Turkey

5.1 Petitions

5.1.1 *A Telegram from Gypsies from Drama*

تلغراف

مخرجی: در علیہ

نومروسی: ۲۸۴۹

انقرہ اعمار واسکان مدیریت عمومیه سی جانب عالیسنہ

معروضاتمزدرا افندم: بزلر درامادن ہجرت ایدن اتوزبر عائله دن مرکب قبطی طائفہ سیز دیگر مسلمان مہاجر لربکی زراعتلہ اشتغال اتمیوب تزدیمزده کی چادیرلرلہ اقامتمزی تامین ایدن و بتون درامہ لیلرجه مشهور اولدیغی وجہلہ حیوان جانبازلغیلہ تامین معیشت ایدرز بنا علیہ مصارفات کاملہ کدیمزہ عائد اولمق اوزرہ ترجیحا چتالجه ویا ادرنہ طرفلرنده اسکانمزہ مساعده بیورلمسی ضمنتده اشبو استدعامزی با تلغراف مقام سامیلرینہ تقدیم ایلر جواب الطافیه اتیان انتظارده یز افندم.

استانبول مسافر خانہ سندہ مقیم

۱۲ نومرو وثیقہ صاحببری

::

Telegram.

To: Deraliyye [1].

Number: 2849.

To the Dignitary Office of Ankara General Directorate of Reconstruction and Settlement.

It is our request. We are the Kıbtı taife [2], composed of thirty-one households who migrated from Drama. Unlike the other Muslim immigrants who work the land, we live in tents with us and earn our living by animal dealing as it is popularly known by all people of Drama. For this reason, provided that we cover all the expenses associated with our transfer, we hereby submit to your attention our request by telegram to be allowed to settle in preferably environs of either Çatalca or Edirne. We hope and await your kind reply in due course.

Residents of the Istanbul Guest House, Owners of Certificate Number: 31.

Notes

1. Derallıye was the Sublime Port, Bâb-ı Âlî, bureaucratic center in Istanbul.

2. Kıbtı Taife: 'Copt' or 'native Egyptian' in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. For women 'Kıbtıyye' was used. In Ottoman texts the communal identity was embodied by terms such as 'Taife-i Kıbtıyye' or 'Kıbtı zümresi' (Çelik, 2008, p. 186; 2018, p. 249). While in state documents the term 'Kıbtı' was used, in the everyday language 'Çingene' or 'Çingâne' (Gypsies) were used (see also Chapter 1).

Source: TCCDA GM, Fon No. 272 0 0 11, Kutu 17, Dosya No. 76, Sıra No. 12.

Prepared for publication by Nürşen Gürboğa.

The archival documents in riq'a handwriting are typed by Gülsüm Gülsev Şanver.

5.1.2 A Telegram from Gypsies from Kavala

تلغرافنامه

مخبرجی: صامسون

نومروسی: ۱۹۷۶

غازی پاشا حضرتلرنه

صورتی اعمار و اسکان وکالت جلیله سنه

بز لر قواله مهاجرلرندن اولوب بالعموم کیسه مزدن ویره رک طقوز یوز نفوسی میاننده صامسونه کلدک. بورا اسکان منطقه اره مزدن الی خانه قدر بزلی هر نه سبيله مبنی ایسه تفریق ایده رک توقاده سوق ایتمک و بر چوق زنکین همشهریلر می صامسونده یرلشدیرمک ایسته یور. بز لر سنه لرجه جبهه لرده عسکرلک ایتمش و وطن مملکت اوغرنده هر فداکارلیقدن چکنمه مش و بواغورده فقر و ضرورته دوچار اولمش زوالی لردت. یالکز عدالت کورمک ایچون ولوای مر ی احمدی طویلانمق اوزره انا طورراغنه قاووشدق. وضعیتیمز توقاده دکل صامسوندن بر ساعت مسافیه بيله حرکت مساعد دکلدر. قصورمز فقیرلک ایسه صامسونک اهمیت موقعیه و تجاریه سنک ویردیکی مساعده بزمده چالیشمغه عزمکارلغمز انحق مکافات ی بوراده تلافی ایده بلرز. عینی زمانده ساحه و شهر اهالیسندن و توتونجی صنفیندن اولدیغمزدن داخل احراجیه و هواسیله امتزاج ایدمه بز. امثالمرله عینی معامله یه تابع طوتولمق حصوصنده کی استرحاممز قبولی قبطی صنفی اضافه ایدیه رک رد اولنیور. جمهوریت خیمه قانونلردن عدل و مساوات بکمر. هر حالده صامسونده اسکانمره فرمان بیورلمسینی عرض و نیاز ایله رز.

فی ۱۶ / ۱ / ۴۰

توقاده سوق اولنمق ایسته مین الی خانه قواله

مهاجر ی نامنه حسن، مصطفی، حامش امین

::

Telegram.

Point of Arrival: Samsun.

Number: 1976.

To His Highness Gazi Pasha.

A Copy to the Illustrious Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement [1].

We, immigrants from Kavala, paid all our expenses out of our pocket and approximately nine hundred people arrived at Samsun. By separating fifty of our households among the immigrants for some reason beyond our knowledge, the settlement zone [2] in this area seeks to send us to Tokad and to settle a lot of wealthy fellow townsmen in Samsun. We are the nebbish who for years had served as soldiers on the front and did not hesitate to make all kinds of sacrifices for the sake of the fatherland and the country and we have fallen in poverty and need for this cause. We were united with our motherland, looking for ways to come together under the Muhammed's flag [3] and to seek justice. The conditions under which we live are not favorable to us to even travel to a distance of an hour away from Samsun, let alone to Tokad. Our perseverance to work hard is combined with the opportunities provided by the commercial and geographic importance that Samsun may offer us, if our poverty is found to be a defect.

At the same time, since we are a province community and an urban community and a tobacco worker community, we cannot adjust to its commercial and climatic conditions. Our request to be treated as equals with our fellows has been denied by attributing us as being from the Kibti community. We expect equality and justice from the codes of the glorious republic and kindly request and submit issuing a firman [4] to our settlement in Samsun.

16/1/[13]40 [5].

Hasan, Mustafa, Hamiş Emin.

On behalf of fifty immigrant households from Kavala who do not want to be transferred to Tokad.

Notes

1. The petition has two identical copies in Turkish with slight differences. The differences are mostly spelling ones. Most probably the second copy was an edited one.
2. The settlement zone was called the local office of the Ministry of Settlement and Reconstruction in charge of the settlement of the exchanged immigrants.
3. Is meant the prophet Muhammad's flag, the flag of Islam, Muslim homeland.
4. An Imperial edict, command, order. The supplicants submitted their petition to the president Mustafa Kemal Pasha. They attributed Mustafa Kemal Pasha an authority belonging to the Ottoman sultan.
5. The date corresponds to 1924.

Source: TCCDA GM, Fon No. 272 0 0 11, Kutu 17, Dosya No. 73, Sıra No. 18.

Prepared for publication by Nurşen Gürboğa.

The archival documents in riq'a handwriting are typed by Gülsüm Gülsev Şanver.

Comments

The two petitions were penned on behalf of the groups of the exchanged Gypsy (Kıbtı) immigrants who came to Turkey in the context of the 1923 Turkey Greece population exchange agreement. The population exchange convention was signed by Turkish and Greek delegations on January 30, 1923, within the context of the Lausanne peace talks. According to the convention, the Orthodox Greeks settled in Turkey and the Muslim citizens settled in Greece were decided to be exchanged, with the exception of Istanbul Greeks and Western Thrace Muslims (Ari, 1995, p. 1). Following the population exchange agreement, approximately 400,000 Muslim citizens of Greece and 1,200,000 Orthodox Greek citizens of Turkey were forced to leave their countries and to settle in their new lands. Since the main criteria in determining the exchanged population was religion, among them there were a variety of communities out of the main ethno-cultural population of the target country (Tsitselikis, 2005, p. 345). The Orthodox Christian Gypsies of Turkey and Muslim Gypsies of Greece were the exchanged groups out of the larger society in both countries as well (Gürboğa, 2016; Kolukırmık, 2016ab). The Gypsy groups who submitted the petitions to the Turkish authorities were those who came to Turkey along with the thousands of immigrants from Greece.

The petitions are important documents in many respects. Although we do not know whether the Gypsy supplicants or a scrivener wrote the petitions, the petitions bear the authentic voices of the immigrant Gypsies. Until now, the Gypsy communities' history has been presented primarily on the basis of state-generated documents, penned by male state authorities in various positions and mostly showcasing the concerns and interests of the state itself (Çelik, 2018, pp. 249-251). In the archives, however, we were able to discover also authentic voices of the Gypsies. They are found mostly in court records and in various kind of petitions. Especially the petitions are invaluable documents directly reflecting the requests and complaints of the Gypsy communities or persons in their authentic voices.

There is no doubt that the petition system was one of the traditional and long-lasting channels of communication in the service of the subjects of the Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey which conveyed the concerns of the ruled into the purview of the local and central bureaucracy (Metinsoy, 2011; Akın, 2009). The Gypsy supplicants of the above petitions resorted to the well-established channel of communication to have the state authorities in charge of the settlement of the immigrants hear their requests and complaints. The practice of writing petitions to the state authorities by the Gypsy communities or individuals were very frequent rather than extraordinary. This indicates their appeal to the ordinary communication channels with the state authorities alike the other groups in the Empire. The wide spread usage of petitions as a mundane channel of communication questions the use of the concept of "marginality" by the scholars to identify the relations of the Gypsies to the state and the society as well (Çelik, 2018, pp. 253-254). The frequent use of the petition system also disproves that they rarely left traces of their voices behind. By contrast, as the petitions above exemplify, they skilfully follow certain discursive strategies to persuade the authorities in line with their requests

and complaints. Certainly, petitions as one of the rich sources of the authentic voices of Gypsy communities and individuals provide the researchers with an opportunity to situate the Gypsies at the centre of research narratives with their authentic voices, who strove for the improvement of their conditions vis-a-vis the state they lived in.

The petitions penned by the Gypsies provide the researchers another opportunity: examining the interaction between ascription (i.e. self-definition) and description (i.e. definition by others) of identity while they were in contact with the state authorities. As the petitions above indicate the supplicants reformulated their Gypsy identity according to their practical needs and interests while communicating to the authorities. As the first petition shows, they sometimes accepted the Gypsy category as defined by the authorities, some other times refused it, as the second petition shows, and appealed to alternative ones, for instance citizenship identity or immigrant identity which were more beneficial than the Gypsy identity in the given context. As is known, the Gypsy communities had a multi-dimensional identity and they activated one or another to suit different conditions. Both petitions exemplify how Gypsy identity was malleable, reformulated and modified by the community members according to “the context of opportunity, constraints and power” (Eminov, 2007, p. 11). If there are more attractive alternatives, then individuals may take advantage of these alternatives by modifying, even changing, their demonstrated identity.

In both petitions the supplicants requested to determine their place of settlement by accepting or refusing a Gypsy identity. However, it was not the immigrants but the Ministry of Exchange, Reconstruction and Settlement that determined it. When the exchanged immigrants arrived in Turkey, their places of settlement were determined in accordance to their production skills and the geographic features of their regions of settlement back in Greece. Ethnic origin was also one of the determinants. The needy immigrants and the non-Turkish ones had to accept the place of settlement determined by the Ministry. Otherwise they were to be deported or deprived of immigrant rights. The aim of the government was to assimilate the non-Turkish Muslim immigrants into the Turkish culture by scattering them into the settlement locations where they were to become not more than 20 percent of the local community (30 Kanunusani, 1929, III (4) 110). Consequently, thousands of exchanged immigrants were settled in Aegean, Trace, Marmara, Black Sea, Central Anatolia and eastern Mediterranean regions of Turkey (Ari, 1995, pp. 52-54) according to the socio-economic, geographic and ethnic criteria.

In the first petition, the Gypsy supplicants wanted to be settled in the vicinity of Edirne and Çatalca located in Trace and in the second petition, the Gypsy supplicants wanted to stay in Samsun, located in the Black sea region rather than separated from the immigrant community with whom they came together and were send to Tokat, located in central Anatolia. Although the supplicants sought to determine their place of settlement, since they were non-Turkish elements as well as poor, they had no legal ground for their request, thus, had to persuade the authorities to settle where they desired.

The first petition is penned on behalf of a Gypsy group stationed temporarily in an Istanbul guest house, who defined themselves as ‘Kıbtı taifesi’, or Gypsy community

from Drama in Greece. The striking point in the petition is their emphasis on the 'difference' from the other immigrant groups rather than the 'similarity'. They differentiated themselves from the other Muslim immigrants who are working in agriculture and they underlined their Gypsy origin with an itinerant way of life without hesitancy or worry. Living in tents and dealing with horse trading was one of the 'Gypsy professions' which mostly occupied the lowest segment in the hierarchy of professions in the Ottoman and Turkish society (Çelik, 2003, pp. 174-176). Contrary to the stigmas and related prejudices, the supplicants boldly emphasised their profession and its connection to their Gypsy origin. Most probably the Gypsy identity in this circumstance was used to serve their socio-economic needs or provide them an opportunity to settle in Trace, historically inhabited by the Gypsy population. Instead of appealing to the other alternatives such as 'exchange', 'immigrant', 'Muslim', 'Turkish', or 'being from Drama', they consciously chose Kibti identity, to persuade the authorities to settle in Trace, more suitable to their profession. Their pragmatic use of Kibti category was no exception. It was used in the same manner in past, when the military conscription was imposed on Muslim Gypsies in 1873. At the time, some of them penned a petition to resist the new law on the grounds that they were 'Kibti' (Yilgür, 2018a, p. 280). Therefore, they could distance themselves from the new obligations from which previously they were exempted.

As a response to the request of the exchanged Gypsy group, the Ministry of Exchange, Reconstruction and Settlement sent a correspondence to the Istanbul office of the sixth directorate of the settlement and reconstruction zone to make all the necessary correspondences to the director of Thracian zone in order for the necessary actions to be taken in order that thirty-one households of Kibti's be transferred to Edirne, so long as they meet their own expenses (TCCDA GM, Fon No. 272 00 11, Kutu 17, Dosya No. 76, Sıra No. 12). In other words, their request was approved by the Ministry. The outcome from this petition illustrates the contingent relations between the state and the Gypsy groups, which cannot be reduced to continual conflict and confrontation.

The second petition was penned by three men on behalf of the fifty immigrants from the Kavala city of Greece. They arrived at Samsun with a large group of immigrants from Kavala and did not want to separate from their fellow townsmen in Samsun and to be settled in Tokat. According to them, the reason for their separation from the rest and for sending to Tokat was due to them being labelled by the authorities as Kibti. Their self-definition in the petition was in total contrast to the first petition examined above. Unlike the first petition within which Kibti identity served their request to settle in a place suitable to their profession, in the second petition Kibti identity appeared to be an obstacle to stay in a place where they could work as tobacco labourers. Hence while in the first petition the supplicants put an emphasis on their 'difference' from the agriculturalist immigrants on the basis of their Kibti origin, the supplicants of the second petition put an emphasis on 'sameness' to the other exchanged immigrants and refused to be labelled as Kibti which they assumed to be the reason of their discrimination.

The supplicants of the second petition defined themselves as immigrants from Kavala, hence they associated their origin with the name of their hometown in Greece rather

than with an ethnic name. Appealing to the ‘immigrant’ category and the refusal of the ‘Kıbtı’ name was not peculiar to the supplicants in question. Since the immigrant category provided the Gypsy communities a more prestigious position than the Kıbtı identity, the immigrant Gypsies frequently appealed to the immigrant identity. For instance, the immigrant Muslim Gypsies who came to the Ottoman Empire from the lost territories during the 1877-1878 Ottoman Russian War, preferred the immigrant category. When the immigrants arrived in the Ottoman cities, they were registered under the title of ‘immigrant’. By the ‘immigrant’ identity, the Gypsies received an opportunity to get rid of social and administrative discrimination and a chance of upward social mobility. They were allowed to settle in Muslim neighbourhoods so far as living Islamic moral codes as well. They also requested to change the names of their neighbourhoods having ‘Kıbtı’ and related titles (Yıldır, 2018a, pp. 285-290).

As the supplicants of the petitions and other historical sources exemplify, the Muslim immigrant Gypsy communities appealed to one among several identity categories interchangeably, depending on which one was the most suitable to their immediate needs in the given conjuncture. However, the second petition’s emphasis on their equal treatment by the authorities as their fellow immigrants, and their call for “equality” before law and “justice” in the name of the republic indicates the rise of a new identity category, the ‘citizenship’ identity. In fact, after the inclusion of Muslim Gypsies in the military conscription in 1873, the Muslim Gypsies were started to be registered in population censuses and registration books not as Gypsy but under the category of Muslim (Yıldır, 2018a, p. 284). The new registration practice was not implemented properly and upon the complaints of the Gypsies, the Gypsy category was removed for Muslim and Christian Gypsies in 1886 by a decision of the Council of State and they were decided to be registered under the title of the religious communities they belonged to. However, in the 1905-6 population censuses, the Gypsy category was brought back by an imperial decree. In the Ottoman parliament in 1909, the Gypsy category continued to be the subject of debate in the context of military conscription. Although some of the deputies advocated the removal of the Gypsy category on the ground that the Gypsies were Ottomans, others insisted on keeping the Gypsy category in military registrations (Ibid., pp. 290-292).

The appeal of the supplicants of the second petition to the citizenship identity by addressing justice, equality, rule of law in a republican regime can be situated in the struggle of the Gypsies for equal rights since the late 19th century. In the petition, they used a strategy to refuse stigmas attached to the Gypsies: such as statelessness, nominal religiosity, laziness, making easy money by emphasizing their patriotism, religiosity and zeal to work hard. Hence, as the patriots serving their countries on the fronts, as Muslims desiring to come together under the flag of Muhammad, as zealous to work hard they were deserving of an equal treatment to the other citizens. While negating Gypsy identity, they also negated all the stigmas associated with it, for the purpose of preventing discrimination. Most often, when the supplicants could not find a positive response to their requests or complaints at the local level, they wrote petitions to the

highest authority, president Mustafa Kemal Pasha. However, when the highest authorities were involved into the evaluation of the petition, in this case the Ministry of Settlement, Reconstruction, they often called examination of the suitability of the request by the local authorities, who had already been the cause of the complaints. As a matter of fact, the local branch of the Ministry once again refused the demand on the ground that they were Kıbtı from Kavala, the complaints were personal rather than communal and the decision to send them to Tokat was not based on ill-will but necessity (TCCDA GM, Fon No. 272 0 0 11, Kutu 17, Dosya No. 73, Sıra No: 18). This does not mean that the bureaucratic evaluation was univocal. There was a request among one official to look for the possibility of satisfying their request to stay in Samsun. However, upon the response from the local office of the ministry, it was decided to send the group to Tokat (Ibid.).

Nurşen Gürboğa

5.2 The Tobacco Workers

5.2.1 *Emin Atılal*

Konuştüğümüz herkes bir “Tütüncüler Grubu”ndan söz ediyordu. TKP’nin ender işçi örgütlenmelerinden biri olan bu grubun üyeleri kimlerdi o zaman? Ve en sonunda onlardan birini bir kahvede bulduk. 1951 TKP davası sanıkları arasında bulunan Emin Atılal, felç geçirdiği için sol kolu tutmuyor ve ancak kulaklıkla işitebiliyor. Kendisi 1924 Drama doğumlu, oldukça hoşsohbet bir insan.

Taa Yunanistan’dan Beri

“Bakın, Tütüncüler taa Yunanistan’dan beri işçi hareketlerinin içindedirler” diye başlıyor konuşmasına ve devam ediyor: “Onların Yunanistan işçi sınıfı mücadelesi içinde çok önemli bir yerleri vardır. Nitekim Türkiye’ye gelişlerinde de bu geleneği sürdürmüşlerdir. Ve bu yüzden işçi sınıfı davasına çok bağlı bir gruptur tütüncüler. Türkiye’de işçi sınıfı mücadelesini geliştirenler de onlardır. Yani bu mücadele içinde özel bir tarihi yerleri vardır. [...] Sendikalaşma ve grev atımları, sosyalist harekete kadro yetiştirme, o zamanlar hep bu gruptan sağlanmıştı” diyor ve kendi ailesine geçiyor:

“Mesela ben, daha çocukluğumdan beri bilinçliyim. Çünkü bütün sülalem bu işlerin içinden gelme insanlardı. Nitekim ağabeyim İbrahim Atılal, Tütün İşçileri Sendikası kurucusu ve genel sekreteriydi. Kendisi 1946 TSEKP tevkifatında ve 1951 TKP davasında da vardır. Amcam Seyyit Ali Atılal da aşağı yukarı her tevkifatta var ve hepimizden de eskidir. Yani biz ailece bu mücadelenin içinde yer almış insanlarız.”

Ve devam ediyor diğer “eski partili” tütüncülerini anlatmaya: “Muammer Tamkan, Yaşar Beyaztekk, Arif Nanak, Ahmet Taşkıran, Zehra Kosova, Mustafa Özçelik, bu arkadaşlar da bizdendir ve TKP davalarının sanığı durumundadırlar.” Yeri gelmişken Mustafa Özçelik’in sağ olduğunu, defalarca aramama ve onca ısrarına rağmen konuşmak istemediğini belirtiyim. Onu da bu sayfalarda görmek beni mutlandıracaktı, ama olmadı.

Nazım'ı denizaltı ile kaçırdık

Söz eski arkadaşlardan ve arkadaşlıklardan açılmıştı bir kez. Hep birileri yad ediliyordu. İşte tam o sırada, şimdi ölmüş bulunan Muammer Tamkan'ın ağabeyi söze giriyor: Ağabey Haydar Tamkan da eski TİP üyelerinden. Başlıyor anlatmaya: “Kardeşim Muammer Tamkan, 1951 TKP tevkifatında tam 2 ay müdüriyette kaldı. Çok dayak yedi, hatta bir ara kan kustu. Sonuçta iki yıl ceza aldı, bir defa da 10 ay Malatya'da sürgünlük. Müdüriyette ilginç bir de sorgusu vardır. Kardeşime, Nazım Hikmet'i nasıl kaçırdınız, diye soruyorlar. O da sıkışmış, bir yalan atayım da kurtulayım şu dayaktan diyor. Biz Ortaköy'deki deniz kıyısında kahvede oturuyorduk, Nazım da yanımızdaydı. Bir denizaltı yanaştı, biz de onu kamufle edip, denizaltıya bindirip kaçırdık, deyince bu sefer daha çok yer misin yemez misin?”

Tütüncüler “esmer vatandaş” oldukları için, haklarında çeşitli söylentiler çıkmış. Düşünlerde zurnayla Enternasyonal çaldıkları gibi, “Öyle bir şey duymadım, ama düşünlerde çalgı çalmaya giden arkadaşlarımız vardı aramızda” diyor Emin Atılal. Sonra yediği 5 yıl cezayı, sırasıyla Harbiye, Güvercinlik, Paşakapısı, Sultanahmet cezaevlerini, Aydın'ın Çine kasabasındaki sürgün günlerini anlatıyor. Ve hâlâ sosyalizme yürekten bağlı, şunları söylüyor: “65 yaşındayım, ümidimi hiç kırmadım. Hep sosyalizm gelecek diye yaşadım. Tabii artık yaşım bu işler için geçse de ben ölsem de olacak bu iş.”

Emin Atılal da Tütüncüler Grubu'nun son temsilcilerinden. [...]

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Whomever, we interview mentions ‘The Group of Tobacco Workers’. Then, who were the members of this group, one of the rare labour organisations of TKP (The Communist Party of Turkey)? Finally, we found one of them in a coffee house: Emin Atılal, who was among the suspects of the 1951 TKP trial, whose left arm is disabled by a stroke and can only hear with a hearing aid. He was born in Drama in 1924, a well-spoken person.

Ever Since Greece

He starts saying ‘Look, the tobacco workers have been a part of labour movements ever since they were in Greece’ and continues: ‘They have a crucial role in the struggle of Greek working class. Therefore, they maintained this tradition when they came to Turkey. Thus, they were a group highly dedicated to working-class ideals. They were the actual developers of working-class struggle. I mean they have had a particular historical place in this struggle. Union organisation, strike attempts, cadre training for socialist movement. [...] They provided the human resource for all these tasks’ and his family:

“For example, me. I have been conscious since I was a child. Because all of my extended family has been a part of these activities. My elder brother, İbrahim Atılal, was the founder and general secretary of the Union of Tobacco Workers. He was arrested in 1946 TSEKP (The Socialist Party of Labourers and Peasants of Turkey) and in 1951 TKP trials. My uncle Seyit was detained in almost all arrest campaigns and he was more experienced in these activities than all of us. So, we, as a family, have been a part of this struggle.”

He continues to talk about the 'old party member' tobacco workers: "Muammer Tamkan, Yaşar Beyaztekk, Arif Nanak, Ahmet Taşkıran, Zehra Kosova, Mustafa Özçelik [1], these friends were also a part of us, and they were suspects of the TKP trials." In speaking of which, Mustafa Özçelik is alive, although I called him many times and insisted, he did not want to talk. To see him in these pages would make me happier, but it did not happen.

We Escaped Nazim with a Submarine

We were talking about old friends and friendships. We mentioned many individuals. At that point, elder brother of Muammer Tamkan, who is no longer alive, cut in. His elder brother, Haydar Tamkan is also one of the old members of TIP (The Workers Party of Turkey). He starts to tell: "My brother, Muammer Tamkan, was arrested in a police station for two months. He was beaten too much. Moreover, he once spat blood. Finally, he was sentenced to two years, and he was once sent into exile to Malatya for ten months. He had experience of an interesting inquiry in the police. They ask my brother, 'How did you escape Nazım Hikmet?' [2]. He was under pressure and lied hoping to escape from the beating. He says: 'We were sitting in a coffee house around the seaside, near Ortaköy. We were together with Nazım. A submarine came, and we camouflaged and embarked him on the submarine, and thus, we escaped him. Then they beat us more than they did before.'"

As the tobacco workers are *esmer vatandaş* (dark-skinned citizens) [3], there have been some rumours about them, such as they were playing International with zurna. Emin Atılal says: "I did not hear such a thing, but we have some friends who go to weddings to play their instruments." Then he explains how he was sentenced to five years, his experiences in the prisons, respectively Harbiye, Güvercinlik, Paşakapısı, Sultanahmet, and his exile to Çine town in Aydın. He is still sincerely dedicated to socialism and says: "I am 65 years, I have never given up hope. I always live with the expectation to see the foundation of socialism. Surely, I am too old for these activities. It is nothing! It will happen even if I die."

Emin Atılal is also among the last representatives of the group of tobacco workers. [...]

5.2.2 Zehra Kosova

Zehra Kosova'yı defalarca aramama rağmen, bir türlü bulamıyorum. Bir ara fenalaştığını duymuş ve neredeyse onu bulmaktan ümidimi kesmiştim ki, tarif üzerine evinin izini saptadım. Kasımpaşa'nın arka sokaklarında tek göz bir odada kalıyordu. Ve işte bir dönemin kadın militanlarından Zehra Kosova şimdi saçları beyazlaşmış, tonton bir teyze olarak duruyordu karşımda. Benim onu aradığımı duymuş, nereden duymuşsa, pek de konuşmaya istekli değildi başlangıçta. Kısa da olsa bir sohbet yapabildim kendisiyle ...

O da "Tütünçüler Grubu"nda. 1914 Yunanistan, Kavala doğumlu. 17 yaşından beri sosyalist görüyor kendini, bugüne kadar birçok grevin örgütleyicileri arasında yer almış. 1946 ve 1948'de komünizm propagandası yapmaktan tutuklanmış. Ayrıca 1951 TKP davası sanıklarından, 14 ay tutuklu kalıyor, işkencede bacağı kırılıyor. ...'nin (Çevirmenin notu: Söz

konusu kişinin şahsi haklarının korunması adına ismi metinden çıkarılmıştır) hakkındaki itirafına rağmen, hiçbir şeyi kabul etmiyor. Nitekim Yalçın Küçük'ün "TKP Pişmanları" isimli çalışmasında adı, "TKP Direngenleri" arasında onur listesinde yer alıyor.

Kosova 1934'te Doğu Halkları Komünist Üniversitesine (KUTV) okumak üzere giden grup arasında yer alıyor. Orada kendi gibi sosyalist olan eşi İskender Kosova ile tanışıp evleniyor. Zehra Kosova'yı en son 1958'deki Hikmet Kıvılcımlı'nın Vatan Partisi (VP) örgütlenmesi içinde görüyoruz, bir tevkifat daha görüyor. Tütüncüleri ise şöyle anlatmakta: "Biz daha Yunanistan'da iken Yunanlı işçilerle dayanışma içerisinde olarak katılmıştık harekete. Türkiye'ye göç edince de bu bilincimizi koruduk. Biz oldukça kalabalık bir gruptuk ve en az yüzde yirmi beşimiz bilinçli durumdaydık. Aileler de çok aktifti. Diyebilirim ki, en militan kesim tütüncüler içinden çıkmıştır. Ve işçi sınıfını bir dönem adeta biz temsil ediyorduk." Kosova işçileri münevverlerden farklı görüyor, birliğe daha önem verdiklerini ve çalışmaktan kaçındıklarını söylüyor.

Kadın bir militan olmanın farkını ve harekette bu ayrımın nasıl şekillendiğini soruyorum. O da "Pratikte böyle bir ayrımın olmadığını ve tüm militanların eşit koşullarda mücadele ettiklerini", hareketin ayrı bir kadın örgütlenmesi olmadığını da ekleyerek söylüyor.

Anılar, Anılar

O da birilerini anmadan edemiyor. TSEKP Beyoğlu ilçesinde çalıştığı arkadaşları Mustafa Arhavi, İbiş, Panayot ve Nubar'ı saygıyla anıyor. Ama en unutamadığı kişi, Topal Hasan diye bilinen Hasan Erim. Birden geçmişin hüznünlü yörelerine dalarak, gözleri yaşıyor. "O çok sevdiğim, yakın bir dostumdu. Dinamit gibi, gagesine sadık, işçi sınıfının bir askeri idi. Yıllarca birlikte çalıştık. Tütüncüler içinde en ileri görüşlü ve meselelere vakıf bir arkadaştı. İş bulamadığım, parasız kaldığımda bana bir o yardım etmişti. 22,5 lira haftalık alır ve 5 lirasını bana verirdi. Tam bir dosttu."

Mimlenmiş bir militan olmak zor işti doğrusu. Nitekim Kosova'ya bu yüzden iş vermemişler, bulduğu işleri de polis engellemiş. Hatta, bir ara aç kalma tehlikesi yaşamış. Aylarca işsiz dolaşmış, "şikâyet sanılmasın ama bazı dostlar elini uzatmadılar" diyor. Kahve ikram ederken değiniyor bunlara. Ha, bir de anılarını yazıyormuş, kimbilir belki bir gün, daha etraflı okuruz.

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Although I attempted many times, I could once never reached Zehra Kosova [4]. While I heard that she was ill and almost stopped trying to find her, I detected the location of her house on a description. She was staying in a room in the backstreets of Kasımpaşa. So Zehra Kosova, one of the female militants of the era, was in front of me as a grey-haired, pretty, old woman. She somehow heard that I had been looking for her and she was not very enthusiastic to talk. Nevertheless, I could have a conversation with her, although it was short.

She is also one of the 'tobacco workers'. She was born in Kavala, Greece in 1914. She has assumed herself as a socialist since she was 17 years old, she has been among organizers

of the many strikes. She has been arrested for communist propaganda in 1946 and 1948. Besides, she was among the suspects of 1951 TKP Trial, detained for 14 months; her leg was broken during the torture. Although XX [5] confessed her presence in the activities, she confessed nothing. Therefore, she has been added to the honour list, 'resisters of TKP' in the book, 'the Penitents of TKP' by Yalçın Küçük.

Kosova was among the ones who were sent for training to the Communist University of Eastern Peoples (KUTV) [6] in 1934. She met İskender Kosova there who was also a socialist like her and they married. We see her finally as a part of the organisation of the Homeland Party (Vatan Partisi) founded by Hikmet Kıvılcımlı [7], then she faced another arrest campaign. She introduces the tobacco workers: "Even in Greece, we participated in the movement in solidarity with Greek workers. After we migrated to Turkey, we maintained our consciousness. We were populous, and at least 25 % of us were conscious. The families were highly active. I can say the tobacco workers were the most militant ones. It was nearly us the representative of the working class for a period." Kosova distinguish workers from the intellectuals as the former prioritise unity and avoid from inner conflicts.

I ask her about the distinctiveness of being a female militant and how this distinction occurred in the movement. She says: "There was not such a distinction practically and all the militants struggled in equal conditions", and there was not a separate women section of the movement.

Memories, Memories

She could not hinder herself from mentioning persons. She remembers with respect her friends with whom she worked in the Beyoğlu branch of TSEKP, Mustafa Arhavi, İbiş, Panayot, and Nubar. The most unforgettable of them was Hasan Erim, known as Topal (cripple) Hasan. Immediately, she muses on wistful fields of the past, and her eyes fill with tears. "He was my beloved intimate friend. He was a soldier of working-class, dynamic and dedicated to his ideal. We worked for years. He was the most far-sighted of tobacco workers and had a grasp of the issues. He was the only one who helped me whenever I was unemployed and destitute. His weekly wage was 22,5 *liras* and gave 5 of it to me. He was a real friend."

It was challenging to live as a stigmatised militant. Therefore, she could not find a job, and the police intervened whenever she succeeded. Moreover, she was once starving. She was unemployed for months. "I do not complain, but some friends did not help me". These are the things she mentioned while she provides coffee. Moreover, she is also writing her memoirs. Who knows, maybe one day, we can read them thoroughly.

Notes

1. Mustafa Özçelik. He was one of the most prominent figures among the tobacco workers. The collection of his memoirs and some essential documents testifying the role of Gypsy tobacco workers' in the Turkish left and union movements was published by the Social History Research Foundation of Turkey (TÜSTAV) in 2003 (Özçelik, 2003).

2. The famous Turkish poet, Nazım Hikmet (1902-1963) was born in Thessaloniki. He went to Moscow for training in KUTV in 1921. After his turn to Turkey, the local police arrested him for a while. Although his acquittal of many charges concerning his poems, which reflected a strong sense of dedication to the leftist ideals, he was sentenced for his organisational activities in 1933 and 1937. In 1938, the police arrested him again for provoking the army and the navy to revolt and the court sentenced him to 28 years and four months. He was released with a general amnesty in 1950. However, although he was not liable legally, the state tried to conscript him to the army, and according to him, this was a severe threat. Then he left Istanbul in 1951 and went to Moscow (Hikmet, 2013; 1962).

3. *Esmir Vatandaş*. The literal translation of the idiom is ‘dark-skinned citizen’. It is a semi-formal expression used to define communities popularly denominated as ‘Kıbtî’ or ‘Çingene’ in the Republican era. Arayıcı (1999, p. 178) and Er (Türkiye, 1996) argue that the designation was given to “Gypsies” by the state in the 1950s. However, this hypothesis has not been convincingly proven yet.

4. Her dedication to leftist ideals and her ability to express them sincerely made Zehra Kosova an extraordinary female figure among tobacco workers and leftist cadres in general. An anecdote published by Zihni Anadol, a journalist, politician and author in his autobiographical work enlightens Kosova’s role in the development of the leftist movements in the era.

The trade unions that were established right after 1946 fell under the Istanbul Union of Syndicates. A ruined bakery in Beşiktaş was chosen as the center for the union. However, the intellectual members of the party, most of whom were members of the country’s elite, were unable to find financial resources to repair the building. Fortunately, this problem, which had stymied the intellectual elite of the party, was solved by the Gypsy tobacco workers. When the prominent tobacco workers gathered to evaluate this problem in Ortaköy, Zehra Kosova put down the child in her arms and said, “I found the solution”. She presented her ring and earrings. “We will repair our trade union with these; we will retain our existence with these; we will show them who we are. I was starving and lacking water. However, I never used them, even in my worst days. I waited for the day. That day is today. I sacrifice them to our trade union.” When her enthusiastic speech was communicated to the leader of the party, Şefik Hüsnü, he burst into tears (Yıldır, 2015, pp. 184-185).

5. The name was removed by the translator to save the personal rights of the mentioned person 6. KUTV. The correct translation of original designation ‘Коммунистический университет трудящихся Востока’ has to be ‘the Communist University of the Toilers of the East’. KUTV was established as a specialised institution for the training of foreign citizens of eastern nationalities in 1921.

7. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı. He was a prominent leftist theoretician, politician, and a pivotal figure in the eyes of Gypsy tobacco workers as well (cf. Ağcabay, 2009).

Sources: Akar, A. 1989. *Bir Kuşağın Son Temsilcileri “Eski Tüfek” Sosyalistler*. İstanbul: İletişim, pp. 108-111. I acknowledge Tanıl Bora and İletişim Publishing for allowing us to re-print the above text. Prepared for publication by Egemen Yıldır

Comments

The book by Atilla Akar is a collection of interviews with the prominent figures of the Turkish left. In the book title “Last Representatives of a Generation ‘old rifle’ Socialist” a Turkish local idiom *eski tüfek*, (old rifle), is used for designating the old and still dedicated Leftists of the Party Members. Two of them, Emin Atılal and Zehra Kosova were among the party cadres who created active organisations involving tobacco workers in the early Republican era. Their selection for the book is not a coincidence, but it reflects their popular image as dedicated socialists and worker leaders.

Gypsy tobacco workers' political culture developed in Greece before the population exchange in 1923-24. They had learned many things from the more experienced Greek and Jewish workers. Emin Atılal seems to be aware of this interaction and emphasises his ancestors' role in the Greek working-class struggle. Moreover, the experience of political participation involving a few generations had shaped their culture on an everyday basis, and the transfer of this culture was initially occurring in their families, at least in many cases. Atılal had a chance to grow in interaction with his family members who had a particular role for the unionisation and political participation of the tobacco workers.

Along with the epic narratives about the organisation and struggle in tobacco factories, the family members' prison experiences told at home made the imprisonment as a threat for the state apparatus less shocking and less terrific, and moreover, almost familiar for the Gypsy tobacco workers. The same point was also raised by Zehra Kosova. She emphasises the presence of the tobacco workers in the union and leftist movements before the population exchange and their participation in politics as family units, which was a highly unique phenomenon for the Turkish left during the early Republican era.

Zehra Kosova was quite critical about some of the intellectual cadres of the leftist movement. She expressed her concerns about them emphasising the merits of workers. She believed that the workers had an attitude to prioritise unity and did not turn the inner conflicts to irreversible divisions. This expression implies a strong sense of inconvenience about the intellectual cadres as they could easily exaggerate differences and produce fractions. Her capability for being critical about the intellectuals, who occupied the higher posts in the official party hierarchy is also of interest in that she perceives Gypsy tobacco workers as an independent circle in the left instead of mere instruments that were being commanded by the educated cadres. The language used by the editor, Atilla Akar, implies that the Gypsy tobacco workers have also been conceived as a subgroup within the Turkish left by their non-Roma and non-worker comrades. Although they were able to transfer their political culture to their offsprings and generate strong community ties which were utilised in the party activities, and therefore constitute a group, it would be an exaggeration to conceive them as a hierarchical organisation themselves. They were more likely to be a diverse community of Gypsy tobacco workers whose familiarity with politics largely depended on the collective and individual experiences of a few generations.

It is not surprising to see that Kosova and Atılal were not enthusiastic to declare the presence of Gypsy individuals among tobacco workers in the interviews. Until recent times, Gypsy, particularly more integrated or assimilated ones, tended to hide their Gypsy identity if possible, along with the rejection of often perceived as pejorative exonyms such as 'Çingene' or 'Kıbtı' in Turkey. In the interview with Emin Atılal, Akar refers to the popular rumour of playing International with *zurna*, a local musical instrument, which is an implication for the Gypsy origin of the tobacco workers and the use of the semi-formal, yet humiliating to a degree, expression *esmer vatandaş* to define them. There is no sign of Emin Atılal's rejection or acceptance of this claim in the interview. However,

he refers to the factual basis of the above-mentioned rumour, namely that some of the tobacco workers were also playing instruments at weddings, as additional work.

Egemen Yilgür

5.2.3 *An Obituary for Zehra Kosova*

İşçi sınıfı davası uğruna mücadeleler ile geçen doksan bir yıllık bir ömür sona erdi. Zehra Kosova göçmen tütün işçileri çevresindendi. Büyük çoğunluğu Roman olan ve en çok horlanan, en gaddarca sömürülen emekçi kesiminden. Mübadil göçmen olarak Türkiye'ye gelen ve Anavatan bildikleri bu topraklarda daha da ilkel bir kapitalizmin çarklarının dişlilerine yakalananlardan. Sülalece tütün işçisi idi Zehra. Anası, babası Yunanistan'ın Kavala kentinde en bilinçli tütün işçilerinin çatısı altında toplandıkları Kızıl Kulübün üyesi idiler.

Kavala kentinin göbeğinde bir meydan var. Sol partiler mitinglerini o meydanda yapıyorlar. Adı "Tütün İşçileri Meydanı", (Platiya Kapnergaton). Meydanın ortasında bir anıt. Tunçtan iki erkek bir kadın heykeli. Anıtın tabanını oluşturan bloğu bir şerit gibi kuşatan gene tunçtan kabartma tütün yaprakları ve eller, eller. Az ötede mermer bir blok üzerinde sınıf savaşında şehit düşen tütün işçilerinin adları yazılı. Papadopolosların faşist cuntası o anıta dokunamadı. Meydanın adını değiştirmeye de cüret edemedi. Bu, tütün işçilerinin sınıf mücadelesinin Yunanistan tarihinde ne derin kökler saldıgının bir kanıtıdır.

Birkaç yıl önce Kavala'da geçirdiğimiz iki hafta süresince hemen hemen her gün Mihri Belli ile birlikte o meydana gittik. Bu ziyaret yalnızca Yunan işçilerine değil bizim ülkemizin göçmen tütün işçilerine de saygının bir ifadesiydi. Çünkü o mücadeleye Türk, Pomak, Roman işçiler de Yunanlı kardeşleriyle omuz omuza katılmışlardı. Zehra Kosova böyle bir gelenekten geliyordu işte.

Göçmen tütün işçisinin öyküsünü yeni kuşaklar bilmelidirler. İbret dolu bir öyküdür o. Onlar, mübadil olarak Türkiye'ye gelirken çıkınları, sepetleriyle birlikte sosyalist bilinci de beraberlerinde getirmişlerdi. Bu bakımdan yerli işçilerden çok daha bilinçli, çok daha ileri durumdaydılar. Uzun yıllar Kasımpaşa'nın, Ortaköy'ün tütün üretim merkezleri birer parti okulu idi. Bir yandan tütün işlerken bir yandan da okuyor tartışıyorlardı.

Zehra Kosova'nın yaşam öyküsünü burada ayrıntılı olarak anlatacak değiliz. Şu kadarını söylemekle yetinelim. Genç kızlık çağından bu yana, nerede bir illegal komünist örgütlenmesi olduysa Zehra abla saflarda yerini almıştır. Nerede sol nitelikte bir legal siyasi örgütlenme girişimi olduysa Zehra abla girişime katılmıştır. Tütün alanında olsun, başka üretim alanlarında örneğin tekstilde olsun sendikalaşma doğrultusunda nerede bir hareket olduysa Zehra abla oradaydı ve öncüydü. Zehra Kosova genellikle erkeklerin alanı sayılan bu alanda öncü kadınlarımızdandır. Giderek o alanda bir numaradır. DİSK Emek Ödülünü alan tek kişidir. Sendikacılık alanında antidemokratik koşullarda bir numara olabilmek inançlı, ciddi ve yiğit kişilik ister. Zehra Kosova'da bunların hepsi ve fazlası vardı. Defalarca tutuklandı, işkence gördü, yıllarca hapis yattı. Bağımlı kapitalizm koşullarında bir militanın kaderiydi onunki de.

Ben Zehra Kosova ile birlikte hapis yatmadım. 1951 tevkifatında o da tutuklanmıştı. Ama ben, Sansaryan Handa iki yıl süren tecritten sonra Harbiye Askeri Cezaevinde

kadınlar koğuşuna getirildiğimde o 14 aylık bir tutukluluk süresinden sonra tahliye edilmiş bulunuyordu. Birlikte hapis yatmadık ama bu birbirimizi tanımamıza engel değildi. Kadınlar koğuşunda öteki mahpuslardan “Zehra abla” hakkında çok şeyler dinledim. Sevilen, sayılan bir arkadaş, bir yoldaşı Zehra Kosova.

Evet, tütün işçilerinin illegal komünist hareket içinde önemli bir yeri vardır. 1951-53 tevkifatını izleyen yargılamada da onlar kalabalık bir grup idiler. 160 küsur sanık içinde neredeyse 30, 35 tütün işçisi. Onlar egemenlerin itirafçılar yaratmak için çıkardıkları ceza indirimi yasasına itibar etmediler. Saflarımızı bölmek amacıyla, bir yandan tahkikat sürerken Türk Ceza Kanunun 141’inci maddesine nedamet getiren itirafçılar için bir Yedinci fıkra eklenmişti. Mahkemede sorgu sırasında “iddianamede hakkımda yazılanlar doğrudur. Ben partili idim. Ama bundan sonra bu işlerde yokum. Tahliyemi istiyorum” dedin mi, derhal tahliye ediliyordun. Daha çok mektep medrese görmüşler arasında bu fıkradan yararlanmayı kabul eden beş on kişi çıktı. Ama Roman tütün işçilerinden tek kişi çıkmadı. Aileleri yoksulluk içinde kıvranıyordu, ama onlar dişlerini sıktılar ve namuslarıyla uzun yıllar hapis yatmayı bildiler.

Bilindiği gibi, 1960’lardan bu yana, özellikle sosyalist ülkelerde yönetimin bürokratik bir nitelik edinmesi sonucu dünya ölçüsünde sosyalist harekette bölünmeler yaşandı. Bunun Türkiye’ye de yansıması kaçınılmazdı, nitekim öyle oldu. Ama Türkiye’nin göçmen tütün işçileri hiçbir zaman rotayı şaşırmadılar. Onlar Mustafa Suphilerin, Şefik Hüsnülerin, Reşat Fuatların yolundan şaşmadılar.

Zehra Kosova yoldaşımızın ölümüyle sosyalist hareketimizin acılarla dolu ama gene de coşkulu ve yükselen bir döneminin önemli bir tanığı, saygın bir temsilcisi saflarımızdan ayrılmış oluyor. Onun yaşamı mücadeleye adanmış, bu yüzden de anlamlı bir yaşamdı. Boşa gitmemiş bir yaşamdı. Ne mutlu ona.

26 Ağustos 2001.

Sevim Belli.

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A life of ninety-one years, which was spent on the struggles dedicated to the grand purpose of the working-class has ended. Zehra Kosova was from the circle of the immigrant tobacco workers; the group of labourers, the majority of which were Roma and who were most despised and exploited most brutally. She was one of them who came to Turkey as an exchangee [1] immigrant and was captured by the wheels of a more primitive form of capitalism in a territory where they believed to be their homeland. All of Zehra’s family were tobacco workers, her mother and her father affiliated to the Red Club (*Kızıl Kulüp*) [2], an organisation involving the most conscientious tobacco workers in Kavala town in Greece.

There is a square in Kavala town centre, where leftist parties hold their meetings. Its name is the square of tobacco workers, (*Platiya Kapnergaton*) [3]. There is a monument in the middle of the square, bronze statues of two men and a woman. The blog on the bottom of the monument is surrounded by tobacco leaves out of bronze as well as hands.

The names of tobacco workers who were martyred in the class struggle were inscribed on a marble blog a little beyond. The fascist junta of Papadopoulos cannot touch this monument. They cannot dare even to change the name of the square, which indicates how deeply the class struggle of tobacco workers was rooted in the history of Greece [4].

A few years ago, we, I and Mihri Belli, went to that square for almost every day during our two-week stay in Kavala. These visits were the manifestation of our respect, not only for the Greek workers but our countries' immigrant tobacco workers as well. Because, along with Greek workers, Turkish, Pomak, Roma workers participated in that struggle. Zehra Kosova was part of such a tradition.

New generations should learn the story of the immigrant tobacco worker. It is an exemplary story. They brought socialist consciousness along with their fardels and baskets when they came to Turkey as exchangees. Therefore, they were far more conscientious and far more progressive than the local workers. The tobacco manufacture centres in Kasımpaşa and Ortaköy were like party schools for many years. While they were processing tobacco, they were reading and discussing the issues as well.

We will not tell the whole life story of Zehra Kosova in detail here. Let us confine ourselves to a limited version: Since her maidenhood, Zehra Abila [5] became a part of any illegal communist organisations wherever that occurred. Zehra Abila supported all the attempts for the development of leftist legal organisations whenever that occurred. Wherever there was a movement for unionisation in tobacco or other areas of manufacture, for example, textile, Zehra Abila headed there. Zehra Kosova was among our female leaders in an area that has usually been assumed to be confined to men.

Furthermore, she was almost the first in this case. She is the only person who received the Confederation of Revolutionary Worker Unions (DİSK) Labour Award. It requires one to have a dedicated, dignified, and brave personality to be first as a union leader under anti-democratic conditions. Zehra Kosova had all these and more. She was arrested plenty of times, tortured, stayed in prison for years. What she lived was the destiny of a militant under the conditions of dependent capitalism.

I did not stay in prison with Zehra Kosova. She was also arrested in the 1951 campaign. However, when I was brought to the women's ward in Harbiye Military Prison after two-years of isolation at Sansaryan Han, she had already been released after a 14-month arrest. We did not stay together in prison, but this has never been an obstacle for us to know each other. I heard many things about her from the other prisoners in the women's ward. Zehra Kosova was a favourite, respectable friend, and a comrade.

Yes, the tobacco workers had an essential place in the illegal communist movement. They constituted a populous group in the investigations following the 1951-1952 arrest campaigns: Almost 30-35 tobacco workers among about 160 suspects. They did not prefer to benefit from the remission law, which was introduced by the sovereigns to create confessors. While the investigation was continuing, a seventh clause was added to the 141st article of Turkish Criminal Law for the confessors repented to divide us. During the court inquiry, if they said "the claims about me written in the accusation are true, I was once affiliated to the party. I will not be a part of these activities anymore. I demand to be

released”, then, the court immediately released them. There were five or ten persons from among whom the more educated ones accepted to benefit from this clause. However, there was no one from the Roma tobacco workers. Their families were suffering from poverty. However, they grit their teeth and found a way to deal with prison conditions in an upright manner.

As is known, since the 1960s, there has been some global divisions in the socialist movement as the administration in socialist countries got a more bureaucratic character. The occurrence of the same thing in Turkey was indispensable, and therefore, it happened. However, immigrant tobacco workers never lost their bearings. They became loyal to the path of the leaders such as Mustafa Suphi, Şefik Hüsnü, Reşat Fuat [6].

The death of our comrade, Zehra Kosova means the loss of a prominent witness to an era of our socialist movement, full of pains, but enthusiastic and rising as well. Her life was dedicated to the struggle and therefore, meaningful. How happy for her that she never wasted her life!

August 26, 2001.

Sevim Belli.

Notes

1. The term used is *Mübadil*, exchangee, this term is mainly used in the context of the Turk-Greek Population Exchange (Hirschon, 2004a, p. xii), in which Roma were also included. However, we are still far from providing accurate quantitative figures about their exact number. The recent studies provided pivotal cases exemplifying the presence of Roma among the Muslim exchangees (Kolukırık, 2006; Gürboğa, 2015; Yilgür, 2015; 2016).
2. There are mentions on the Red Club in the accounts of other immigrant tobacco workers as well (Yilgür, 2015, pp. 177-78). Clubs were crucial for self-organising of different ethnic and social groups in Thessaloniki and around (for a short development history of clubs and the related socialist organisations see Starr, 1947; Aktsoglou, 1997; Hadar, 2007; Haupt & Dumond, 2013).
3. The expression is quoted from the original text. It is rendered as Kapnergati's Square or the square of tobacco worker (Mentesidou, 2016, pp. 46).
4. The author might probably be misinformed about the history of the square. According to Angeloudi (Αγγελούδη, 2010, pp. 175 referred by Mentesidou, 2016, pp. 46), the square was given its name in 1986 and immediately after, the monument was placed there; much later than the collapse of the military rule in Greece in the 1970s (Clogg, 1997).
5. *Abla* means elder sister in Turkish. It has considerably been relevant to call Zehra Kosova as Zehra Abla among the leftists from different circles. The shared saying, which indicates Zehra Kosova's perception as a stable and consistent female figure, reflects a shared sense of intimacy with her as well.
6. Mustafa Suphi, Şefik Hüsnü, and Reşat Fuat were among the most prominent leaders of the late-Ottoman and early Republican socialist movement. They represent the early attempts to establish a tradition of orthodox Marxism in Turkey and, therefore, they have been respectable historical figures at least for a considerable portion of the Turkish left, including Belli (cf. their biographies in Aziz, 2009; Akbulut, 2010; Tosun, 2013).

Source: Belli, S. (2011). Sunu-Zehra Kosova Öldü. In Kosova, Z. *Ben İşçiyim*. İstanbul: Sarı Defter-Tüstav, pp. 11-13. I appreciate kindness and support of Erden Akbulut and TÜSTAV for letting us reprint the text above.

Prepared for publication by Egemen Yilgür.

Comments

Zehra Kosova was among the most famous and the most respectable representatives of the immigrant tobacco workers. The publication of her memoir, *Ben İşçiyim* (I am Worker) carried her reputation among the leftist circles in Turkey to the broader public. The document above is the foreword of the book's second edition. It was Zehra Kosova's funeral speech presented by Sevim Belli, another female figure of the Turkish left, also respectable and prominent (cf. Belli, 1994). In Zehra Kosova's biography in the funeral speech, Sevim Belli intended to introduce the Roma tobacco workers as an entire community instead of a mere concentration. The speech was a well-structured presentation of the prevalent image of the Gypsy tobacco workers, which, before that, had been mostly invisible to the public. She somehow succeeded in dealing with the well-known difficulties of the Gypsy tobacco workers' public representation, which derived from the discrepancy between their self-identification and the external designation of the community. In the speech, she uses the term *Roman*, the Turkish counterpart of the original Roma word 'Rom'. In Turkey, the term became popular since the 1990s and a considerable portion of Turkish society has perceived it as a more polite way to describe communities whom they traditionally denominated as 'Çingene' (Gypsies). Along with many others, a famous novelist who was actively affiliated with the early leftist movements, Vedat Türkali reveals that this inconvenience about the external designation was also the case for the Gypsy tobacco workers (Demirel et al., 2010). Thus, Sevim Belli adopted the new and relatively more prestigious term to indicate the presence of a Roma element, the most visible and dominant one among the immigrant tobacco workers. Moreover, she tended to define the labour circle as the 'Roma tobacco workers', which was not an exaggeration, as the non-Roma individuals were extremely exceptional among them.

The points raised by Belli in the speech, such as Zehra Kosova's dedication to the leftist ideals, her possession of the skills required to be a union leader and her consistent attitude against the threat of torture or prison are integral elements constituting the positive image of immigrant tobacco workers in general. Although this heroic image has been prevalent among the leftist circles until today, one should not ignore the other accounts about the Roma tobacco workers: such as the narratives of a former leftist anti-communist author, Aclan Sayılğan. He conceives them as non-considerable elements which could be hired for little expense. According to Sayılğan, prison conditions were much comfortable than the Gypsy tobacco workers' own houses and, therefore, the latter showed a great eagerness to stay in prison (Sayılğan, 1969). Sayılğan attempted to create a contra-image against the epic image of the tobacco workers and tended to generate their exaggerated and one-sided presentation, which recalls the common prejudices and clichés about Roma and other related communities (Dom, Lom, Abdal, etc.) in Turkish society.

Nevertheless, a careful investigation of the files of the arrest campaign in 1951 reveals that there was indeed a considerable diversity in the level of dedication, political

consciousness, or consistency among the individual workers. However, the same documents reveal the reliability of another point raised by Belli as well: There was nobody from among the tobacco workers who accepted to benefit from the remission law, despite the fact that this was a great chance for them to be released. Some of them confessed their role in the party activities during the frequently brutal police investigations or torture but mostly tended to reject their confessions in the court. Therefore, although individual Gypsy tobacco workers had different levels of political consciousness and dedication, it would not be legitimate to ignore their agency in the leftist politics, which provide a basis for the idealised image of the heroic tobacco worker.

Belli draws a multi-dimensional portrait of Zehra Kosova as a political figure. She was a union leader and a trustful cadre for illegal communist organisations and any attempts to establish leftist legal initiatives. As well as the whole speech, even this point is representative of all Roma tobacco workers, at least for the most politicised ones. The nucleus of the Turkish left in the period between WWI and WWII mostly constituted of Ottoman and Republican elites. In this manner, the presence of a group of workers who had politicised and got experienced in unions before the population exchange in Greece was an excellent chance for them. The leftist organisations tried to take advantage of their presence to reach the working-class masses, but also for the practice of everyday activities required by the development of any leftist organisations. However, this was also the chance for Roma tobacco workers to encounter prestigious elites or the most prominent intellectuals of the era under the roof of the same organisation, and this meant a socio-cultural interaction on both sides. The Gypsy tobacco workers combined the everyday experiences they gained in Greece and the influences of their interaction with the Turkish left as a part of their culture, and thus succeeded, to some degree, to transfer this culture to new generations. Belli emphasises the role of the tobacco manufacture centres as party schools in Kasımpaşa and Ortaköy, where there was a significant Romani population and a range of Gypsy neighbourhoods. Alongside production, the working hours was a period of interaction for the tobacco workers, an interaction that allowed the politicised workers to transfer their political culture and experiences to the younger generations.

Although in the funeral speech Belli emphasises the presence, or more accurately the dominance, of Gypsies among tobacco workers without any hesitation, it is not possible to find any mention of the ethnic origin of the Gypsy tobacco workers in the memoir itself. Zehra Kosova, like the many others, intended to keep this point untouched. Lack of any references to the Roma origin in the memoir overlaps with the lack of demonstrated ethnic consciousness among the majority of the Gypsy tobacco workers. Their preferred identity was the leftist worker, rather than of any ethnic or religious ones. It is possible to understand this attitude as either an intention for the individual emancipation from prejudices and ethnic discrimination or voluntary assimilation.

Egemen Yılıgür

5.3 Media Testimonials

5.3.1 *May Day*

1 Mayıs Eğlenceli Geçti.

Birkaç kişi amele arasında tahrikât yapmak istedilerse de yakalandılar.

1 Mayıs öteden beri her tarafta amele bayramı olarak kabul edilmiş bulunduğu için, İstanbul zabıtası komünist tahrikâtı ve propagandasını yapmak üzere bugünden istifade etmek isteyenlere karşı, her sene olduğu gibi dün de sıkı tertibat almıştır.

On beş gün evvelinden beri şehrimizin muhtelif yerlerinde, bilhassa amelenin mütekâsif bulunduğu mahallerde işçileri ve halkı komünistliğe tahrik edici bazı beyannameler bulunmuş, bunun üzerine zabıta tarafından tahkikat ve takibat icrasına başlanılmıştı.

Beyanname, dağıtmağa ve taşkınlık yapmaya teşebbüs edecekleri anlaşılan ameleden 52 kadarı nezaret altına alınmışlardı.

Buna rağmen evvelki gece sabaha karşı şehrin Şişli, Paşabahçe, Cibali ve Ortaköy gibi bazı yerlerinde beyannameler dağıtılmak istenmiş, bir, iki yere de bayrak asılmak teşebbüsünde bulunulmuştur. Fakat müteyakkız olan zabıta kuvvetleri bu beyannamelerle bayrakları ele geçirdikleri gibi müteşebbisleri de yakalamışlardır. Bunlardan başka evvelki gece sabaha karşı bir şahsın elindeki bir paketi Fatihte Gelenbevi mektebi civarındaki bir arsaya bırakmak istediği görülmüş, kendisi tevkif edilmiştir. Paketin içinde birçok beyannameler bulunmuştur.

Ufak kıt'ada ve matbu olan bu beyannameler, Cemiyeti Akvama, iş kanununa, Avrupa emperyalizmine ait komünist fikirlerini ihtiva etmekte, üstlerinde kırmızı orak çekiç işareti, altında (Türkiye komünist fırkası) ibaresi bulunmaktadır.

Kadıköy'ünde üç yere de bu beyannamelerden atılmış ve bunları atanlar da yakalanmıştır.

Kadıköy ile Gelenbevi mektebi civarında yakalananlardan birinin şehrimize yeni geldiği anlaşılmıştır.

Diğer bir ikisinin "Kıbtı" oldukları da meydana çıkmıştır. Beyanname dağıtmak, bayrak asmak ve saire gibi suçlardan dolayı zan altına alınanların yekûnu yirmiyi bulmaktadır.

Şuraya buraya asılmak istenen ve tutulan bayraklar kırmızı zemin üstüne beyaz yazı ile yazılmış "1 Mayıs amelenin mücadele günüdür" ibaresini muhtevidir.

Zabıta tarafından dün, amelenin usulsüz ve nizamsız bir şekilde toplanmalarına meydan verilmemiş, fabrika ve depolarda izinsiz ve şüpheli olarak vazifelerini terkeden bazı işçiler hakkında da tahkikata başlanmıştır.

Baharı tes'it

1 Mayıs öteden beri baharın başlangıcı sayılır. Dün birçok aileler bu münasebetle kırlarda gezmişler, eğlenciler tertip etmişlerdir. Sabahleyin erkenden çiçeklerle süslenen birçok otomobiller ve otobüsler kalabalık kabileleri Kâğıthane'ye, Hürriyeti Ebediye tepesi civarına, Boğaziçi'ne ve şehrin diğer mesirelerine götürmüşlerdir.

1 Mayıs gezintilerine çıkan aileler eski bir âdete tevfikân fazla miktarda süt içtiklerinden dün Beyoğlu'nda adeta bir süt buhranı olmuştur.

∴

Mayday was Full of Joy.

Although a few persons intended to provoke workers, they have been detained.

As the first day of May has been accepted as a Labour holiday, Istanbul police have taken strict security measures against the ones who intend to exploit May Day to make communist provocation and propaganda as it happens each year.

In the last 15 days, in different parts of our city, particularly the places with a dense labourer concentration, some leaflets provoking workers and people in a pro-communist manner have been found and therefore the police have initiated an investigation and prosecution.

The fifty-two of the workers whose intention had been detected to distribute leaflets and to create an uproar have already been arrested.

Nevertheless, there have been attempts to distribute the leaflets in different parts of the city such as Şişli, Paşabahçe, Cibali, and Ortaköy and in one or two places to display some flags. However, police forces that had already been on the alert found the leaflets and caught the offenders. Furthermore, a person trying to leave a package on the terrain around Gelenbevi School in Fatih has been arrested. There were many leaflets in the package.

The leaflets in small size and printed included communist ideas about the league of nations, labour law, and European imperialism; a red hammer and sickle and an inscription 'the Communist Party of Turkey' were located on their top and bottom, respectively.

These leaflets were also distributed in three places in Kadıköy, and their distributors have been arrested.

It is understood that one of the persons who has been arrested around Kadıköy and Gelenbevi was a newcomer to our city.

It is also detected that a few of them were 'Gypsies' [1]. The number of accused individuals with the distribution of leaflets, displaying flags, etc. was around twenty.

There was an inscription 'May Day is the Day of Workers' on the red background with white letters on the flags which was attempted to be displayed and was found.

Yesterday, the police did not allow the workers to gather illegally and irregularly, and an investigation has been initiated about the workers who left the factories and stores suspiciously, without permission.

Celebration of Spring

May Day has been accepted as the beginning of spring all along and therefore, many families went for a hike and had parties. Many cars and buses adorned with flowers carried populous groups to Kağıthane, places around Hürriyeti Ebediye Hill, Boğaziçi and the other mesîres [2] of the city.

As the families who went on May Day trips drunk too much milk, following an old tradition, a milk crisis almost occurred in Beyoğlu yesterday.

Notes

1. The term used is 'Kıbtî'.
2. Mesîre. A local term used for the resorts which were generally located in the country-side (Devellioğlu, 2013, p. 727). For a detailed description of mesîres in Ottoman and early Republican İstanbul see Abdülaziz Bey (1995, pp. 290-310) and Kaygılı (2009).

Source: [No Author]. (1933a). 1 Mayıs Eğlenceli Geçti, *Cumhuriyet*, An. 9, No. 3226, 1933, May 2, pp. 1-2.

Prepared for publication by Egemen Yilgür.

Comments

In the early republican period, the state was trying to limit the development of the far-left activists' organisation with preventive interventions. Members of leftist parties or unions were not too populous, and it was a simple attempt for the state to trace their movements, particularly of the ex-convict communists. It was also a common practice to arrest the famous leftists before May Day, including the most prominent representatives of the Roma tobacco workers. The majority of them were concentrated in a few districts such as Ortaköy or Hacıhüsrev in İstanbul, and thus, the arrest campaigns primarily targeted these settlements. One of the most important and famous personalities among Roma tobacco workers, Zehra Kosova realised the presence of the politicised workers in her neighbourhood when she witnessed the detention of her friends' husbands before each May Day (Kosova, 1996, p. 75).

The Gypsy tobacco workers were not enthusiastic to declare their Roma identity publicly. Nevertheless, their non-Roma comrades were aware of the tobacco workers' ethnic background and expressed this in in-group conversations. However, they also preferred not to emphasise it publicly. It was more likely that it was state of pro-state authors who underlined this issue and raised it as an objection against the Roma tobacco workers' reliability as political subjects. The narrative of Sayılğan (1969), a former leftist and one of the most consistent critics of the Communist Party of Turkey, exemplifies this intention the use of stereotypes against 'Gypsies' was done in order to discredit the Roma cadres of leftist organisations and the left itself. The news above indicates that the development of this discourse occurred in the early republican era: The anonymous writer of the news indicates the presence of 'Gypsies' among the detained ones in a specific paragraph.

Egemen Yilgür

5.3.2 The Trial of the Communists

Komünistlerin Muhakemesi.

Geçen 1 Mayıs'ta komünistlik tahrikâtı yapmak ve bazı muzır beyannameler dağıtmağa teşebbüs etmek ve beyannameleri para ile tedarik edilen birtakım kimselerle dağıttırmaktan ve duvarlara yapıştırmaktan suçlu olanların dün sabah muhakemelerine İstanbul Ağır Ceza Mahkemesi'nde başlandı.

Muhakemeleri gizli olarak yapılan bu suçlular arasında beyannameleri dağıtmağa ve yapıştırmağa memur bazı Çingeneler de vardı.

Komünistlik suçundan dün muhakeme edilenler: Mahmut oğlu Besim, İbiş oğlu İbiş, Salih oğlu Hulûsi, Mehmet oğlu Mustafa, Osman, Ramazan ve Mümin isminde yedi kişiden ibarettir.

∴

The trial of the communists.

The trial of the offenders who make communist provocation and attempt to distribute pernicious leaflets and hire people to distribute the leaflets and stick them to walls on last May Day has been initiated in Istanbul High Penal Court yesterday morning.

Among these criminals whose trial is conducted secretly are some “Gypsies” [1] who had been assigned to distribute and stick the leaflets.

The ones who are accused of being communist are seven people whose names are Mahmut, the son of Besim, İbiş, the son of İbiş, Salih, the son of Hulûsi, Mehmet, the son of Mustafa, Osman, Ramazan, and Mümin.

Notes

1. The term used in this case is ‘Çingene’ is an exonym used for Roma, and in many cases, for other related communities, such as Dom, Lom, Abdals, etc. (Yilgür, 2016, pp. 21-24). However, it is also, to a lesser degree, self-denomination of some exceptional individuals who see the adoption of the term the best way to weaken the ethnic discrimination such as the ‘Çingene’ (Gypsy) intellectual, Mustafa Aksu (2006).

Source: [No Author]. (1933b). Komünistlerin Muhakemesi. *Cumhuriyet*, Year 10, No. 3266, 1933, June 11, p. 2.

Prepared for publication by Egemen Yilgür.

Comments

The news above again points to the participation of Gypsies in the communist movement. At the same time, it exemplifies how the press combined the popular prejudices against ‘Gypsies’ and the fear and distrust against communists to discredit the leftist movements of the era. In the first passage, the anonymous author declares that the offenders hired some people to distribute the leaflets. Although it is uncertain who hired whom here, the author clarifies its argument in the subsequent passage. There were some Çingeneler (Gypsies) among the accused ones, and they were assigned to do the tasks mentioned above. It is not too difficult for the reader to combine the connotations of passages and extract the possible implication behind the text: Gypsies are not reliable to be dedicated activists of any movement and, therefore, they can only be the ordinary labourers who are hired by the evil communists behind the scene.

Egemen Yilgür

5.4 Training in the USSR

5.4.1 *Remzi Salih Mustafa*

Тов. Горб.

Сов[ершено] секретно.

В. – срочно.

Н/В запрос от 8/III-35 г.

Иставридис Папа Константинович, – настоящая фамилия Ремзи М. [1], чл[ен] КП Турции, в [19]34 г. был послан в СССР на учебу. Решили до поступления на учебу дать ему немного практики на производстве. Направлен отделом кадров КУТВ на табачную фабрику в Ростове н/Д с указанием, что он не должен деконспирироваться. Документы у него на имя Иставридис – грека, а в самом деле он турецкий цыган.

Его вызвали в Ростовском отделе НКВД и там он продолжал конспирироваться, тем самым вел в заблуждение тамошних работников.

Черномордик

6260/3-7.

10/III [19]35 г.

∴

Top Secret.

Very Urgent.

To comrade Gorb.

Ref: Your letter dated March 8, 1935.

Papa Konstantinovich Istavridis whose real name is Remzi M., is a member of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). He was sent to USSR for training in 1934. It was decided to give him a chance to practice before he starts his education and sent to Rostov on Don Tobacco Factory on condition that he should not reveal himself. His official documents were issued with the name of Greek Istavridis, but in fact he is a Turkish Gypsy.

He was called to the Rostov branch of NKVD [2], and he continued to keep secrecy and in this way he misinformed the staff there.

Chenormordik

6269/3-7.

March 10, 1935.

5.4.2 *The Opinion Report*

Gizli.

28.VII.[19]36.

Görüş raporu

İstavridis (Remzi Mustafa): 1908 Yunanistan doğumlu Çingen. Tütün işçisi. TKP'ye 1932'de girmiştir. Aynı yıl tutuklanmış ve 4 yıl hapse mahkûm olmuş, 1 ½ yıl yatmış ve 1934'te genel afla salıverilmiştir. Partisinin tavsiyesi üzerine okumak için 1934'te kaçak olarak SSCB'ne gelmiştir. Moskova'ya vardığında ülkesindeki parti çalışmaları ve tutukluluk sırasındaki tavrı hakkında birçok yanıltıcı ve yanlış bilgi verdiği ve ECCI'e sunmak üzere parti MK'nden aldığı mektubu kaybettiği için KUTV'a kabul edilmemiştir. İstavridis Rostov-Don Birinci Devlet Tütün Fabrikası'na işe gönderilmiştir ve halihazırda bu fabrikada çalışmaktadır. Fabrikadaki tutum ve tavrı iyidir. Daha sonra kendisi teknik engeller yüzünden ülkesine geri gönderilmemiştir.

İstavridis tarafımızca kendisinden yararlanabileceğimiz ülkesine geri gönderilmelidir.

Parti temsilcisi Ferdi ... [İmza].

Kadro raportör yardımcısı Galcan ... [İmza].

::

Secretly KP Turkey.

July 28, 1936.

Opinion Report

Istavridis (Remzi Mustafa): He was born in Greece in 1908. A Gypsy. Tobacco worker. He became affiliated to the TKP in 1932. In the same year he was arrested and sentenced to 4 years, stayed in prison for one year and a half and was released with a general amnesty in 1934. He came to USSR illegally for training, on the recommendation of the Party. After his arrival in Moscow, he was not accepted to KUTV [3] because of some embellished and giving some deceptive information about his work in the party, and his attitude during his arrest, and losing a letter given to him by the Central Committee of the party for delivery to the Executive Committee of Komintern [4]. Istavridis has been sent to work in the Rostov-on-Don First State Tobacco Factory, and he still works there. His attitude in the factory is right. Subsequently he has not been sent to his country due to technical restrictions.

Istavridis has to be sent to a country where we can use him.

The Party representative Ferdi [5] ... [Signature].

The vice-rapporteur Galcan ... [Signature].

5.4.3 *The Autobiography*

Афтобиография

Я родился 1908 город Драма, Греция. Имя мое Ремзи, отца Сали, отец рабочий табачник. Мать работница, табачник. Имя Гюлсюм Мустафа. Я уехал из Греции в Турцию 1922 г. (точно не помню). В Стамбуле работал рабочим таб[ачной] промышленности. Участвовал в Стамболе во всех забастовках. С начала 1933 был партийным и был выбран секретарем районого комитета Касым паша г. Стамбул. Был арестован в 1933 г., осудили меня на 4 года, участвовал в голодовке. Был выселен в Анкару.

Сидел в тюрьме 1.5 года, была амнистия, выпустили меня. После тюрьмы был поставлен секретарем районого комитета Касым паша (Стамбул). После того Центральный комитет Т. [К.] П. послал меня в область укрепить областной комитет. После этого ЦК П[артии] послал меня в СССР учиться. ЦК П[артии] дал мне письмо. Я отдал [это письмо] в НКВД, оттуда [я его получил] обратно, но дальше у меня украли это письмо. Когда [я] приехал в Коминтерн, сказал [что] я потерял письмо. Меня [в] школу не взяли, послали работать на производстве.

Ремзи (Иставридис).

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The Autobiography [6]

I was born in Drama, Greece, in 1908. My name is Remzi. My father's name is Sali. My father is a tobacco worker. My mother, Gülsüm Mustafa, is a tobacco worker as well. I went to Turkey from Greece in 1922 (I do not remember the exact time). I worked in the Tobacco industry in Istanbul. I participated in the strike in Istanbul. At the beginning of 1933, I became a party member. I was chosen as the secretary of the branch in Kasımpaşa, Istanbul. I was arrested in 1933 and sentenced to 4 years. I participated in the hunger strike. I was sent to Ankara.

I stayed in prison for one and a half year, an amnesty was granted, I was released. After the prison, I became the secretary in Kasımpaşa, Istanbul branch again. The Central Committee of the TKP sent me to Samsun to strengthen the city committee. Then, the Central Committee of the TKP sent me USSR for training and gave me a letter. I gave it to NKVD, and they gave it to me back. Then, the letter was stolen. When I came to Komintern, I said to them that I had lost the letter. Then, they did not accept me to the school, and I was sent to work in production.

Remzi (Istavridis).

5.4.4 *References*

С[овершено] Секретно.

Ремзи Салих, он же Иставридис Папа Константинович, родился в 1908 г., в г. Драма, Греция, в семье рабочего-табачника. По национальности цыган. Подданный Турции. Образование низшее. Знает турецкий, греческий и русский языки. По профессии табачник. Член КП Турции с 1932 г. В 1922 г. переехал из Греции в г. Стамбул, Турция. [...] С марта 1939 г. по настоящее время работает мастером на табачной фабрике в г. Алма-Ата. В августе 1941 г. т. Ремзи обращался к представительству КП Турции при ИККИ с просьбой отправить его добровольцем на фронт.

Представитель КП Турции при ИККИ т. Марат характеризует т. Ремзи положительно.

Родственники: Отец рабочий; мать домохозяйка – до войны проживали в г. Самсун, Турция. Жена Иставридис – (Лощинина) Зинаида Никифоровна, русская, член ВЛКСМ.

Заключение: Тов. Ремзи Салих, он же Иставридис Папа Константинович, рожд. 1908 г. Цыган из Турции. Член КП Турции с 1932 г. Имеет опыт профсоюзной работы в стране. За революционную деятельность сидел 1 ½ в тюрьме. На работе в СССР проявил себя положительно.

Адрес: г. Алма-Ата, ул. Дунганчанская, д. 13, кв. 25.

Основание: Материалы личного дела.

Белов, Новик.

19 марта 1943 г.

(Пр. No. 148).

∴

Top Secret

Remzi Salih, who is known as Papa Konstantinovich Istavridis, was born as a member of a tobacco worker's family in Drama, Greece in 1908. His nationality is Gypsy. He is a Turkish citizen. He graduated from primary school. He can speak Turkish, Greek, and Russian. He is a tobacco worker. He has been a member of TKP since 1932. He went to Turkey from Greece in 1922. He worked in a tobacco factory there [...] [7]. He has worked in Alma Ata Tobacco Factory since 1939 March until now. He applied to the legation of TKP in ECCI to be sent to the front line voluntarily in 1941. Comrade Marat, who is the representative of TKP in ECCI, has positive impressions about him.

His relatives: His father is a worker. His mother is a housewife. They lived in city of Samsun, Turkey until the war. His wife – Zinaida Nikiforovna Loshchinina-Istavridis, is Russian. She is a member of the VLKSM [8].

Conclusion: Comrade Remzi Salih (known as Papa Konstantinovich Istavridis) was born in 1908. He is a Gypsy from Turkey. He has been a member of TKP since 1932. He gained experience in union activities in his country; stayed in prison on his revolutionary activities for one and a half years. Working in USSR he demonstrated himself positively.

Address: Alma-Ata, Dungananskaya Street. No. 13, Apt. 25.

Reason: Personal File Documents.

Belov ... [Signature]. Novik ... [Signature].

1943 March, 19. Protocol No. 148.

5.4.5 *The Questionnaire*

Примечание: Ответы на, все вопросы должны даваться вполне точно и подробно. Секретно.

Анкета

Вопрос:

Какой КП командировал на учебу или кем послан?

1. Псевдоним.

2. Время и место рождения.

3. Точно указать сословие или происхождение.

4. Ваша профессия или специальность и стаж.

5. Национальность.

6. Подданство.

7. Семейное положение.

8. Имеет ли братьев, сестер, где они?

9. Точно указать чем занимаются родители и ближайшие родственники и источник их существования?

Ответ:

ЦК КП Турции.

Папа.

В Дrame, 1908.

Табачник-рабочий.

Табачник – стаж 10 лет.

Турок.

Турецкое.

Женат. 1 дочка.

Жена – табачница.

2 брата табачники;

1- в Самсуне, 1- в Стамбуле.

Родственники: рабочие-табачники.

::

Remark: The questions have to be responded in detail and complete.

Secret.

The Questionnaire

Questions:

Which communist party sent the respondent or who sent him?

1. Pseudonym.

2. Date of birth and birthplace.

3. Indicate exactly estate or origin.

Answers:

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey.

Papa Istavridis.

1908, Drama.

Tobacco worker.

4. Your occupation, specialisation, working period.	Tobacco worker, ten years.
5. Nationality.	Turk.
6. Citizenship.	Turkish.
7. Marital Status, members of the family.	Married, one daughter.
My wife is a tobacco worker.
8. Do you have brothers or sisters? Where are they?	I have two brothers, one of whom is in Samsun, and the other one is in Istanbul.
9. The occupation, the source of living of parents and intimate relatives?	Relatives: tobacco workers.

Notes

1. There is an error in the original where it is written 'Remzi R.'
2. NKVD (See Dictionary of Abbreviations and Neologisms in USSR).
3. KUTV (See Dictionary of Abbreviations and Neologisms in USSR).
4. Komintern (See Dictionary of Abbreviations and Neologisms in USSR).
5. Ferdi was the party name of Şefik Hüsnü (1887-1959). He was among the leading, but also the most controversial figures of the Turkish left, namely the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). Thus, his testimonies on Roma tobacco workers deserve careful investigation. For a detailed biography, see Akbulut (2010).
6. Handwritten document, the original mistakes are preserved in order to keep the authenticity of the source.
7. Omitted is the repetition of data from the Autobiography.
8. VLKSM (See Dictionary of Abbreviations and Neologisms in the USSR).

Source: TÜSTAV, 495-26 6-73. Istavridis (Remzi Mustafa) Dosyası. I appreciate Erden Akbulut, for informing me about the above document and TÜSTAV for granting rights of publication, and Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov for comparing Turkish translations with Russian originals. Prepared for publication by Egemen Yilgür.

Comments

Remzi Mustafa was one of the Gypsy tobacco workers affiliated with the TKP and whom the party administration sent to the USSR for training. While the file enlightens his personal experiences in USSR during this period, it also sheds light on the life course of a Gypsy Communist in Turkey and the USSR. He was born in Drama, Greece, in 1908. Both of his parents were tobacco workers, and he resumed his family tradition, becoming a tobacco worker in Istanbul. His first experiences in factory based worker movements led him to an affiliation with the Communist Party of Turkey at the beginning of the 1930s. He was elected as the secretary of the Party's local branch in Kasımpaşa, a locality with a considerable Roma concentration and a working-class location in general. Along with the immigrant Gypsy tobacco workers there have been the settlements of various Roma sub-groups for a long time (Yilgür, 2018b). Like many other politicised tobacco workers, he was arrested and sentenced to 4 years and released with amnesty after one and a half year stay in prison. Then, the party sent him USSR for training along with the other most talented worker leaders. However, his failure to save the letter given by the local party

authorities for delivery to the Russian officials caused his rejection by the KUTV, and the authorities assigned him as a worker in a local tobacco factory. He somehow succeeded to regain his image after almost seven years of work experience and demanded to be sent to the front line in 1941.

It is of interest that the complex nature of self and external identification of Roma tobacco workers emerges in the pages of the file. Although he was a Gypsy in the eyes of Soviet and TKP officials, his declared identity is Turkish. The discrepancy between the external and internal ways of identification exemplifies the identity changes and differentiation of the adopted identity from the traditional or attributed ones, a phenomenon which is also present nowadays (cf. Marushiakova & Popov, 1999, p. 85).

Egemen Yılıgür

5.4.6 *Mustafa Mehmet (Alekber Ağaoğlu, Petko)*

Gizli.

TKP.

Sonuç

Petko (Mustafa Mamu). Çingene, 1915 doğumlu. Tütün işçisi. 1934'te TKP'ye girmiş ve aynı yıl partinin tavsiyesi üzerine okumak için illegal olarak SSCB'ne gelmiştir. KUTV'ü bitirince teknik zorluklar nedeniyle ülkeye gönderilmemiş. Seksiyondan geçinmektedir. Petko tarafımızca yararlanılabileceği ülkesine gönderilmelidir.

Parti temsilcisi ... (Ferdi).

Personel yardımcı uzmanı ... (Galcan).

∴

Secret.

Communist Party of Turkey.

Conclusion

Petko (Mustafa Mamu). A Gypsy, was born in 1915. Tobacco worker. He affiliated to TKP in 1934, and he came to USSR for training at the recommendation of the party in the same year. After he graduated from KUTV, he was not sent to the country due to technical restrictions. He is dependent on the section's aid. Petko has to be sent to his country where we can take advantage of him.

Party representative ... (Ferdi).

Personal deputy officer ... (Galcan).

5.4.7 *The Autobiography (1)*

Автобиография

Алипкер Ага Оглы рождения 1909 года, место рождения Турция г. Кара Бича национальности турок. Социальное положение отца сапожник, умер в 1914 г. в Вайне. Я сам рабочий. С 1925 г. табачник. Имею 2-х братьев в Турции и мать работает на табачной фабрике. В Турции, г. Истанбул учился два года в начальной школе на родном языке. После 2 года бросил учиться, потому что родители экономически были не в состоянии меня дальше учить.

В 1925 г. я поступил работать рабочим на табачную фабрику и работал до 1934 г. как рабочий.

В конце 1932 г. меня приняли в коммунистическую партию Турции. В начале 1934 г. меня послали на политическую учебу в СССР.

Я учился под руководством Коминтерна с 1934-1936 г. после окончания 2-х годичного курса я был послан на работу в Среднюю Азию в г. Ферган на текстильную фабрику в качестве пом. мастера по ремонтам машин. Проработал я 14 мес. на этой фабрике. Был арестован органами НКВД г. Ферганы 21.II.1938 г. Просидел 14 мес. освобожден 2.IV.1939 г. с прекращением дела, т.е. за отсутствием фактов обвинения. и я был освобожден из тюрьмы. Справка за № 2547.

НКВД г. Ферганы утерял мой паспорт и я приехал в Москву получить паспорт и жить в Москве.

В настоящее время состою на учете в Коминтерне член ТКП.

14.I.1940.

Алипкер.

Мой адрес: г. Москва, Тверский бул. 13, ком. 2.

Копия верна: ... [неразборчивая подпись].

15.I.1940 г.

::

The Autobiography

Alekber [1] Ağaoğlu born in 1909, birthplace is Kara Biga [2], nationality Turkish. My father's social situation is shoemaker [3], he died in 1914. I am a worker. I have been working as a tobacco worker since 1925. I have two brothers in Turkey, and my mother works in a tobacco factory. I got an education in my native language in a primary school. After two years, I dropped out, because my parents, financially, were not able to educate me.

I started to work in a tobacco factory in 1925 and worked until 1934.

At the end of 1933, I have been accepted to the Communist Party of Turkey. At the beginning of 1934 I was sent to USSR for political training.

I have been educated under the supervision of Comintern between 1934-1936, and after I graduated from the two-year school, I have been sent to Central Asia, to work as the assistant of a machinery repairman in the textile factory in Fergana city. I worked there for 14 months. I have been arrested by the Fergana office of NKVD in 1938, February 21. I stayed in prison for 14 months. On the dismissal of the case, namely lack of crime element, I have been released in 1939, April 2. Certificate of release: No. 2547.

Fergana office of NKVD lost my passport, and I came to Moscow to get a new passport and live.

Currently I am already in Comintern as a member of TKP.

January 14, 1940.

Alipker.

My Address: Moscow, Tverskaya Street 13, Room 2.

Copy correct with original: ... [Illegible signature].

15.01.1940.

5.4.8 *The Questionary Form*

Анкетный лист

Вопросы:

1. Фамилия, име, отчество (псевдоним).
При перемене фамилии или имени и отчества указать старые и причины перемены.
2. Время и место рождения.
3. Сословие и соц. происхождение
4. Образование
5. Какие знаете языки
6. Ваша профессия
7. Партийность

Ответы:

Настоящая: Мустафа Мехмет.

Петко Янко Иванович.

Аликпер Ага Оглы.

1914 года, Турция, г. Кара бичи.

(это правильный год рожд[ения] 1914).

1909 г. Азербайджан, город Шанха (на этот г[од] выдан вид на ж[ительство]).

Рабочий сапожник.

Учился 2 года в турецки народный школы.

Учился 2 года в СССР, Москва, КУТВ, сектор А.

Родной язык турецкий.

Русский язык говорю и читаю слабо.

Текстильщик пом.-мастер.

1934 года член Т.К.П. Турция. билет нет.
[...].

22. Национальность	По отцу цыган, по матери турок. [...].	
28. Родители	Отец	Мать
а) Фамилия, имя, отчество	Мехмет	Юммя
б) Время и место рождения	Греция, Юнанистан	Серес [...].

∴

The Questionnaire [4]

Questions:	Answers:	
1. Surname, name, father's name (pseudonym).	Real name is Mustafa Mehmet.	
If there is any name change, the former names,	Yanko Ivanovich Petko.	
and the reasons for change have to be written.	Alekber Ağaoğlu.	
2. Birthplace and date of birth.	1914 (this is real date of birth [5]), Turkey, Kara Biga.	
	1909, Azerbaijan, Şanha (the residence permit for this year [6]).	
3. Estate and social origin.	Shoe-maker worker.	
4. Education.	Two years in a primary school in Turkey.	
	Two years in the KUTV, Sector A.	
5. Which languages you know.	Mother tongue Turkish.	
	I speak and read Russian little.	
6. Your occupation.	Textil worker, assistant master.	
7. Party membership.	1934 member of TKP. Party card – none. [...].	
22. Nationality.	From father side Gypsy. From mother side Turkish. [...]	
28. Parents:	Father	Mother
a) Surname, name, fathers' name.	Mehmet	Ümmü
b) Birthplace and date of birth.	Greece, Yunanistan	Serres [...]

5.4.9 *Autobiography* (2)

Секретно.

Автобиография

Тов. Петко (псевд[оним]), Мустафа Мехмет

Родился в 1915 году в гор[оде] Бига. Отец был сапожник (ходил по городу и на ул[ице] чинил сапоги). По нац[иональности] цыган. До моего рождения отец

умер. Мать жива, работает прачкой в Стамбуле. Есть два брата в Стамбуле – табачные рабочие. Один из братьев имел связь с коммунистами – распростр[анял] прокламации [...]

∴

Secret

The Autobiography [7]
Comrade Petko(Pseudonym), Mustafa Mehmet

I was born in Biga in 1915. My father was a shoe maker. (In the city, in the streets, he was repairing shoes.) I am of Gypsy nationality. My father died before I was born. My mother is alive, and working in Istanbul as a laundress [8]. I have two tobacco worker brothers in Istanbul. One brother was connected to communists – distributed leaflets [...]

5.4.10 *Reference*

Секретно

Справка

Аликпер Ага Оглы, [или] Мустафа Мехмед (он же Петко Янко Иванович) по одним данным турок, по другим цыган, 1914 г.р., родился в г. Бига (Турция), рабочий, табачник, член КП Турции с 1934 г. В СССР прибыл как политэмигрант в 1934 г.. С июля 1934 г. по июнь 1936 г. учился в КУТВе, после чего работал несколько месяцев на Аржанской текстильной фабрике им. Красной Армии на ст. Рассказово по Павелецкой ж.д. С декабря 1936 года работал в Фергане на текстильной фабрике им. Дзержинского. В феврале 1938 года был арестован органами НКВД, освобожден по прекращению дела. Снова работал в Фергане, проживал по Первомайской ул., д. 10, кв. 4. В 1940 г. работал в г. Иваново на Меланжевом комбинате. По сообщению т. Сухарева от 23. V. 41 г. Аликпер Ага Оглы получал пособие 250 руб. в мес.

На одном заявлении т. Подчелимовой (жена Аликпер) от 4.XII. 45 г. имеется запись, что Аликпер Ага Оглы выбыл из Москвы 5.VI.41 г.

По ходатайству т. Губляева, с 1.IV.[19]46 г. т. Подчелимовой было восстановлено пособие в сумме 300 руб. в мес.

Нач. отдела помощи политэмигрантам Исполкома СОКК и КП СССР.

[Signature] ... (Суетинова).

17 марта 1951 г.

∴

Secret.

Reference

Alekber Ağaoğlu, [or] Mustafa Mehmet (known as Petko Yanko Ivanovich); according to some evidence, he is a Turk, according to others, Gypsy. He was born in Biga (Turkey) in 1914, a tobacco worker, a member of TKP since 1934. He came to USSR as a political immigrant in 1934. He was trained in KUTV from 1934 July to 1936 June and then, worked in Poveletski railway Rasskazovo station, Arzhansk Red Army Textile Factory. He started to work in Dzerzhinsky Textile Factory in Fergana in 1936, December. In February, 1938, he was arrested by NVKD, and released after the abatement. Then, he worked again in Fergana, stayed on Pervomayskaya Street 10, apt 4., In 1940 he worked at Melange factory in the city of Ivanovo. According to the testimony of comrade Sukharev dated May 23, 1941, Alekber Ağaoğlu got 250 rubles monetary aid.

In a petition of comrade Podchelimova (Alekber's wife), she writes that Alekber Ağaoğlu left Moscow on June 5, 1941.

At the recommendation of the comrade Gulyaev, Podchelimova started to get 300 rubles monthly as monetary aid again.

The Chair of the Department of Aid for Political Immigrants of the Executive Committee of Soviet Society of Red Cross and CP USSR.

[Signature] ... (Suetinova).

March 17, 1951.

Notes

1. The name Alekber in Russian original is 'Алипкер' (Alipker).
2. Kara Biga. It is a sub-district in Biga, Çanakkale (Sezen, 2006, p. 273). The place name is misspelled in Russian original as 'Кара Бича' (Kara Bicha). The case of Mustafa Mamu's family is exceptional among the Roma Tobacco Workers majority of whom were born in Greece and came to Turkey with the Turk-Greek Population Exchange in 1923-1924. However, he was born in Turkey before the population exchange, and his family had left Greece during the previous waves of migration.
3. Shoe-making or shoe-shining has been popular occupations of Roma in Turkey. After the change of work organisation, which decreased the demand for qualified workers in tobacco manufacture, many of the tobacco workers subsisted on this occupation (Yilgür, 2016).
4. Extract from the form. The answers are handwritten.
5. Note by another handwriting, probably added by a respective clerk.
6. Note by another handwriting, probably added by a respective clerk.
7. Extract from handwritten autobiography.
8. There was a mistake in the Turkish translation, which pointed as the occupation of Mustafa Mamu's mother a fortune-telling. I thank Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov for checking all translations and corrections from Russian.

Source: TÜSTAV, 495-266-198. Mustafa Mehmet (Alekber Ağaoğlu, Petko). Dosyası. I appreciate Erden Akbulut, for informing me about the above document and TÜSTAV for granting rights of publication.

Prepared for publication by Egemen Yilgür.

Comments

Mustafa Mamu was born into a tobacco worker family. He worked in a tobacco factory and affiliated with the Communist Party of Turkey in 1934. This trajectory which begins within the family and peaks with the party affiliation following a period of interaction and informal training in tobacco factories is not rare and is not limited exclusively to him. The culture, which was a combination of union leftist politics in Greece and the encounters with the local-left in Turkey, and which was the fundamental basis of a considerable tendency to participate in the activities mentioned above, surrounded the Gypsy tobacco workers. What they experienced when they started to work in tobacco factories reminded them of the stories told to them by their parents and grandparents. They were already familiar with what to do when they faced an over-exploitation or suppression in the factories. Thus, it was just a matter of time and personal capabilities for the individual tobacco workers to affiliate themselves with the party or other leftist organisations. The most-talented ones were involved in the party circle, and the party administration conceived a few of them reliable enough to send for training in USSR, such as was the case of Mustafa Mamu.

The evaluations of Mustafa Mamu concerning his ethnic background exemplifies the flexible nature of the self-identification of Roma individuals (cf. Marushiakova & Popov, 1999). Identity itself and the discourses utilized to justify the identity claim can shift under the influence of various factors. The documents in the file indicate the diversity of discourses on identity and origin adopted by Mustafa Mamu: A Turkish tobacco worker, son of a Gypsy father and a Turkish mother, and ultimately a Gypsy.

Although all the details provided by Mustafa Mamu at different times may be factual, he appears to prioritise different ones as to compose new discourses whenever the context changes. His mother might indeed have been a member of one of the more-assimilated Roma sub-groups who were less-enthusiastic about declaring their Roma origin. Thus, it becomes a matter of context in emphasising this point and in raising a Turkish identity claim for her, or to ignore this small detail and proudly adopt a pure Gypsy identity. While the former was logical in the early Republican Turkey where the state urged its citizens to support its policy to create an ethnically homogenous nation (Çağatay, 2002; Aslan, 2007; Ülker, 2007; Yeğen, 2007), the latter would seem attractive in USSR where the state recognised Gypsies as a 'nationality' (O'Keeffe, 2013; Marushiakova & Popov, 2017c).

Egemen Yilgür

5.5 Kakava Day

Kakava

Mut Barolara.

Milleti necibeyi kıptıyanın yevmi mesu'dun mübareki olan 6 Mayıs [1]934 Sabahı Tuluyı şemsten bir saat on dakika üç saniye mukaddem edasına borçlu oldukları Bayram ayını davetiyesidir.

“Akanikas nanay pañç akanikas nanay pañç pañç pañç but pañç inadına pañç lambirdos kirlos sospas kirolos harmandan yana minçte kirolos.”

Gerne sosti astardam. Akabinde düdü kobaki.
Marçi ürdüm dim kabukas. Akina kay akina kay.

Bak şu bahar mevsiminin bahtı olan zevk bize.
Halimi muhtasarca arz edersem işte size.
Ne kadar söylesem ancak o da binde birisidir.
Pekte çok söylemek olmaz derler elbet geveze.
Evvela dinle dili aradır sözümü ey gözüüm.
Söylesem asla yalanı bil hakikattır sözüm.
Öyle bir gün ki yetiştik Hamdi bi hat eyleriz.
Sahibi gevni mekan etti ihsani bize.
İşte nevruzu Hızırda milletimiz Fahreder.
Kaffe'yi çergeyi neşinin gam-alamı gider.
Çoluk çocukları pür neş'e cemiyet kurup.
Fukara şakirtleriz hamedederiz halimize.
Yevmi mahsus muktezası her çadır ehli bugün.
Bir şu işret bir de kuzu mutlaka kebab eder.
Davul zurna bir takım saz şöyle emsali düğün.
Penbe zümbül raksederler didesin süze süze.
Bir sene çektiğimiz mihnet meşakkat zahmeti.
İşte bugün cümlemiz hatıralarından ref eder.
Gel bu mecliste şevk gör ihtiyar et zahmeti.
Her kızın çalkantısı revnak verir her göze.

6 Mayıs 6538.

Edirne ve Tevabii Umum Çeri Başılığı.

::

Kakava [1]*Highly Distinguished* [people] [2]

The 6th of May is a holy and blessed day of the pure Kıbtı people (nation). This is an invitation for a festive ritual that we must do on the 6th of May 1934 in the morning, just one hour, ten minutes and three seconds before sun rising ...

“When it was about five o’clock, when it was about five o’clock, the new crop is born from the old field, like the way a new life is born” [3].

Everyone again got hold at the horo, the people returned from the fields [4].
I was afraid that someone in a bad mood would not let me join the horo [5]. *Now sway left, now sway right* [6].

For us it is a taste of the forthcoming spring season.
 If I may explain to you shortly about my condition.
 That is one in a thousand of the many talks of mine.
 It is not good when people are talking and chatting too much.
 Listen to me my lovely that my words are lovely.
 Let me tell you that what I say is truth, not a lie.
 What a day, on which we are eternally grateful because we are alive.
 The Lord of cosmos gave us goods.
 Here, our nation proudly coming together on the new day of Hızır
 Grieves and pains leave all the tents and wanderers.
 Children become united and join.
 We are Fukara [7] and we are grateful for our condition.
 It is a rule for the special day that every tent owner.
 Must be drinking, cutting lamb and definitely kebab.
 An exemplary celebration with davul-zurna and a band of instruments.
 Pembe [8], Zümbül [9] belly dance with wishful.
 One year we were in trouble, and bother.
 All of us leaving them out of our memory.
 Come and replace the trouble, get joining.
 Every girl’s movement gives us beautifulness, to everyone’s eyes.

6th of May 6538 [10].

General Çeribaşı of Edirne and the province of Edirne.

Notes

1. *Kakava* is the name of the holiday in Romani language, coming from the word for cauldron, referring to a festive common meal.
2. The original text is in Turkish, with parts in the Romani language. The Romani language sentences are given in italic.

3. Here, as well as in the next paragraph, the translation from the Romani language is very free and quite different from the literal translation, as it is mainly related to the meaning of the text. This is due to the fact that this type of folklore texts related to the traditional customs of the Balkan peoples (Christian and Muslim) are virtually incomprehensible when translated literally. This approach implies not only a good command of the Romani language (in this case also of Turkish because of the many loanwords) but also good knowledge of the traditional celebrations, customs and songs of the Balkan peoples (for more details see Marushiakova & Popov, 1997). For a more detailed explanation of the content and the meaning of the entire text, see below.
4. According to the traditional practices for the fertility among the Balkan peoples, women who participate in them must circumnavigate the fields early in the morning, to 'pick the dew'.
5. This refers to the joint *horó* (circle dance) of all participants in the celebration, before sitting at the common festive table and/or afterwards, which represents its completion.
6. This refers to certain dance steps (swings) characteristics for the traditional *horó* dances of the Balkan peoples.
7. Literally, the meaning of this term in Ottoman Turkish is poor man, pauper and was used as a byword for Gypsies.
8. A woman's name.
9. A woman's name.
10. It is not very clear where this date comes from. Supposedly it is an attempt to create a Roma calendar and it comes to say that the Kibti calendar is more than six thousand-year-old.

Source: *Tarih ve Toplum*, Sayı 137, İletişim Yayınları, Mayıs 1995, İstanbul (back cover).

Prepared for publication by Sinan Şanlıer, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translation from dialectal Ottoman Turkish by Sinan Şanlıer. Translation of Romani words and Turkish loanwords in the Romani language text consulted with Mozes Heinschink.

Comments

The source presented above represents a text written on a poster, i.e. it is intended for public distribution in the city of Edirne (in Eastern Thrace, in the European part of Turkey). The text was written in two languages and was intended to be understood by the local Roma (who call themselves *Kıpti*). It is probable that, at the time, the Roma in Edirne were already bilingual (with two mother tongues); today, the situation is quite similar, with the predominance of the Turkish language, while the Romani language is preserved (to varying degrees) in the individual neighbourhoods of Edirne. It is interesting to note that the dialectal Ottoman Turkish, written in Latin (introduced in 1928) was used rather than the spoken Turkish language; this probably means that some of the local Gypsies had studied at a religious school where they had learned this language.

The text cannot be understood outside the specific ethnocultural context and in particular the celebration of the *Kakava* holiday by the Gypsies. *Kakava* ('cauldron' in Romani language) is the name of the Balkan holiday, called *Hıdırellez* in its Muslim version and St George's Day in its Christian version (see Marushiakova & Popov, 2007b, pp. 33-50; 2016c, p. 47). The term reflects on a symbolic level the common meal although, according to Balkan traditions, the main festive dish is roasted lamb, which is not cooked in a cauldron. On this day (in the Christian variants of the surrounding Bulgarian population) the young girls go before sunrise to the river, where they ritually wash and foretell their future; young married women tour the fields, naked from the waist down to "gather

dew” (this is believed to ensure fertility and rich harvest); after the ritual activities, everyone gathers for a common meal, followed by a horo dance performed by all participants in the holiday.

Of course, in their ‘own’ version of the holiday celebration, Gypsies do not adhere strictly and in all details to the traditional festive structure of the Balkan peoples. In practice, they make a combination of various ritual and festive elements, as reflected in the text of the poster.

We decided to publish the text of this poster, primarily because it is one of the earliest sources that reflects the important functions of this Gypsy holiday. Perceived as ‘one’s own’ holiday, it integrates the community and differentiates it from the ‘others’ (the rest of the population). Such functions of a holiday are not typical only for Gypsies in Turkey; as already seen above, in one form or another, they were discovered during this period by Gypsies (including their organisations) in other Balkan countries too (see Chapters 2 and 3). In this case, the very form of the public announcement of the holiday through a poster is indicative. Of course, Gypsies know very well when their holiday is. However, by publishing this information on a poster, they demonstrate to the surrounding population that they too have ‘their’ holidays, i.e. that they are people like everyone else. Including phrases in the Romani language demonstrates the possession of their own language and by highlighting the year 6538 it most probably aims to underline an ancient history. In this way, the community publicly legitimises its societal position as a specific ethnic and cultural community, which at the same time invites others to its holiday, thus emphasising that it is part of the society.

The poster also contains illustrations of a Gypsy blacksmith and his tools (smithing tong, anvil, spade, and ‘cezve’ – a Turkish coffee pot), and a tent in the background, i.e. a national symbols (a characteristic of nascent nations) appears graphically. The transition of images of artifacts from everyday life in the field of national symbolism is a common phenomenon among numerous nationalities in many parts of the world. The same objects (as well as other objects used by blacksmiths or made by them) can be seen depicted on the preserved flags of the Gypsy guilds in the Balkans, the oldest of which is from 1849, from Prizren, in Kosovo (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016b, pp. 80–81).

It is indicative that on subsequent similar posters announcing the public celebration of Hıdırellez, printed in Edirne in 1948 and 1966 (Şanlıer, 2018) the same graphic is repeated. There the text is more or less modified, but drawn traditional national symbolism is maintained unchanged over the years.

It is interesting to note the further development of the *Kakava* holiday in present-day Turkey. Nowadays, the holiday retains its Romani name, it continues to be known that it is a Gypsy holiday by origin, but the celebration of *Kakava* in Edirne is already a cultural landmark for the whole city, largely visited by locals and tourists. Moreover, in the neighbouring town of Kırklareli, *Kakava* has already been officially declared a celebration of the entire city, although many of its constituent elements have disappeared or have been substantially modified (for more details see Marushiakova & Popov, 2007b).

This development of the attitude of the Roma in the Edirne region to the *Kakava* holiday, and more generally to the own ethnic traditions as a whole (regardless of what they perceive in each specific case as an 'own' tradition) can be differently interpreted. From a post-modern discourse, defined by the ideologeme of Antigypsyism, this is a clear case of the exoticisation of the Roma, which is a consequence of discriminatory (and colonial) attitudes towards them. From this point of view, however, it would be more accurate to speak about self-exoticism, because the Roma themselves built this public image and insisted on the development of such an attitude towards them.

This is not a paradox, but rather a historical regularity, because the Roma in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe adhered to the discourse of modern nationalism, dominant as an ideology in the construction of ethnonational states in the whole region, and for which cultural traditions (including holidays) were among the most important manifestations of the 'folk spirit' (in Herder's terminology). That is why in all the capital cities of the region there were large national ethnographic museums, and all over the countries local museums and folklore ensembles were being created to preserve and demonstrate "authentic" (whatever that means) folk music and dance. In this way, by preserving and publicly displaying one's 'own' traditions (whether in their old or modernised forms), the Roma expressed their aspirations for an equal position among other peoples. The issue of folklorism among Roma as a process that includes invention, adaptation and public performance of tradition outside the original cultural context should not be overlooked. It comes to underline that this process is an important component of the Roma civic emancipation movement.

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