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An Analysis on Cai Hesen's Türkiye Writings



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ABSTRACT

Türkiye and China are two oppressed nations that shared the same fate at the beginning of the 20th century. Both nations wanted to eliminate imperialism's exploitation and stand up by achieving their democratic revolutions. The victory of Türkiye against imperialism in the War of Independence and the development of friendly relations with the Soviet Union were followed with interest by the leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The successful Turkish Revolution aroused the idea that it could set an example for China among the early CPC leaders. For this reason, communists in China followed the Turkish Revolution closely and tried to apply it to the Chinese Revolution practice. Cai Hesens, the leader and theoretician of the CPC in the founding period, was especially interested in the Turkish Revolution. Cai Hesens published his views on the Turkish Revolution in his articles in the CPC's publication, *The Guide Weekly* (向导 Xiangdao), and influenced the CPC's leadership. In this study, the articles of Cai Hesens, a key theorist in the early stages of the CPC who evaluated the Turkish revolution and its impact on the CPC cadres, are discussed.

Keywords: Cai Hesens, China, Communist Party of China, Turkish Revolution, Türkiye

Introduction

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA (CPC) was closely interested in the Turkish Revolution despite the long distance between Türkiye and China. It is particularly interesting that this interest in Türkiye and the Turkish Revolution was in the early period of the CPC. Early Chinese Communists seemed interested in Türkiye's victory over imperialism and its friendship with the Soviet Union. Despite this, studies, especially in Türkiye, have ignored this interest, and only two translation studies have been made about this period.

Two articles written by Cai Hesens and Gao Junyu, CPC cadres, were translated from Chinese to Turkish. The first of these, Cai Hesens's article titled "We Wish Victory

to the Turkish Nationalist Party", written in 1922, was translated into Turkish by Giray Fidan in his book, *The Chinese Guests of the Republic*. The other is Gao Junyu's article "The International Value of the Victory of the Turkish National Army", published in September 1922 and translated into Turkish by the *BRIQ Journal* (Alan, 2020).

On the other hand, this issue has been valued in China. The article "The impact of the Turkish Revolution on the CPC during the critical period of the Guomindang-Communist cooperation decision-making process" by Wu Haiyong (2013) in China is highly valuable. In his article, Wu focused on the role played by the Turkish revolution in creating the CPC's united front with the Guomindang (GMD) and gave examples, especially from the writings of Cai Hesens.

Sun Menglin and Huang Zhigao's (2019a) article "Role Models and Lessons: The Concerns of Early Chinese Communists about Türkiye's Revival- In the Background of National Revival Thoughts" examined how the Turkish revolution set an example for CPC leaders and the reasons and concerns of CPC leaders for their interest in the Turkish revolution. Another study is Huang Zhigao's (2010) article "Observation and Reaction of the Communist Party of China to Turkish Revolution During 1921-1925". In his article, Zhigao evaluated the CPC's observations on the development of Turkish-Soviet friendly relations during the War of Independence to the GMD-Soviet cooperation.

Türkiye's victory over imperialism and the realization of a revolution that abolished the monarchy aroused an interest in the Turkish revolution among China's progressive intellectuals.

Studies in China on this subject are not well known in Turkish academia since they are in Chinese, and there is no English source on the subject. Studies in Türkiye have not been directed to question the reasons and roots of the CPC's interest in the Turkish Revolution. In studies in China, the role of Cai Hesen, who focused on understanding the Turkish revolution, and his influence on the CPC have not been emphasized.

At the beginning of the 20th century, western powers defined the Ottoman Empire as a "sick man" at one end of Asia. Similarly, the Qing Dynasty at the other end of Asia was defined as a "sick man". Kang Youwei (Chinese: 康有為), a Chinese statesman and reformist who visited

the Ottoman Empire in 1908, wrote in his travel book that "The Ottomans and China are in the same situation, Europe has long viewed the two as the 'Sick Men' of the East, but it is unclear which will die first." he stated. In his travel book, in which he stated the similarities between the Ottoman Empire and China, Kang underlined that the only solution to prevent the collapse of the state was revolution (Fidan, 2013: 24).

While the imperialist countries occupied the Ottoman Empire after the loss of the First World War, China was also a semi-colonial state of the imperialist countries. Although the revolution took place in 1911, it was interrupted. After the warlords seized power in China in a short time, a struggle continued among the people against both imperialist exploitation and warlords. When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk went to Samsun on May 19, 1919, Chinese youth also showed resistance against imperialism on May 4, 1919.¹ Even today, May 19 is celebrated as Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day in Türkiye, while May 4 is celebrated as Youth Day in China.

The resistance of Türkiye and China against imperialism started in similar periods. Türkiye's victory over imperialism and the realization of a revolution that abolished the monarchy aroused an interest in the Turkish revolution among China's progressive intellectuals. The early leaders of the CPC, Cai Hesen, Gao Junyu, Li Dazhao, and Chen Duxiu, took an interest in the Turkish revolution and hailed Türkiye's achievements. Especially Cai Hesen, who was among the first CPC leadership staff, wrote four articles about Türkiye and emphasized that the Turkish Revolution set an example for China. This study examines Cai Hesen's writings on Türkiye and the impact of the Turkish revolution on CPC cadres.



Cai Hesen
(Zhongguo Qingnian Wang, n.d.)

Cai Hesen's Revolutionary Struggle and Role in the CPC

Born in Shanghai on March 30, 1895, Cai Hesen (Chinese: 蔡和森)² was an important ideologue during the birth of the CPC. At the same time, Cai Hesen was a close friend of Mao Zedong, whom he found valuable in his intellectual life, discussed and even played an important role in Mao's Marxist-Leninist path. As one of the CPC's founders and most important theorists, Cai significantly contributed to theory, strategy, and propaganda in the early CPC era. It was even said that "Hesen is the theorist and Mao is the realist" (Ven, 1991: 32). Cai Hesen

exchanged letters with Mao Zedong and had much intellectual sparring during his study in France. Cai's letters hold special significance in the history of Chinese communism because they played a critical role in the development of Mao's thought (Ven, 1991: 35). Deng Xiaoping said about Cai Hesen: "Comrade Cai Hesen was one of the prominent leaders of our party in the early days. He made significant contributions to the Chinese revolution. Chinese people will always remember him!" (People's Daily, 2015b).

Two places are important in the development of Cai Hesen's intellectual life. The first is the years he spent at the Hunan First Normal School in Changsha (1914-1917), and the other is the year he spent in France (1920-1921). After Cai developed his intellectual and organizational skills at Hunan First Normal School, he met communism and improved himself on Marxism-Leninism and the revolutionary party model in France. With the transformation of Hunan First Normal School, which underwent a series of educational reforms at the beginning of the 20th century, Cai encountered new Western ideas at school. The school had a highly developed pedagogy, and Cai particularly enjoyed reading about the reformist intellectuals of the turn of the century (Levin, 2019:309). Cai was a student of Yang Changji, an expert in neo-Confucianism and Western ethics in Changsha, who became a professor at Peking University in 1918. Cai Hesen first appeared with Mao Zedong, Xiao Zisheng³ (萧子升 1894-1976; also known as Xiao Yu 萧瑜) and his younger brother Xiao Zizhang (萧子璋 1896-1983; also known as Xiao San 萧三) in Changsha.



In the winter of 1917, the leaders of CCP, Mao Zedong and Cai Hesen, initiated the organization, New Society Study Society (Xinmin Xuehui). In the picture, Mao Zedong is fourth from the left in the back row, Cai Hesen is the first from the right in the back row. Changsha, November 26, 1919. (Zhongguo Qingnian Wang, n.d.)

He emerged as a youth leader during his years at the First Normal School⁴. During this period, the two very close friends, Cai and Mao, formed an intellectual model that reflected their later political personalities. While Mao took a heroic path to serve China, which was more inclined to follow the path of the “Great Men”, Cai emphasized the education of the masses and the strengthening of their rights and freedoms. There was also a philosophical difference between the two. While Mao valued Confucius and Mencius,

Cai valued the less popular, utilitarian philosopher Mozi (Levin, 2019: 309). In 1918, before the May 4th Movement, Cai Hesen and Mao Zedong organized the New Citizen Study Society (Xinmin Xuehui 新民学会) to renew academics, improve behavior, and improve people’s traditions. Later, 73 of the 78 members of the New Citizen Study Society joined the CPC and became the first party members. Mao and Cai joined the May 4 Movement. Cai, however, went to France shortly after the May 4th Movement for a study program.

Cai closely felt the ideological turmoil in Europe following the October Revolution in Russia and the workers' movements in various countries during his time in France in the early 1920s. He quickly translated Marxist theoretical classics into Chinese, summarizing the experiences and lessons of the Communist Parties of various countries. He examined the Marxist-Leninist theory of party building, especially the experience of the Bolsheviks (People's Daily, 2019, and Chunqi, 2020: 60-61).

Cai Hesen was the first to propose the name "Communist Party of China"

After seriously examining communism and the Russian Revolution, he saw that his previous intellectual beliefs were insufficient and started to define himself as a Marxist after the summer of 1920 (Liu, 2006: 107). Some young Chinese intellectuals had met the revolutionary ideas of Marxism and Leninism in France. Many of the CPC's leadership, such as Cai Hesen, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, and Xiang Jingyu, were educated in France. Between 1919 and 1921, approximately 1500 Chinese students were educated in France. Wang Guangqi, founding member of the Young Chinese Association, explains this situation: "The Chinese who go to the US to study are fascinated by the money-worshipping philosophy, and when they return to China, they will bring the American capitalist

model. Especially the Chinese who go to America live comfortably by receiving scholarships from the government. But those educated in France make their own profits in factories. He said that while students in the US were learning capitalism, students in France were learning about labor and the working classes." (Bailey, 1988). Students studying in France were not in comfortable conditions. It is understood that their education while working increased their awareness of labor and their interest in the struggle for labor.

Cai's years in France developed him theoretically and broadened his horizons. On September 16, 1920, Cai Hesen, traveling in France, wrote a letter to Mao Zedong openly proposing to "formally establish a Communist Party of China" in China, discussing in detail the theory, policy, and principles of party building. Cai Hesen was the first to propose the name "Communist Party of China". On December 1, 1920, Mao Zedong wrote a letter to Cai Hesen and other New Citizen Study Society members in France expressing his approval of Cai Hesen's proposal to form the party. Mao Zedong wrote to Cai Hesen on January 21, 1921, "Your letter is very insightful, and I agree with every word. At the party level, Mr Chen Zhongfu and the others are already organizing." (Tao, 2015: 125-126). During his stay in France, Cai Hesen put forward an ideological proposal for establishing the CPC in line with Lenin's party-building principles and party-building theory and played an important role in the party's founding.



In July 1920, Cai Hesen, along with Xiang Junyu and other members of the Xinmin Society who remained in France, took a group photograph. (Zhongguo Qingnian Wang, n.d.)

On July 23-31, 1921, with the participation of 12 delegates representing different parts of the country (Mao Zedong, Dong Biwu, Chen Tanqiu, He Shuheng, Wang Jinmei, Deng Enming, Li Da, Liu Renjing, Chen Gongbo, Li Hanjun, Zhanng Guotao and Zhou Fohai), the first CPC National Congress was held in Shanghai. On July 31, 1921, the CPC was officially established.

Cai Hesen was not in China when the CPC was established. After returning to China in the winter of 1921, he was elected as a member of the Central Executive Committee at the first congress of the Communist Youth League on May 5, 1922. In July of the same year, Cai Hesen and his wife, Xiang Jingyu⁵, were elected to the Central Executive Committee at the CPC's Second National Congress. Cai was responsible for the propaganda and organizational work of the Central Executive Committee. He made important contributions to the party's organizational structure, ideological

structuring and working style. He also played an important role in the consolidation and development of the party. Additionally, Cai worked to establish an organization of the CPC in Europe with Xiang Jingyu, Zhou Enlai, Zhao Shiyan, Deng Xiaoping, and Li Fuchun.

Hesen always attached great importance to the theoretical work of the CPC. He said, "A revolutionary party cannot be without a revolutionary theory. That is why a revolutionary party must not only have good organization and good policies, but also a revolutionary theory to unite its ideas before leading the revolution on the right path." (People's Daily, 2015a). Regarding the founding of the CPC, Mao Zedong said, "History has proven that Comrade Cai Hesen's forward-thinking party-building ideas were in line with the actual situation of the Chinese revolution and played a strong role in promoting the party-forming activities of the early communists in China" (People's Daily, 2015a).

Cai Hesen was the editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper “*The Guide*” (Chinese: 向导 Xiangdao), which started its publication on September 13, 1922, and was the first publication of the CPC. *The Guide* was the theoretical organ of the CPC during its founding, and Cai was the Editor-in-Chief of *The Guide* for more than three years, from September 1922 to October 1925 (Aizhi, 1981:54). Hesen was also the first to publicize the CPC’s slogan “Down with international imperialism” in China. In China, concepts such as “imperialism” and “warlords” were foreign terms. Until then, many Chinese did not know what “imperialism” was (Nanyang Hi-Tech Industrial Zone, 2021). In its manifesto, *The Guide* made clear the purpose of the newspaper’s publication: “Resist the aggression of international imperialism”, “Destroy the warlords who hinder peaceful reunification”, and call on all citizens to fight for “unification, peace, freedom and independence”.

The Guide played a guiding role in bringing about the revolution by spreading the CPC’s line, principles, and policies.

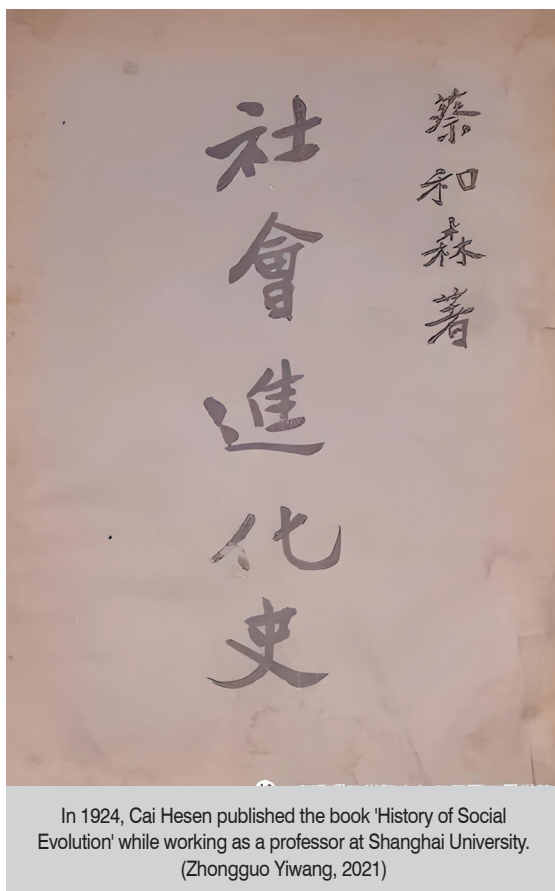
Of the 201 issues published, Cai Hesen edited 116 articles and wrote 134. *The Guide* played a guiding role in bringing about the revolution by spreading the CPC’s line, principles, and policies. In a short time, *The Guide*’s circulation increased rapidly, and from a few thousand copies to more than 100,000 copies, it created a light in the reader (Tao, 2015: 125-126). The content of the 16-page *The Guide* consisted of columns such as “China Weekly”, “World Weekly”, “Correspondence”, “Reader’s Voice”, and “What to Say”.

After establishing the united front between the

CPC and the GMD, *The Guide* continued to advocate the CPC’s united front policy, the alliance with Soviet Russia proposed by Sun Yat Sen, and support the development of agriculture and industry (The Paper, 2021). Briefly, the Directory was a weekly publication where current events in China and the world were analyzed, and the Chinese revolution was discussed. In particular, *The Guide*’s articles supported the workers’ and peasants’ movement to follow anti-imperialist and anti-feudal policies to bring about the national revolution formulated by the CPC’s Second National Congress (The Paper, 2021a).

Hesen worked day and night to ensure *The Guide* could be published on time. When he was tired in the middle of the night, he would lie on his bed with his clothes and rest for a while. After waking up, he would get up and immediately go to work at the desk. Among the early leaders of the CPC, Cai Hesen was a particularly hardworking and determined leader, known as a “workaholic” who forgot to sleep and eat (Libo, 2021).

Cai Hesen was also an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Shanghai University. He taught the history of social evolution at Shanghai University in 1923 and first attempted to disseminate, nationalize and popularize the Marxist materialist view of history (People’s Daily, 2015a). In 1924, he compiled and published “The History of Social Evolution” in Shanghai. In his book, Cai used Engels’ “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” and social Darwinism to illustrate the inevitable laws of social development. (USTB Committee of the Communist Youth League, 2021; Guangming, 2005). This book is the first history of social development written by the Chinese based on Marxist historical materialism and is the basis of such works. In addition, Shanghai University was the left wing of the Guomindang and an important center of activity for the CPC (Ven, 1991:152).



In 1925, Cai Hesun joined and led the May 30 Movement.⁶ On behalf of the CPC, Cai Hesun published “The CPC Announces its Resistance to the Barbaric and Brutal Massacre of Imperialism”, which quickly spread the struggle to Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and other cities, and called on all workers and peasants in the country to unite against imperialism. In October of the same year, he was appointed by the CPC Central Committee and went to Moscow to attend the sixth extended meeting of the Comintern Fifth Executive Committee. At the end of 1925, he gave a long lecture, “The Development of the History of the CPC,” at Sun Yat Sen University in Moscow. In his speech, Cai made a

deep analysis of the nature of the Chinese Revolution, the historical tasks of the CPC, and the role of classes in the revolution. He defined the proletariat as “the vanguard of the revolution” and the peasantry as “the ally of the working class”. This was the first study on the history of the CPC (Nantong Institute of Technology, 2021).

In 1927, the united front disintegrated when Chiang Kai-shek massacred CPC members in Shanghai.⁷ In July 1928, Cai was elected as a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee at the CPC’s 6th National Congress in Moscow. He stated that an armed struggle should be carried out in the countryside, and an army should be established (Deng, 2015).

At the end of 1928, he was appointed to go to Moscow as a member of the CPC Comintern. At the beginning of 1931, Cai Hesun returned to China from the Soviet Union to join the work of the CPC. The CPC Central Committee sent Hesun to organize the disbanded Guangdong Provincial Party Committee. He was working from Hong Kong, as the situation in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, was difficult to rectify. However, in June 1931, Cai Hesun was betrayed by a traitor named Gu Shunzhang and was arrested by the British police in Hong Kong. The British authorities handed him over to Guangzhou. Tortured in Guangzhou prison, Cai Hesun did not bow down and died in Guangzhou at 36 on August 4, 1931 (Communist Party of China, 2022).

Cai Hesun was a person whose life was a glorious struggle and who lived only by fighting for the cause of revolution.

Cai Hesen's Evaluation of the Turkish Revolution and His Impact on CPC Cadres

At the beginning of the 20th century, getting China back on its feet had become the mission of China's progressive intellectuals and people. Because of the May 4th Movement in 1919, all segments of the Chinese people sought national liberation and development calls. This prompted Chinese progressive intellectuals to think about the future of China.

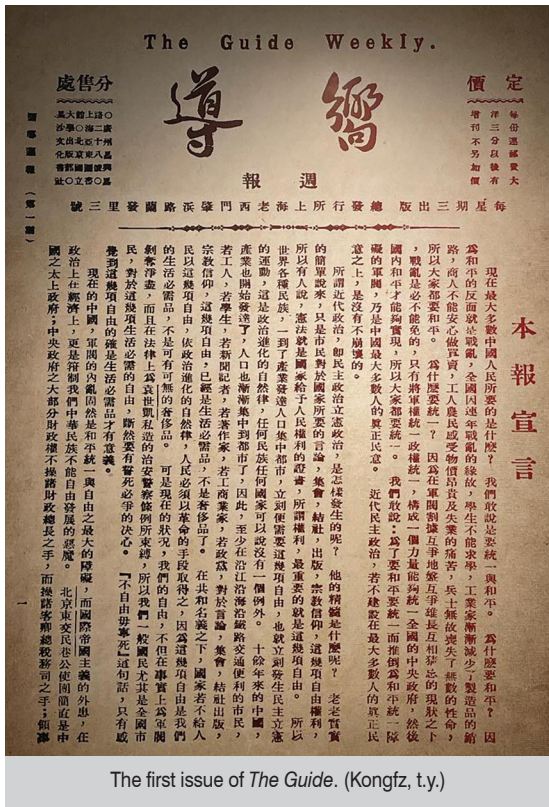
Cai thought that the Turkish Revolution's elimination of feudalism and imperialism would set an example for China's resurgence.

After the May 4th Movement, as Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Cai Hesen, and other early Chinese communists sought the path to national rejuvenation, Türkiye, also known as the "sick man of Asia", suddenly stood up, and this was the spirit of rejuvenation the early Communists had been waiting for. The fact that Türkiye, known as the "sick man of the Near East", and China, known as the "sick man of the Far East," shared the same fate prompted the early Chinese communists to follow Türkiye's changing direction (Sun Menglin and Huang Zhigao, 2019a: 12). Li Dazhao was interested in the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Committee of Union and Progress, based on the similarity between the Turks and the Chinese, two deep-rooted nations. He was interested in the Turkish Revolution, thinking that the Turkish Revolution's elimination of feudalism and imperialism would set an example for China's resurgence (Sun Menglin and Huang

Zhigao, 2019b).

The early communists in China believed that youth was the power of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and that the Soviet Union supported the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The fact that the War of Independence in Türkiye resulted in a strong reconciliation of all classes under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie in an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution caught the attention of the CPC leaders. This created an important precedent for the Communists in China to conduct a comprehensive anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolutionary movement to achieve full independence and rejuvenation (Sun Menglin and Huang Zhigao, 2019b).

Cai Hesen focused on the similarity of the situation in Türkiye with China. For this reason, he put Türkiye and countries such as Iran and China on the side of the oppressed nations where the nationalist movement rose against imperialism. Cai Hesen, in his letter to Mao Zedong on August 13, 1920, evaluated the situation of the revolutionary movement in the world on four occasions. He listed them as follows: 1) The places where the proletarian revolution was victorious: Russia; 2) The places where the proletarian revolution continued or failed: Central European countries and the defeated countries of the Balkans; 3) The countries where the proletarian revolution was pregnant: the five big countries that won the war; and 4) The class consciousness rose countries, countries where nationalist movements were thought to lead to being Bolshevik: Iran, Türkiye, India, Egypt, Korea, and China (Hesen, 1983). Cai believed the rising nationalist wave against imperialism in Türkiye and China would ultimately serve the socialist struggle.



The first issue of *The Guide*. (Kongtz, t.y.)

At the Second National Congress of the CPC held in Shanghai on July 16-23, 1922, Cai Hesen analyzed China's politics and economy and proposed the slogan of defeating imperialism and warlords. Qu Qiubai, on the other hand, compared the second congress with previous meetings of revolutionary groups in the Far East and emphasized the importance of the strategies proposed by the second congress to form a united front. On August 28-30, 1922, at the West Lake in Hangzhou, representatives of the Comintern, Marin⁸, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Cai Hesen, Gao Junyu, Zhang Tailei, and others, held a special meeting as the Central Committee. After two days of discussion, the guidelines for the CPC's participation and cooperation with the GMD were determined.

The West Lake Conference⁹ was closely related to the War of Independence in Türkiye. Here, the CPC's War of Independence in Türkiye and Türkiye's cooperation with the Bolsheviks set an example for the "confused" leaders of the CPC. For example, the success of the Turkish revolution and the evaluations of Türkiye were influential in the change of opinion of one of the CPC's founders and the first CPC secretary, Chen Duxiu (陈独秀), about the Guomindang at the West Lake Conference (Haiyong, 2013: 23-24). The unification of all national classes in Türkiye by uniting against imperialism showed the importance of forming a united front with the Guomindang. A Comintern representative was present at the West Lake Conference. Comintern representative Marin explained the importance of forming a united front between the CPC and the GMD, giving examples from the Turkish revolution (Sun Menglin and Huang Zhigao, 2019a: 13). Additionally, the gains of cooperation between Türkiye and Soviet Russia set a positive example for the CPC leaders.

CPC cadres enthusiastically welcomed the success of the Turkish War of Independence on September 9, 1922. Cai Hesen, in his article in *The Guide*, hailed Türkiye's victory as "a message of the liberation of the oppressed nations"; while Gao Junyu, one of the CPC leaders, evaluated in his article published in *The Guide*, "Türkiye has won a victory that has an international value and strikes a blow to imperialism" (Alan, 2020). In 1922, the representative of the Comintern, Marin, emphasized the similarities between the nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal and the Guomindang in his article on

the “Fifth Year of the Russian Revolution” in *The Guide* and summoned the Guomindang to make the Chinese revolution successful (Haiyong, 2013: 23). The fact that the CPC leaders and the Comintern representative welcomed Türkiye’s victory shows that it is a reflection of their belief that Türkiye’s victory would also achieve success in Chinese revolutionary practice.

Notably, the Turkish revolution’s success came to the Chinese revolutionaries’ agenda in their meetings with the Soviet representatives.

Anatoly Gekker, the Soviet military attaché, who came to meet with Sun Yat Sen in Shanghai on September 26, 1922, after the West Lake Conference, also mentioned the example of the Turkish revolution. Gekker emphasized that nationalists from different views united against foreign invaders in Türkiye and stated that Mustafa Kemal’s victory was Russia’s victory. Despite the claim that Russia cannot help other countries, he focused on how concrete the cooperation between Türkiye and Russia is. Gekker emphasized that a coalition of nationalist forces should be established in China first. Then an effective resistance organization against imperialist powers should be organized with Russian help (Party History Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 1997: 217).

Notably, the Turkish revolution’s success came to the Chinese revolutionaries’ agenda in

their meetings with the Soviet representatives. In these meetings, the military aid the Soviets could make to China and the situation in Türkiye were compared. This situation shows why the Chinese revolutionaries followed the Turkish-Soviet friendship with interest. For example, Chen Duxiu, in his article “October Revolution and China’s National Liberation Movement”, mentions that the Soviets rushed to aid oppressed countries such as China, Türkiye, Iran and Egypt. Duxiu stated that all the oppressed nations should unite to crush imperialism. He emphasized that the claims made about the Soviet invasion of China are fabrications, giving the example of Türkiye. He noted that Türkiye achieved success against imperialism with the support of the Soviets and that the Soviet Union never harmed Türkiye’s heritage (Zhigao, 2010: 123).

At the same time, Cai was the first person to come up with the concept of a “*Paper Tiger*”. Cai used the term paper tiger to describe those who ignore the public and try to intimidate the masses violently (Zunhua, 2015). This concept was later used frequently by the leader of the Chinese Revolution, Mao Zedong, and Chinese leaders. Cai first described paper tigers in the reactionary bourgeois of Greece, who cooperated with England, in his article titled “Greece in the Revolution” in the 13th issue of *The Guide* dated December 13 1922 (Hesen, 1978: 132-134). Later, in the 88th issue of *The Guide*, dated October 1924, he considered the Chinese bourgeois, who cooperated with British imperialism, as paper tigers. CPC cadres, especially Mao Zedong, stated that imperialism and all reactionaries were paper tigers.



A photograph of the gathering on the third anniversary of the appointment of representatives of the Guomindang and CCP, with Sun Yat Sen as the President of the Revolutionary Government in Guangzhou, on May 5, 1924.

The event took place at Sun Yat Sen's residence in Shanghai.

Mao Zedong stands second from the left in the back row.

The CPC's interest in the Turkish Revolution continued after the victory of the War of Independence. For example, Chen Duxiu, in his article written in 1924, praised the abolition of the caliphate and the reform process in Türkiye. He stated that the GMD should follow reforms like Türkiye after the war was won against imperialism and warlords in China (Zhigao, 2010: 122).

During the First United Front between the CPC and GMD, Mao Zedong was acting head of the Guomindang Central Propaganda Department from 1925 to 1927. He presided over propaganda related to promoting the national revolution. The first united front period between the CPC and the GMD, the

report of the CPC propaganda bureau on May 19, 1926, suggested that a book titled "Collective Essays on National Movements" should be written as one of the tasks to be done in the new period to provide education for party members (Schram, 1994: 373-385).

The book, which was edited by Mao Zedong and consisted of 5 chapters, was planned to include Türkiye's National Revolution section in the world revolutionary movements section. Shen Yanbing (Chinese: 沈雁冰)¹⁰ was appointed compilation officer in Shanghai and was responsible for collecting manuscripts for the series in Shanghai and sending them to Party members for free reading after printing.

Shen Yanbing noted in his memoirs: “This ‘National Movement Series’ set was of great educational importance to both the Guomindang and the Communists at that time.” However, the collapse of the united front between the CPC and the GMD in 1927 left the book incomplete. Some parts of it were written, but no data could be found on the part where Türkiye’s struggle for independence took place. The fact that the CPC and GMD members included the Turkish Revolution in the book prepared for their education proves that it profoundly affected the early communists.

Cai Hesen's Writings on Türkiye

In the articles written in *The Guide*, Cai discussed workers’ movements and national movements in different countries (“Workers’ Movements in France”, “The Political Situation in England”, “The New Situation in the Greek Revolution”, “The Balkans and Bulgaria”, and “Türkiye’s War of Independence”) and the political situation in China (“Chinese Workers’ Movement Policy”, “The Situation of Peasants and Workers in China”, “Foreign Powers”, “The Middle Class and the GMD”, “Guangdong Peasants’ Movement”, “What is the GMD Left?”, and “Sun Yat Sen’s Death and the National Revolution”). He often wrote about international events such as the Lausanne Peace Conference in the 1920s (“The Question of Reparations and Imperialism”), especially the plans of the British and US imperialists (“Current Situation and Imperialism”, “New and Old Tactics of Imperialists Against China”, “Imperialism and Warlords”, and “To Suppress Revolutionary

Forces”). He commented on international events in his writing and gave a lot of space to the struggles against imperialism and imperialism in various countries.

Cai Hesen wrote four articles on Türkiye: “We Wish Victory to the Turkish Nationalist Party” (September 1922), “Türkiye and International Imperialism” (November 1922), “The Sole Supporter of the Turkish Nation at the Lausanne Conference” (December 1922), and “The Lausanne Conference and Türkiye” (December 1922). Cai closely examined the struggle against imperialism in Türkiye when the resistance against imperialism in China was on the rise. In particular, he considered the abolition of capitulations and full independence stance of Türkiye in the Lausanne negotiations important for China because its semi-colonial state since the Opium Wars brought the slogan of full political and economic independence to China’s revolutionaries.

Cai Hesen, in the last paragraph of his article titled “Unity, Debt and Guomindang” (Hesen, 1978: 64-69), written in September 1922 after the West Lake Conference, states that Türkiye achieved a revolutionary success in its war against imperialism. He emphasized that it should be introduced in China. He defined the essence of the struggle in China as the elimination of imperialism and feudalism. Although Cai mentioned Türkiye very briefly in this article, it is understood that the CPC leaders followed Türkiye closely, and Türkiye was discussed at the West Lake Conference. The example of Türkiye seems to have significantly impacted the establishment of a united front between the CPC and the GMD for the CPC leaders.



From the meeting of Sun Yat Sen (second from the left), Soviet Union's military advisor in China, Vasily Blyukher (first from the left, stayed in China from 1924 to 1927), and other Soviet advisors. (1924)

In his article titled “We Wish Victory to the Turkish Nationalist Party”¹¹ (Hesen, 1978: 81-85) in September 1922, he briefly summarized Türkiye’s process from the First World War to the War of Independence and stated that Türkiye’s victory was a hope for all oppressed nations. In his article, Cai also emphasized the similarity between the Guomindang and those led by Mustafa Kemal. In his article, he says: “How similar are the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) and the Turkish Nationalist Party, which have been fighting the imperialists in the Far East for the last 30 years, and how important this scene is for the oppressed nations! Look, our 400 million brothers, the oppressed Turks won a great victory against the imperialists! Their nationalist parties set them on the road to victory! While we envy them, we should also learn from them. Call on our party (Guomindang) to cooperate with Soviet

Russia against the imperialists oppressing China! (...) Long live the victory of the oppressed Türkiye!”

Cai emphasized that Türkiye’s victory was the most important historical event after the Russian Revolution and underlined that it set an example for millions of oppressed nations. In addition, Cai emphasized that his friendship with Soviet Russia had a great share in Türkiye’s success in the War of Independence against imperialism.

Cai’s inclusion of Türkiye in the first issues of *The Guide* and the joy of Türkiye’s success indicates the interest in the Turkish revolution. In his article written in October 1922, he emphasized that Sun Yat Sen and Mustafa Kemal were a part of the independence movement. In his article titled “Sino-German-Russian alliance,” he says: “Sun Yat Sen is a revolutionary of the Chinese national independence movement, just as

Mustafa Kemal was a revolutionary of the Turkish national independence movement, although he was not a communist or a 'radical' movement." (Hesen, 1978: 88-93).

Cai emphasized that just as Mustafa Kemal's policy was the only policy for Türkiye's independence, Sun Yat Sen's policy was the only policy suitable for China at that time. Referring to Sun Yat Sen's letter to Dianxin Bao (电信报), Cai stated that the alliance between Germany, Russia and China was based on an independent basis. Cai wrote, "Dr. Sun also believes that since the founding of Soviet Russia, one of the greatest historical threats to China's political independence and territorial integrity has been removed. While the labor and peasant government remain true to its 'non-imperialist' policies, Russia has nothing to fear from a democratic China." Cai continues: "Can China have equal status by crawling under imperialist Britain, the US, France and Japan, or can it achieve equal status by joining forces with non-imperialist Germany and Russia?"

"I wonder how we Chinese feel when we see the demands of the Ankara government?"

In his article titled "Türkiye and International Imperialism" in November 1922, Hesen stated that the abolition of the sultanate, which had become an instrument of imperialism, dealt a blow to British imperialism. He stated that the US implemented an open-door policy against Türkiye to gain in the Lausanne Conference.

At the end of his article, Cai appreciated the determination of the Turkish side in the National Pact, Greece to pay compensation to Türkiye, the abolition of the capitulations, the redefinition of the Iraqi borders, Türkiye's demand for complete financial, political and economic independence, sovereignty over the straits and the nationalization of the railways. After writing Türkiye's demands, Cai ended his article with the following sentence; "I wonder how we Chinese feel when we see the demands of the Ankara government?" (Hesen, 1978: 112-113). Cai was inviting the Chinese to follow the path of the Turkish revolution.

In his article titled "The sole supporter of the Turkish Nation at the Lausanne Conference", written in December 1922, he stated that the Entente Powers opposed the participation of Soviet Russia in the Lausanne Conference because they aimed to intimidate Türkiye at the table. Cai Hesen stated that with the participation of Soviet Russia in the Lausanne Conference, the aggressive rhetoric of the imperialists increased, and the US and France displayed a hypocritical attitude by appearing in favor of Türkiye's independence. Cai underlined that Türkiye's only friend during the Lausanne talks was Soviet Russia. Cai ended his article: "All imperialist powers are cruel to suppress the Turkish national liberation movement. Thus, the only supporter of the Turkish nation at the Lausanne Conference was the socialist laborer Russia. Workers and peasants in Russia are strong defenders of the independence and freedom of the Turkish nation and Turkish sovereignty over the Straits." (Hesen, 1978: 128-129).

In Cai Hesen's article titled "Lausanne Conference and Türkiye" (Hesen, 1978: 139-149) in the same month, Türkiye's five conditions in the Lausanne Conference were evaluated: 1) the national borders of the Pact, 2) the compensation payment of Greece, 3) abolition of capitulations, 4) Iraq's border problem, and (5) Türkiye's demands for complete financial, political and economic independence. Cai Hesen ended his article by saying, "The diplomatic relations between Russia and Türkiye are very close, and the relations between Russia and Türkiye have not been shaken, even though the Western European powers have tried their best to wear them down. The future of the country is quite bright. This is the old policy and new tendency of the Mustafa Kemal government, which was deceived, oppressed and humiliated by international imperialism and the Lausanne Conference! It is the bright future of Türkiye's national liberation! As long as the Kemal government resists imperialism! Soviet Russia wants to help him!"

Cai emphasizes that imperialism is the enemy of peace and oppressed nations all over the world.

Cai, especially in these two articles, focused on the benefits of establishing a friendship with the Soviets for China. It seems that

he wrote this article to encourage the progressives within the CPC and the GMD to cooperate with the Soviets. Considering that cooperation talks were held between Sun Yat Sen and Soviet representatives during this period, Türkiye was a concrete example at that time.

In an article he wrote in January 1923, Cai emphasizes that imperialism is the enemy of peace and oppressed nations all over the world and that the world has entered the era of national revolutions: "The only way to save the peoples of the world, especially the workers, peasants and oppressed nations, from the terror of capitalist imperialist war is to advance together the revolution and the national revolution of the East. Attempt to bring about world revolution. Since the last imperialist world war, Russia's territory, constituting one-sixth of the world, has fallen outside the sphere of capital imperialism, and Soviet Russia has been consolidated in these five years. Revolutions (Türkiye, India, Egypt, Korea, and China) are also rising gradually, and Türkiye and India's national movements are on the way to victory and expansion day by day. This is the process of the collapse of the old world and the day-to-day birth of a new world. Therefore, the proletariat of Central Europe and the oppressed nations of the Near East are working hard to maintain and consolidate the German-Russian-Turkish alliance. All patriots in China should stand up and call for a Sino-Russian-German

alliance!” (Hesen, 1978: 156-164). In his article, Cai interprets the revolutionary wave in Türkiye as the rise of an oppressed nation in common with China. In particular, he stated in his article that the wave of national liberation had begun in the world. He argued that this revolutionary wave would lead to a new world order. Cai also tried to show the importance of being in the right alliance positions in foreign policy for the success of this revolutionary wave.

Cai Hesen, in his article titled “The Murder of the Russian Ambassador in Lausanne and the ‘Civilization’ of the Capitalist Countries”, written in May 1923, mentions that the murder of the Soviet ambassador was an imperialist conspiracy (Hesen, 1978: 213). Cai writes that the imperialist states acted barbarously under the name of civilization. He emphasized that the imperialist states were uncomfortable after the Soviets defended Türkiye’s rights during the Lausanne Conference, especially the British, French and Italian representatives.

Vorovski, Ambassador to Rome, represented the Soviet Union at the Lausanne Conference convened on April 23, 1923. Vorovski traveled from Rome to Lausanne and settled in the Cecile Hotel with his two secretaries. When the imperialists’ efforts to remove Vorovski from the Conference failed, an anti-Bolshevik hitman of Russian origin assassinated Vorovski on May 10, 1923. Cai wrote on this subject: “At the last Lausanne

meeting, the meeting fell apart when the Allies were unable to crush Türkiye as they wished, due to the participation of Soviet representatives. The Allies did not invite the Soviets to the meeting, but the Soviet Union sent its ambassador to Italy, Vorovski, to attend the meeting. That’s why the evil of the oppressed nations, the Entente imperialists, emerged through assassination. This vile, barbaric, illegal and savage trick is to express the ‘civilization’ of the capitalist powers!” (Hesen, 1978: 213). Cai tried to show that Western states resorted to various tactics to weaken Türkiye’s hand at the Lausanne Conference. In fact, in this article, Cai tried to emphasize that the civilization of the West has become barbaric by addressing the intellectual classes in China who see Western civilization.

Cai Hesen, in his article written in September 1923, mentioned Türkiye in two sentences in one paragraph. Cai wrote: “The Guomindang must ruthlessly resist British and all foreign imperialist aggression before Cao Wu overthrows Chen Jiongming’s warlords and rules China. How could Turkish Nationalists overthrow the Istanbul government (like the Chinese government in Beijing) and rule Türkiye without first resisting British and Greek aggression?” (Hesen, 1978: 244). It shows that the essence of the Turkish revolution was a successful war against imperialism and that this is an example for China.


The last article Cai mentions about Türkiye is “Sun Yat Sen’s Death and the National Revolution”, written after Sun Yat Sen’s death in 1925. In this article, Cai Hesen stated that it was necessary to discuss the Chinese revolution process after Sun Yat Sen’s death (Hesen, 1978: 364-373). He evaluated the Chinese revolution as a part of the world revolutionary movement, like Türkiye, Iran, India, Egypt and all other revolutionary movements. He says that the main purpose of the Chinese Revolution is to defeat imperialism and fight the warlords inside China. Cai emphasized that Sun Yat Sen symbolizes the Chinese nation’s struggle against imperialism and warlords. He underlined that after Sun Yat Sen’s death, the Chinese revolution could be achieved by striving to continue the policy of cooperation with the Soviets, such as the Turkish revolution, to ensure its success.

Conclusion

In the early days of the CPC, Cai Hesen played an important role in determining the party’s theory and strategy. Despite his young age, Cai improved his knowledge of Marxism, Leninism, and imperialism. With his experience in theory and strategy, he served as the editor-in-chief of the CPC’s first publication, *The Guide*. Additionally, Cai’s theoretical background significantly impacted the ideas of the CPC’s early leadership. Remarkably, he included the Turkish revolution in 4 of his 134 articles in

The Guide. In addition, he briefly mentioned the Turkish Revolution in 6 of his articles.

Cai, a leading CPC cadre, was particularly interested in the Turkish Revolution and Türkiye. Cai’s interest in the Turkish revolution is based on the idea that Türkiye’s successful struggle against imperialism can set an example for China. It is evident from the analyses of the Turkish Revolution that the struggle against imperialism was emphasized. In all his related articles, he emphasized the importance of Turkish unity against imperialism on the domestic front and cooperation with the anti-imperialist forces abroad.

In his writings, Cai stressed that these two strategies were crucial to the success of the Turkish Revolution. As he explained, this strategy is the only path to achieving China’s independence and ensuring the revolution’s success. Consequently, the CPC formed a united front with the GMD and cooperated with the Soviets. Through his articles in *The Guide*, he attempted to influence the ideas of CPC and GMD leaders. In light of this, Cai recognized the similarity between Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s revolutionary cadres and the Guomintang. Therefore, when discussing Mustafa Kemal, he considered it a Turkish nationalist party and identified it with the Guomintang in China. Combining Türkiye’s success against imperialism with the strategy of forming a united front between the CPC and the GMD, it has also revealed a vital strategy for the Chinese revolution. 

Notes

- 1- May 4 Movement (Chinese: 五四运动): Despite China's participation in the First World War, Germany's colony in Shangdong was given to Japan in the Treaty of Versailles, with the surrender of the Beiyang government (1912-1928). This situation drew the reaction of the Chinese youth, and more than 3,000 young people from Peking University and other universities protested the event with the slogans "Fight for full independence, get rid of the traitors inside", "Don't sign Versailles", and "China belongs to the Chinese" on May 4, 1919. This movement, which started with student demonstrations in Beijing, increased the nationalist and anti-imperialist wave. Since 1950, May 4 has been celebrated as a youth day in China..
- 2- Cai Hesen also used the name Cai Linbin.
- 3- He is the person Nazım Hikmet met and became friends at the Communist University for Laborers of the East in Russia and wrote the poem "Jokond ile Si-Ya-U" on his behalf.
- 4- Hunan First Normal School "Normal (师范)" universities in China are institutions that provide teacher education. It can also be translated as Hunan First Teacher's School.
- 5- Xiang Jingyu (1895-1928) was the only woman among the founding members of the CPC and the first woman elected to central committee. She was the wife of Cai Hesen.
- 6- More than 2,000 Chinese students protested on May 30 after a Chinese worker was killed at a Japanese factory in Shanghai on May 15, 1925. When the protests got out of control, the police in the international enclave opened fire on the students and many lost their lives. The protests turned into anti-imperialist and labor actions. Shanghai University also played an important role in the May 30 movement.
- 7- On the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, on April 12, 1927, more than a thousand CPC members were arrested, 300 people were executed, and more than 5,000 disappeared. This event is also known as the Shanghai Massacre.
- 8- The Comintern representative, Marin, is known to the Chinese as Ma Lin. Marin's real name is Henk Sneevliet, a Dutch communist.
- 9- On August 28-30, 1922, the Central Executive Committee Plenum at West Lake in Hangzhou is also known as the West Lake Conference.
- 10- Also known as Mao Dun, Shen Yanbing was the Minister of Culture of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1965.
- 11- In 1922, the Association for the Defense of Rights in Anatolia and Rumelia was conducting the War of Independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. The People's Fırka was established on September 9, 1923, as a continuation of the Association for the Defense of Rights in Anatolia and Rumelia and the Group for the Defense of Rights in Anatolia and Rumelia in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. Mustafa Kemal, on the other hand, used the name "People's Fırka" for the first time on December 6, 1922. Cai Hesen named it the Turkish Nationalist Party in his article because it was fighting for independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal.

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