

The Defenses (1989)

Vedat Türkali (1919 – 2016)

OVERVIEW

Divided into the sections “Articles,” “Speeches,” “Interviews,” and “Defenses,” the book brings together a selection of Vedat Türkali’s newspaper articles, public speeches, interviews, and courtroom defenses from various political trials, highlighting the close relationship between art and politics. Throughout the book, issues such as censorship, freedom of expression, cinema, literature, the peace movement, socialism, democracy, and the history of the Turkish left are intricately intertwined. Sometimes Türkali reflects on the social role of art as a novelist and screenwriter. At other times, he focuses on state repression, limits on democratic rights, and the punishment of political dissent. His courtroom defenses, written in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, are not merely legal documents but also valuable testimonies to the history of freedom of thought and association in Turkey. Across the collection, Türkali demonstrates why art and politics cannot be separated and explains how he understands literature and cinema as integral components of broader struggles for social transformation. The book therefore offers both an account of the principles Türkali defended throughout his life and a critical reflection on Turkey’s recent political and cultural history.

PEOPLE

Bekir Yıldız	Author
Ertem Göreç	Director
Halit Refiğ	Director
İsmail Bilen	General Secretary of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP)
Reşat Fuat Baraner	Senior Member of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP)
Ruhi Su	Musician
Süreyya Duru	Director
Şefik Hüsnü	Leader of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP)
Yılmaz Güney	Director, scriptwriter, actor

SYNOPSIS

In the ten essays that make up the first section of the book, Vedat Türkali discusses censorship, cinema, peace, and cultural policy. In an article dated 14 December 1983, he criticizes the destruction of Halit Refiğ’s *Yorgun Savaşçı* by TRT. On 11 January 1986, he evaluates the proposed Law on Cinema and Video Works. On 24 May 1986, he discusses film financing and censorship in relation to the Istanbul Film Days. On 17 July 1987, Atilla Dorsay publishes a critique of Türkali’s novel *Yeşilçam Dedikleri Türkiye*, to which Türkali responds on 10 October 1987. Dorsay then replies on 16 October 1987. In his essay “Peace,” Türkali addresses the threat of nuclear war. In a piece dated 28 February 1988, he commemorates the filmmaker Süreyya Duru. In “The Ankara Film Festival,” he discusses Mahmut Tali Öngören’s efforts to establish the festival and draws attention to the invisibility of screenwriters. In “Istanbul,” he examines literary representations of the city through the works of Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Nâzım Hikmet, Sabahattin Ali, and Orhan Kemal. The section titled “Speeches” includes Türkali’s talk on cinema and the novel at the Association of Political Science Graduates and his speech on Ruhi Su, delivered at Zincirlikuyu Cemetery on 4 June 1988. The “Interviews” section brings together conversations conducted by Zeliha Midilli (15 March 1985), Aziz Çalışlar (January 1987), Banks (March 1987), Serpil Eryılmaz and Mehmet Sevda (14 August 1987), and Çağatay Anadol (April–May 1989). In these interviews, Türkali reflects on his years as a teacher, his entry into cinema, his research practices as a novelist, censorship, Turkish cinema, the history of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), Stalinism, and divisions within the socialist movement. The final section, which gives the book its title, contains Türkali’s courtroom defenses in the trials concerning the Turkish Writers’ Union, the Intellectuals’ Petition, and the Peace Association.

In these texts, he defends freedom of thought, expression, and association, presents anti-war activism and peace advocacy as legitimate democratic activities, and opposes the punishment of political beliefs. In this respect, the book is not only a record of a writer's intellectual world but also a document of the struggles over democracy, culture, and freedom in Turkey during the 1980s.

ARTICLES

Cumhuriyet, 14 December 1983

One of his articles in *Cumhuriyet*, Vedat Türkali begins with a story from Evliya Çelebi and criticizes a mentality that is hostile to artworks and visual representations. In the story, a follower of the Kadızadeli movement buys an illustrated Shahnameh and, claiming that images are forbidden, scratches out the eyes of the illustrations, defaces some of them, spits on them, and damages the book. He then argues that he is carrying out the Islamic duty of eliminating wrongdoing.

Türkali says that during his years as a teacher he reads this story to his students. One student reacts by saying, "This man cannot be a Turk, sir!" because he cannot imagine such behavior as compatible with Turkish identity. Türkali responds that every society contains ignorant people who are hostile to art. He then connects this incident to the burning of *Yorgun Savaşçı* (The Weary Warrior), the film adapted by director Halit Refiğ from Kemal Tahir's novel and destroyed by TRT, the state television broadcaster. He draws a parallel between the mentality that destroys the illustrations in a book centuries ago and the mentality that destroys a film.

He reports that screenwriter Bülent Oran considers this film even more successful than *Aşk-ı Memnu*, another adaptation directed by Halit Refiğ that receives widespread acclaim. Türkali also recalls a television program he attends years earlier with Adalet Ağaoğlu. During the discussion, Ağaoğlu speaks of a "censorship cell" lodged in people's minds. Türkali uses this idea to argue that people often demand freedom for themselves but are quick to call for censorship when others are involved.

Türkali also mentions *Küçük Ağa*, Tarık Buğra's novel, which Yücel Çakmaklı adapts for TRT. However, TRT later abandons the project. He notes that when Tarık Buğra comments on the issue in *Nokta* magazine, he argues that his own novel gives society confidence and morale because it presents a historical reality without distorting it through personal interpretations. Türkali points out that this statement implicitly accuses *Yorgun Savaşçı* of distorting historical facts through subjective interpretation.

Although he does not agree with either Kemal Tahir or Halit Refiğ, Türkali argues that, instead of burning the film, the authorities could have requested a new edit or suggested additional scenes. He describes the act of burning a film as a form of "Ottoman fury." He concludes his article by returning to Evliya Çelebi's story. When Melek Ahmet Pasha learns that the illustrations in the Shahname have been damaged, he interrogates the man and asks why he does it. The man replies that he is preventing evil. Enraged, Melek Ahmet Pasha orders him to be beaten and fines him to compensate for the value of the book. Türkali ends by saying that he does not live in an age where he can long for such methods. Instead, he says that he would like to submit a petition and asks where he should deliver it.

Cumhuriyet, 11 January 1986

In an article published in *Cumhuriyet*, Vedat Türkali discusses a new bill titled the Cinema and Video Works Act, which is about to be introduced to parliament. He notes that, if enacted, the law will transfer authority over cinema from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, abolish the mandatory pre-screening of scripts that often results in censorship, and direct revenues collected from fines to the film industry. He argues that these measures could be beneficial if implemented properly.

However, he considers the bill problematic because it leaves many important issues to future regulations. One article establishes a supervisory board that will evaluate works according to criteria such as national security and public morals. Although the board is required to include an artist and a producer, Türkali argues that such supervision means that censorship will continue in another form. Moreover, local administrative authorities are granted the power to block the distribution of works whenever they deem it necessary. As a result, while authority appears to be redistributed among different ministries, this change is largely superficial.

Türkali also points out that the film industry lacks representative organizations other than the Film Producers Association (FİYAP). Consequently, regulations are shaped primarily according to the interests of producers rather than those of other groups working in the sector.

Addressing these issues, Türkali links the emergence of the bill to the conflict between filmmakers and video distributors. He notes that the spread of video technology allows films to be viewed outside movie theaters, leading to the proliferation of pirate videocassette dealers and prompting the state to provide certain guarantees for producers. In this sense, the proposed law is primarily motivated by employers' concerns about protecting the market. According to Türkali, a genuinely effective law would also take into account the working conditions and interests of cinema workers.

Cumhuriyet, 24 May 1986

In an article published in *Cumhuriyet*, Vedat Türkali argues that the Cinema Days festival helps generate interest in domestic cinema that goes beyond the standards of commercially driven American filmmaking. He states that he has always respected film workers because making films in a market dominated by foreign filmmakers, many of whom are graduates of prestigious film schools, requires working under extremely difficult and discouraging conditions.

Although the event is organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, Türkali notes that it is also supported by numerous financial institutions, holding companies, and prominent public figures. Referring to the two-million-lira prize sponsored by Eczacıbaşı and divided among three jury award recipients, he sarcastically remarks that "our great mountains of finance could not even give birth to a rabbit." However, this passage is altered by page editor Sami Karaören, who replaces it with a milder version: "Two million? Not bad, perhaps, but what about other awards? Shouldn't our great financial institutions have done more for Turkish cinema? Is it improper to ask such a question?"

Türkali argues that cinema depends on both intellectual creativity and financial resources. He claims that capitalist and socialist countries have already solved the problem of financing cinema, whereas Turkey remains in a workshop phase of development. Despite the lack of financial support, Turkish cinema has nevertheless demonstrated what can be achieved under conditions of scarcity. He therefore offers a proposal to the major financial actors supporting the Cinema Days festival: award-winning directors should be granted the opportunity to make films with budgets of sixty million lira each, while any profits should belong to the directors and the initial investment should simply be recovered by the sponsors.

From Atilla Dorsay

In a *Cumhuriyet* article published on 17 July 1987, Atilla Dorsay writes that Vedat Türkali successfully portrays the period before the 27 May coup in *Bir Gün Tek Başına* (One Day All Alone) and the aftermath of the 12 March memorandum in *Mavi Karanlık* (Blue Darkness). However, while reading Türkali's novel *Yeşilçam Dedikleri Türkiye* (The Turkey They Call Yeşilçam), he begins to feel increasingly uneasy after a certain point.

According to Dorsay, the character Şahin Doğu strongly resembles Yılmaz Güney, Refik recalls Ertem Göreç, and Gündüz appears to represent Vedat Türkali himself. Yet Şahin Doğu reflects only a limited part of Güney's life and fails to convey his contributions to cinema.

Dorsay also argues that the novel creates the impression that it is set in the 1960s, but suddenly introduces events that belong to the 1970s. Among these are the death of İsmet İnönü (1973), the filmmakers' march (1977), the Maraş massacre (1978), and the wave of pornographic filmmaking that emerged in 1974–75.

Likewise, although the name Eczacıbaşı is never mentioned directly, the references to the pharmaceutical industry clearly point to the company. *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, he suggests, is treated in a similar way. At this point, Dorsay argues that a novelist who transforms events that have had such a profound impact on society into fictional material should exercise greater care.

While acknowledging that every novelist may draw inspiration from real events, he questions whether it is appropriate for a writer to invoke "novelistic freedom" and, in doing so, evade responsibility while

directing such severe criticism at individuals and institutions that have been transformed into fictional characters. He concludes by emphasizing that this is not a literary question but an ethical one.

Vedat Türkali's Response

In a *Cumhuriyet* article published on 10 October 1987, Vedat Türkali responds to Atilla Dorsay's criticism, explaining that he saw the article only much later because he had been traveling. He first argues that the characters Refik and Gündüz, who clearly evoke Ertem Göreç and Türkali himself, do not fully represent their contributions to Turkish cinema either. Refik, for example, is not portrayed through films such as *Otobüs Yolcuları*, *Kızgın Delikanlı*, or *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* –the latter is the realized version of the fictional film *İlaç Dosyası* that appears in the novel. Yet, Türkali notes, this omission does not seem to trouble Dorsay. By pointing this out, he implies that defending Yılmaz Güney is not his responsibility.

Türkali also stresses that *Yeşilçam Dedikleri Türkiye* is not merely a novel about Yeşilçam but a novel about Turkey. In this context, he recalls that Orson Welles based *Citizen Kane* on William Randolph Hearst, suggesting that drawing upon real individuals and institutions is a legitimate literary practice.

Second, Türkali argues that the events in the novel are organized according to fictional rather than historical time. He maintains that anachronism is harmless unless it is used “to prove a dangerous falsehood.” Invoking the saying, “From the same flower, the bee makes honey and the snake makes poison,” he invites Dorsay to reflect on the intentions behind his interpretation.

Third, Türkali implies that Dorsay is inclined to protect certain institutions because of his connections to them. He acknowledges the importance of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper but remarks that he is also familiar with attitudes expressed in statements such as, “Let us be careful not to allow that communist into this newspaper.”

He argues that genuine democracy cannot exist so long as the official definition and interpretation of the word “communist,” along with the practices derived from them, continue to shape public life. Finally, turning to Eczacıbaşı, Türkali states that he feels no moral obligation toward any monopoly that profits at the expense of the country. In his view, criticizing such institutions does not constitute an ethical failing but a legitimate political and moral stance.

Atilla Dorsay's Reply

In a response published in *Cumhuriyet* on 16 October 1987, Atilla Dorsay answers Vedat Türkali's criticisms. He argues that Türkali is not particularly receptive to criticism, pointing to an earlier dispute in *Yedinci Sanat* magazine with Nijat Özön concerning the communist arrests of 1951. According to Dorsay, Türkali responded to Özön with insults and personal attacks rather than engaging with the criticism itself.

Dorsay also rejects Türkali's argument that the events in *Yeşilçam Dedikleri Türkiye* should be understood according to fictional rather than historical time. He contends that such a defense is not convincing for a novelist dealing with highly contemporary events. Referring to *War and Peace*, he argues that a historical novel set in the distant past may enjoy certain liberties in its treatment of time, but a novel that portrays contemporary reality cannot claim the same privilege.

Finally, Dorsay states that critics such as Fethi Naci and Atilla Özkırımlı have become reluctant to write about Türkali because of his reactions to criticism. He concludes by asking whether intimidating critics is a way of remaining effectively immune from critical scrutiny.

Peace

In his contribution to the collection *Barış İçin Yazdılar Çizdiler* (They Wrote and Drew for Peace), Vedat Türkali notes that wherever there is oppression, there is also a struggle to eliminate it. He says that Turkey is a country of prohibitions and that those who come together for peace often suffer. Referring to Prof. Tolga Yarman's article on how a nuclear attack can destroy the world in eight minutes, he argues that, in the thermonuclear age, a reckless person who does not care about others can easily wipe out humanity. He points out that, at a time when the American media promotes underground villas as shelters against nuclear attacks, Turkey is among the countries that can be sacrificed without hesitation. For this reason, he argues that the most basic condition of being patriotic in this country is to be committed to peace.

In Memory of Süreyya Duru

In his *Cumhuriyet* column of 28 February 1988, Vedat Türkali recalls saying at Süreyya Duru's grave: "I lost a friend, cinema lost a director, and Turkish society lost a citizen with a heart of diamond." He adds that he wholeheartedly agrees with Bekir Yıldız's assessment of Duru as an exemplary citizen.

Türkali notes that Süreyya Duru, with whom he works for many years, achieves international recognition through *Bedrana*, which receives the CIDALC Award, and *Kara Çarşafli Gelin* (The Bride in the Black Veil), both of which gain success at film festivals. He argues that Duru draws his strength not from Bekir Yıldız's stories or Vedat Türkali's screenplays, but from his warm-hearted personality and his compassionate view of society.

He states that Duru never responds to criticism, or even attacks, with anger and always acts with common sense. He explains that *Kara Çarşafli Gelin* (The Bride in the Black Veil) and *Güneşli Bataklık* (Sunny Swamp) are finally screened after years of legal battles that reach the Court of Cassation, yet *Güneşli Bataklık* is removed from cinemas in some places because of threats.

Türkali maintains that Duru faces these attacks, which lead him to economic ruin, with remarkable courage, and he argues that Duru remains a figure whose presence is greatly needed in Turkey's process of democratization.

The Film Festival in Ankara

Vedat Türkali begins his *Cumhuriyet* column of 13 April 1988 by describing the efforts of Mahmut Tali Öngören, whom he portrays as a person who is dismissed from his university position and whose books are banned from distribution, yet who never gives up. Türkali recounts how Öngören works to organize a film festival in Ankara.

He first approaches BİLAR Inc. Although the company initially claims that it cannot undertake such a project, Hâluk Gerger from BİLAR, Alper Aktan from the Alumni Association of Ankara University's Faculty of Political Sciences, and many others eventually come together and successfully organize the festival. Türkali notes that the festival also presents awards to first-time filmmakers. However, while awards go to the producer and the director, the screenwriter receives nothing. He argues that a good film begins with a good screenplay, yet screenwriters in the industry are often overlooked in precisely this way.

Istanbul

At the request of Ataol Behramoğlu, Vedat Türkali writes an essay for the Paris-based journal *Anka*, where it is published in French. He begins with a story from the *Saltukname*. In the story, Hasan asks Şerif why he leaves no people in a certain city. Şerif replies that when the devil descends from the heavens, he sets foot in this city, making it a nest of corruption. The city in question is Istanbul.

Türkali notes that Istanbul has long been regarded as a "devil city" that tempts people, and he admits that every time he leaves the city, he fears that he may never return. According to Türkali, narratives of Istanbul begin in Byzantine sources and continue through *Dede Korkut* and the *Saltukname*, later finding expression in the works of Evliya Çelebi and eventually the writers of the *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* (New Literature) movement. Halit Ziya, Mehmet Rauf, Tevfik Fikret, Mehmet Akif, and Yahya Kemal each see a different Istanbul.

Yet under Yahya Kemal's gaze, shaped by the historical consciousness of Western bourgeois culture, the city becomes a carrier of history, culture, and civilization. The other major representative of this approach is Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, especially in the Istanbul chapter of *Five Cities*. However, Türkali argues that Tanpınar's admiration for the past can distance him from social reality. His characters often appear less as figures shaped by their social classes than as embodiments of ideas. As a result, Istanbul ceases to be a living city.

TALKS

On Cinema and the Novel

In a talk delivered at the Alumni Association of Ankara University's Faculty of Political Sciences, Vedat Türkali describes cinema as a historical event of such significance that it marks a division comparable to the distinction between before and after Christ. At the same time, he argues that cinema has existed

throughout human history in a broader sense. Since cinema consists of images placed side by side, the desire for movement and the urge to view people and objects from different perspectives have always been present. Yet cinema, because it depends on capital, requires a market like any other industry.

In its early years, it turns to subjects that attract audiences, including theatre, and later to novels. Both cinema and the novel allow people to see things from multiple perspectives. In theatre, for example, the audience views the stage from a fixed position. In cinema and fiction, however, different angles are possible. Türkali illustrates this point by noting that Stendhal invents a tower that does not actually exist in Parma in *The Charterhouse of Parma* in order to provide a broader perspective on events. This, he argues, is what cinema and the novel share. Cinema first discovers montage, the possibility of combining different shots. When a director starts filming, a shot begins within a particular *mise-en-scène*. The same scene can then be filmed again from another angle. Novelists proceed in a similar way. A writer may first describe a crowded hall from a panoramic perspective, as if viewed from above, and then focus on a man sitting by the door with his arms crossed. In effect, the writer zooms in, much like a camera. Before filming, the director arrives at the location and determines which shots will be used, from what angles, and at what distance. This process is known as *découpage*. Türkali argues that novels have an equivalent process. Both filmmakers and novelists also rely on omission. If a bookcase catches fire, for instance, the owner does not necessarily recount every detail of the event when speaking to someone who already knows about the fire. Directors do not stage scenes this way, and novelists do not write them this way. Unless there is a specific narrative reason, details that characters already know are not repeated. In these respects, cinema and the novel are remarkably similar.

Some filmmakers adapt novels by reproducing them almost line by line. Türkali cites Bondarchuk's adaptation of *War and Peace* as an example. According to him, Bondarchuk explains that Russian audiences know the novel so well that they would hold him accountable if he departed from it. Türkali nevertheless stresses the importance of creating an original work rather than reproducing a novel exactly. In the field of cinema, video represents a major turning point. Many films that are expected to fail in movie theatres become highly successful on video.

Türkali predicts that cinema-like environments may eventually be created in people's homes. He recalls seeing a four-and-a-half-minute three-dimensional film in Paris and reaching out to touch what appears to be a witch-like woman, only to discover that she is merely a hologram made of light. As a novelist himself, Türkali reflects on what he can learn from cinema. One of the first obstacles he encounters is the widespread belief that, after the Industrial Revolution, people no longer have the patience to read long novels and that writers should therefore keep their works short. He attempts to follow this advice but fails. While writing *Bir Gün Tek Başına* (One Day All Alone), he realizes that some stories simply require length and that this cannot be determined in advance.

According to Türkali, every work contains characters and events, the audience's interpretation, and the creator's perspective. He recounts the story of a well-known French filmmaker who screens a film in Africa and later asks viewers what they think of it. The audience enthusiastically discusses a white chicken running across the screen. The filmmaker, who has never paid attention to the chicken, only notices it because of their response. The story demonstrates that what creators intend to communicate and what audiences ultimately receive are never identical. Türkali states that he tries to bring all these elements together in his own novels. First-, second-, and third-person perspectives frequently intertwine. Before writing, he imagines each scene as though it were a sequence in a film. He considers which scenes should stand out and how much emphasis each should receive. Even while transferring cinema's editing, rhythm, and perspective into fiction, he strives not to lose the intellectual dimension of the novel.

On Ruhi Su

In a speech delivered on 4 June 1988 at the unveiling of Ruhi Su's memorial tomb in Zincirlikuyu Cemetery, Vedat Türkali begins by arguing that both nature and society contain elements of chance. He maintains that people should benefit from fortunate circumstances when they arise, while refusing to accept unfortunate ones as an unchangeable fate and instead struggling against them. According to Türkali, Ruhi Su is fortunate in several respects. He is born with a beautiful voice, a natural gift that shapes his life. Despite being an orphaned and impoverished boy from a small town, he also gains

access to a good education. A third stroke of good fortune is that he lives in an age with the technical means to record and preserve artistic performances.

Yet Ruhi Su also experiences considerable misfortune. Because he is born during the years when imperial powers attempt to divide the country, he witnesses profound suffering from an early age. Another disadvantage is that he is born in what Türkali describes as an “underdeveloped” country. Moreover, he is imprisoned for supporting revolutionary workers. Türkali recalls witnessing Ruhi Su’s remarkable ability to cultivate human potential during their time in Adana Prison. There, Ruhi Su works patiently with a young murder convict named Raşit, whose singing voice is initially poor. After days of practice, Raşit becomes capable of performing folk songs beautifully. For Türkali, this episode demonstrates Ruhi Su’s extraordinary capacity to uncover hidden talents in others. In this sense, he is a man who is able to turn misfortune into opportunity.

INTERVIEWS

With Zeliha Midilli

In an interview with Zeliha Midilli for *Haftanın Sesi* on 15 March 1985, Vedat Türkali describes himself as one of the “literary” students at his high school. During those years, he reads writers such as Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Nâzım Hikmet, Ahmet Haşim, Yahya Kemal, and Orhan Veli. One of the people most responsible for nurturing this interest is his literature teacher, Salim Rıza Kırkpınar, a close friend of Yahya Kemal.

Inspired by this environment, Türkali enrolls in the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at university. Yet alongside influential scholars such as Fuat Köprülü, he encounters figures whom he considers far less significant, such as Ahmet Caferoğlu. In his view, there are few people in the department who shape the literary atmosphere. The sole exception is Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar.

After graduating, he teaches in military schools for nine years. When he first comes to Istanbul for university, he takes the entrance examination for the Higher Teachers’ School. He places fourth among forty candidates, but only two students are admitted. Convinced that returning to Samsun would mean never coming back to Istanbul, he learns that the Ministry of Defense runs a program to train teachers for military high schools and immediately joins it. Türkali enjoys teaching and believes that the profession contributes to the intellectual development of future military officers. However, after the arrests of 1951, he is unable to return to his teaching career. He turns to publishing, a field he dislikes because his real ambition is to write. While working on a book titled *İnsanlık için Kendisini Feda Edenler* (Those Who Sacrifice Themselves for Humanity), he meets a young filmmaker named Kemal İnci, who is making films with Suphi Kaner. This encounter marks his entry into cinema. When Suphi Kaner begins addressing him as “master,” he soon becomes known throughout the film industry simply as “the master.” Yet by that time, years spent in prison have already given him extensive knowledge of film history, technique, and theory.

When he enters the film industry in 1958, he adopts the pen name Vedat Türkali instead of using his real name, Abdülkadir Pirhasan. As the Democratic Party government becomes increasingly repressive, he does not wish to attract attention under his own name. He also anticipates that he may occasionally have to compromise in his cinematic work. Knowing that life rarely permits absolute purity, he accepts certain concessions, including projects such as *Bir Gecelik Gelin* (A One-Night Bride). Türkali is accustomed to criticism and even attacks on his work. For example, his novel *Mavi Karanlık* (Blue Darkness) is heavily criticized because readers believe that it portrays people from his immediate circle. Although the novel initially becomes a bestseller, these attacks eventually reduce its sales. Nevertheless, Türkali repeatedly revises his own work whenever he discovers mistakes. He recalls that the painter and sea captain Özcan Onur, who partly inspires a character in the novel, points out a technical error: in the novel, the engine is started before the mooring line is released, whereas in reality the opposite occurs. Türkali corrects the mistake in the second edition.

Research forms an essential part of his writing process. For a planned film titled *Kanlı Perşembe* (Bloody Thursday), he interviews young people who witness the events of 27 May 1960. Although the film is never made, he later uses this material while writing *Bir Gün Tek Başına* (One Day All Alone). For *Mavi Karanlık*, he investigates the physical and psychological consequences of torture, consulting psychiatrists and reading extensively. When the psychiatrist Gencay Gürsoy reads the manuscript, he remarks that the portrayal is so convincing that he feels as though he is observing one of his own

patients. For another novel in progress, *Yeşilçam Dedikleri Türkiye* (The Turkey They Call Yeşilçam), Türkali studies research on pharmaceuticals and medication.

Despite his accomplishments, Türkali emphasizes the hardships that shape his life. He is arrested when his daughter Deniz is seven years old and his son Barış is only two and a half months old. His wife, like him, is removed from the teaching profession and is forced to work in a bank. The family is eventually able to purchase the flat in which they live only by selling a small house inherited from his wife's father, selling another modest apartment she owns, and contributing additional savings of their own. Even then, Türkali describes himself as a man with no accumulated wealth.

With Aziz Çalışlar

In an interview conducted for the monthly cultural magazine *Günümüzde Kitaplar* in January 1987, Aziz Çalışlar begins by asking Vedat Türkali to what extent literature responds to social and political events in the aftermath of the 1980 coup. Türkali answers by recalling a remark he attributes to André Gide: death may be a summit, but many deaths together create a plain made up of countless summits. For this reason, he argues, wars rarely produce great literature. Turkey, he suggests, has already reached such a plain. Since the events in question are still recent, he adds, more time must pass before they can be fully processed in literature. Nevertheless, he describes his novel *Mavi Karanlık* (Blue Darkness) as a form of social response. Because of censorship, he wrote it cautiously, repeatedly deleting passages and reconsidering what he could say. In this context, he recalls Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın's memoirs. According to Türkali, because the word "nose" is allegedly banned during the reign of Abdülhamid II, Hüseyin Cahit is forced, while translating *An Iceland Fisherman*, to replace it with the phrase "the sharpest point where land extends into the sea." (In Turkish, the word "burun" means both nose and cape). Türkali remarks that he removes so much material from his novel that he could later write the novel again in a different form.

When Çalışlar observes that censorship is even harsher in cinema, Türkali agrees and argues that a film made by Yılmaz Güney in 1965 would be impossible to produce under the political conditions of the 1980s because the freedoms associated with the 1961 Constitution no longer exist. Çalışlar then refers to the Argentine film *The Official Story*, noting that it successfully depicts a political era without becoming trapped in partisan conflicts. Türkali responds that such a film can only be made after the military junta has fallen.

The discussion then turns to the unequal application of freedom and censorship. When Çalışlar points out that some journalists make accusations in books that are far more severe than anything found in a novel, Türkali replies that freedom and the law operate differently for different people.

Çalışlar asks whether the connection between literature and social issues is being deliberately weakened and suggests that subjects are often considered more valuable when framed as individual rather than collective problems. Türkali largely agrees, arguing that some writers confine themselves to a particular conception of creativity. Çalışlar offers the example of Russian aristocratic painting, in which peasants are largely absent because peasantry occupies a degraded social position. Türkali responds by recalling a scene in his *Mavi Karanlık* (Blue Darkness) in which a character complains that the gardener ruins an otherwise beautiful garden painting.

When the conversation shifts to whether certain themes are considered more appropriate for literature than others, Türkali notes that some writers position themselves as producers of "nobler" and more genuinely artistic works because they avoid political themes. He insists that he does not regard himself as a refined man of letters in that sense. Çalışlar then asks what Türkali means when he describes his own work as a non-literary novel, noting that his six-hundred-page novel is composed largely of dialogue and interior monologue. Türkali explains that while the novel is fundamentally a narrative form, he prefers to show rather than tell. What interests him are actions, behaviours, and concrete practices.

From this point, Çalışlar raises the issue of realism. Türkali argues that authenticity does not emerge from reproducing life exactly as it is. Instead, it requires synthesis and artistic transformation. He adds that his own novel unfolds chronologically, within the flow of narrative time.

The conversation then moves to the relationship between contemporaneity and everyday life. Çalışlar argues that a character reaches a broader social significance when he or she ceases to be a direct

copy of a real individual and instead comes to represent a social type characteristic of an era. Türkali agrees that novelists inevitably draw inspiration from people around them, but stresses that these individuals are transformed through an artistic filter. As an example, he recounts how a man who believes that the painter Özgür in the novel is based on him complains that the character says things he himself has never said in real life. Türkali also notes that his novels are frequently criticized for containing too much profanity.

The discussion then turns to Yeşilçam. After noting that the Turkish film industry possesses its own distinctive jargon, Çalışlar asks about the relationship between Yeşilçam and Turkey in Türkali's novel about the film world. He argues that the two mirror one another. Türkali responds that Turkey is governed not by genuine free-market competition but by monopolistic structures. Çalışlar links this observation to the question of freedom, suggesting that the most powerful actors are also the freest and that liberalism is widely misunderstood. Türkali counters that liberalism has effectively come to an end. In his view, the world is organized through monopolistic systems in which powerful countries render weaker ones dependent and shape their developmental trajectories according to their own interests. As an example, Çalışlar points to the pharmaceutical dossier in the novel and asks why Türkali focuses on the drug industry rather than arms trafficking. Türkali replies that Turkey does not yet possess a significant privately owned arms industry, whereas the pharmaceutical sector already functions as a major site of exploitation. As a result, a novel ostensibly about Yeşilçam becomes, through the pharmaceutical industry, a novel about Turkey itself. Characters such as Zühtü also carry broader cultural meanings. Although he belongs to the petty bourgeoisie, he embodies the figure of the Ottoman rake. In socialist Romania he tests his anti-communism, in Germany he confronts his past, and in Greece he arrives at a synthesis of his life experiences. In this way, he comes to represent an entire social class.

Finally, while discussing the possibility of adapting the novel for the screen, the conversation turns to competing understandings of cinema in Turkey. Türkali argues that every artistic approach is shaped by historical conditions. Even the most distinctive creative personalities are products of specific socio-economic and political circumstances. For this reason, filmmakers must be evaluated within the conditions in which they work. He distances himself from the idea of art that can be understood only by a small cultural elite and insists that he wants his work to reach as many people as possible. At the same time, he rejects the notion that his aim is simply propaganda. He cares deeply about aesthetic concerns, but he also emphasizes that aesthetic forms are shaped by industrial structures, technical possibilities, and material conditions. For that reason, he argues, figures such as Orson Welles do not develop their styles solely through personal taste but through the historical and technological circumstances in which they create.

Banks, March 1987

In this interview, Vedat Türkali begins by explaining that he turns from literature to cinema primarily in order to earn a living. He adds that he adopts the pen name Vedat Türkali because he anticipates that he may have to make certain compromises in the film industry. However, he notes that the relatively liberal atmosphere created after the 27 May coup allowed filmmakers to produce works far better than he initially expected.

Asked which of his screenplays achieve popular success, he lists *Otobüs Yolcuları* (Bus Passengers), *Kızgın Delikanlı* (The Angry Young Man), *Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet* (The Tricycle), *Bedrana*, *Kara Çarşafli Gelin* (The Bride in the Black Veil), and *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* (What Is Fatmagül's Fault?). At the same time, he argues that *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (Those Who Wake Up in the Dark) possesses the strongest screenplay, even though it fails to attract a wide audience.

When asked how screenwriting and novel writing contribute to one another, Türkali replies that the modern novelist must understand cinema. He explains that his own conception of the novel is grounded in this belief. Turning to the relationship between cinema and television, he argues that television frees cinema from the monopoly of movie theatres.

Türkali attributes the success of his novel *Bir Gün Tek Başına* (One Day All Alone) to its ability to capture the experiences of a generation while those experiences remain fresh, as well as to its emotional appeal. Beyond this, however, he states that he prefers not to discuss his own novels. If he fails to express what he wishes to say through fiction, he argues, there is little point in explaining it further.

Finally, Türkali contends that Turkey is not experiencing genuine growth. Growth, in his view, implies healthy development and transformation. Instead, he argues that the country is merely swelling economically, a process that may eventually lead to a painful explosion.

With Serpil Eryılmaz and Mehmet Sevda

In this interview, published in *Türkiye Postası* on 14 August 1987, Vedat Türkali argues that Turkish cinema struggles to produce consistently strong works because it fails to keep pace with technological developments. In his view, Turkey possesses all the necessary ingredients for cinema: its people, geography, and history offer rich material for filmmaking. Yet cinema is fundamentally a technical art. The rapidly developing techniques of filmmaking cannot be fully utilized in Turkey because the necessary infrastructure is lacking. Laboratories are inadequate, soundproof studios are scarce, and imported materials are used sparingly because of their cost. Whereas films elsewhere may be shot with 40,000 to 50,000 meters of negative film, productions in Turkey often rely on only 5,000 to 7,000 meters. Moreover, when a film is blocked by censorship, producers who invest all their resources in a project risk financial ruin. At the same time, because Turkish society is marked by a continual struggle between progressive and conservative forces, censorship laws may remain unchanged while their implementation fluctuates considerably. As a result, uncertainty prevails.

Asked about films that address women's issues, Türkali states that he is not especially eager to comment on the subject. Nevertheless, he argues that women's problems cannot be resolved unless the "problem of men" is also addressed. Referring to *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* (What Is Fatmagül's Fault?), he notes that the film is frequently criticized because its female protagonist is ultimately rescued by a man. He responds that neither he nor the actor who appears in the film can solve such a social problem. A film, he argues, can only probe certain issues and open possible solutions to discussion.

When asked about films he admires, Türkali mentions *Adı Vasfiye* (Her Name Is Vasfiye), *Ahh Belinda*, and *Asiye Nasıl Kurtulur?* (How Can Asiye Be Saved?), all written by his son Barış Pirhasan. Despite the difficulties facing the industry, he believes that high-quality films can still be made. He expresses similar optimism about literature, pointing to younger writers such as Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin. As an example, he remarks that it is difficult to believe that a novel as accomplished as *Sessiz Ev* (Silent House) is written by such a young author.

The interview also addresses criticisms directed at the so-called "Septemberist" novels written after the military coup of 12 September 1980. Türkali argues that periods of discouragement and withdrawal are common in artistic life and should not be regarded as unusual. While acknowledging the effects of political repression, he rejects explanations that attribute the turn toward apolitical fiction solely to censorship and pressure. The novels he calls "products of fear" may nevertheless possess considerable artistic merit.

Finally, on the question of form and content, Türkali insists that the two cannot be separated. His own aim, he explains, is always to communicate what he wishes to say to readers in the most effective form possible.

With Çağatay Anadol

In this interview, published in *Görüş* in April–May 1989, Vedat Türkali is asked about the merger of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) and the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), their adoption of a common program, and the possibility of reaching a similar agreement with the Socialist Workers' Party of Turkey (TSİP). He responds that any healthy unification of the left first requires an understanding of why divisions emerge in the first place. While acknowledging that left-wing movements throughout the world experience fragmentation, some of it resulting from theoretical disagreements and some from deliberate provocations, he argues that the situation in Turkey reaches a much more advanced level.

According to Türkali, Marxists in Turkey existed for many years within a single organizational tradition centered on the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), which was founded in the 1920s and operated at times legally and at times underground. After the enactment of *Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu* (the Law on the Maintenance of Order) in 1925, the TKP is forced underground. Nevertheless, until 1946 the Marxist movement in Turkey largely retains the appearance of a single party. Although small groups, factions, and tendencies accused of Trotskyism occasionally emerge, they never develop into independent rival organizations. As the most significant opposition movement within the party, Türkali points to the

"Workers' Opposition" associated with Nâzım Hikmet. However, he notes that this movement is ultimately brought to an end through the firm decisions and interventions of the Communist International (Comintern). In his view, these disagreements do not represent a departure from Marxist-Leninist principles but rather reflect differences in organizational practice.

Türkali argues that the first serious organizational split emerges in 1946 with the establishment of the Socialist Party of Turkey by Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu. He recalls that there is a strong desire within the left to avoid fragmentation and act collectively, yet this aspiration fails to materialize. Although Esat Adil's party and Şefik Hüsnü's Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey differed little in programmatic terms, many believed that they should unite. However, when the issues of U.S. aid and Turkey's foreign-policy orientation came to the fore, Esat Adil supported American assistance in a manner similar to the mainstream political parties, making unity impossible in practice.

Türkali also recalls that socialist parties were banned in 1946 and that the TKP suffered a devastating blow during the mass arrests of 1951. Despite this, he acknowledges that the period following the military intervention of 27 May 1960 opened a relatively democratic era. Yet he emphasizes that Turkey never developed into a genuinely democratic system in which the working class could freely establish and develop its own political organizations. For decades, the state banned the TKP and used the specter of communism as a tool of intimidation and repression. In particular, Türkali argues that an intense ideological campaign was waged after 1960 to prevent younger generations from becoming acquainted with socialist ideas.

In this context, he strongly criticizes Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code. In his view, these provisions are designed not only to suppress contemporary socialist activity but also to prohibit access to the socialist past. As a result, the Turkish working class becomes disconnected from its own history, experiences, and organizational traditions. Each generation is forced to begin its political struggle as though everything must be discovered anew. Institutional memory fails to develop, and historical experiences cannot be transmitted to subsequent generations.

Türkali argues that this process turns Turkey into a country repeatedly cut off from its own past and condemned to repeat the same mistakes. The anti-communist atmosphere created by the state, he contends, affects not only political organization but also the intellectual habits of the country's educated classes. People fear being labeled communists even when they rise to the highest levels of public life. According to Türkali, this fear extends from university rectors and professors to ministers and generals. He attributes the caution and timidity of many Turkish social democrats to this long history of repression and argues that such fear weakens intellectual courage and creativity.

Finally, Türkali maintains that preventing the working class from organizing and institutionalizing itself has inflicted serious damage on Turkey. Workers' rights remain limited, trade unionism and the right to strike are often treated as suspect activities, and socialist ideas are stigmatized as forms of dangerous radicalism. As a consequence, he argues, the working class is subjected to a harsh and primitive form of exploitation. Referring to the Marxist distinction between absolute and relative surplus value, that is, the difference between increasing profits by extending working hours and increasing them through technological innovation, he contends that where cheap labor can be exploited under conditions of political repression, capital has little incentive to modernize industry or invest in new technologies. For this reason, class repression harms not only workers but also Turkey's industrialization and economic development. In his view, this is one of the principal reasons for the country's relative industrial backwardness.

Following this response, Çağatay Anadol turns to the shortcomings of the socialist movement itself. In particular, he asks whether the movement is able to preserve its organizational and political continuity after the arrests of 1951 and to what extent the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) tradition plays a guiding role in the emergence of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), founded in 1961.

Vedat Türkali begins by arguing that important parts of TKP history remain insufficiently understood. He notes that knowledge about the Comintern period is still limited, and that Comintern archives have only recently begun to be opened to various communist parties. For this reason, he believes that many aspects of TKP history will become clearer in the future. Nevertheless, he maintains that some general assessments can already be made on the basis of existing knowledge.

According to Türkali, the approximately eleven-year period between the enactment of the Law on the Maintenance of Order in 1925 and 1936 is an extremely difficult underground period, but also one marked by continuing ideological inquiry. During these years, the TKP attempts to understand the specific conditions of Turkey, analyze the country's social structure, and pursue political struggle. Although deprived of legal means of activity, the party succeeds in maintaining its basic political orientation.

Türkali argues that during the early years of the Republic, the TKP's position was not entirely hostile to the new regime. On the contrary, it recognized the anti-imperialist character and progressive aspects of the Republic. In this context, he places particular emphasis on the relationship between the Soviet Union and Kemalist Turkey. In his view, the Soviet Union was surrounded by hostile states and effectively lived behind a "sanitary cordon," making Turkey strategically important. The TKP therefore supported certain progressive initiatives undertaken by the Ankara government.

As an example, Türkali cites the party's position on the Kurdish question. According to him, the TKP recognized the existence and needs of the Kurdish population and emphasized them publicly. At the same time, however, it supported the Ankara government against certain rebellions led by sheikhs and tribal leaders that it regarded as influenced by imperialist powers. Despite this, after the enactment of the Law on the Maintenance of Order, the government suppressed opposition without distinguishing between left and right and targets the TKP as well.

Türkali stresses that the party's underground activities between 1925 and 1936 were conducted under extraordinarily difficult conditions. Leaflets were distributed, attempts were made to organize May Day celebrations, and propaganda and agitation activities were carried out in front of factories. Yet each of these actions came at a heavy cost. He also notes that relations between the Soviet Union and Ankara remained complex during this period. Although the two sides were at times dissatisfied with one another, they continued to need each other.

Türkali then turns to the Comintern decisions of 1936. He argues that, in response to the growing danger of war, the Comintern undertook a broad reassessment of international conditions and classified countries according to whether they were inclined toward war. Turkey was considered one of the countries not pursuing a war-oriented policy. Within this framework, the Comintern implemented a decentralization policy for the TKP that effectively dismantled its central organizational structure.

Türkali regards this decision as one of the most damaging developments in the party's history. In his view, it created serious confusion within the organization, weakened organizational continuity, and inflicted lasting damage on the TKP. He notes that some opposition circles later explained the decision by claiming that TKP leader Şefik Hüsnü has fallen out of favor with the Comintern. Türkali dismisses this interpretation as overly simplistic. According to him, the real explanation lies in international politics.

He argues that Stalin's primary concern at the time was to prevent Turkey from moving into an openly hostile position toward the Soviet Union and to preserve relations with Ankara. The rise of German fascism in Europe constituted a major threat, and Turkey's geopolitical position therefore acquired considerable strategic significance for the Soviet Union.

Türkali also cautions against evaluating the communist movement of that era according to contemporary standards. He recalls that the principal criterion within the international communist movement was one's attitude toward the Soviet Union. Referring to the views of Georgi Dimitrov, he emphasizes that the Soviet Union was then regarded as the only socialist state and the main source of hope for communists worldwide. Surrounded by hostile powers and particularly vulnerable because of the oil regions of the Caucasus, it remained a central target of imperialist states. Consequently, the security of the Soviet state and the policies of communist parties became deeply intertwined. Turkish ruling elites, he argues, were likewise attentive to these geopolitical realities.

For Türkali, therefore, the interruptions experienced by the TKP cannot be explained solely through internal organizational weaknesses. The party's development was shaped by the regime established under the Law on the Maintenance of Order, the conditions of underground activity, Comintern decisions, Soviet foreign policy, and broader international developments such as the rise of fascism. Nevertheless, he continues to regard the decentralization decision of 1936 as one of the most significant turning points in the history of the TKP.

When discussing the TKP's policy of "decentralization" in the 1940s, Türkali argues that this decision did not amount to the liquidation of the party. Rather, under the conditions of the single-party era, it represented a strategy of moving away from the appearance of an underground organization and working within broader organizations united around anti-war, pacifist, anti-fascist, and democratic demands. However, the policy was interpreted in different ways within the party. While some cadres viewed it as a tactic that would strengthen the organization, others perceived it as a relaxation of the party's central structure. Türkali notes that the debates surrounding Hasan Ali, Eczacı Vasıf, and Doctor Hikmet were also connected to these disagreements.

Turning to the international context, he emphasizes that the Soviet Union was regarded as the sole source of hope for communists around the world in the face of the threat posed by Nazi Germany. He argues that the dissolution of the Comintern must also be understood within these circumstances. In his view, had the Soviet Union been defeated, the world would have come under the domination of German fascism. He adds that this belief was not limited to communists but was widely shared by figures such as the French socialist leader Guy Mollet.

According to Türkali, the TKP became active again in 1944. The danger of fascism was highlighted through *En Büyük Tehlike* (The Greatest Danger), a pamphlet prepared by General Secretary Reşat Fuat Baraner and published under the name Faris Erkman. Yet in the same year Reşat Fuat was arrested, and the movement suffered a severe setback. In 1945, the activities of Mihri Belli and the circle around the Forward Youth Association also came under pressure. After the end of the war, expectations of democratization rose, and in 1946 the Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey was established under the leadership of Şefik Hüsnü.

Looking back, however, Türkali argues that the TKP made serious mistakes in the field of clandestine organization. From the arrests of 1927 and 1929 to the operation of 1944, the party repeatedly failed to maintain secrecy and was often exposed because of its own errors. He maintains that mistakes made during the arrests of Reşat Fuat Baraner and İstanbul Provincial Secretary Sebati Selimoğlu effectively paralyzed the movement. In particular, he argues that after Selimoğlu's arrest, Reşat failed to take the necessary precautions and was consequently apprehended shortly afterward.

Türkali also draws on his own experiences. He recalls that he was in contact with Şefik Hüsnü in 1946 and believes that Hüsnü placed excessive confidence in postwar democratization and in the new political climate shaped by growing American influence. In Türkali's view, this optimism proved misplaced once police raids resumed. Şefik Hüsnü was arrested, and during the TKP arrests of 1951 Türkali himself became one of the first people taken into custody.

At the time, Türkali was teaching at a military school and was known as "Captain Abdülkadir." He states that he knew the party was under constant police surveillance and that he repeatedly warned General Secretary Zeki Başıtmar. Nevertheless, he argues that the organization did not exercise sufficient caution in matters of security. He explains this failure by suggesting that the party was not yet adequately prepared for the demands of clandestine work.

Türkali notes that police surveillance reports that later became available revealed that Zeki Başıtmar and other party cadres had been monitored step by step. As an example, he recounts a meeting between Başıtmar and Doctor Sevim, who had arrived from France. Believing that they were not being followed, Başıtmar met with Doctor Sevim in public places. Because Doctor Sevim suffered from severe hearing loss, he spoke very loudly. Türkali points out that the police subsequently proved able to reproduce even the details of their conversations. He also claims that after his arrest Başıtmar gave a 170-page statement and, in certain instances, implicated Tevfik Dilmen by mentioning his name, thereby placing him in a difficult position. In the end, Türkali argues, the organization collapsed during the arrests of 1951.

Responding to Çağatay Anadol's question about whether the organization established by Zeki Başıtmar after leaving Turkey could legitimately be regarded as the real TKP, Türkali adopts a cautious position. He acknowledges that Başıtmar may have exceeded his authority, but argues that the legitimacy of an organization recognized as the TKP by the Soviet Union and the international communist movement cannot be dismissed outright. At this point, he turns to the role of İsmail Bilen. Türkali notes that Bilen served for many years as the party's representative abroad and was widely

recognized within international communist circles. For this reason, he argues, Bilen's position cannot simply be ignored. Having personally known many important TKP figures, including Reşat Fuat Baraner, Halil Yalçinkaya, Mihri Belli, Doctor Hikmet, Martel Şükrü, Emin Sekun, and Ekber Babayef, Türkali considers it unfair that all responsibility is later placed on İsmail Bilen. In his view, the history of the TKP includes violations of legality, internal purges, and a variety of political mistakes. Bilen may have shared responsibility for some of these developments, but portraying him as the sole culprit or a convenient scapegoat does not adequately explain the historical record.

Türkali then broadens his critique by discussing the damage that Stalinism inflicted on the communist movement. In his view, conditions of severe repression prevented the development of healthy internal democracy within the party. The Soviet bureaucracy, he argues, preferred to preserve existing relationships rather than question the position of figures such as İsmail Bilen, partly because it did not wish to assume responsibility for promoting alternative representatives. As a result, accountability and democratic oversight failed to develop within the party. Türkali maintains that under Zeki Baştımar's leadership, tendencies toward personal authority became stronger and that dissenters were easily denounced as enemies of the party or ideological deviants. He even claims that one of Baştımar's first actions was to accuse Reşat Fuat and attempt to marginalize him within the movement. According to Türkali, this reflected a mentality of "I am the party" and a desire to establish hegemony.

Türkali subsequently draws a sharp distinction between Lenin's concept of democratic centralism and Stalinism. In his interpretation, Lenin's model combined democratic debate with organizational unity, whereas Stalinism transformed centralism into a despotic system operating behind a democratic façade. The suppression of pluralism, the treatment of criticism as a political offense, and the elevation of leaders beyond criticism created serious problems both in the Soviet Union and within the TKP. Türkali argues that many of the organizational crises experienced by the communist movement can ultimately be traced to this Stalinist political culture.

According to Türkali, the historical trajectory of the TKP became increasingly disconnected from its own past, particularly during the period of İsmail Bilen's leadership. Figures such as Reşat Fuat Baraner and Doctor Hikmet were systematically marginalized, while İsmail Bilen was presented as the movement's almost exclusive legitimate leader. Türkali regards this not merely as a personal rivalry but as a rupture in the historical memory of the Turkish communist movement. In his view, this rupture resulted both from state repression and from the internal power struggles of the TKP leadership operating abroad.

Turning to the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), founded after 1960, Türkali emphasizes that many of the leading figures of the new period, including Behice Boran, actually emerged from former TKP circles. However, in order to participate in legal politics and protect themselves from police repression, these cadres distanced themselves from the TKP and at times even adopted the position that they had no connection with it. Türkali considers this understandable to a certain extent, yet argues that over time it evolved into a form of disinheritance that rejected the movement's historical roots. As a result, new generations were unable to learn their own political history, and the Turkish socialist movement failed to develop a shared historical consciousness.

According to Türkali, this is one of the principal reasons why the Turkish left later fragmented into numerous factions. Detached from the experiences of earlier generations, younger activists often rejected the leaders and organizations before them and established their own movements instead. The result, he argues, was a degree of fragmentation rarely seen elsewhere in the world. During the 1970s, these divisions became even more pronounced as different groups increasingly struggled against one another. In the same period, cadres gathered around İsmail Bilen, whom Türkali collectively refers to as the "Leipzig School," attempted to reorganize the TKP. With support from international socialist circles, they revived party activities, organized conferences, published materials, and eventually prepared the party's Fifth Congress. Yet Türkali maintains that although organizational activity was revitalized, the fundamental problem remained unresolved. The culture of criticism had disappeared, loyalty to leaders and sycophancy had become more prominent, and mechanisms for honest internal debate had ceased to function effectively.

For this reason, Türkali intensifies his criticism of İsmail Bilen. He states that he finds Bilen problematic not only politically but also personally. Recalling Şefik Hüsnü's description of Bilen as a man of "forty lies," he argues that Bilen's relationship with the Soviet bureaucracy caused considerable damage to

the Turkish left. In his view, Bilen's influence was one of the principal factors contributing to the fragmentation of the revolutionary movement in Turkey. He even expresses surprise that some younger activists came to regard Bilen as a heroic figure. At the same time, however, he rejects the idea that all responsibility can be placed on a single individual. The deeper problem, he argues, lies in a broader Stalinist political culture and bureaucratic tradition.

Türkali then returns to figures such as Şefik Hüsnü, Reşat Fuat, and the older generation of the TKP. While acknowledging that they made mistakes, he describes them as dedicated and remarkable individuals who devoted their lives to the struggle of the working class. He speaks particularly highly of Şefik Hüsnü's intellectual abilities, citing his criticisms of the constitutional order and the early Republican regime published in *Vazife* in 1923. According to Türkali, the task today is not to erase the past or destroy historical figures but to confront the history of the TKP honestly, acknowledging both its achievements and its failures.

Looking toward the future, Türkali also expresses reservations about the concept of "unity." In his view, genuine unity cannot be achieved through the suppression of differences but only through democratic debate and pluralism. The Turkish communist movement, he argues, must openly discuss all of its historical experiences and clarify questions of historical responsibility without turning İsmail Bilen, or anyone else, into a scapegoat. He maintains that Turkey needs to develop an original socialist perspective grounded in a deep understanding of its own society, working class, and people. In this context, he recalls a remark by a leader of the Chilean Communist Party: one may respect the Soviet Union without repeating its mistakes. For Türkali, this captures the central task facing the Turkish left, to assess the errors of the past honestly and to build a democratic political culture free from prejudice.

Responding to Çağatay Anadol's question about whether the ideological legacy of the TKP tradition bears the influence of Kemalism, Türkali argues that the boundaries between communism and social democracy have at times become blurred within the Turkish left. He maintains that the TKP often supported the progressive aspects of Kemalism and displayed a tendency to seek alliances with certain sections of the bourgeoisie. According to Türkali, although Kemalism initially pursued a policy that moved alongside the Bolsheviks, it gradually distanced itself from the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, particularly after 1936, the TKP felt compelled to take into account the sensitive relationship between the two states and adopted a "separate" line that emphasized working within the Republican People's Party (CHP). As a result, many communists sought to support what they regarded as the progressive aspects of Kemalism and to interpret it in an anti-fascist and democratic direction. Referring to Mihri Belli's defense during his 1945 trial, Türkali recalls that some communists of the period openly described themselves as "Kemalists." In his view, however, the central problem of the TKP was not excessive proximity to Kemalism but its failure to fulfill its historical tasks at the appropriate moments.

Returning to the question of unity, Türkali argues that the fragmentation of the Turkish left cannot be overcome simply through the merger of a few organizations. What is needed, he contends, is a broad reckoning with the past and a shared historical consciousness encompassing the full range of historical experience. The history of the TKP from the 1920s to 1951, he argues, constitutes the common heritage of the entire socialist movement and should not be monopolized by any single organization or faction. Genuine unity, in his view, must be built upon a willingness to acknowledge and critically evaluate this shared past. Otherwise, attempts at unification will remain purely formal.

The discussion then turns to Articles 141, 142, and 163 of the Turkish Penal Code. Türkali opposes making distinctions among these provisions. While Articles 141 and 142 target communist activity and Article 163 addresses religious politics, he argues that all three should be evaluated together from the standpoint of democratic principles. In this context, he recalls appearing on the same platform as the conservative writer Abdurrahman Dilipak. Türkali views positively Dilipak's support for the repeal of Article 163 and argues that a true commitment to democracy requires defending the freedom of expression of opposing viewpoints as well as one's own. In his assessment, political actors in Turkey have generally demanded freedom for themselves while refusing to defend it for their opponents.

At this point, Türkali advances an argument on secularism and political Islam that differs from more conventional positions on the left. He believes that fears of an immediate introduction of Islamic law following the repeal of Article 163 are greatly exaggerated. The real danger, he argues, lies not in freedom but in the state's long-standing practice of secretly manipulating and directing religious

movements. In an open political environment, religious currents would reveal their actual level of social support, whereas under conditions of repression they gain strength through narratives of victimhood. For this reason, he argues that the Iranian example cannot be directly applied to Turkey. The Shi'i clerical structure that played a central role in Iran, he notes, has no equivalent in Turkey, whose historical and social conditions are fundamentally different.

Türkali also adopts a more nuanced approach to religion and Islam. He stresses that Islam is not a single, fixed entity but contains a variety of interpretations. Alongside conservative interpretations compatible with imperialism, he argues, there are also popular and progressive interpretations. As an example, he mentions Şeyh Servet, who sympathized with socialists during the Turkish War of Independence. He also points to Catholic priests in Latin America who sided with the poor. In his view, the central issue is not the existence of religion itself but the protection of democratic freedoms and the right to organize. Genuine secularism, he argues, does not mean maintaining state tutelage over religion but creating conditions in which all beliefs can organize freely. He further maintains that Turkey has never been fully secular, since the state has long kept religion under its own supervision, thereby creating new problems.

For this reason, Türkali contends that the struggle for democracy must defend freedom of expression, freedom of organization, and freedom of conscience for all social groups, not merely for socialists. The task of the left, he argues, is to oppose not only Articles 141 and 142 but also Article 163 and thereby develop a coherent program of democratic freedoms. He presents this position as a broader democratic perspective that differs from earlier traditions of prohibition and tutelage.

Finally, Anadol asks whether a contradiction exists between democratization and the preservation of the secular Republic. If republicanism and secularism are historical achievements, would removing legal restrictions on religious political movements in the name of freedom of thought and organization ultimately undermine those achievements? Türkali responds that the Turkish left has traditionally regarded the bourgeois-democratic revolution as a historical advance despite its many shortcomings. Republicanism and secularism, he argues, are among its most important accomplishments. Yet preserving these gains does not require restricting democratic rights. While acknowledging the historically progressive role played by Kemalism, he maintains that it is mistaken to present its historical function as a direct solution to contemporary problems.

Türkali therefore opposes limiting freedom of thought and organization in the name of defending secularism. In his view, democracy cannot be defended through undemocratic means. Legal prohibitions do not eliminate religious or reactionary movements; rather, they render them less visible and may allow them to re-emerge in more dangerous forms. In contrast, within an open and democratic political environment such movements can be publicly debated, criticized, and scrutinized, while their internal differences become more visible.

For this reason, Türkali advocates a libertarian approach to questions of religion and secularism. Genuine secularism, he argues, does not consist in the state's suppression of particular beliefs but in guaranteeing all citizens the freedom to believe, organize, and express their views. The real danger, in his view, lies not in ideas that can be openly seen and debated but in political tendencies that are driven underground by repression and consequently become more difficult to monitor and challenge.

Toward the end of the interview, the discussion turns to the history of revolutionary movements. Türkali argues that historical knowledge should not be left to the accounts of only a few individuals. He maintains that people should record their own experiences and testimonies, since doing so contributes to a more accurate understanding of historical events. The accumulation of diverse testimonies, he suggests, makes it easier to identify past mistakes and challenge inaccurate interpretations of history.

DEFENSES

The Trial of the Turkish Writers' Union

The contents of the Trial of the Turkish Writers' Union are not reproduced in the book. The case concerned the prosecution of union leaders as part of the larger Peace Association (*Türkiye Barış Derneği*) trial following the military coup of 12 September 1980. The Peace Association trial involved the prosecution before martial law courts of writers, politicians, and legal professionals who advocated peace and opposed nuclear armament.

In his defense, Vedat Türkali begins by explaining the aims and structure of the Turkish Writers' Union and questioning the logic behind the accusations. He recalls that the union's charter explicitly commits itself to defending fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly freedom of speech and expression. For this reason, he argues that portraying the union's activities as criminal is incompatible with both reason and law. He further emphasizes that the union brings together writers with widely differing political views and operates under constant public scrutiny, making it impossible for it to function as a secret or illegal organization.

Türkali then points out that the state itself had long regarded these activities as lawful. Union meetings were held with official permission, took place under the supervision of government representatives, and were never the subject of criminal complaints or formal warnings by public authorities. He also stresses that prior censorship of writers or attempts to regulate what they could write ran contrary to the principles of the union.

Addressing speeches used by the prosecution as evidence, Türkali notes that these were public texts that had already been published. He explains that his remarks on communication, education, and culture dealt with issues such as the public's right to information, the dangers of nuclear war, the difficulties writers faced in reaching the public, and broader patterns of cultural decline. He argues that none of these statements had ever previously been regarded as criminal and that they were only retrospectively transformed into evidence of wrongdoing.

Turning to the issues of nuclear war and peace, Türkali presents advocacy of peace as a form of patriotism. He argues that nuclear war would have catastrophic consequences for humanity and that Turkey occupies a vulnerable position amid the conflicts of the great powers. In his view, the education system should promote democratic, humanistic, and peaceful values rather than militaristic and chauvinistic ones.

Maintaining that the views treated as criminal by the prosecution amount to nothing more than opposition to war and a call for peace, Türkali invokes a number of historical examples. Referring to Mustafa Kemal's anti-war stance, André Malraux's opposition to fascism, and the destruction caused by the world wars, he argues that advocating peace is not a crime but a responsibility. Genuine patriotism, he contends, consists of protecting people from the disasters of war.

Türkali then develops a lengthy defense under the heading "The Nâzım Hikmet Question." Regardless of his political views, he argues, Nâzım Hikmet is one of the greatest poets of Turkish literature. He notes that Hikmet's works were taught in school textbooks for many years, including up to the period of Atatürk's illness, and became part of the country's cultural heritage. The poet's emphasis on labor, creativity, and human dignity, Türkali maintains, is not incompatible with the progressive ideals of the Republic.

He presents Nâzım Hikmet as the heir to a tradition of artists, including Nesîmî, Pir Sultan Abdal, Namık Kemal, Mehmet Akif, and Tevfik Fikret, who refused to abandon their convictions despite various forms of repression. For this reason, Türkali argues that excluding an artist's work because of political beliefs is historically misguided and that artistic achievement should be distinguished from political opinion. Recalling that Otto von Bismarck acknowledged the communist Heinrich Heine as one of the greatest poets of the German language, he contends that Nâzım Hikmet's literary stature should likewise be recognized independently of his political identity.

Türkali further notes that during the Franco era the works of Pablo Picasso remained culturally significant, while during the McCarthy period the writings of figures as politically diverse as Howard Fast, Arthur Miller, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway were not removed from public circulation because of their artistic value. He even invokes the example of Ezra Pound, whose sympathies toward fascism were well known, to argue that artistic merit can be distinguished from political beliefs. In his view, one of the defining characteristics of civilized societies is their refusal to judge artists solely through the lens of political identity or to sacrifice cultural heritage to ideological conflict. Nâzım Hikmet, he therefore concludes, should be regarded as one of the major poets of Turkish literature regardless of his political convictions.

Türkali also argues that the accusations directed at writers stem primarily from their political views. He points to the contradiction that individuals holding similar views are sometimes able to occupy positions within the state while writers expressing comparable ideas are subjected to prosecution.

Referring to the international standing of the Turkish Writers' Union, he notes that the organization maintains relations with bodies such as the Balkan Writers' Union, the Afro-Asian Writers' Association, and the European Writers' Union, and serves as a representative of Turkish writers abroad. In this context, he argues that failing to defend a universally recognized poet such as Nâzım Hikmet would damage the union's credibility.

Türkali also criticizes Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code as well as the State Security Courts. He argues that these legal provisions have no place in democratic states governed by the rule of law and function primarily as instruments of political repression. Different governments, he contends, have repeatedly used them to suppress opposition, transforming them from legal measures into political tools.

Finally, he notes that May Day is celebrated throughout the democratic world as a day of workers' solidarity. It provides a peaceful means for expressing social demands, while rights now taken for granted, such as social insurance, were themselves won through similar struggles. Returning to the accusations of illegality directed at the union, Türkali rejects them outright. He emphasizes that the union documented all of its activities, reported them to the relevant authorities, remained open to public oversight, and that its members openly described their activities in court rather than concealing them. For these reasons, he concludes, the Turkish Writers' Union cannot reasonably be characterized as a secret or illegal organization.

The Intellectuals' Petition Trial

This case, which is not explained in detail in the book, concerned the petition entitled "Observations and Demands Concerning the Democratic Order in Turkey," drafted and signed by a group of prominent intellectuals following the military coup of 12 September 1980.

In his defense as one of the signatories, Vedat Türkali argues that just as Kenan Evren referred to Sultan Mehmed VI Vahdettin, often remembered as a traitor, as an "intellectual," their petition was similarly transformed into a "manifesto" through political interpretation. He insists that the document was, in every respect, a petition: it was formally signed, properly submitted, and addressed not to private individuals but to the competent authorities of the state. Since those authorities carried historical responsibilities, he argues, submitting a petition was the legitimate means through which citizens could offer warnings, criticisms, and recommendations.

Türkali then turns to developments following the 12 September coup. He argues that constitutional changes weakened judicial independence and trade unions, that universities were transformed into institutions resembling religious seminaries and reduced to the level of vocational schools, that the press was silenced, and that torture became widespread in prisons. According to Türkali, what is most troubling is that all of these developments came to be treated as normal. In his view, the entire system was designed to enable a few hundred billionaire families and their foreign partners to accumulate even greater wealth. Under such conditions, bribery, repression, torture, and plunder came to be regarded as natural. The only thing that was not natural, he argues, was calling this system a democracy.

Drawing comparisons with Western countries, Türkali contends that advanced capitalist societies historically accumulated wealth through the exploitation of other nations, whereas in Turkey it was the country's own people who were being exploited. At the same time, he notes that colonial powers in the West also faced organized opposition movements that challenged such practices. As an illustration, he recalls a foreign minister from a Western country telling his Turkish counterpart that democracy could not truly exist in Turkey as long as a communist party remained illegal. Türkali emphasizes that the person making this statement was not a communist and may even have been anti-communist, yet still understood that democracy required political pluralism.

He further argues that in a country lacking organized labor action, the availability of cheap labor reduces incentives for investment in technologies that increase productivity. In the long run, this leads to economic stagnation and underdevelopment. Finally, Türkali states that he opposes every form of

darkness imposed by the regime established after 12 September. In his view, the restrictions, repression, and coercion employed by the military regime sought to prevent precisely the kinds of democratic demands expressed in the petition, and it is against these practices that his criticism is directed.

The Peace Association Trial

In his judicial interrogation in the Peace Association trial, that is, during his initial questioning before the court, Vedat Türkali argues that his membership in the Peace Association cannot reasonably be treated as evidence of criminal activity, since the organization had operated legally for years and remained subject to official oversight.

He maintains that the prosecution largely constructed its case according to the logic employed in the earlier First Peace Trial. Türkali notes that the prosecutor openly stated during the proceedings that the outcome of the First Peace Trial before the Court of Cassation had been awaited before initiating the present case. Referring to decisions from the earlier trial, he criticizes the argument that a crime may emerge not from a specific act but from activities accumulated over many years. Comparing the alleged criminality of an association to the process of making yogurt or wine, he argues that such reasoning is absurd, since meetings, publications, and public speeches had taken place openly and in full public view.

This issue forms one of the central questions of his defense. If the association had genuinely been engaged in criminal activity, why had the state failed to intervene for years? Government officials attended its meetings, prosecutors had access to its publications, and its congresses were held openly. According to Türkali, the long delay suggests either that the authorities neglected their responsibilities or that they deliberately waited in order to prosecute citizens retrospectively. In his view, neither possibility is compatible with the principles of a state governed by the rule of law.

Türkali also draws attention to a claim found in the records of the First Peace Trial. According to that argument, the failure to apply provisions of the criminal code concerning offenses against the state resulted from the influence of judges and prosecutors who held certain political views. Türkali contends that this interpretation shifts attention away from the actions of the defendants and instead casts suspicion on earlier judicial practices and public officials. For this reason, he argues, the case is less concerned with judging concrete actions than with retrospectively constructing crimes after the fact.

Türkali does not view the proceedings merely as a personal trial. Rather, he regards them as one of the latest episodes in the century-and-a-half-long struggle for freedom of thought in Turkey. Recalling that both defenders and opponents of repressive measures have existed throughout modern Turkish history, he insists that the issue at stake is not simply the Peace Association but freedom of thought and expression itself.

The first concrete accusation directed against him is his membership in the Peace Association. Türkali does not deny this charge. On the contrary, he states that he is proud to be a member. He describes the association as a legal organization dedicated to peace and opposition to war and argues that membership in such a body cannot constitute a crime.

The indictment also treats his participation in the Second General Assembly, held on 3-5 April 1980, and his election to the Honorary Board as evidence of wrongdoing. Türkali acknowledges attending some of these meetings but states that he does not remember all the decisions taken there in detail. The only thing he is certain of, he says, is that no decision amounting to a crime was adopted at any meeting he attended. He further remarks, with some irony, that he first learned of his election to the Honorary Board from the prosecutor and jokingly thanks him for the information.

Another accusation concerns a trip he made to Greece on behalf of the Peace Association. Türkali expresses surprise that this journey is treated as incriminating. He notes that the visit took place with the knowledge of both the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The international conference in Athens focused on preserving peace in the Mediterranean, preventing the danger of nuclear war, and promoting disarmament. In his view, participation in such a gathering was not contrary to Turkey's interests but beneficial to them.

As an example, he recounts an incident from the Athens meeting. At the entrance to the National Technical University of Athens, where the conference was held, an exhibition entitled "Photographs of Turkish Atrocities in Cyprus" had been installed. Mahmut Dikerdem, head of the Turkish delegation, objected and succeeded in having the exhibition removed. Türkali presents this episode as evidence that those attending the conference acted in Turkey's interests rather than against them.

One of the prosecution's principal accusations is that Peace Association meetings served as venues for communist and pro-Soviet propaganda. Türkali responds by stating that he spoke only twice at association events. One occasion involved a brief, unprepared speech; the other was a statement he delivered on behalf of the Turkish Writers' Union at a UNESCO meeting. He emphasizes that he did not make speeches elsewhere in connection with the association's activities.

Türkali further argues that the peace movement belongs to no single class, ideology, or political group. Priests, religious believers, socialists, conservatives, politicians, and scientists can all unite around the same cause because a nuclear war would kill people regardless of whether they are right-wing or left-wing. Referring to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he maintains that the demand for peace is not ideological but rooted in the common interests of humanity.

He also notes that the UNESCO statement cited by the prosecution had never previously been the subject of any investigation. The text argued that the Turkish army was composed of ordinary citizens, that education should promote democratic and humanistic rather than militaristic values, that disarmament was important, and that Mustafa Kemal's anti-war statements remained instructive. Türkali asks what part of this text could plausibly be regarded as communist or pro-Soviet propaganda.

He then challenges the logic of the accusation itself. Even if the Soviet Union also advocated peace, he argues, supporting peace does not automatically amount to Soviet propaganda. Throughout history, different countries have often shared common interests on particular issues. The fact that the Soviet Union supported a given idea does not transform everyone who supports it into a Soviet sympathizer. Türkali therefore criticizes attempts to equate advocacy of peace with Sovietism and recalls how similar accusations were directed against patriots during the Turkish War of Independence by figures such as Damat Ferit Pasha and Şeyhülislam (Grand Mufti) Dürrizade.

The indictment also treats the fact that he remained a member of the association until its closure as evidence against him. Türkali openly acknowledges this. Indeed, he declares that if the association were reopened, he would join it again. He insists that this position stems not from stubbornness but from a sense of responsibility toward his country, its people, and history.

The final section of his defense is devoted to the threat of nuclear war. Drawing on the writings of Professor Tolga Yarman, Türkali notes that approximately twenty thousand nuclear weapons exist worldwide and that only a small fraction of them would be sufficient to destroy humanity. Nuclear war, he argues, is not an abstract fear but the greatest danger facing humankind.

In his view, Turkey is particularly vulnerable because of its geographical and political position. Recalling Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he suggests that in a future conflict among the great powers Turkey could become one of the countries sacrificed in the process. For this reason, he argues that the struggle for peace is not only a universal responsibility but also a national duty.

At the conclusion of his defense, Türkali refers to a contemporary news report distributed by Agence France-Presse (AFP). According to the report, an organization calling itself the "Armenian Scientific Team" had threatened to drop atomic bombs on Istanbul, Ankara, and İzmir. He cites this report to demonstrate that the nuclear threat is not merely theoretical. Turkey, he argues, faces real dangers, and for that reason peace activism should be regarded not as a crime but as a public responsibility.

Defense in the Peace Association Trial

Vedat Türkali begins his defense by criticizing the prosecutor's "Opinion on the Merits." He accuses the prosecutor of presenting his own political convictions as absolute truths rather than offering a legal assessment. According to Türkali, the essence of the prosecutor's position is simple: "What I say is true; those who think otherwise should be punished." While he does not entirely reject the prosecutor's claim that the decline of the Ottoman Empire resulted from its failure to experience the Renaissance and the Reformation, as well as from the ignorance and dogmatism of its rulers, he points out that historical rulers generally regarded their own actions as both correct and patriotic. In the same way, he argues, contemporary prosecutors may also be mistaken. Turkey's underdevelopment, he contends, cannot be explained solely by the absence of a Renaissance. The principles associated with the French Revolution, freedom, equality, human rights, and the rule of law, have likewise been suppressed for long periods. For this reason, he interprets the trial as one episode in a century-long struggle for freedom in Turkey.

Türkali then argues that the world has entered a new era in which the central issue is socialism. In his view, the existence of socialist countries inhabited by more than one and a half billion people constitutes a historical reality that can no longer be ignored. Modern societies therefore permit socialist ideas to be openly debated rather than banning them. He points to the legal existence of communist parties in countries such as Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Ideas, he argues, should be tested through open public debate rather than through prohibitions.

At this point, he turns to the prosecutor's lengthy criticisms of the Soviet Union. The prosecutor, he notes, argues that freedom does not exist in the Soviet Union, that human rights are violated there, and that the Communist Party has established a dictatorship. Türkali emphasizes that there is nothing objectionable about expressing such views and that people in Turkey are free to voice them. However, he argues that anyone who speaks positively about certain Soviet policies or suggests that opposition to nuclear armament may coincide with Soviet positions is immediately treated with suspicion. In his view, the prosecutor regards only his own opinions as legitimate while treating alternative perspectives as criminal.

To reinforce this criticism, Türkali draws a historical comparison with Giordano Bruno, whom he regards as one of the pioneers of the Renaissance. He recalls that Bruno was burned at the stake and argues that those who condemned him believed in their own truths just as sincerely as contemporary prosecutors believe in theirs. Throughout history, he maintains, progressive ideas have frequently encountered dogmatism, yet freedom of thought has ultimately prevailed.

Türkali also recounts that he visited the Soviet Union twice. One of these trips took place at the invitation of the Union of Soviet Filmmakers. He traveled through various cities and encountered aspects that he both admired and criticized. Nevertheless, he chose not to publish his impressions. In his view, criticizing the Soviet Union in Turkey is not only permitted but often rewarded, whereas speaking positively about any aspect of Soviet society is treated almost as a crime. The issue, he argues, is not whether one praises the Soviet Union but whether individuals are compelled to view the world through a single ideological lens.

He further maintains that the prosecutor performs his role not merely as a legal official but as the advocate of a particular worldview. According to Türkali, the prosecutor is engaged in an ideological struggle against communism and evaluates the Peace Association through that framework. Quoting from the prosecutor's opinion, he notes concerns that left-wing parties, associations, and trade unions might gain influence through democratic institutions and eventually transform the existing social order. Türkali responds that such developments are entirely normal in democratic systems, where political parties naturally seek power and attempt to reshape society according to their own programs.

For this reason, he regards the prosecutor's presentation of this possibility as a catastrophic scenario as fundamentally anti-democratic. He accuses the prosecutor of defending a particular political and economic order rather than applying legal principles impartially. He further criticizes claims that the Soviet Union could somehow dispatch troops to Turkey at the invitation of a handful of individuals, describing such fears as unrealistic. A country of fifty million people, he argues, cannot be taken over at the request of a few citizens. The real objective, in his view, is to restrict democratic organization and political participation.

Türkali then invokes the example of the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis. He recalls that Theodorakis faced attacks from nationalist circles in Greece because of his support for Greek–Turkish friendship and was even accused of being a “Turkish agent.” Yet, Türkali notes, the Greek authorities did not prevent him from expressing his views. By contrast, writers and intellectuals in Turkey were prosecuted for advocating similar ideas. He presents this comparison to highlight the differences between the two countries.

Turning to the specific accusations directed against him, Türkali addresses the claim that he attended the Second General Assembly of the Peace Association, held on 3–5 April 1980, and was elected to its Honorary Board. He states that, because of an exceptionally busy schedule, he did not participate in these meetings and played no role in any decisions taken there. He further remarks that he first learned of his election to the Honorary Board through the prosecutor’s indictment and never received any official notification concerning the matter.

The second accusation concerns a speech he delivered at the symposium “Mass Communication in Education for Disarmament,” organized by the Peace Association on 8–9 March 1980. Türkali notes that the prosecutor had previously described this speech as “communist and Soviet propaganda” but now merely claims that it contains “occasional ideological elements.” He argues that “ideological elements” is not a legal category and that the prosecutor has replaced a concrete accusation with vague language. He also points out that the symposium was organized in cooperation with UNESCO, that his speech was published, and that neither the speech nor his book *Bu Gemi Nereye* (Where Is This Ship Heading?), in which the same text later appeared, had ever previously been the subject of legal proceedings.

The third accusation concerns his participation in a peace conference held in Athens in 1978. The prosecutor claims that the meeting operated under Soviet influence through the World Peace Council. Türkali responds that he attended the conference at his own expense and paid for both his travel and accommodation himself. He recalls publishing his impressions of the trip in *Milliyet* newspaper between 23 and 25 February 1978 under the title “Atina’ya Barış Yolculuğu” (A Journey to Athens for Peace) and later including them in *Bu Gemi Nereye*. He emphasizes that neither the articles nor the book had previously been considered criminal.

Türkali concludes his defense by expressing regret that he was unable to contribute more actively to the Peace Association. Nevertheless, he believes that his trip to Athens enabled him to communicate important truths to the public. What he did, he insists, was not a crime but the responsibility of a writer committed to his country. He therefore states that he awaits the court’s decision with a clear conscience.

THEMES

JUSTICE

Injustice In the trials against the Turkish Writers’ Union and the Peace Association, speeches, activities, and institutions that had long been considered legal and had regularly operated under state supervision were retrospectively reinterpreted as criminal evidence. In his courtroom defences, Vedat Türkali criticizes this arbitrary redefinition of legality and argues that lawful activities were turned into crimes after the fact.

POLITICS

Oppression Türkali presents the burning of *Yorgun Savaşçı* by TRT as a direct act of destruction against a work of art. Similarly, Süreyya Duru’s films *Kara Çarşafılı Gelin* and *Güneşli Batakılık* became entangled in lengthy court proceedings, while *Güneşli Batakılık* was removed from circulation in some locations because of threats. Mahmut Tali Öngören was dismissed from his university position and prevented from distributing his books. Türkali himself was unable to return to teaching after the 1951 arrests of members of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). The imprisonment of Ruhi Su, the banning of the TKP, the continuous police surveillance of communists, and the prosecution of public statements in the Intellectuals’ Petition and Peace Association cases are further manifestations of the same mechanism of oppression. Oppression in the book therefore extends beyond individuals to films, books, professions, and the public expression of ideas.

Conflict Conflict appears first and foremost between the state and its opponents. This is particularly visible in the criminalization of demands for peace during the Peace Association and the Intellectuals' Petition trials, as well as in the arrests of TKP members. In the cultural sphere, tensions between artists and state institutions emerge through various forms of censorship. Türkali also discusses conflicts within the TKP itself. He argues that internal criticism was suppressed during the period of İsmail Bilen and that figures such as Reşat Fuat Baraner and Doctor Hikmet were marginalized from the party's official history. Leadership struggles involving Zeki Baştımar, İsmail Bilen, and other party cadres, attempts by rival factions to exclude one another, and competing interpretations of the past contributed, in his view, to the fragmentation of the Turkish left. Conflict thus operates both between the state and the opposition and within the same political movement.

ETHICS

Duty While discussing Süreyya Duru, Vedat Türkali emphasizes that the director never abandoned either his films or his democratic principles despite suffering financial losses. Similarly, Türkali regards his own decision to continue writing and speaking despite censorship, lawsuits, and the risk of imprisonment as part of the intellectual's responsibility toward society.

PSYCHOLOGY

Isolation Türkali argues that for many years the label "communist" functioned not merely as a political identity but as a stigma that excluded people from professions, public life, and positions of social respectability. His inability to return to teaching after the 1951 arrests serves as a personal example. In his interview with Çağatay Anadol, he notes that many people, from professors and bureaucrats to high-ranking state officials, feared being identified as communists. As a result, individuals often concealed their political views, hid their connections to socialist movements, and felt compelled to defend themselves constantly. According to Türkali, this process marginalized not only individuals but also the historical memory of the Turkish left, preventing past experiences from being transmitted to later generations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many figures in the fields of art and culture continue to produce despite receiving little recognition, few rewards, and limited financial compensation. What does Türkali's attention to the labor of screenwriters, censored artists, and forgotten cultural figures suggest about the relationship between the invisibilization of cultural labor and political power?
2. According to this book, memory is not merely a matter of remembering the past but a field of political struggle. In this light, do you think that the mechanisms of forgetting and enforced forgetting criticized by Türkali continue to operate today in different forms?
3. In the examples discussed by Türkali, artists and intellectuals often find themselves drawn into political conflicts while simply trying to protect their work. In this context, can censorship and political pressure be understood as processes that transform artists into political subjects?

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