

# Introducing the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ankara

Wednesday 26 March 2008, by [Mustafa Akyol](#)

**Turkey will not become a free and democratic country until the SSRA is abolished, and all institutions of the regime accept the sovereignty of the people.**

Turkey is often called a democracy, but that is a gross mistake. In fact, it is only a quasi-democracy. In democracies, sovereignty rests with the people. In Turkey it is shared between the people and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ankara (SSRA). The latter lets the people make decisions on trivial issues, but never allows them to mingle with more important ones. When the representatives of the people take steps to make Turkey a real democracy, the SSRA first resists, then warns, then attacks.

Of course the SSRA does not call itself as such. It simply calls itself “the Republic.” Dictionaries will tell you that a republic is “a state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives.” But in Turkey, it is precisely the opposite. The like the USSR of Moscow, the SSRA of Ankara is a “republic” which does not trust its people. It only trusts its own rigid ideology, which is often at odds with the deep-seated beliefs, values and identities of the people. That’s why the SSRA is engaged in a never-ending war against “the internal enemies of the Republic,” who constitute the majority of the nation.

## **Vulgar (not dialectical) materialism**

The ideology of the USSR was created by tragically misled but highly sophisticated thinkers such as Karl Marx and Vladimir I. Lenin. The ideology of the SSRA has less accomplished but more numerous minds in its making. The roots go back to late Ottoman thinkers such as Abdullah Cevdet, who, according to Princeton historian Şükrü Hanioğlu, was deeply influenced by the German “vulgar materialism” (Vulgärmaterialismus) of late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which heralded a post-religious world solely guided by “science and reason.” (The USSR was based on a more elaborated version of materialism, the “dialectical” one, founded by Marx and Engels.)

This vulgärmaterialismus idea was cultivated in the 1930s, the golden age of the SSRA, when the one and only political party, the CHP (Republican People’s Party) became identical with the state. (Similarly, in the USSR, the Communist Party was the only party that existed and it was indistinguishable from the state itself.) The CHP elite believed that the state had to dominate the whole society and engineer it according to its own ideology. Their main problem was religion. They were quite convinced that they had to wipe the influence off religion from Turkish society in order to ensure “progress.” The overwhelming majority of the people did not like the idea, hence came the CHP’s witty and tell-tall motto: “For the people, in spite of the people!”

Actually in the 1930s, the SSRA attacked not just public religion, but also anything which was civil and independent. Not only Sufi orders but also freemasonry lodges and even feminist clubs were closed down by the regime. For the SSRA, “civil society” was anathema. This hatred toward anything civil is still very much alive in Ankara. The commissars of the regime deeply resent all kinds of nongovernmental organizations, except the few ones which cherish their own ideology.

The biggest tragedy for the SSRA was the end of the totalitarian era of the interwar period. When the allies defeated the Nazis, with whom the SSRA flirted for sometime, and the United States started to

promote democracy around the world, Ankara's nomenklatura grudgingly had to conform and accept the founding of political parties which don't agree with its ideology. That was the time that we moved from full authoritarianism to quasi-democracy. That's why since the 1950s, the political history of Turkey is shaped by the conflict between the SSRA and the elected representatives of the people. The former has staged four military coups, and has constantly blocked efforts toward liberalization.

To date, the SSRA has two major enemies: Religion and capitalism.

Actually religion is fine when it is limited to the private life of citizens and the state-controlled mosques. (That was the policy in most moderate communist regimes, too.) But any sort of civil religion — all Sufi orders, religious communities, and independent preachers — is abhorred by the SSRA and its apparatchiks. (Many of the "crimes" of the incumbent AKP according to the Chief Prosecutor who has just asked for the closure of the party, are simply informal links between AKP members and Sufi orders.) The SSRA hates non-Islamic religion such the Protestant missionaries or the Ecumenical Patriarchate, too. It actually dislikes anything that it cannot control.

## **Leninism in Ankara**

Capitalism, and especially foreign capital, is another threat to the SSRA, which it sees as a dangerous force that integrates Turkey to the world and thus undermines its "national sovereignty" — a euphemism for homegrown tyranny. They believe in the Leninist theory of imperialism, which was adapted by Kemalist thinkers such as Doğan Avcıoğlu and promoted nowadays by eccentric figures such as Doğu Perinçek, the Maoist-turned-nationalist. According to this theory the "transfer of capital" from rich countries to poorer ones is a form of "exploitation." That's why the legal branch SSRA has repeatedly annulled or blocked decisions taken by the current AKP government toward privatization and the welcoming of foreign capital. Actually the mouthpieces of the SSRA continuously accuse the AKP for "selling Turkey to the imperialists."

Some people say that the SSRA (in their language, "the Republic") is not undemocratic because it enjoys some popular support as well. The second part of the argument is true. The CHP represents the SSRA in the political realm and it gets roughly 20 percent of the votes. But almost all tyrannies have such a base, which consists of people who benefit from the regime and don't care about the fate of the second-class citizens. Saddam Hussein enjoyed a very wide base among the Sunnis of Iraq, while it was the Shiites and Kurds who suffered from his bloody tyranny. And there are still people on the streets of Moscow who yearn for the days of Stalin.

Turkey will not become a free and democratic country until the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ankara is abolished, and all the institutions of the regime accept the sovereignty of the people. Turkey's democrats have been fighting for that cause for decades and now we are at a very critical point. The Western world should not leave these democrats unaided. We need a real concerted effort to tear down this wall.

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## **Sources**

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