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Научная статья / Research article

The Raid in the Editorial Office of the Turkish Newspaper *Tan*, 1945, and its Impact on the State of Soviet-Turkish and US-Turkish Relations in the Post-WWII Period¹

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Погром в редакции турецкой газеты «Тан» в 1945 г. и его влияние на состояние советско-турецких и американско-турецких отношений в послевоенный период

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Abstract: The author examines the demonstrations carried out by university students in Istanbul on December 4, 1945 and the raid on the printing operations of the pro-Soviet *Tan* newspaper, known as the Tan Raid, in light of U.S. State Department documents, namely the related files in National Archives Records Administration. The influence of the Tan Raid on Turkey's international relations is discussed in the context of Turkish-American and Turkish-Soviet relations. The Raid is regarded as a significant incident since it coincides with the post WW2 period when Turkey's relations with the Soviet Union had already deteriorated due to Moscow's demands to revise the Montreux Convention by 19th of March 1945. Furthermore, Turkish-American diplomatic contacts in the aftermath of the Raid show Washington's perspective on policy towards Soviet Union, as U.S. officials advised a moderate line to their Turkish counterparts. On the other hand, preparations for the Raid seem highly controversial since Turkish government officials did not strongly condemn the event and the police did not intervene against the protestors despite of their violent actions towards *Tan* and some left leaning bookstores. The slogans during the demonstration show its anti-Soviet character, which Ankara denied in order to decrease tensions with the Soviets by arguing that it was *Tan*'s owner, the Sertel couple to whom the anger was directed, not the Soviet Union. The intelligence obtained by diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, the meetings they conducted with Turkish politicians, their conclusions regarding the process leading up to the raid, and their opinions on Turkish-Soviet relations provide the background for the analysis.

Keywords: Turkish-American Relations, Turkish-Soviet Relations, Turkish Foreign Policy, American Foreign Policy, Tan Raid, Tan Incidents

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¹ The arguments and archival sources related to Tan Raid are used for the first time among the Authors' publications. They are not produced from Author's doctoral dissertation.

Аннотация: В статье на основе введения в научный оборот архивных документов, в том числе из фонда госсекретаря США, исследуется история демонстрации студентов Стамбульского университета 4 декабря 1945 г.и связанного с этим погрома редакции газеты «Тан», известного как «Тан Рейд». Автором анализируется влияние данного инцидента на внешнюю политику Турции в контексте турецко-советских и турецко-американских отношений после окончания Второй мировой войны, когда противостояние между СССР и Турцией заметно усилилось. С привлечением новых исторических материалов автор раскрывает внешнюю политику США в отношении СССР в этот период и выявляет рекомендации Вашингтона Турции, направленные на снижение напряженности в ее отношениях с Кремлем. Хотя инцидент известен как «Тан рейд», он был направлен также против нескольких книжных магазинов и издательств (кроме типографии газеты «Тан»), в которых выходила литература левой направленности. В числе атакованных оказался также один из книжных магазинов, где бизнес-менеджером был советский гражданин. Понесенные финансовые потери стали предметом обмена дипломатическими нотами между Турцией и СССР по вопросу о компенсациях советской стороне. Как показало исследование, у американской дипломатической миссии в Анкаре сложилось впечатление, что турецкие официальные круги не были разочарованы насильственными действиями, совершенными в отношении левых изданий, а скорее расценили данный инцидент как естественный, обусловленный ростом в стране после войны антисоветских настроений. Автором были проанализированы полученные американскими дипломатами в Анкаре сведения об инциденте, характер состоявшихся встреч, которые они провели в те дни с турецкими политиками, и выводы американской стороны о влиянии данного инцидента на состояние турецко-советских отношений.

Ключевые слова: турецко-советские отношения, турецко-американские отношения, внешняя политика Турции, внешняя политика Америки, Тан Рейд, Тан происшествия

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Introduction

The Tan Raid is commonly seen as an important benchmark in Turkish political history, which played role in shaping the republic's position in its international relations in the wake of the Second World War. The raid coincided with a period when Turkish – Soviet relations had deteriorated, as a consequence of several incidents starting from the beginning of the war. In March 1945, signals of Russia's intention to change the Montreux Regime became apparent. The Montreux Convention of 1936, which gave Ankara full sovereignty over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits in peace time and right to militarize them, which had been ruled by an international commission since the 1923 Lausanne Conference. Following WWII, the Soviet Union started to put pressure on Turkey to share its sovereignty rights, but Ankara argued that this was an “international matter”², knowing that U.S. and Britain would contest Soviets' gaining this privilege if it came to an international convention. On the other hand, in 1944, Britain was moderate in allowing free passage of Russian warships through the Straits.³ How-

² “Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, The Near East and Africa,” Office of the Historian, accessed December 3, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v08/d1182>.

³ “Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta,” Office of the Historian, December 3, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Malta/d227>.

ever, the Kremlin's demands also included having bases in the region and defending the Straits together with Turkey.

The incident that took place in Istanbul at the end of 1945 arose from the protests that targeted the *Tan* newspaper and several bookstores that apparently had leftist leanings. The university students who damaged the bookstores and the printing office of the *Tan* shouted slogans attacking Zekeriya Sertel, the owner of *Tan*, and his wife Sabiha Sertel, who was a columnist for the paper. Besides the two journalists, who followed a pro-Soviet line, Communism was a target of the slogans as well. Although there is no written proof, testimonies of eyewitnesses suggest that the protests had been organized by the ruling Republican People's Party, or at least ignored by it. The incident coincided with a critical period in Turkish diplomacy relations with the Soviet Union had deteriorated. This article covers the course of events that led to the Tan Raid and its records in U.S. archival documents, namely the remarks of American diplomats about the incident and Turkish – Soviet relations. Turkey faced several demands from the Soviet Union in 1939, before WW2 broke out. While Turkey's Foreign Minister at the time, Şükrü Saraçoğlu, arrived Moscow at 25th of September 1939 for negotiations to include Soviet Union to the potential Tripartite Treaty between Turkey, Britain and France, he faced unexpected demands, such as revising Montreux Convention in favor of the Kremlin.⁴ In a similar way, on 19 March 1945 Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs Molotov announced the termination of the Soviet –Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression, which had been signed on 17 December 1925, declaring “The Soviets considers it necessary to assert that owing to deep changes which have taken place particularly in course of second world war, this treaty no longer corresponds to the new situation and requires serious improvement”.⁵ The Kremlin's step was regarded as a signal for demanding a revision in Montreux by the Turkish side. Moreover, Japan was one of the signatories of the Convention. Since Japan was on the losing side of WW2, Ankara believed that by revision, the Soviets wanted to exclude Japan from Montreux.⁶ However soon, it became apparent that Soviets were following a policy that would provide opportunities to exert strong political pressure on Turkey.⁷ From a historical perspective, the Treaty of Hunkar Iskelesi, signed among Russia and the Ottoman State in 1833, opened the Straits to Russian warships freely and Ottomans could close the Straits to any warships in case of war. However, during WW1 Turkey let the German battleships *Goeben* and *Breslau* pass, which violated the Straits regime. As a consequence of Lausanne, Soviets demands were left out and freedom of passage was established for merchant ships during peace or war, and warships were given passage only in peace time. In the interwar years, the Soviets were attacked twice through the Straits. Montreux recognized Turkish sovereignty and granted complete freedom of passage to commercial ships in peacetime and limited freedom to warships with certain

⁴ Barış Ertem, “Türkiye Üzerindeki Sovyet Talepleri ve Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri (1939–1947),” *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3, no. 11 (2010): 252, 253.

⁵ “Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, The Near East and Africa,” Office of the Historian, accessed December 2, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v08/d1183>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

tonnages limitations. In war time, different conditions would regulate when Turkey was determinant. However, the Soviets were not satisfied with the Montreux Convention since it still gave the opportunity to foreign warships to navigate Black Sea and imposed limitations on the size of vessels that the Soviet Union could send into the Mediterranean. Moreover, Montreux did not give Soviet Union direct control over Straits.⁸ As a matter of fact, at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Josef Stalin argued that “a small state like Turkey could keep a hand on the throat of a large country like Russia”. Accordingly, Russia should not have to beg Turkey to give passage to its ships through the Straits, and a new regime like that for the Suez Canal should be established. Although the British kept a moderate stance in response to Russia’s intention, London was confused when it heard the Soviet demands on 7 June.⁹

On 7 June 1945, the Soviets put forward four demands from Ankara government: i) Kars and Ardahan, on the Soviet border in northeast Turkey, which was occupied by Russia during WW1, should remain Soviet. ii) The Soviets should gain naval and military bases in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. iii) The Montreux Convention should be revised. iv) the Thracian border should be changed in favor of communist Bulgaria. These demands were supported by Moscow’s shifting troops towards Thrace, and a war of nerves it conducted with Bulgaria via media outlets that directly targeted Turkey’s government at the time.¹⁰ Due to the its perception of the threat, Turkey sought diplomatic support from U.S. and Britain, although the former refrained from giving explicit support due since this would harm its relations with Kremlin while Britain supported Turkey.¹¹ Considering Turkey’s efforts to balance Moscow’s war of nerves towards Turkey, the Tan Raid holds a considerable significance since it coincided with one of Ankara’s major foreign policy struggles.

On November 1, 1945, Turkey’s President Ismet Inonu openly declared that “the only thing missing in Turkey is an opposition party”¹², but by the end of 1945 opposition circles had surfaced when it became apparent that Turkey would turn to multi-party politics. The change became evident in pro-Soviet publications towards the end of 1945, with the expansion of the strict censorship that was enforced during the war years.¹³ In the process, a group of left-leaning intellectuals published a journal titled *Görüşler* (Opinions”). The journal was named after a column in the *Tan* newspaper by Sabiha Sertel, who was well-known for her left-wing orientation.¹⁴ It was hoped that publish-

⁸ Gökay Bülent, “Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920–1991,” in *Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 61.

⁹ A.L. Macfie, “The Turkish straits in the second world war, 1939–1945,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 2 (1989): 245–246.

¹⁰ Bağcı Hüseyin, Bal İdris, “Turkish Foreign Policy in Post Cold War Era: New Problems and Opportunities,” in *Turkish Foreign Policy in Post Cold War Era* (Floria: Brown Walker Press, 2004), 97.

¹¹ H. George, *Troubled Alliance-Turkish American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 16–19.

¹² Türk Devrim Tarihi Enstitüsü, *İnönü’nün Söylev ve Demeçleri-I 1919–1946* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi Publ., 1946), 397.

¹³ B. Lewis, *Modern Türkiye’nin Doğuşu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1993), 308.

¹⁴ Ali Ulvi Özdemir, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Serteller ve Tan Gazetesi (1939–1945),” *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 49, no. 3 (2012): 179–216.

ing the proposed journal would be instrumental in triggering Turkey's democratization. *Görüşler*, owned by the Sertel couple, was similar in content and editorial policies to their newspaper, *Tan*, which essentially claimed to be a Soviet sympathizer, and defended anti-fascism, the transition to a democratic and liberal order, the abolition of anti-democratic laws, and the termination of the one-party regime.¹⁵

The contributors to *Görüşler* were announced on the cover of the first issue, which was published on December 1, 1945. The prominent opponents of one-party rule Celal Bayar, Fuat Köprülü, Adnan Menderes, Teşvik Rüştü Aras were on the initial list of contributors along with leftist intellectuals such as Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, Niyazi Berkeş, Sabahattin Ali, and Aziz Nesin. However, only the first issue appeared, since the weekly was unable to continue publication due to violent acts that erupted subsequently. This study discusses intelligence obtained by diplomats serving in the U.S. Embassy in Turkey during the period leading up to the Tan Raid, their meetings with Turkish politicians, their comments and conclusions. In addition, based on information available in documents from archival documents, the impact of the Tan Raid on Turkish-Soviet relations is examined from American perspective.

The Tan Raid was studied in a number of publications within the context of Turkish-Soviet relations. However, to explain the course of events and to understand the U.S. reaction, the American archival documents were not used. Vural underlines that in 1945's fall, both in Greece and Iran, internal turmoil connected to the Soviet Union was lasting and Turkey's threat perception from Soviet Union led to a rapprochement between U.S. and Turkey. Accordingly Turkey's international relations and *Tan*'s supporting publication to opposition groups in Turkey's domestic politics made the psychological atmosphere suitable for the Tan Raid.¹⁶ Özdemir claims that the Tan Raid was a message by Turkish government to the world in its search to position itself in the new international order.¹⁷ Turkey apparently aimed at being a member of the Western world following WW2.

The Background of the Raid

In an atmosphere where Turkey's threat perception of the Soviet Union was high, Turkey's left-wing intellectuals prone to a moderate stance towards Moscow's aspirations were confronted by official circles and the media under its control. Within this context, Turkey's international relations had an impact on domestic politics when publication of *Görüşler* triggered hostility against the leftist movements and mobilized Turkish youth groups to conduct act of violence towards the left-wing media organs and bookstores.

When the first copy of *Görüşler* was published, the initial letter of its Turkish name ("G"), was found to resemble a sickle. The sickle and hammer were the two symbols of Communism. The resemblance to this symbol created the perception that

¹⁵ Hülya Öztekin, "Türkiye'de Çok Partili Hayata Geçiş Sürecinde Muhalif Bir Dergi: Görüşler," *İletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi*, no. 41 (2015): 178.

¹⁶ Mithat Kadri Vural, "II. Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'sinde Bir Muhalefet Örneği Olarak "Tan" Gazetesi," *ÇTTAD* 8, no. 16–17 (2008): 391.

¹⁷ Ali Ulvi Özdemir, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Serteller ve Tan Gazetesi (1939–1945)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, no. 49 (2012): 181.

the journal would lead to a violent communist revolution, or at least support such a revolution in Turkey. According to Sabiha Sertel, the deliberate association of the letter ‘G’ with a sickle during the publication of the journal was beyond its control and had been an attempt at sabotage. According to Sertel, Sabahattin Ali, also a left-leaning writer, had a similar experience. Ali had requested that flags of all countries be placed around the logo depicting the world, which appeared in the advertisements of the *Yeni Dünya* Newspaper (New World), which he owned. He had asked that the Turkish flag be given prominence, however, in the printing process the flags were replaced and the Soviet flag was prominently positioned, which suggested that the newspaper was pro-Soviet.¹⁸

Following publication of the first issue of *Görüşler*, Celal Bayar declared that he had no connection with the journal. He argued that he was in no way associated with any ideology other than Kemalism, indicating that his new political party would be founded soon. Sabiha Sertel, the publisher of *Görüşler*, wrote in her memoirs that she had obtained the necessary permission from Bayar and other founders of the Democratic Party (DP). According to Sertel, on behalf of the founders of the DP, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Rüştü Aras had explained that they gave up writing for the journal after the negative reaction from official circles in Ankara following the publication of the first issue. In fact, Celal Bayar had promised to give an interview, not an article, to the journal. Sertel, however, wrote Bayar’s name on the cover of the journal, at the top of the section presenting those who had promised to write for the journal, even though Bayar had indicated that he could only give an interview. It is likely that this was a manifestation of Sabiha Sertel’s attempt to create the perception that the journal was effective by taking advantage of Celal Bayar’s popularity. Sertel, on the other hand, claimed that Bayar had offered to cover the expenses related to the journal’s issue, but Sertel had refused. In other words, Bayar supported the journal to some degree at its founding stage.¹⁹

DP’s founding staff initially pledged financial assistance, articles and interviews to *Görüşler*, but backed down due to the reactions to the first issue.²⁰ It can be argued that such collaboration was based on mutual interests. There was a strong possibility that the left-wing intellectual group comprising Zekeriya Sertel, Sabiha Sertel, Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Cami Baykurt and others sought to use their own ideologies to influence the new opposition party to be established.²¹ However, the Tan Raid, which took place on December 4, 1945, led to a break between the DP and other opposition elements.²² In one view, the Tan incident served as a warning to the DP as it was in the process of coming to power, and it ceased its collaboration with left-leaning opposition groups.²³ With the process that started with the Tan Raid, the DP and the ruling Republican People’s Party (RPP) adopted a joint stance against left-wing tendencies, which signaled the beginning of a period when left-wing parties and unions stopped operating.²⁴

¹⁸ S. Sertel, *Roman Gibi* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları Publ., 1987), 298–299.

¹⁹ Ibid., 296–303.

²⁰ Timur Taner, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Hayata Geçiş* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Publ., 2003), 112–113.

²¹ Goloğlu Mahmut, *Demokrasiye Geçiş 1946-1950* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları Publ., 1982), 130.

²² A. Gevgilili, *Yükseliş ve Düşüş* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları Publ., 1987), 41.

²³ Küçük Yalçın, *Türkiye Üzerine Tezler* (İstanbul: Türkiye Üzerine Tezler Publ., 2006), 459.

²⁴ Ensar Yılmaz, “Türkiye’de Siyaset Alanının Yeniden Tanziminde İki Önemli Olay: Tan Gazetesi Baskını ve Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak’ın Ölümü,” *Bartın Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 1 (2016): 66.

It is possible that the Sertels might have thought that the people who were in the process of forming a party, especially Celal Bayar, would have brought added value to *Görüşler*. However, on the eve of forming a new party, some individuals may have desired to be heard via the press, even if it was left-leaning. As a matter of fact, the strict press censorship of the single-party era seemed to have loosened, but the vast majority of the media was still controlled by the government.

After the first issue of *Görüşler* was published, columnists close to the government embarked on an intensive smear campaign against the journal. Sabiha Sertel's harsh style in the first issue of *Görüşler* might also have played a role in this development.²⁵

On the second page of the first issue of *Görüşler*, there was a call for the abolition of the anti-democratic laws of the one-party regime in an article published under the signature of Zekeriya Sertel. It argued that such changes could be made not by the RPP and the current parliament, but by a government that would come to power through free elections. Under the heading "Dünya Sola Gidiyor" (The World Is Going Left), it noted that socialist regimes had been introduced in countries such as England, France and Belgium.²⁶ The most obvious reaction in the Turkish press regarding these articles came from Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, who was famous for opposing the left. Yalçın referred to the demands of the Russians for bases on the lands in Eastern Anatolia and the Straits, and stated that the struggle had begun, with words and articles as the means. Accordingly, journalists and citizens had to carry out the fight. It was not the government's job to silence these people.²⁷

The articles published in the Turkish press against *Görüşler* stirred up the youth and brought thousands of students together in a demonstration. Another view contends, however, that the students were organized by the RPP's Istanbul Provincial Organization itself. According to Sabiha Sertel, some of the youth groups that attacked Tan's printing offices had been organized beforehand by the People's Party and Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu. Sertel argued that the Tan's printing press was destroyed according to their instructions.²⁸ Similarly, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir argued that the RPP played a role in organizing the Tan incident²⁹, not to mention that then Prime Minister, Şükrü Saraçoğlu, had criticized *Tan* and *Vatan* newspapers without naming them at a press conference about three months before the raid, and complained about their "impropriety."³⁰

The reason for the demonstration against the printing offices of *Tan* was that it also published *Görüşler*. As a matter of fact, both media organs belonged to the Sertels. In the early hours of December 4, 1945, about 20,000 university and high school students with slogans walked from the Beyazıt Campus of Istanbul University to the building where *Tan* was located. Even though the demonstrators were on the premises of *Tan*,

²⁵ Burcu Biçer Ertuna, *Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Aydınları Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel'in Fikir Yazılarında Modernleşme Bağlamında Kadın, Toplum ve Siyaset* (Marmara: Marmara Üniversitesi Publ., 2008), 341.

²⁶ Hülya Öztekin, "Türkiye'de Çok Partili Hayata Geçiş Sürecinde Muhafif Bir Dergi: Görüşler," *İletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi*, no. 41 (2015): 178–179.

²⁷ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, "Kalkın Ey... Ehli Vatan!...", *Tanin*, December 3, 1945.

²⁸ S. Sertel, *Roman Gibi...*, 308.

²⁹ Aydemir Süreyya Şevket, *İkinci Adam (1938–1950)* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi Publ., 2005), 285.

³⁰ Us Asım, *Atatürk, İnönü, İkinci Dünya Harbi Ve Demokrasi Rejimine Giriş Devri Hatıraları, 1930–1950* (İstanbul: Vakıf Matbaası Publ., 1966), 646.

the police did not intervene. Some of the marchers, with axes in their hands, attacked the building, smashing the windows and printing presses inside. The press thrown out the window, and the paper rolls of newsprint were plundered. According to eyewitnesses, “Kahrolsun Komünizm, Kahrolsun Serteller” (Damn Communism, Damn the Sertels) were the slogans heard during the demonstration.³¹ In their fury, the crowd went so far as to strip the Sertels naked after finding them and painted them red.³²

After the demonstrators removed the *Tan*’s sign and replaced it with a portrait of Atatürk, they arrived at Beyoğlu singing the national anthem, after passing through Sirkeci to leave flowers at the Republic Monument in Taksim. The *Yeni Dünya* and *La Turquie* newspapers, and the Berrak Bookstore, which sold left-leaning books, were along the marchers’ route, and were also damaged. Demonstrators attacked the *ABC Bookstore* on Ankara Street on the way back, after placing their wreath. The crowd then proceeded to the Provincial Hall and the RPP’s Provincial Organization Center and dispersed after shouting slogans. Although there was no evidence that the demonstration against *Tan* was instigated by the one-party regime itself, there appear to be various indications in this direction. It is noteworthy that the police did not intervene despite witnessing the attacks by the demonstrators, and despite the fact that the demonstrators caused damage and openly committed crimes. The police took no legal action and no government official made a statement condemning the incident. While it was reluctantly agreed that the demonstrations were unfortunate, the pro-government media generally praised them.³³ Meanwhile, the police had not taken any precautions during the events, which lasted until 3 pm and took place in a region very close to police headquarters in Istanbul.³⁴

Ali İhsan Göğüş, who was detained for organizing the events, argued that the articles written by Sabiha Sertel were responsible for the Tan Raid.³⁵ Kazım Alöç, the martial law prosecutor at the time, was surprised that the RPP inspector, Alaaddin Tiritöğlü, came to visit the seven people who organized the events while they were in custody. According to Alöç, the RPP inspector offered cigarettes to the defendants and asked them how they were doing.³⁶

Edwin C. Wilson, the U.S. Ambassador to Ankara, informed the State Department on December 4, 1945 about the demonstrations and quoted the first eyewitness accounts from Istanbul that thousands of university students had damaged the workplaces of *Tan* and *La Turquie* newspapers. Wilson noted that both media organs were pro-Soviet and that a Soviet bookshop had been damaged. Also, all the buildings on the main street were forced to display a Turkish flag. The demonstrators used chalk to write ‘damn communism’ on the walls and cars as they passed by. Wilson also mentioned that the crowd sought to reach the Soviet Consulate building but was blocked by the police.³⁷

³¹ Mumcu Uğur, *40’ların Cadı Kazanı* (Ankara: Um:ag Vakfı Yayınları Publ., 2002), 74–75.

³² Erduran Refik, *Sabiha* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi Publ., 2004), 140.

³³ Necmeddin Sadak, “Türk Gençliğinin Heyecanlı Gösterisine Dünya Hayran Kalmıştır,” *Akşam*, December 7, 1945.

³⁴ Yetkin Çetin, *Türkiye’de Tek Parti Yönetimi (1930–1945)* (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar Publ., 1983), 220.

³⁵ Göğüş Ali İhsan, *Hep İsmet Paşa’nın Yanında* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi Publ., 2008), 55.

³⁶ Kazım Alöç, “İfşa Ediyorum,” *Yeni Gazete*, April 12–26, 1967.

³⁷ U.S. National Archives, 867.00/12-44.

The U.S. Ambassador sent another telegram to Washington on the same day indicating six reasons for the demonstrations:³⁸

1) A strong anti-Russian sentiment emerged in Turkish society. This feeling was mainly revived after the Soviet demand for land in the Eastern regions, as well as for bases in the Straits, and the events in Iran.

2) *La Turquie* and *Tan*, published by the Sertels, were influential. According to Wilson, pro-Soviet policies pursued by the two press organs had become more evident in recent months.

3) In the last few days, two pro-Soviet press organs had emerged. These were the *Yeni Dünya* newspaper and the *Görüşler* magazine. *Yeni Dünya* was published by the owner of the *La Turquie* newspaper. The publisher of *Görüşler* was the Sertels. The names of reputable dissidents were used without permission in the advertisements of *Görüşler*. One of them, Celal Bayar, said he had no connections to *Görüşler*.

4) The broadcasts by *Moscow Radio* in Turkish since the end of November had been hostile to the Turkish government and its leaders.

5) Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın of *Tanin* newspaper, Falih Rıfkı Atay of *Ulus* and some writers from *Tasvir* had recently accused Ahmet Emin Yalman and the Sertels of being Soviet agents.

6) The quality of education received by Turkish youth and university students was very patriotic.

The telegrams sent by American diplomats show that U.S. had paid close attention to the course of anti-Soviet sentiments among the Turkish population following Moscow's demands for Turkey's territories and the Straits region. The deterioration of Turkish-Soviet relations accelerated the diplomatic activities between Turkey and U.S. as Ankara asked for Washington's support to stand against the demands.

The Meeting between Wilson and the Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The archival documents show that after the Tan Raid, several meetings took place between Turkish officials and the U.S. Ambassador to Ankara about the incident and the deterioration of Turkish – Soviet relations. Within this context, the ambassador held a private meeting with Secretary General Feridun Cemal Erkin of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to Erkin, in recent months, there had been a build-up of anger among university students towards the Sertels and *La Turquie*'s publications. The situation gained momentum after the publication of the first issue of *Görüşler* during the period leading up to the raid. According to Erkin, *Görüşler* had declared that it would be a literary journal with no political content. Celal Bayar wanted to wait until the publication of the first issue to indicate his support the journal. However, this was not the case, and when the first issue Bayar was listed as one of the main authors he reacted angrily. The sequence of events that Erkin conveyed to the American diplomat followed Sabiha Sertel's account.

³⁸ NARA, 867.00/12-44.

In Secretary General Erkin's view, the fact that Bayar's name was put on the cover of the journal was the last straw, which provoked and motivated the students' actions. According to Erkin, the demonstrators carried banners with the slogans "Çok yaşa Türkiye," "biz faşist değiliz," "Türk toprağı Türk kalacak" ("Long live Turkey," "We are not fascists," and "Turkish territory will remain Turkish"). Erkin informed Wilson that there had been no action against the Soviet Consulate General. In the view of the U.S. Ambassador, however, this did not reflect reality.

Erkin argued that the demonstration was not against the Soviets, but against the "traitors" inside. In his meeting with Wilson, Erkin also addressed the way the Russians perceived the issue. It appears that on the evening of December 4, 1945 the Turkish Press General Manager learned that Turkey's representative of the Soviet official news agency, TASS, had exaggerated the events in reporting to Moscow. The TASS representative conveyed to Moscow that slogans such as "Ruslara ölüm," "Kahrolsun komünizm" ("Death to the Russians" and "Damn communism") were shouted. He argued that this action was against the Soviet Union. The Turkish Press director then contacted the TASS representative and stated that his statements did not correspond with the facts. He suggested that the Russian journalist had altered the text sent to Moscow. The Russian responded that he would report to his government if even a single word of his text had been changed or was blocked from contacting the Soviet Union. The director then ensured that the message was sent to Moscow without any change. He invited representatives of the international press to Istanbul on the evening of the incident and distributed the news texts that he had prepared about the events to the press representatives invited. Erkin informed the American ambassador that all factual information had been conveyed to the Turkish ambassadors abroad and he expected the Soviet Union to complain about the issue. According to Erkin, it would likely distort what happened on December 4th. During the meeting, which took place in Erkin's office, Wilson witnessed a call from the Russian Consul General in Istanbul. As the archival documents state, the Soviet diplomat had sent a letter of protest to the Governor of Istanbul just before the phone call.³⁹

The meeting suggests that Turkey made an effort to argue that it was not aiming at increasing tension with the Soviet Union. In a similar way, on the eve of Cold War the U.S. was following a moderate policy towards Soviet Union. However, Washington's hopes to cooperate with Soviet Union were frustrated when Moscow resisted removing its troops from Iran as promised. The moderate tone that Washington Turkey to adopt turned more aggressive when President Truman wrote that there was "no doubt that Soviets intend to attack Turkey." Unless the Soviets were to face "an iron fist and strong language, another war was in the making." In his Army Day Speech, the president now publicly warned Moscow that the sovereignty and integrity of countries in the Near and Middle East must not be threatened by coercion or penetration. To show Washington's support to Turkey, he sent the battleship *USS Missouri* to Istanbul on 5 of April 1946, ostensibly to carry the remains of the late Turkish Ambassador Münir Ertegün.⁴⁰

³⁹ NARA, 867.00/12-545.

⁴⁰ H. George, *Troubled Alliance- Turkish American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 19–20.

The Meeting between Wilson and Prime Minister Saraçoğlu

The meetings between Turkish officials and American diplomats then focused on the Tan Raid. The Ambassador Wilson's impressions of the meeting with the Turkish Prime Minister were transmitted to Washington, which concluded that Turkish authorities saw the raid favourably

As is evident from the archival documents, Prime Minister Saraçoğlu also reported the events as described by Feridun Cemal Erkin. According to Saraçoğlu, it was the pro-Soviet and anti-Turkish behavior of certain newspapers that had provoked university students. Saraçoğlu told Wilson that the Turkish government had nothing to do with what happened. According to Saraçoğlu, the demonstrations were masterfully organized by the students, and the events broke out suddenly. The Turkish authorities were not aware of the developments before to the incident and the attacks against *Tan* had begun before the police could intervene. The Prime Minister also argued that the fact that the students organized their actions in the narrow streets of Istanbul made it difficult to intervene. The police prevented the demonstrators from crossing into Pera and closed the Golden Horn bridges. However, in the meantime, some of the crowd had already entered Pera partly by boat. Those who reached Pera broke the police line-up, looted *La Turquie's* office and two leftist bookstores. The archives also show that, during his meeting with Saraçoğlu, Wilson, got the impression that he confirmed the actions of the demonstrators. According to the ambassador, the Turkish Prime Minister seemed to think that the demonstrators were provoked and that their reactions were understandable and did not disapprove of their actions.⁴¹

The Meeting between Wilson and Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Tan Raid resulted in a Soviet diplomatic to Turkey demanding compensation of the damage caused to the bookstore, which was run by a Soviet citizen. Since the 19th of March 1945, when the Soviet Union informed Turkey that it would not renew the Non-Aggression Pact under current circumstances, relations had already begun to deteriorate, and the Tan Raid only further worsened matters.

The American archival documents show that Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hasan Saka informed Wilson of the Soviet move. Accordingly, on December 8, 1945, the Soviet ambassador requested an appointment with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs by telephone to convey his country's protest notes about the events of December 4. Saka received the Russian ambassador only half an hour after the call. The minister went on to show Wilson the text of the note he had received, and the ambassador passed its contents onto Washington. The note stated that hostile statements against the USSR had been made during the December 4 Istanbul demonstrations. It added that they had been shouted by the crowd, and that two bookstores selling Russian publications and Soviet books were destroyed. These facts were meant to give the demonstration an anti-Soviet character. According to the note, the Turkish police, despite all this hostile behavior, did not stop the demonstrators and in fact protected them. It concluded that the Soviet government would not tolerate such a provocative incident and blamed the Turkish government for the incident.⁴²

⁴¹ NARA, 867.00/12-545.

⁴² NARA, 867.00/12-845.

According to the American archival documents, the Turkish minister of foreign affairs immediately responded to the Soviet Ambassador to Ankara, Sergei A. Vinogradov. He argued that Soviet government had relied on incorrect information and added that the crowd had not expressed any hostility against the Soviet Union. He argued that the demonstrations were against the communism in Turkey, not against the USSR, stressing that communism was illegal in Turkey. At the same time, the police had not protected the demonstrators, but rather tried to protect the booksellers. The fact that the police were injured in clashes with the demonstrators proved it.

The Turkish Minister informed the Soviet ambassador that the owners of the bookstores had legal rights to cover their losses. On the other hand, he stated that the information obtained by the Soviet Government was the same as that provided to the TASS correspondent. He stressed that Turkish authorities had warned TASS about the errors, but that its correspondent insisted on passing the news in its current form. Saka underscored that the December 4 demonstrations had nothing to do with any foreign country and argued that the demonstrations were all about Turkey's domestic issues. He informed the Russians they would receive his government's report on the subject after its completion. The minister also pointed out that government officials listened to Moscow Radio's broadcasts of every evening and were aware that they attacked Turkish institutions and individuals.

According to Saka, those broadcasts were far more hostile than in the events in Istanbul. Regardless, the Turkish government would not react in anger to such words. In a private meeting with Ambassador Wilson, Saka stated that he had expected the Soviets to react in this way. According to Saka, for the Russians this opportunity was too good to miss. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs also shared with Wilson his belief that when the Russians had achieved their goal in Iran, it would be Turkey's turn, and they would use the events of December 4 in addition to other accusations. On December 13, 1945, the U.S. State Department thanked its embassy in Ankara for its report on the *Tan* incident and instructed it to issue a call for moderation to Turkish authorities, asking them to refrain from anything that could be interpreted as provocative before the United Nations would become fully operational.⁴³

The Exchange of Diplomatic Notes between Turks and Russians through the Eyes of Americans

Wilson sent a telegram to Washington on December 11, 1945 to assess the exchange of notes between the Turks and Russians in relation to the events of December 4. The Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Feridun Cemal Erkin, had accordingly contacted Wilson on the morning on December 11, 1945 to give him a copy of the note responding to the Soviet Ambassador's protest of December 8. The Turks had replied to the Soviets an hour later, at 6 o'clock in the evening. Erkin stated that the Turkish government tried to be conciliatory in preparing its note, explaining that the December 4 demonstrations were related to Turkey's domestic affairs. It added that there was no hostility to the USSR. Erkin had received news that U.S. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes would leave for Moscow in one or two days and predicted that

⁴³ NARA, 867.00/12-845.

the Soviets would inform him of the issue. He, therefore, he asked that the Turkish response note be shared with the American before his visit to Moscow. According to Erkin, the Russians would have told the Byrnes that what happened was provocative and fascist.⁴⁴ The Turkish diplomat's effort, therefore, sought to prevent the American from being convinced by the Soviets.

The Turkish response stated that the investigation into the events of December 4 had been completed and concluded that they were based entirely on domestic factors. It added that the Turkish press was completely free. However, as in other countries, it struggled to publish opposing ideologies. The December 4 incidents were partly a reaction by some of the Turkish public against the political views of certain Turkish journalists. This finding was evident both in official reports and in those written by reporters for the international press. Therefore, it was wrong to link the incidents with the Soviets. Despite the fact that the TASS correspondent had been warned, the note argued that he had sent completely false information to Moscow, causing a dispute between Ankara. However, the note also added that the investigation had sought to determine whether provocateurs played a role in the deteriorating relations between the two countries, and found no evidence that the actions had been directed at any country. The report also stated that a Soviet citizen had been identified as one of people who had suffered financial losses, and that he should apply for legal redress, much as some Turkish citizens had already done. However, the Turkish government had no responsibility in the events and that the police were not negligent. Furthermore, there was no hostility against the USSR.⁴⁵

The archives show that Wilson and Saka met at for dinner on December 12, 1945. During the meal, the Turkish minister informed the American ambassador of his government's offer to the Soviets to make their exchange of notes public. In response, the Vinogradov stated that he would ask the Soviet government about the matter. Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Feridun Cemal Erkin continued to keep Wilson informed about these developments. The Soviet ambassador responded two days later December 14, 1945, that they could make the mutual notes public if the Turkish government. However, the Soviets regarded the Turkish note as unsatisfactory and a denial of the reality.

Hasan Saka thanked the Soviet ambassador and informed him that they would publish the notes on December 15. Nevertheless, he objected to Vinogradov's assessment of the Turkish note and argued that it was based on confirmed facts. The Soviets published the texts of the notes on the evening of December 14, 1945, the day before the agreed date, without informing the Turkish government. Feridun Cemal Erkin said to Wilson that the move was unexpected and surprising, and announced that the Turkish government would publish the full text of the notes at noon on December 15.⁴⁶ The U.S. ambassador duly informed Washington.

Wilson had contacted Erkin twice since the events of December 4 and suggested that the Turks remain calm. He expressed his hope that the necessary steps would be taken to prevent a further escalation of the events. The secretary general explained that

⁴⁴ NARA, 867.00/12-1145.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ NARA, 867.00/12-1345.

the situation was calm and that things would not get any worse. He also mentioned that a newspaper in Izmir was receiving threats similar to the attacks against *Tan*. The police were immediately instructed to investigate the incident and provided the necessary protection. In dispatch to Washington, Wilson argued that protests against pro-Soviet sympathizers were unlikely to continue, since they had been thoroughly cowed. “Our danger,” Wilson concluded “was the possibility the Soviets would in fact launch a campaign of provocation.”⁴⁷

In his telegram of December 17, 1945, the American ambassador referred to the student demonstrations in the Bursa, Izmir and Çatalca regions. More students had protested there than in Istanbul on December 4. He referred to *Ulus*, saying the demonstrations were held to protest the recent articles in favor of communism. Students marched to Anıtkabir, the tomb of Atatürk in Ankara, placed a wreath, and destroyed copies of *Görüşler*. The booksellers who refused to sell left-wing publications were applauded. According to the U.S. Embassy, the demonstrators had been orderly, and had not damaged any buildings or caused personal injuries.⁴⁸

Wilson said the Turkish government did not approve of the demonstration. Indeed, two ministers had come to the demonstration personally to urge the students to return to their classrooms. Moreover, the police arrested a number of student leaders. According to Wilson, these were indications that the government did not approve of the gathering.⁴⁹ Wilson concluded that after the Tan Raid Turkey’s stance towards anti-Soviet movements became relatively more moderate than when compared to 4th of December incidents.

The Journalist Zekeriya Sertel’s Search for Asylum in the United States

In his telegram dated December 10, 1945, Wilson informed Washington that he had had received an asylum application from the Sertels and mentioned that he had rejected the request. On the morning of December 9, the U.S. Ambassador received a message from the U.S. Consul General in Istanbul, MacAtee. The American press representative called the American Consul General on the night of December 8 and informed him that the Sertels had invited him to their home. The Sertels argued that they had been terrorized and sought asylum and protection from the American consul. MacAtee responded to the Sertels that he had no such authority but promised he would bring the matter to Ambassador Wilson’s attention, which he did.

According to the American press representative, the Sertels had not cited any developments after the December 4 incident as the basis for their request. Wilson told Washington that Consul General MacAtee had asked him for instructions on the matter. Wilson replied that the U.S. consulate in Istanbul had extraterritorial status but underlined that there must be an urgent risk of death for asylum to be granted. Furthermore, there had to be no other safe zone where those making the request could take refuge. Wilson added that the Sertels’ status did not appear to meet these criteria. The American ambassador notified Erkin of this development, suggesting that the Turkish government

⁴⁷ NARA, 867.00/12-1745.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ NARA, 867.00/1-746.

might consider protecting the Sertels. After thanking Wilson, Erkin expressed his confidence that the Sertels were not in danger, but added that he would immediately instruct the security forces to ensure adequate protection.⁵⁰

The Sertels were not the only ones who contacted the Americans about their search for asylum. Frank O'Brien, Zekeriya Sertel's stepson, sent a letter to Wilson on December 26, 1945. O'Brien, who had been the *Associated Press's* correspondent in Bucharest, asked that his stepfather's application for asylum to the United States be accepted. Wilson forwarded both the text of O'Brien's letter and his response to Loy W. Henderson, Director of the Office for the Near East and Africa at the U.S. State Department on January 7, 1946. The last paragraph of O'Brien's letter stated that Zekeriya Sertel might also be an asset to the United States were he to settle there. Wilson noted that the reasons why Sertel could not be employed by the U.S. Government should be clearly stated if Sertel were nevertheless allowed to go to the United States. On the other hand, he noted that he did not know Sertel well, having met him only twice, and having had a long conversation once. According to the information from people whose judgment he trusted, Sertel was a weak individual devoid of influence or intelligence. Sincere in his liberal ideas, Sertel probably didn't realize he had been used by the Soviets. Wilson also noted that he was under the influence of his vehemently pro-Soviet wife, Sabiha.

Henderson replied the same day confirming that Wilson had made the right decision by not granting Zekeriya Sertel asylum, and that the State Department fully approved. Henderson stated that Sertel's plan to come to the United States should be postponed until he had served his imprisonment in Turkey. He also suggested that Sertel could become a Soviet propagandist if he came to the United States. According to Henderson, the best way to deal with the issue was as described in Wilson's reply letter to O'Brien. The U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul should have considered Sertel's visa application independently and without prejudice, according to its merit. Henderson emphasized the ministry's interest in the Sertels and asked them to be informed of the developments.⁵¹

Zekeriya Sertel also sent a letter to the embassy himself, which its clerk, a Mr Horner, received on December 12, 1945. Although Wilson noted that the credibility of the Turkish source who delivered the letter was questionable, he forwarded the contents of the letter, which argued that Sertel and his wife were threatened after the December 4 incidents.⁵²

The incident (the December 4 incidents) that happened was organized and conducted by the secret police. After this distressing event, my wife and I don't feel safe in this country. Every day and every night, we're threatened by the agents of the secret police. That's why we want to apply for asylum to the U.S. Consulate General. We'd like to be sent to the United States if possible. Would you please send these wishes of us to the ambassador and let us know the result by phone? My phone number is 60387. Yours sincerely, Zekeriya Sertel.

⁵⁰ NARA, 867.00/12-1045.

⁵¹ NARA, 867.00/1-746.

⁵² NARA, 867.00/12-1845.

According to Wilson's instructions to Horner, who accepted the letter, the embassy's position on Sertel's asylum application was negative.⁵³

Conclusion

The Tan Raid that took place on December 4, 1945 was an important episode in Turkish-Soviet relations that consisted of demonstrations by university students against the *Tan* newspaper, owned by Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, a left-leaning pro-Soviet couple who criticized the one-party regime. According to witnesses, thousands of students engaged in acts of violence against the paper's printing press, causing damage. During the demonstrations, a left-leaning bookstore operated by a Soviet citizen was also damaged. The demonstrations had a negative impact on the already strained Turkish-Soviet relations of the period.

This study examined the correspondence of the U.S. embassy about the event. It discussed the views of American diplomats regarding the Tan Raid. The U.S. Embassy took into consideration the intelligence it had obtained and concluded that the Turkish government had avoided ordering the police to stop the demonstration. It also reported that the Soviet Union had claimed compensation from Turkey for the damage to the bookshop owned by one of its citizens. Turkey did not accept the Soviet Union's claim for compensation, and instead explained how the relevant individual could seek redress through the courts. Moreover, the documents indicate that the U.S. tried to decrease the tension between Turkey and Soviet Union. The American government followed a moderate policy at the time, and asked Turkish officials to be calm, in an effort to avoid an escalation of tensions Between Ankara and Moscow.

Washington's policies ultimately shifted when Russians did not withdraw from Iran as they promised. Truman signaled a harder line by sending the *USS Missouri* to Turkey in April 1946. Meanwhile, the archives also reveal that although Zekeriya Sertel, publisher of *Tan* and *Görüşler*, followed a pro-Soviet line, he applied for asylum to the United States following the Tan Raid, but was not successful.

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⁵³ NARA, 867.00/12-1845.

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