

# Communist Movement in Turkey in the Reports by Diplomacy and the Press of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia (1918-1941)

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## Abstract

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), which was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 1918, by uniting South Slavs, played an essential role in maintaining the peace system that was established after the First World War as well as in preventing the expansion of the Communist impact from Russia after the Bolshevik October Revolution. Anti-Communist orientation of its leading political elites and the monarch himself, the king Aleksandar Karađorđević, is indicated by the fact that since 1921 the activities of the Communist party have been forbidden by law and strictly sanctioned, as well as that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes became a sanctuary for more than 100.000 of the ones who were forced to immigrate from Russia after Bolshevik's triumph. Therefore, the authorities of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) intensively gathered the intelligence data about the activities of the Communist activists and Bolshevik agents in the countries in its surrounding, thus also in Turkey, with which the Kingdom has had friendly relations since 1925. These activities were a matter of interest of the officers of its diplomatic embassies in Istanbul and Ankara. They carefully followed the presence of Communist agitators in Turkey and the intensity of their activities. Their reports which were directed to the authorities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade, were, to a large extent, based on immediate information (from “confidential” and “well-informed source”) and the analysis of the articles from the Turkish press. In that way, they reported on the activities of the Turkish police organs for suppressing Communist organizations, arrests and judicial processes of the Communist activists, actions of the Comintern agents and the Soviet intelligence services through the form of “experts” in certain trade agencies in Turkey, etc. Considering their dominant opinion, the primary aim of Moscow, as the Bolshevik center of the “world revolution”, concerning the relations with Turkey was not conducting the revolutionary upheaval, but, regarding its unique

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geostrategic position, it was establishing the impressive propaganda stronghold for the activities directed to Europe. Moreover, they also identified the causal link between the nature of bilateral relations of Turkey and the Soviet Union and the reinforcement, namely the weakening of the Communist activities in Turkey.

Considering these meticulous analyses and reports, the authorities of the Kingdom of SCS/ Yugoslavia had an opportunity to establish their anti-Communist strategy better and thus worsen and prevent the Communist activities.

**Keywords:** Communist Movement, The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/ Yugoslavia, Anti-Communist Strategy, Bolshevism, Public Opinion.

## Sırp, Hırvat ve Sloven Krallığı/Yugoslavya Diplomasisinde ve Basınında Türkiye'deki Komünist Hareketi Üzerinde Raporlar (1918-1941)

### Özet

1 Aralık 1918 yılında kurulan Sırp, Hırvat ve Sloven Krallığı (1929 yılından itibaren Yugoslavya Krallığı) Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra sabitleşen barış sistemi korumakta uluslararası çapta önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu kapsamda Bolşevik Ekim Devrimi'nden sonra Rusya'dan gelen komünist etkisini durdurmak görevini de devralmıştır. Yeni kurulan ülkenin siyasi seçkinleri sınıfının ve Kral Aleksandar Karacorjeviç'in kendisinin komünist karşıtı tayınları, 1921 yılında Komünist Partisi'nin yasadışı ilan edilmesi ve sert şekilde cezalandırmalara uğratılmasında görülebilmektedir. Aynı şekilde, Sırp, Hırvat ve Sloven Krallığı, Bolşevik galibiyetinden sonra Rusya'dan göç etmek zorunda kalan 100 binden fazla kişiye ikinci vatan olmuştur. Bu yüzden, SHS Krallığı hükümeti, ülkede ve yurtdışında, ki bunla birlikte Türkiye'de de faaliyet gösteren komünist eylemci ve Bolşevik ajanları hakkında istihbarat bilgileri toplamakta yoğun girişimlere adanmıştır, ki bu ülkeyle ilişkileri 1925'ten itibaren dostluk ve işbirlikçilikle nitelendirilmiştir. Bu işlerle en yoğun olarak İstanbul ve Ankara'da bulunan diplomasi temsilcilikleri uğraşmıştır, ki bu memurlar Türkiye'deki komünist tahrikçilerin faaliyetlerini ve bunların şiddetini dikkatlice takip etmişlerdir. Belgrad'taki Dışişleri Bakanlığı'na gönderdikleri raporlar en fazlasıyla ("güvenilir" ve "tahsilli" kaynaktan gelen) doğrudan bilgiler ve Türk basını incelemeleri üzerine dayanmıştır. Bu şekilde Türk polisi tarafından komünist örgütlenmesini püskürtmesi, tutuklamalar ve komünist eylemcilerin hukuk süreçleri ile Türkiye'deki belirli ticari kurumlarda "bilirkişi" rolü altında Komintern ve Sovyet istihbarat teşkilatlara ait ajanların faaliyetleri hakkında raporlar göndermişlerdir. Onların genel düşüncelerine göre, "dünya devrimi" Bolşevik merkezi olan Moskova Türkiye'de devrimci şekilde

hükümetin devrilmesini hedef olarak görmemiştir. İddialara göre amaç, Türkiye'nin önemli jeostratejik konumunu ele alarak, Avrupa'ya doğru somut faaliyetlerin örgütlenmesi için bir propaganda merkezin kurulmasıymış. Aynı şekilde, Türkiye ile Sovyetler Birliği arasındaki ilişkilerin doğası ve Türkiye'de komünist etkinliklerin yükselmesi ile zayıflaması arasındaki sebep-sonuç ilişkisini de fark etmişlerdir.

SHS/Yugoslavya Krallığı yükümlü kurumları, bu özenli analiz ve raporlar üzerinde komünist karşıtı stratejilerini daha iyi bir şekilde örgütlemeye ve aynı zamanda komünist faaliyetlerini zorlaştırmak ve olumsuzlaştırmak için olasılık tanımıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Komünist Hareketi, Sırp, Hırvat ve Sloven Krallığı, Komünist Karşıtı Strateji, Bolşevizm, Kamuoyu.

### **Communist Movement in Turkey in the Reports by Diplomacy and the Press of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia (1918-1941)**

The victory of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 was an event of essential importance for global socio-economic and political processes during the “short 20th century”. The fact that the ideology of socialism went beyond the theoretical framework and was realized in political practice opened a new chapter in the relations between the leading capitalist Western European countries, the creators of the Versailles Peace System and the Soviet Union, the first country of socialism. The victory of the Bolshevik revolution and the failure of the counter-revolutionary forces that enjoyed the support of the leading countries of the Entente bloc, as one of the imperatives of the foreign policy of France and Great Britain, raised the question of curbing the spread of the “red virus” to Europe.<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS), created by the unification of the South Slavic peoples on the 1st of December, 1918, was, for official Paris and London, a crucial element in curbing the “red danger from the east” throughout the interwar period.<sup>2</sup>

1 Чедомир Попов, *Од Версаја до Данцига*, Новинско-издавачка установа Службени лист СРЈ, Београд 1995, р. 147.

2 The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) was created as a product of a long process of unification of South Slavs realized during the entire 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In order to strengthen their unity, in 1929, the name of the state was changed to “Kingdom of Yugoslavia”, although the attribute “Yugoslav” was used extensively on various occasions and for various purposes, so its use is quite every day for the period before 1929.

By the way, the echo of the October Revolution was strongly felt in the Kingdom of SCS. Namely, during the First World War, a significant number of conscripts from ethnic Croats, Slovenes and Serbs fought as part of the Austro-Hungarian military formations on the Eastern Front, some of whom were captured by the Russian Imperial Army and directly experienced the October Revolution. This influenced the fact that individuals, after returning from captivity, “infected” with the ideas of communism, began to propagate a new ideological discourse openly. The strengthening of the communist ideology resulted in the creation of the *Socialist Workers Party of Yugoslavia (Communists)* in April 1919, which became a member of the Third International. A year later, at the second party congress held from 20-25. June, it was renamed the *Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY)*.<sup>3</sup> The fact that in the elections for the Constituent Assembly, held on the 28th of November, 1920, the CPY took third place in the number of seats won speaks volumes about the influence of the Communists in the Kingdom of SCS in the first years after the First World War.<sup>4</sup> This rise of the communist idea came as a real surprise to the ruling political structures in the Kingdom of SCS, which, after several terrorist acts committed by communists against prominent figures of the political establishment, influenced the adoption of the Law on State Protection on the 2nd of August, 1921, which banned the activities of the CPY. After that, mass persecutions and arrests of its members and sympathizers began.<sup>5</sup> Since then, the activities of state security bodies have been aimed at suppressing communist activities, both in the country and abroad. Special attention was paid to the “preventive action” against the Yugoslav communist cells in exile, as well as in the surrounding countries. To that end, the government of the Kingdom of SCS engaged diplomatic and intelligence mechanisms that provided information on the activities of communists in those countries and their contacts with communist organizations there. In the Ottoman Empire, i.e., from the 29th of October, 1923 to the Republic of Turkey, employees of the diplomatic embassy in Istanbul (since 1936 in Ankara) and consulates in Istanbul and Izmir, especially military attachés at the embassy, were in charge of that.<sup>6</sup> Their reports to the Ministry of Foreign

3 Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, knj. 1, Nolit, Beograd 1988, p. 119.

4 Out of a total of 419 seats in the Constituent Assembly, the Communists won 58 (12.4%). - Branislav Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji (1919-1929)*, Institut za savremenu istoriju - Narodna knjiga, Beograd 1979, p. 81.

5 *Istorija Saveza komunističke Jugoslavije*, Izdavački centar „Kомунист“ - Narodna knjiga - Rad, Beograd 1985, p. 79.

6 Тонка Жупанчић *Посланство Краљевине Југославије у Турској – Цариград, Анкара: 1919–1945 (1890–1945) – аналитичко-сумарни инвентар*, Архив Југославије, Београд, 2002.; Тонка

Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS were based mainly on “reliable, well-informed sources” or conclusions drawn by diplomatic officials when analyzing articles in the Turkish press.

According to preserved archival sources of Yugoslav provenance, the initial news about the existence of the communist movement in Turkey was received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in early May 1923. a communist conspiracy aimed at carrying out a coup.<sup>7</sup> On that occasion, several dozen people were arrested, suspected of being part of this conspiracy, and two Turks and one Greek were identified as organizers. Compromising documents and various documents of communist content were found in their apartments, mainly from Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and Greece. Rumors circulating in Istanbul pointed out that the number of those arrested was far higher than officially announced, and the detainees were sent to Izmir, where they were to be tried in a short procedure.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, leading metropolitan dailies wrote, referring to foreign news agencies that had their correspondents from Turkey, that there was great unrest in the ruling circles there because it was considered that the event was the result of illegal actions of Bolsheviks from the Soviet Union. The revolt of the proletariat for the forthcoming “Labor Day” - the 1st of May, that is, their diplomatic mission in Istanbul also participated in the preparation. The press that was published in Belgrade transmitted information that in the Caucasus, which initiated the urgent departure of the Minister of the Army with significant military reinforcements to the Erzurum region.<sup>9</sup>

The reactions of the government in Ankara to the strengthening of Bolshevik activities in Turkey came as a considerable surprise to the diplomacy of the Kingdom of the SCS, which, with great suspicion and even hostility, treated the Soviet Union. The fact that the Turkish police placed Soviet representatives under

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Жупанчић, *Генерални конзулат Краљевине Југославије у Цариграду 1923–1945 (1912–1947) – аналитичко-сумарни инвентар*, Архив Југославије, Београд, 2003.

7 Archives of Yugoslavia (AY)-370-1-506, Report of the delegate of the Kingdom of SCS Zivkovic from Istanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS, 8.V 1923.

8 Zivkovic's delegate was disturbed by the knowledge that a certain Kjazim from Van was among those arrested when a document issued by the Embassy of the Kingdom of SCS in Paris was found. – *Ibidem*.

9 “Припреме за нови рат”, *Правда*, 1. V 1923, 2.; “Бољшевичка завера у Цариграду”, *Време*, 1. V 1923, 2.;

surveillance, resolutely suppressing any appearance of Bolshevik ideas among the Turks, met with the sympathy of officials in Belgrade and increased their interest in the development of communist ideology in Turkey. According to more detailed information from the diplomats of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul, the communist movement there began immediately after the end of the First World War, in a period characterized by a sharp revival of the political scene. At that time, a number of new political groups appeared on it, which represented the nucleus for the formation of new political parties. They gathered around the editorial offices of some Istanbul newspapers and magazines, the most important of which were *Light* (*Aydınlık*), *New World* (*Yeni Dünya*) and *Liberation* (*Kurtuluş*), and the Ankara newspaper *New Life* (*Yeni Hayat*). Under the influence of Bolshevik activists from Moscow, extreme left-wing individuals grouped around the newspapers *Light* (*Aydınlık*) and *Sickle and hammer* (*Orak ve çekiç*) and they will form the nucleus of the Communist Party.<sup>10</sup>

Even though the Bolshevik government was an essential support for the movement of Mustafa Kemal Pasha during the Liberation War, the issue of legal action of communists on the territory of Turkey caused numerous disagreements between Moscow and Ankara. This, in large part, stemmed from their different ideological discourse. While their foreign policy interests coincided mainly in terms of internal organization, despite some similarities, the differences were noticeable.<sup>11</sup> The Turkish establishment tried to modernize the country with accelerated industrialization and construction of transport infrastructure, but on the basis of moderate capitalism, while providing the growing working population with the protection of their rights through legal solutions, i.e., through the activities of trade unions controlled by state bodies, prohibiting strikes as a method of political struggle. According to Jevrem Tadić, an envoy of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul in early December 1927, the Turkish government, therefore, sent a clear message to the Soviets that it would not tolerate any communist activity on its territory that would disrupt the country's internal political and economic stability. Only to tacitly

10 AY-370-25-461, Study of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Constantinople "The Origin and Activity of Communists in Turkey", 15. VII 1930.

11 The ambassador of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul, Jevrem Tadić, wrote that the Soviets strongly contributed to the creation and organization of today's independent nationalist Turkey and are constantly of the most significant help to it. Turkey recognizes that, is grateful to them for that, and is in the closest friendship and alliance with them. - AY-370-2-441, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS, 2. XII 1927.

support Soviet communist exports through Turkey and from Turkey (especially from Istanbul), to the Balkan countries, especially to Greece and Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup> Despite reassuring promises, the Soviet government continued to support the spread of the communist movement in Turkey illegally. It did so, to a large extent, through its diplomatic and consular missions, especially through the network of “Arkos” trade agencies and the representation of a company that sold oil and gasoline in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> In the middle of the third decade of the 20th century, the Turkish police authorities discovered several attempts to infiltrate communist agitators among workers, peasants, bureaucrats, students, and even in the army.<sup>14</sup> Thus, communist cells and numerous printed communist literature were discovered in the tobacco processing factory in Istanbul and the textile factory in Adana. Several dozen workers were arrested on that occasion, including three Turkish citizens employed by “Arkos”. The embassy of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul managed to find out the names of most of those arrested. According to this information, among them in the Istanbul organization were: Shefik Husnu Bey, leader of the Turkish Communists,<sup>15</sup> Salih, a veterinarian by profession,<sup>16</sup> Nuri, electrician, Mahmoud, railway conductor, Agan, student in Moscow, Niko, carpenter, Kjazim, driver, Dervish, Istanbul Municipal Administration Officer, Hilmi, shoemaker, Joakim, carpenter, Shefket Sureya, “Arkos” Propaganda Officer in Istanbul, Hamdi Shamilov, “Arkos” Propaganda Secretary in Istanbul, Vedat Nedim Bey, Soviet

12 AY-370-2-441, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS, 2. XII 1927.

13 ARCOS (All-Russian Co-operative Society) is a Russian company that started operating in October 1920 in London. It was established as the official trading agency of the Soviet government in the United Kingdom. It was a British company operating under British law, although all shareholders were Soviet citizens. It served as a cover for the activities of the Soviet intelligence service abroad. - Edward Hallett Carr, *Ruska revolucija od Lenjina do Staljina 1917-1929*, Globus, Zagreb 1984, p. 73.

14 In mid-July 1925, employees of the telegraph service in Adana, Erzurum and Samsun went on strike but were arrested and carried out in Ankara because it was suspected that the strike had a communist background. - “Хапшење штрајкача у Турској”, *Време*, 16. VII 1925, 1.

15 In 1925, he was sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison. A few months before his arrest, he returned from the Soviet Union, disguised, under a false name and with a forged passport, to Istanbul. He managed to organize a central communist committee for Turkey and a regional committee for Istanbul. He started publishing an illegal brochure called “Bolshevik” and translated several texts by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin into Turkish. - AY-370-2-442, List of arrested communists in Turkey, 2. XII 1927.

16 Salih was the founder of a communist organization in Ankara, where he published the newspapers Rad (*Emek*) and Novi život (*Yeni Hayat*). - *Ibidem*.

Bank Officer In Istanbul, Kyazim, an official of the “Soviet Shipping Section” in Istanbul, Kuchuk Halki, a server at Galata Kay, and Fahri Hassan Said, assistant director of intelligence at “Arkos” in Istanbul. The organization in Adana was led by a certain Shefket, a driver by profession, and with him were also arrested: Suhi, Kerim Ragip, Fethi, Naji, Ishan and others.<sup>17</sup>

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in Istanbul had intelligence on a vigorous diplomatic protest note sent by the Soviet ambassador to Istanbul to Turkish Foreign Minister Tefvik Rushdi-bey, demanding that the detainees be released immediately. However, he politely courted but resolutely refused to meet that Soviet demand.<sup>18</sup> Ambassador Tadic estimated that in the current environment in Turkey, the communist movement had no chance of any visible success and that, possibly, this unpleasant episode will affect Soviet-Turkish relations in the future.<sup>19</sup>

The trial of those arrested took place in Ankara from 17-24. January 1928. On that occasion, it was determined that Vedat Nedim Bey was the head of the “Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey” when ambassador Tadic wrote that he represented a small general staff without an army and that Shefik Husnu returned from the Soviet Union due to his inactivity of the three emissaries he sent to the interior of Turkey to form local party organizations, one did nothing and the other two did almost nothing.<sup>20</sup> Most of those arrested had been arrested earlier for failed attempts at communist propaganda but were released after short detention because neither they nor their guilt was taken very seriously.<sup>21</sup> During the interrogation, except for a few, the detainees denied that they belonged to the communist movement. The court acquitted 25 of them, 31 people were sentenced to two to three months in prison, and the longest sentence was given to Shefik Husna - a year and a half in prison.<sup>22</sup>

17 *Ibidem.*

18 AY-370-2-441, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS, 2. XII 1927.

19 *Ibidem.*

20 AY-370-2-444, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of SCS in Istanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS, 25. I 1928.

21 MP Tadic claimed that one of the reasons for their pardon was the fact that Soviet diplomatic representatives mediated for them with the Turkish authorities. - *Ibidem.*

22 AY-370-2-444, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in Istanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of SCS, 25 I 1928.; “Комунистички



The strengthening of communist propaganda in Turkey was assessed by Belgrade diplomatic circles and journalists who dealt with internal affairs in Turkey as a kind of “special war” against the new political course. The Belgrade daily *Vreme* wrote on the 12th of May, 1929, that Kemal Pasha was aware that communism had no conditions for development and that he would allow them to shout at will if their slogans did not hide the blackest reaction. He used communism to overthrow the new state and ruin all previous achievements.<sup>23</sup> Namely, on the eve of the International Labor Day, the 1st of May, 1929, communist agitators tried to intensify the propaganda campaign by publishing a proclamation printed in Arabic script, which, in addition to being illegally placed on the streets of Istanbul, was delivered to leading Turkish newspapers.<sup>24</sup> The reaction of the police authorities was reflected in the arrest of many suspects, including several citizens of the Soviet Union,<sup>25</sup> for which the consul of the Soviet Union in Istanbul visited the governor there (“valija”) and expressed regret.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, nine communist activists were arrested in Izmir, who was allegedly enjoying the indirect help of the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

After this coup, the communist organization in Turkey tried to reorganize and intensify its activities. Some of its leaders who escaped arrest took part in the Balkan Communist Conference in mid-1929. It was decided to form a “Central Committee”, half of whose members would operate in Turkey and half abroad, to form a “District Committee” in each province, which would operate in accordance with the instructions of the “Central Committee”, and his role would be to control the activities of Communist Party members in factories and in the

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заробљеници у Турској осуђени”, *Време*, 25. I 1928, 5.; “Пресуда комунистима у Ангори”, *Правда*, 25. I 1928, 2.

23 “Први мај у Турској”, *Време*, 12. V 1929, 3.

24 The proclamation was printed on a spirograph in red and blue ink. The headline read, “Proletarians of all countries, unite!” Furthermore, it was signed with the words “Turkish Communist Party” and “Turkish Communist Youth Association”. - *Ibidem*.

25 Police also issued a warrant for a woman who was employed as a typist at the “Arkos” office in Istanbul. - *Ibidem*.

26 “Vreme” wrote that the Turkish authorities, despite Turkey's alliance with the Soviet Union, closely monitored the actions of Soviet officials in Turkey and severely sanctioned their possible disloyal actions. - *Ibidem*.

27 The Belgrade press reported the allegations of the Turkish news agency “Anatolia” that the court released six of them and that the prosecution requested the imposition of a prison sentence of 12 years for three of them. - Кратке вести, *Време*, 11. VII 1929, 2.

countryside. The newly adopted structure of the communist movement was to consist of four segments:

1. Communist parties
2. Communist youth groups
3. Groups of women - communists
4. Groups of worker's associations

A new conception of communist activity was established, which included intensified propaganda activity among workers and peasants and the printing of newspapers that were to be distributed free of charge. At the same time, the possibility of armed actions was rejected because the ultimate goal of the leadership of the communist movement in that phase was not to overthrow the government but to expand the circle of members and sympathizers.<sup>28</sup> Activities designed in this way in the early 1930s resulted in the increased influence of communist "instructors" in the "Association for the Development of Workers", especially in its organizations in Izmir and Adana, which, according to Yugoslav diplomats in Istanbul, was the result of the communist leader's release Shefki Husni, editor of the newspaper *Light (Aydınlık)*.<sup>29</sup>

That the "communist danger" was on the rise again is shown by the fact that in early September 1930, the police discovered illegal communist organizations in Istanbul and Ankara. About 30 people were arrested in Istanbul on that occasion, including some university professors and students. Several "suspicious persons" were arrested in Ankara, as well as two pilots from Crimea, and during the search of the facilities used by the suspects, one printing house was discovered. In police circles, it was considered that this organization was one of the most important that have been discovered so far and that its leaders-maintained contacts with the Third International in Moscow.<sup>30</sup>

The growing influence of the world economic crisis that hit the vulnerable Turkish economy also contributed to the communist propaganda, which gave communist

28 AY-370-25-461, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Constantinople to the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 15. VII 1930.

29 *Ibidem*.

30 "Комунистичка завера у Цариграду", *Политика*, 4. IX 1930, 1.; "Два турска авијатичара ухапшени као комунисти", *Време*, 6. IX 1930, 7.

activists the opportunity to blame the current regime for the accumulated economic difficulties in society, i.e., to attract new sympathizers and members, especially from the working population. Trying to make their activities more visible, the communists were intensively engaged in organizing the “May Day” celebration, to which the police authorities responded with mass preventive arrests in the days before this holiday.<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of the 1930s, the intensification of communist activity was especially noticeable in Izmir, where their main stronghold was located in the local tobacco processing factory, and wherein February 1932, nine communists were arrested, three of them women.<sup>32</sup>

According to the data available to the Yugoslav embassy, it could be concluded that Soviet diplomatic and economic representatives in Istanbul and some other most important Turkish cities continued their previous practice,<sup>33</sup> during the initial period of the fourth decade of the 20th century, they provide very covert assistance to the communists there, and the Turkish authorities continue to suppress communist activity and propaganda “at the root”,<sup>34</sup> despite the generally friendly relations between the two countries. However, it is interesting that newspapers printed in the Soviet Union were freely sold and distributed in Turkey and that, with the support of the Soviet Union, Turkish communists tried to infiltrate the editorial offices of leading Turkish newspapers. Thus, the journalist of the Kurun newspaper was a supporter of the communist Sabri Etem, Nurametik Nazif, who became a communist during his studies at the Military Academy in Moscow, and the pro-government newspaper *People (Ulus)* wrote in the *Tan* newspaper. The texts were also published under the code name “XXX” by the writer Nazim Hikmet, who was arrested in 1930 as a communist and a graduate of the “Communist

31 In the last week of April 1937, the Istanbul police arrested about 100 workers and intellectuals who were known to be communists. However, the court prosecuted only seven of them, where propaganda material was found, and the others were acquitted. – “Комунистичка агитација у Турској поново узима маха”, *Време*, 8. IV 1931, 1.; *Izveštaji Ministarstva inostranih poslova Kraljevine Jugoslavije za 1937. godinu*, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd 2013, p. 278.

32 “Хапшење комуниста у Смирни”, *Време*, 17. II 1932, 6.

33 The main base of Soviet propaganda in Turkey was the Consulate General in Istanbul, where there was also a radio station. The propaganda activities were led by Vice Consul Kaman Kitанов, originally from Azerbaijan. The department of the “Third International” also operated under its roof, which tried to spread propaganda among high school students and universities in the form of cultural activities.- Бранко Лазаревић, *Дипломатски списи*, Историјски архив у Неготину, Неготин 2001, p. 113.

34 AY-370-3-290, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Istanbul to the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 21. XII 1936.

Academy” in Moscow. However, the most important stronghold of the “hidden” communists was considered to be the editorial office of the *Republic (Cumhuriyet)*, in which, in addition to the editor-in-chief Yunus Nadi, there were two members of the Turkish Communist Party, journalists Sabiha Uskeri and Suat Dervis. She was educated in Berlin 1927-1932, where she became a follower of communist ideology.<sup>35</sup>

In an effort to suppress communist activity as much as possible, the Turkish authorities resorted to the internment of individuals in some smaller provincial cities and appointed those who would agree to change their minds, i.e., accept official regime positions, especially from intellectuals, to essential and well-paid positions.<sup>36</sup> Those who would remain ideologically steadfast promised to keep calm in order to be released from internment. If, on the other hand, they broke their promise and tried to get in touch with the workers, the police arrested them and also expelled them to the interior of the country.<sup>37</sup>

Despite vigorous measures by the Turkish authorities, the illegal activities of the communist movement persisted. During the winter and the beginning of the spring of 1937, the intensification of communist propaganda was felt, which also had an impact on the structures of the army. Thus, a dozen members of the communist organization were discovered among the participants of the course for reserve officers in Istanbul, who did not receive the rank, but were sent to military garrisons in the interior as ordinary soldiers, and about 30 students were arrested at the Ankara Military Academy.<sup>38</sup> Turkish police were aware that communist agitators had infiltrated Armenian refugees from Turkey who were in the Soviet Union, gathered around two organizations - the nationalist *Dashnakcutyan* and

35 Лазаревић, *Дипломатски...*, p. 113.

36 Thus, according to Branko Lazarevic, the Yugoslav ambassador to Ankara from the 6th of October 1935 to the 15th of June 1937, the head of the Turkish government's Presbytery in the mid-1930s was a man arrested in 1924 for belonging to the communist movement and his deputy was considered a “Soviet man?”. - *Ibidem*, p. 115.

37 AY-370-3-290, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Istanbul to the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 21. XII 1936.

38 Shortly afterward, the information that Nazim Hikmet, who was accused of being one of the organizers of the communist organization at the Military Academy, was killed in the Ankara prison turned out to be untrue. - AY-411-1-307, Confidential Telegram of the Consulate General of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Istanbul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 11. IV 1938.

*Hanchik*, which was under the influence of the “Third International”.<sup>39</sup> The Yugoslav consul in Istanbul estimated that the strengthening of communist actions was a consequence of the cooling of relations between Ankara and Moscow.<sup>40</sup>

The aggravation of the political situation on the international scene, and especially the beginning of the Second World War, pushed the interest of Yugoslav diplomats in Turkey in communist activities to the background. Therefore, their reports submitted to the competent ministry in Belgrade until the “April War” in 1941 no longer contained data on the activities of communists in Turkey, but the focus was on other vital issues in that period, primarily on the views of the Turkish government. In connection with the new current situation in the field of international relations, i.e., its efforts to avoid dragging Turkey into the war.

### **Conclusion**

The emergence and development of the communist movement in the Ottoman Empire, in other words in Turkey, between the two World Wars, attracted the intense attention of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, that is the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after 1929. Through its diplomatic missions in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, the Kingdom gathered information about its activities and the Turkish government’s attempts to suppress this movement. According to the available information, the communist movement operating in Turkey was supported by the official Moscow government, which, through the Komintern structures at its disposal, gave direction and instructions through the Soviet diplomatic and commercial missions in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

While communist propaganda had its greatest impact among the working population, it also began to spread among students, which made the Turkish power structure worried about such a situation. A certain influence also began to be noticed in the lower ranks of the army and developed in some intellectual circles, namely among journalists. In order to disrupt communist propaganda, Turkish police forces carried out arrests of communist activists and sympathizers,

39 AY-370-1-226, Report of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Istanbul to the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 16. V 1937.

40 The Yugoslav ambassador to Ankara, Lazarevic, wrote to Belgrade officials that, based on talks with his German and Hungarian counterparts, he concluded that the deterioration in Soviet-Turkish relations was interpreted as a consequence of the Turkish government's approach to official London and Rome. Foreign policy positions of the Soviet Union, i.e., its European policies. - Лазаревић, *Дипломатски...*, p. 199.

who were not sentenced by the courts to long prison terms. This was to prevent the deterioration of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union which was an important foreign policy factor.

In general, despite great and persistent efforts, the communist movement in the interwar period failed to achieve significant political successes in Turkey. In other words, its attempts at massification were not sufficient to establish an organization that would be a significant opposition to the **Kemalist** establishment. Operating illegally and subjected to considerable repression by the government, the movement remained on the margins of the political scene and was not able to significantly influence public opinion.

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