IF THE KURDISH NATION DECIDES TO SECEDE, HOW WILL THE CLASS-CONSCIOUS PROLETARIAT OF TURKEY REACT?

In the event of secession two situations are possible:

First, as mentioned above, in the event of secession favorably affecting the development of the revolution then it is a simple matter. The proletariat of Turkey would definitely advocate for and support secession.

Second, in the event of a negative effect of secession on the development of the revolution, if in such a situation the Kurdish nation wished to secede, what would the class-conscious proletariat of Turkey do? The answer given by the Safak Revisionists to this question in verbal discussions is this: to prevent secession by all means, including force. The answer our movement gives to the same question: communists would absolutely reject the use of force in such a situation. While disseminating propaganda in favor of “unity” among Kurdish workers and toilers, they would never use force in opposing the desire for secession. To recognize “nations’ right of self-determination” means to never oppose when a nation wishes to exercise this right, that is, to secede. Communists will entirely and absolutely leave the decision as to whether the Kurdish nation founds a separate state to the Kurdish nation itself. If the Kurdish nation wishes it will establish a separate state, if it doesn’t, it won’t. It is the Kurdish nation that will

make this decision, not others. Just as communists will not obstruct a nation's desire to secede, they will also actively struggle against the efforts of the government of the bourgeoisie and landlords to forcibly prevent this. They will also struggle against all manner of external intervention. If the Kurdish proletariat and toilers were aware that secession would undermine the revolution, they would do all they could to ensure unity. Even if they were not aware, no one has the right to intervene externally on their behalf. External intervention, the use of force, obstructing the desire for secession on whatever grounds, are all in violation of "the right of self-determination of nations." Such a violation would sabotage the unity of workers and toilers, shake their confidence in each other, stoke national enmity, and in the long term do great harm to the cause of the proletariat as a result.

After the revolution succeeded in the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks unhesitatingly agreed to the secession of the Finns at their request (December 31, 1917). If the Finnish people hadn't wanted to secede and if Finland had organized as a people's republic in the USSR this, of course, would have been better, but the Finnish nation wanted to secede. In this situation it was necessary to either agree to secession or to adopt a harmful policy of suppressing the aspiration by force. The Bolsheviks agreed to secession, not placing the smallest obstacle in the way of the desire for secession. That attitude was to the benefit of both the Finnish people and the revolution in the Soviet Union. That attitude consolidated the trust of

the Finnish workers and peasants in the Soviet proletariat. In the years 1918-20 when the civil war continued in the Soviet Union, the imperialists' plans to attack the Soviet Union through Finland met with the resistance of the Finnish people. If the secession of the Finnish nation had been prevented despite their wish to do so, that attitude would have only created a deep-rooted hostility between the peoples of the two countries.

At Smolny Comrade Lenin said:

I very well recall the scene when, at Smolny, I handed the act to Svinhufvud⁶¹ which in Russian means "pighead" – the representative of the Finnish bourgeoisie, who played the part of a hangman. He amiably shook my hand, we exchanged compliments. How unpleasant that was! But it had to be done, because at that time the bourgeoisie were deceiving the people, were deceiving the working people by alleging that the Muscovites, the chauvinists, the Great Russians, wanted to crush the Finns. It had to be done.⁶²

⁶¹ Pehr Evind Svinhufvud was the 3rd president of Finland. He was conservative and rabidly anti-communist. At the end of his life, his views were close to those of Mussolini and Hitler.

⁶² Lenin, *Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.), Report on the Party Program*

Comrade Lenin's attitude on the Finnish question is a thoroughly instructive example. The attitude of the Safak Revisionists is diametrically opposite to that of Comrade Lenin. Our attitude is in complete accordance with that of Comrade Lenin.

18. “DIVISIVENESS” DEMAGOGY

The Safak Revisionists say: “Our movement struggles against the ruling classes of every nationality that is hostile to the revolutionary unity and fraternity of the Turkish and Kurdish people, and their *divisive policy*.” [my emphasis] Their term “divisive policy” has been borrowed from the political dictionary of chauvinistic nationalists and feudalists of the Turkish ruling classes. The ruling classes attach the label of “divisive” to everyone who opposes their nationalist policies. They not only call Kurds who wish to secede, but also all those who defend the right of secession or oppose national oppression to this or that degree, “divisive.” The meaning of divisiveness in Turkey is the “division of territory,” the “division of the State’s unity and its integrity.” In this sense, to say that the ruling classes and, even while being a little more progressive politically, the middle bourgeoisie, who (openly) extend one hand to democracy and the other (from behind) to the ruling classes, are “divisive,” is absurd. What divisiveness? They are the merciless enemies of “divisiveness.” Morning to night they curse “divisiveness.” They are in favor of the State’s unity and opposed to the division of its territorial integrity at any price! That is, they are in favor of forcibly keeping the Kurdish nation and other minority nationalities within the borders of Turkey. Whereas communists are opposed to such a “unity,” communists defend the union of workers and toilers from all nationalities. When it is in the interests of

the revolution, they defend non-separation of territories and organization in a single state (and even when defending this their fundamental goal is the unity of workers and toilers). When it is not in the interests of the revolution, they advocate the division of territory and the State and secession. The slogans “unity of territory” or “unity of the State” are slogans of the bourgeoisie and landlords of the dominant nation. Communists have to distinguish with firm lines between their slogan “the unity of workers and toilers from all nationalities” and the slogan “unity of territory and State.” To attack “divisiveness” with the language of the bourgeoisie and landlords of the dominant nation instead of taking the above position will only confuse minds and make it easier for the Turkish ruling classes. You cannot oppose national injustice in a frighteningly demagogic manner saying “they are the real divisive ones,” attributing a meaning to the concept of “divisiveness” that in reality does not exist. People still remember how in the newspaper “Worker-Peasant,” among a load of such demagogy and sophistry, under the headline “Who is Divisive?” the Kurdish nation’s right to secession was ruined and how the ruling classes’ slogan of “unity of State and territory” was insidiously supported. The Safak Revisionists in reality defend the “unity of territory and the State” in an indirect way, by attacking the “divisive policy” with the vocabulary of the ruling classes that is, they adopt the official view of the State. The slogan of the class-conscious proletariat, regardless of nationality, is this:

Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers [and oppressed people] of all nations⁶³

⁶³ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter X

19. SAFAK REVISIONISM MAKES M. KEMAL AND I. INONU'S DOMINANT NATION NATIONALISM A CORNERSTONE

The Safak Revisionists approve of the national oppression inflicted on the Kurdish nation and other minority nationalities in history. They applaud the fact that M. Kemal said: "In Turkey there are Turks and Kurds." They greet fervently the fact that at Lausanne, İsmet İnönü⁶⁴ said: "I am the representative of the Turks and Kurds," and base their own views on this. It is as if they are saying to the Turkish ruling classes: "Look, Atatürk and İnönü recognized the existence of the Kurds. This is what we are doing! What is there to be angry about this?"

The revisionist traitors assume that they are resolving the national question by recognizing the existence of a people [even though they are yet to recognize the existence of the Kurdish nation – only recognizing the existence of the Kurdish people (!)]. On the national question communists defend the absolute equality of all nationalities and languages and oppose all manner of inequality and privilege between nationalities and languages. On the subject of forming a state, they want the equality of nationalities too. The unconditional advocating of "the right

⁶⁴ İsmet İnönü was the 2nd president of Turkey and leader of CHP from 1938 to 1972. Ironically, while he was of Kurdish descent, he was in charge of "Turkifying the Kurds" during the time of Mustafa Kemal. During his presidency, he continued to uphold the Kemalist ideas of a "Great Turkey."

of nations to self-determination” stems from this, whereas the bourgeoisie wants at every opportunity inequality in favor of its own nationality it wants privilege and tramples on the natural rights of other nationalities, etc. The bourgeoisie of the dominant nation may recognize the existence of other nations and even grant some rights to them when obliged to do so, such as the Arab bourgeoisie in Iraq. But at every opportunity they will trample on these rights and wish to oppress other nationalities. It is not the recognition or non-recognition of the existence of minority nationalities that separates communists from the bourgeoisie.

And anyway, M. Kemal, by discussing the existence of the Kurds in a bogus manner at the Sivas Congress⁶⁵, when central authority did not exist or had entirely collapsed, wanted in reality to prevent a possible separatist movement of the Kurdish nation. He wanted to ensure that they would accept the yoke of the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords. The whole of M. Kemal's life is full of examples of oppression and persecution of the Kurdish nation and other minority nationalities. If there is someone in Turkey whose support cannot be secured, that person is M. Kemal. Furthermore, the nationalism that needs to be struggled with first and foremost in Turkey is M. Kemal's nationalism, which is dominant nation nationalism. Inonu's claim to be the representative

⁶⁵ The Sivas Congress was held in the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence aimed at defining a Turkish national identity and the future borders of the Republic of Turkey.

of the Kurds at Lausanne was also an open attack on the Kurdish nation's right of self-determination: a despicable determining of the Kurdish nation's destiny from outside, the cunning to include the regions where the Kurdish nation lives within the borders of Turkey, that is, of the field of domination of the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords, through haggling with imperialists, and the most ferocious manifestation of Turkish nationalism. This is what the revisionist traitors use as a basis for their ideas!

20. A SUMMARY OF SAFAK REVISIONISTS' THESES REGARDING THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The Safak Revisionists ignore the national oppression of other minority nationalities and languages. The Safak Revisionists do not see the Kurdish movement as a national movement. They evaluate it as a "popular" movement that merely opposes national oppression. Just as they are unable to distinguish between the class movement and the national movement of the Kurdish people, they also do not distinguish between the general democratic content of the Kurdish national movement opposing oppression and persecution and its backward content strengthening Kurdish nationalism, thereby erasing the difference between the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords, and the Kurdish proletariat and toilers.

The Safak Revisionists mistakenly analyze the profound economic and political reasons for the national oppression and persecution implemented against the Kurdish nation by the Turkish ruling classes. They portray national oppression and class oppression, and national contradiction and class contradiction as one and the same.

The Safak Revisionists, ignoring the profound evidence of Turkish nationalism among the Turkish workers and peasants, are sacrificing the truth to fancy words! They are undermining the importance of the activities we have to carry out among workers and peasants to counter Turkish nationalism.

By distorting the concept of “nations’ right of self-determination” in an unbelievable way, initially transforming it into a Bukharinite formulation, then subsequently violating this Bukharinite formulation, the Safak Revisionists are rendering impossible the Kurdish nation’s right of self-determination and demolishing concepts regarding the national question.

Using the demagoguery of “divisiveness,” the Safak Revisionists are defending the unity of territory and the State in an insidious way. They utilize M. Kemal and I. Inonu, representatives of dominant nation nationalism in Turkey, as props, assuming that by recognizing the existence of a nation the national question will be resolved. The result is this: the line followed by the Safak Revisionists on the national question is an effort to reconcile Turkish nationalism, a nationalism inherited from the current represented by Mihri Belli [see note], with Kurdish nationalism.

The Safak Revisionists are, on the one hand, Turkish nationalists, while, on the other, they have extended the hand of friendship to Kurdish nationalism. It is as if the following message was being conveyed between the lines: “Our brothers the Kurdish bourgeoisie and landlords! Put aside this secession idea! Come, join forces with us! Look, we also oppose the persecution to which you are subjected. Those who oppress you are ‘divisive!’ But if you wish to secede, you will too become ‘divisive!’ And, as you know, we are the enemies of ‘divisiveness’ etc.” A Turkish nationalism that makes concessions to

Kurdish nationalism! Here, is a summary of all the nonsense and charlatanism regarding the national question!

21. A SUMMARY OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST MOVEMENT'S VIEWS REGARDING THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The Marxist-Leninist movement is today the most relentless and determined foe of the national oppression inflicted on the Kurdish nation and minority nationalities by the Turkish ruling classes, and is in the forefront of struggles against national oppression, persecution of the other languages and national prejudice. The Marxist-Leninist movement unconditionally supports, and has always supported, the right of self-determination of the Kurdish nation, oppressed by the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords, that is, its right of secession and to establish an independent state. In regards to the right to found a state, the Marxist-Leninist movement is also opposed to privilege. The most fundamental tenets of people's democracy render this absolutely necessary. The unprecedented national oppression inflicted upon the minority nationalities in Turkey by the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords also render this imperative. This is at the same time made absolutely necessary by the freedom struggle of the Turkish workers and toilers, for, if they do not demolish Turkish nationalism, liberation will be impossible for them.

Nations' right of self-determination should never be confused with the necessity for a certain nation to secede. The Marxist-Leninist movement considers the question of secession concretely in every particular case: it "must decide the latter question exclusively

on its merits in each particular case in conformity with the interests of social development as a whole and with the interests of the proletarian class struggle for socialism.”⁶⁶ The Marxist-Leninist movement rejects absolutely the use of force and creating obstacles in the event of decisions of secession of which it does not approve. Borders should be fixed by the will of the nation. This is imperative in regards to the reciprocal confidence, sound friendship and willing union of the working and toiling masses belonging to various nationalities.

The Marxist-Leninist movement supports the struggle of oppressed nationalities in general and the Kurdish nation in particular against national oppression, persecution and privilege, and absolutely supports the general democratic content of the national movement of the oppressed nation.

The Marxist-Leninist movement also directs and administers the class struggle of the Kurdish proletariat and toilers against the bourgeois and small landlords that make up the leadership of the Kurdish national movement. It warns the Kurdish workers and toilers against the actions of the Kurdish bourgeois and landlords that aim to consolidate nationalism. The Marxist-Leninist movement remains indifferent to the struggles for supremacy of the bourgeois and landlord classes of various nationalities.

The Marxist-Leninist movement wages a struggle against the efforts of landlords, mullahs, sheikhs etc.

⁶⁶ Lenin, *Resolutions of the Summer, Resolution on the National Question*

to reconcile the struggle against national oppression with their attempts to strengthen their own positions.

The Marxist-Leninist movement is conscious of the efforts of the big Kurdish feudal lords, clergymen, big bourgeois etc., to use nationalist slogans as cover to split the ranks of the workers and peasants through secret intrigues between the Turkish bourgeoisie and landlords and the working peoples of all nationalities, and to pacify the workers and peasants and their struggle against them.

The Marxist-Leninist movement, as Comrade Lenin explains, in the eyes of the working masses of all countries, especially the oppressed countries, is constantly and systematically being defrauded by the imperialist states, which, in reality—under the guise of forming politically independent states—create economically, militarily and financially dependent states.

The Marxist-Leninist movement supports and advocates for the working class and other working people of a particular state to form unified organizations, i.e. in common political, trade union, cooperative, cultural organizations, etc. It fights against the tendency towards separate organizations of workers and working people according to different nationalities. Because only when they are organized together can the workers and working people of different nationalities successfully carry out the fight against international capital and reaction. Only then can they successfully combat the propaganda and the reactionary aspirations of the landlords, clergymen

and bourgeois nationalists of all nationalities.

The Marxist-Leninist movement absolutely rejects the plan of “national-cultural autonomy”, which is generally adopted by all of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois, opportunistic parties and movements of all nationalities in our country. This plan proposes the division of the state educational system according to different nationalities, thereby aiming to bind the workers and laborers of every nationalities to the culture of their respective bourgeoisie and landlords with their consequential spiritual enslavement. Therefore, this plan is extremely harmful, both from the standpoint of democracy and from the standpoint of the class struggle of the proletariat.

The Marxist-Leninist movement provides the following solution to the national question under the system of the people’s democratic dictatorship:

In the system of popular democratic dictatorship, full equality of nations and languages will be guaranteed. No compulsory national language will be recognized, and public schools that teach all native languages will be created. The constitution of the people’s state will strictly prohibit the privileges of any nation and the violation of the rights of national minorities.

Every nation will be given the right to self-determination. To achieve all of this requires especially widespread regional autonomy and full democratic local self-government. The basis of these autonomous and self-governing region, economic and social conditions, the national composition of the population,

etc., will be determined by the local population itself.

Let us again repeat our main slogan on the national question: “Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers [and oppressed people] of all nations.”⁶⁷

Note: This was written in December 1971. After the organization separated from revisionism, the original text was revised in June 1972.

⁶⁷ Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Chapter X

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