



CRITIQUE OF AN ANECDOTE REGARDING THE ADMIRATION FOR HITLER IN TURKEY DURING THE YEARS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR*

-Peyami Safa Event-

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Abstract

In the periods in which Turkey joined the World War I as an ally with Germany and tried to be out of war in the World War II, Germany had a striking significance in political, economical, social and cultural life of the country. During these wars, certain movements could be seen either in favour of Germany or disfavour of Germany in Turkish political and intellectual environment. In the background of their supporting Germany, the political ideas of some figures belonging to Turkish intellectuals were major reasons of their attitudes.

Peyami Safa (1899-1961) was a figure who belonged to the generation transforming from Ottoman to the Republic and thereby went through both wars, and who marked a trace in Turkish literature, press and thought. His overall destination was Turkish nationalism and during the World War II it can be seen that he was in favour of Germany.

During the out break of war he was writing for Cumhuriyet Newspaper and according to an anecdote he was entranced and fainted while he was listening to Hitler on the radio and this event was attributed to the reason of his being an extreme admirer of Hitler and even a fascist. This event which was mentioned in Nadir Nadi's memories has still been repeated by several others. The only source that attributes this event of fainting to another reason is Vecdi Bürün's memories. Beşir Ayvazoğlu's monograph called Peyami is the only source giving the anecdote's both versions together; and the writer rightfully regards the narrators in a prudent manner. It is also surprising that Cumhuriyet, for which Nadir Nadi wrote and which was owned by his father, was considered as an advocate of Germany before and during the war.

With the theory that true history comments can only be made through true knowledge, the anecdote in question needs a serious criticism. This situation, which gets its sources

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from the Turkish-German relations, is an important data for the discussions of history methodology.

Key Words

Peyami Safa, Hitler Admiration, Fascism, Turkish- German Relations, Criticism of Memory.

İKİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI YILLARI TÜRKİYE'SİNDE HİTLER HAYRANLIĞINA DAİR BİR ANEKDOTUN TENKİDİ

-Peyami Safa Olayı-

Türkiye'nin Almanya ile müttefik olarak girdiği Birinci ve savaş dışı kalmaya çalıştığı İkinci Dünya Savaşları sürecinde ülkenin siyasî, iktisadî, sosyal ve kültürel hayatında bu ülkenin önemli bir belirleyiciliği vardır. Türk siyasî ve entelektüel çevrelerinde her iki savaş döneminde Almanya taraftarı ve aleyhtarı oluşumlar müşahede edilebilir. Bu tarafların arka planında Türk entelijansiyasına mensup bazı şahsiyetlerin ideolojik duruşları, tavır ve tutumlarının önemli sebeplerindedir.

Peyami Safa (1899-1961) Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e intikal eden kuşağa mensup, dolayısıyla her iki savaş sürecini yaşamış; Türk edebiyat, basın ve düşünce dünyasında iz bırakmış bir şahsiyettir. Genel fikrî istikameti Türk milliyetçiliğidir ve ikinci büyük savaş sırasında Almanya yanlısı bir tavrının olduğu görülür.

Cumhuriyet gazetesinde yazdığı savaşın başlangıç döneminde, Hitler'in radyodan verilen bir nutkunu dinlerken kendinden geçtiği ve bayıldığına dair bir anekdot onun aşırı Hitler hayranı ve hatta faşist olması sebebine bağlanmıştır. Nadir Nadi'nin hatıralarında yer verilen bu olay, başkaları tarafından da hâlâ tekrar edilmektedir. Bu bayılma olayını farklı bir sebebe bağlayan tek kaynak Vecdi Bürün'ün hatıralarıdır. Anekdotun her iki versiyonunu bir arada sadece Beşir Ayvazoğlu'nun Peyami adlı monografisi vermekte; yazar, anlatıcıları haklı olarak ihtiyatla karşılamaktadır. Nadir Nadi'nin yazdığı ve babasının sahibi olduğu Cumhuriyet'in, savaş öncesi ve sırasındaki yıllarda Alman yanlısı olarak değerlendirilmesi, meselenin bir diğer ilginç yanını oluşturmaktadır.

Doğru tarih yorumlarının ancak doğru bilgilerle yapılabileceği tezinden hareketle, söz konusu anekdotun ciddi bir tenkide ihtiyacı bulunmaktadır. Türk-Alman ilişkilerinin oluşturduğu bir zeminden malzemesini sağlayan bu durum, Tarih metodolojisi tartışmaları için de önemli bir veridir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Peyami Safa, Hitler Hayranlığı, Faşizm, Türk-Alman İlişkileri, Hatıra Tenkidi.



1. INTRODUCTION

Germany is one of the countries which have had political, military, economic and cultural effects on the recent history of Turkey. The relations which were developed with the Ottoman State during the reign of Wilhelm II considerably increased the German influence over the state, and this process resulted in the World War I alliance under the conditions determined by the conjuncture of the developments. The two defeated countries of the war shared a similar fate by signing the Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919) and the Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920). Both countries thought that these peace treaties which they were made to sign were unjust; and Turkey brought the struggle waged against the Sevres to a successful conclusion with the signing of the treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923. The struggle of Germany to evade the conditions of the Versailles¹ lasted longer; these conditions created the reasons for the birth and rise of National Socialism and Hitler, and the process resulted in the Second World War.

Hitler, who determined the goals of Germany as: at first to invalidate the conditions of the treaty of Versailles, then to become one state and one nation and finally to create a new Lebensraum², attained his first two goals until 1939. The way to attain his third goal was opened with the start of the second big war of the last century and ended with the biggest tragedy of human history in the 20th century.

Hitler Germany's annexation of Austria and invasion of the Sudetes region of Czechoslovakia, together with its emancipation from the constraints of the Versailles was appreciated by Turkey; the former was compared to the Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) of Turkey and the latter was compared to the Treaty of Sevres.³ In Turkey, which won its national struggle under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and had the opportunity to re-establish its relations with Germany during the Weimar Republic period, the event which increased the sympathy for Germany and even created a German advocacy after the start of the Second World War was the German-Russian War which started in the June of 1941. The reasons for the emergence of a pro-German stance in Turkey, which had stated its policy as remaining out of war and being neutral, were principally affected by ideolo-

¹ According to Versailles regulations, Germany ceded the Alsace-Lorraine and Saar regions to France. The definite future of Saar would be clear after 15 years. Poznan and Western Prussia were given to Poland. Danzig became a free city. Germany recognized the independence of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. All German colonies were placed under the protection of the victorious European countries. The military power of Germany was dismissed and the country was obliged to pay high war damage compensation. See: *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Vol. 1 (Edit. Baskın Oran), İletişim Publications, 8th Edition, İstanbul 2003, p. 401.

² Fahir Armaoğlu, *20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi (Vol. 1-2: 1914-1995)*, Alkım Publications, 11th edition, p. 241

³ Armaoğlu, *op. cit.*, p.351; Cemil Koçak, *Türk-Alman İlişkileri (1923-1939) İki Dünya Savaşı Arası Dönemde Siyasal, Kültürel, Askerî ve Ekonomik İlişkiler*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications, Ankara 1991, p. 127.



gies. While the Turkish Nationalists and Turkist-Turanist circles took a stance supporting Germany, the Allies and particularly the Soviet Union was supported by the left; and this situation caused political polarizations among the Turkish media. *Cumhuriyet* and *Tasviri Efkar* newspapers attracted attention with their pro-German attitudes and publications throughout the war.⁴ *Tan* published leftist points of view; *Yeni Sabah*, *Haber*, *Son Telgraf*, *Tan* and *Vatan* published articles advocating the allies. *Akşam*, *Vakit* and *İkdam* provided neutral content.⁵

A special aspect of being pro-German emerged by taking the form of an admiration for Hitler. Some individuals imitated Hitler's hair style and the shape of his moustache; while some others decorated their walls with his photographs as an indication of their admiration.⁶

One of the figures whom we encounter in memoirs, academic studies, certain ideological brochures, newspaper articles, even literary works such as novels and poems which deal with the admiration for Hitler and German/ Nazi sympathizers in Turkey during the years of the Second World War is Peyami Safa, a significant personality of the Turkish novel, journalism and intellectual life.⁷ An interesting event which is particularly told about him is his fainting while listening to a speech of Hitler on the radio. This event is narrated with comments on his admiration for Hitler and being a supporter of Germany and even a Nazi. Besides, these comments mostly refer to Nadir Nadi's memoirs.⁸ The memoirs of Vecdi Bürün, who was one of the witnesses of the event, is the only work which provides a

⁴ Günay Göksu Özdoğan, "Turan'dan "Bozkurt"a Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946)", İletişim Publications, İstanbul 2001, pp. 147-148.

⁵ Mithat Atabay, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında Türkiye'de Milliyetçilik Akımları*, Kaynak Publications, İstanbul 2005, p. 295.

⁶ The hair style of the famous Turkist Nihal Atsız and the moustache of İsmet İnönü are shown as examples for this attitude. Nurettin Topçu, one of the well-known figures of the movement of Anatolianist Nationalism, could give a place to Hitler on the walls of his house next to the portraits of Mehmet Akif and Hüseyin Avni Ulaş. For more on this topic see: Süleyman Seyfi Ögün, "Nurettin Topçu Şaşırtıyor", *Zaman*, 30 May 2009; Düccane Cündioğlu, "Nurettin Topçu ve Hitler", *Yeni Şafak*, 27 June 2004; Regarding the developments in Italy and Germany: "It is a fact that all Turkists, foremost among whom was Nihal Atsız, even nationalists like Peyami Safa and Nurettin Topçu, who were on different lines, had sympathy to Hitler." Beşir Ayyazoğlu, "Tanrıdağ'dan Hira Dağı'na Uzun İnce Yollar", *Milliyetçilik Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce*, Vol. 4, İletişim Publications, p. 566.

⁷ Peyami Safa (2 April 1899-15 June 1960) is a well-known novelist, journalist and intellectual of Turkey. He is known with his novels such as *Dokuzuncu Hariciye Koşuşu*, *Fatih-Harbiye*, *Matmazel Noraliya'nın Koltuğu*, adventure books which he wrote under the pen name Server Bedii, intellectual works entitled *Türk İnkılabına Bakışlar*, *Doğu-Batı Sentezi*, *Millîyet ve İnsan*, his articles published in prominent newspapers of the country and the polemics he engaged in with famous figures. For more information see: Beşir Ayyazoğlu, *Peyami Hayatı Sanatı Felsefesi Dramı*, Ötüken Publications, İstanbul 1998; Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı, *Peyami Safa Hayatı ve Eserleri*, Semih Lüfi Kitabevi Publications, İstanbul 1940; Peyami Safa, *Seçmeler* (Ed. F. K. Timurtaş-E. Göze), 100 Temel Eser Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Publications, İstanbul 1970; Mehmet Tekin, *Romancı Yönüyle Peyami Safa*, Ötüken Publications, İstanbul 1999; Beşir Ayyazoğlu, *Doğu-Batı Arasında Peyami Safa*, Ufuk Kitapları, İstanbul 2000; Nan A Lee, *Peyami Safa'nın Romanlarında Doğu-Batı Meselesi*, Ötüken Publications, İstanbul 1997; Nevzat Kösoğlu, *Peyami Safa*, Alternatif Publications, Ankara 2002; *Peyami Safa*, (Ed. Toker Publications Literary Board), İstanbul 1984; Ergun Göze, *Peyami Safa Nazım Hikmet Kavgası*, Yağmur Publications, İstanbul 1975; Ergun Göze, *Peyami Safa*, Kültür Bakanlığı Publications, Ankara 1988.

⁸ Nadir Nadi, *Perde Aralığından*, Çağdaş Publications, 3rd Edition, İstanbul 1979.



different reason for this fainting event.⁹ The form of this anecdote which is narrated in the sources needs a serious critique.

2. PEYAMI SAFA, WHO FAINTS WITH HITLER'S DANZIG SPEECH, AND THE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE MEMOIRS

Danzig, which was part of Prussia for more than a hundred years and culturally a German city, gained the status of free city as Poland's way of access to the Baltic Sea under the sovereignty of the League of Nations after the First World War. Germany reacted to this situation; the issue was declared as one of the foreign policy targets by Hitler and became a matter which was continuously kept alive until the war.¹⁰ The independent Polish state disappeared from the maps in a short time during the Second World War, which started with the attack of the German troops to Poland on 1 September 1939 and the invasion of the Russian troops from the east. Hitler's armies entered Danzig on 19 September 1939 and Hitler gave one of his famous speeches to the people living in the city and to the entire world through radio broadcasts.

2.1. Hitler, Propaganda and the Radio

According to Hitler's definition; "*The art of propaganda lies in understanding the emotional ideas of the great masses and finding, through a psychologically correct form, the way to the attention and thence to the heart of the broad masses.*"¹¹ Propaganda was not a target but a means, and should always address the masses. He said that great masses were like a woman, whose psychic state determined less by abstract reason than by an emotional longing for a strong force will complement her nature.¹² He made his first speech as a teacher to his soldiers about Versailles. He became a big orator in two years.¹³ All the big events which changed the world were achieved through speech, not writings. "*All really great historical revolutions were not produced by the written word. At most, they were accompanied by it.*" The French and Bolshevik revolutions were not the works of written word, but the products of agitators led by demagogues of the grand style who can manipulate masses.¹⁴ Fascism and Nazism were "*technological dictatorships*" which were created based on these ideas. Radio, cinema and mass demonstrations were the most important means of propaganda.¹⁵

⁹ Vecdi Bürün, *Peyami Safa ile 25 Yıl*, Yağmur Publications, İstanbul 1978.

¹⁰ *Türk Dış Politikası*, Vol. 1, p. 409.

¹¹ Adolf Hitler, *Kavgam*, Manifesto Publications, İstanbul 2005, p. 146.

¹² Hitler, *op. cit.* pp. 144-148.

¹³ Hitler, *op. cit.* pp. 372-373.

¹⁴ Hitler, *op. cit.* p. 378.

¹⁵ George Langluis, Jean Boismenu, Luc Lefebvre, Parice Regimbald, 20. *Yüzyıl Tarihi* (Translated by Ömer Turan), 2nd Edition, İstanbul 2003, pp.169-170.



Hitler attached great importance to propaganda and he appointed Goebbels, who had been conducting such activities since 1929, as Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda with the regulations made in the months of February-March.¹⁶ The country which used the radio as a means of propaganda before and during the war was Germany via Goebbels. He said that the regime suppressed all kinds of rebellious ideas through radio broadcasts and quoted from *Mein Kampf*: “*Words are weapons in warfare*”¹⁷ Hitler, who said that they would never have possessed Germany if they had not had loudspeakers¹⁸, expressed his propaganda tactics within the targeted countries with the words: “*Our strategy is to destroy the enemy from within, to conquer him through himself. Mental confusion, contradictions of feelings, indecisions, panic these are our weapons.*”¹⁹ The radios of the countries broadcast 24 hours during the war. Through radio broadcasts, they endeavoured to prove the rightfulness of their countries and particularly shake the trust of the people of the enemy countries in their governments, provoke and create panic among the people. Radio broadcasting centres and stations became as important as the command centres of the armies. The broadcasts of one thousand American radio stations which were used as means of propaganda during the Second World War were received by 16 million radio devices.²⁰ London, Berlin, Rome, Moscow and Tokyo became broadcast centres where propaganda activities were carried out. Italian radios broadcasting in Arabic tried to provoke the Arabs against the Jews, mentioning Mussolini as “*the Sword of Islam*” in their radio broadcasts. British radios started to broadcast Quran recitations as a tool of counterpropaganda, and this tactic was adopted by all Western countries.²¹

Hitler, who described the spoken word as the biggest weapon and could use it effectively, addressed his militants with the irrational exaggerations of Fascism “*which are always rightful, faultless and is Germany itself*”: “*Reason prevents you from coming to me; it is only faith which enables you to come to me.*”²²

2.2. Different Narratives of an Anecdote

Books like memoirs usually have certain characteristics which attract their readers. “*Political, intellectual, literary, whichever area they are written in, memoirs are appreciated not because they portray the main streets of history, but*

¹⁶ Osman Özsoy, *Propaganda ve Kamuoyu Oluşturma*, Alfa Publications, İstanbul 1998, p.298.

¹⁷ Huriye Kuruoğlu, *Propaganda ve Özgürlük Aracı Olarak Radyo*, Nobel Publications, Ankara 2006, pp.22-23.

¹⁸ Meltem Ahiska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik*, Metis Publications, İstanbul 2005, p.22, footnote 10.

¹⁹ Ahiska, *op. cit.* p. 159.

²⁰ Nail Yılmaz, *Kamuoyunu Etkilemede Propagandanın Rolü*, Unpublished MA Thesis, İstanbul 1995, p. 24.

²¹ Özsoy, *op. cit.* pp. 349-351.

²² Langluis, *op. cit.* p. 163.



have a value as long as they clearly present the details and show the history traveller around back streets... Memoirs are golden opportunities for those who leave the group and wonder about the alleys and back streets which are out of the route. They amuse the traveller with lies, fallacies and trickeries. They are stimulating and assertive, that's why they easily betray. However, success is always possible for those who are not deceived by dalliances, but stay patient; as long as they are not contented with one single street and do not give up the wonder and curiosity needed for going forward and more. What the memoirs made us forget will be found again with the help of memoirs themselves..."²³ In the book from which the quotation is taken, the writer relates the interest that memoirs attract particularly to the information they contain which involves gossip. Memoirs appear in front of us with lines full of "revelations, sensation, mysteries of history, secret anecdotes witnessed or heard only by the writer, and revenge!"²⁴ These statements display the fainting event of Peyami Safa, which we encounter especially in memoirs and the aim of this study quite beautifully. We enter the alleys from the main streets of war through Nadi's memoir entitled "*Perde Aralığından*".

2.2.1. The View of Nadir Nadi on Peyami Safa in '*Perde Aralığından*'

When the Second World War started, Peyami Safa was writing for *Cumhuriyet*²⁵, which was one of the most significant newspapers of Babiali. In the section where Nadi introduces Peyami before narrating the Danzig speech and the fainting event, the writer does not write of him favourably at all. According to Nadi, Peyami was one of the most influenced writers by the Russian-German affiliation. His body and physique were weak, but his war skills were superior. He highly enjoyed entering into discussions, but was offending. "*Since he wrote novels easily, he could also dream easily, but he could not move his mind away from the bias of viewing the combinations he imagined as a complete and infallible synthesis of reality when he thought about politics.*" He reflected his ego and could never defeat his instincts. Although he believed in a primitive form of liberalism, he shifted towards National Socialism after their journey to Paris. "*The disparity among nations was a rule of nature, as the result of the inequality among people. Strong nations could oppress the weaker nations, or could rule them in the pursuit of their self-interests. Nations could open new areas of life for themselves based on their own strength. This was*

²³ Dücane Cündioğlu, *Arasokakların Tarihi*, Gelenek Publications, İstanbul 2004 (From the back cover introduction).

²⁴ Cündioğlu, *op. cit.* p. 47.

²⁵ *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, which started publishing on 7 May 1924 in Kırmızı Konak, which was the old headquarters of İttihat ve Terakki (Committee of Union and Progress) located in Cagalolu, İstanbul, is still a member of the Turkish press. The founders are Yunus Nadi, Zekeriya Sertel and Nebizade Hamdi. Nadir Nadi is one of the two sons of Yunus Nadi. For more information on the history of the newspaper and its place in the history of the Turkish Press see: Aysun Köktener, *bir gazetenin tarihi cumhuriyet*, Yapı Kredi Publications, İstanbul 2004; Emin Karaca, *Cumhuriyet Olayı*, Altın Kitaplar Publications, İstanbul 1994.



their right."²⁶ With these words, Nadi simply lays a ground for the event he will narrate. He presents us a portrait whose racist ideas are formed based on *Social Darwinism*, and whose being a national socialist, Nazi supporter and Hitler admirer would not be found strange.

It is necessary to exactly quote these lines in order to judge what he narrates in his memoirs and compare them with his previous writings: "*Hitler visited Danzig for the first time on 19 September... His big speech would be broadcast on all German radio stations. We had got together with friends at the printing house and were listening to the magnificent ceremony held in Danzig. Hitler started his speech amid the noise of bands, marches and elated shouts. He had an irritating and hysterical voice, like cutting lumber with an electric saw. I have always been surprised how this voice enchanted big masses... He was not tired of harping on the same string and repeating what he said before.*" In the following lines, Nadi mentions the content of the speech and refers to Hitler's explanations on Danzig. The speech continues amid cries of "Heil!" of rampant crowds enthused by the speech. "*I got bored and left the room where we listened to the radio. While opening the door to head to my office, I saw Peyami, who could not speak one word of German, crouching in the corner with a yellow face as if stunned and listening to that hysterical voice, which the interferences distorted even more. Soon, my friends brought him to my office; all of his muscles contracted in spasm and semi-conscious, and immediately called a psychiatrist... Peyami was enchanted by the Danzig speech, a single word of which he was unable to understand. He believed that one of the biggest revolutions of our age was succeeded.*"²⁷ According to Nadi, who lists his determinations on Peyami in the following pages of the memoir in detail, after leaving Cumhuriyet, Peyami "*became a Nazi supporter in foreign politics and a sharp opponent in domestic politics. He did not want to believe that Germany could lose the war... The fall of Hitler also crushed him... As soon as the war ended, the Tan newspaper, which counted on Stalin's being valued by the Allies, started to attack in order to wear out certain writers. Scanning the collections of previous issues and taking examples from articles, it was trying to present Peyami and me as individuals who wrote their articles under Hitler's command. Although I, who do not like quarrels, gave the appropriate response to Tan, my quarrelsome friend Peyami paid no attention to Tan's attacks. One day, he secretly whispered his reason for keeping silent: He was afraid of being sent to Nuremberg Trials!... When I heard this response, I fell off my chair in astonishment. My old friend had either developed a guilt complex or he was going mad. Since I found the second possibility a more likely one, I utterly felt sorry for Peyami.*"²⁸ After years

²⁶ Nadi, *op. cit.* pp. 47-48.

²⁷ Nadi, *op. cit.* pp. 48-49.

²⁸ Nadi, *op. cit.* pp. 134-135.



passed in confusions, following the coup of 27 May Peyami “hid behind some coupists and adopted a racist, reactionary and allegedly anti-communist stance, which in fact was adversary of Atatürk and revolution.” Nadi concludes all he says with a final judgement about Peyami: “In an unstable social and economic environment, if saying and writing what we think and believe is often regarded as bravery and obeying the rulers and those who provide benefits becomes the only way of living for men of thought, we should not be surprised that certain treasures with weak character sacrifice and waste themselves.”²⁹

As is seen, according to the memoirs of Nadi, at a certain period Safa was quarrelsome, liked struggling but offending in terms of character; however, he became an ignorant who stayed away from struggle and was so unaware of the law that he thought he might stand trial at a court of war crimes outside his country. He was not a balanced and normal person any more. In the period after the coup of 27 May, he was again a racist, reactionary and anti-communist, who in fact was an adversary of Atatürk and revolution. It was not necessary to wait for the end of war to see that he was an abnormal Nazi supporter and Hitler admirer. His fainting event was the proof of this abnormality. Although he could not speak one word of German, he would lose himself with Hitler’s voice- which should actually disturb normal people- and become insane with the ecstasy resulting from believing that the biggest revolution has been achieved. He would stand in front of us as a faithful dervish who had obeyed the call of his mentor Hitler, saying “Come to me, not with your reason but with your belief!”

2.2.2. The Event Narrated by Vecdi Bürün, a Friend of 25 Years

Vecdi Bürün, who was a close friend of Peyami Safa for a long time, tells the incident in his memoirs under the title *The Event of Fainting at the Newspaper*. First, he explains why Peyami was against the Allies: Peyami held Britain responsible for our martyrs in the First World War, -particularly in Çanakkale-, he did not feel a sympathy for the French, thus, he supported the Germans, who were against communism, “... or rather the Germans attracted his idle sympathy to themselves.”³⁰

According to what Bürün tells in his memoirs, Peyami’s wife Nebahat Hanim, who was pregnant at that time, got worse and was taken to hospital for birth. Peyami did not leave his wife alone during the days she stayed at

²⁹ Nadi, *op. cit.* p. 136.

³⁰ Bürün, *op. cit.* pp.43-44. In a footnote, Bürün explains why Peyami Safa was against the Russians as follows: “Peyami Safa was a Spiritualist in a philosophical sense. In this regard, he was against Marxism and its materialist view. He not only hated revolutionary Marxism, but also the Soviet Russia, which was our historical enemy. Furthermore, since Peyami Safa was a personalist in terms of doctrine, he was against neither utopian socialism nor the scientific socialism of Marx, which in fact was none other than utopianism and messianism. Nevertheless, it can be said that he was a kind of socialist within the understanding of social equity.” Bürün, *op. cit.* p. 328 (footnote 8).



hospital and accompanied her at the hospital through long nights. Bürün shared these heavy and exciting moments with his friend. Peyami was pleased with his friend's concern. After three nights spent at the hospital, his son Merve was born. They left the hospital and went to Cumhuriyet newspaper together. Both of them were very tired. Bürün continues his story as follows: *"Voices were coming from the radio in Feridun Osman's office, the editor in chief of the newspaper. Peyami Safa wanted to listen to the radio although he was highly nervous. Besides Ahmet Hidayet Reel, Fikret Adil was also in the room. Fikret Adil was a literature enthusiast who was famous for his gossiping behaviour. The speaker on the radio announced that Hitler would give his speech. The fuhrer of Germany started his speech in a horrible voice. A few minutes after Hitler's speech, Peyami Safa leaned to the side of his armchair. He had fainted. Water and cologne were immediately brought to the room. Friends opened the collar of his shirt and massaged his temples and wrists with cologne. After a few minutes, the maestro opened his eyes. He immediately understood what had happened. He thanked those who were in the room for their help and then he wanted us to take him to Professor Kazım İsmail's clinic, which was close to the newspaper. The reason for his fainting was obvious. Peyami, who was already of poor physique, could not endure exhaustion resulting from waiting at the hospital for long nights. Fikret Adil would convey this event to the circles as follows: 'While Hitler was giving his speech, Peyami Safa got so excited that he collapsed on the armchair and fainted.'"*³¹ The same person would almost run from pillar to post and depict Peyami Safa as such an admirer of Hitler who fainted when he heard Hitler's voice.³²

While Nadir attributes the reason for Safa's fainting to his admiration for Hitler, the mentioned reason is completely different in Bürün, who gives physical illness and exhaustion as the reason for the event.

Beşir Ayvazoğlu is the only writer who provides both anecdotes and evaluates the topic in his book. Other works and references merely provide us information regarding the fainting event and Peyami Safa's pro-Nazi stance and admiration for Hitler as told by Nadi. This situation directly reminds us what Cündioğlu says regarding memoirs. The events narrated in memoirs are more appealing, provocative and interesting. Bürün's version of the event, however, is disregarded.

Ayvazoğlu says that the version of the event described by Vecdi Bürün should not be trusted because of the excessive love he felt for Peyami, and also what Nadi tells could not be true. According to Ayvazoğlu, it would be meaningless to clasp an unconscious person and carry him to Nadi's office.

³¹ Bürün, *op. cit.* pp. 44-46.

³² *ibid.*, pp. 44-46.



It is obvious that Nadi heard about the event from others and narrated it as if he had witnessed what had happened.³³ At this point, it is necessary to lay aside the critiques and evaluations regarding both versions and mention certain narratives on Peyami regarding the fainting event and similar opinions in brief.

2.2.3. Some Other Narratives about Peyami Safa and the Fainting Event

The brochure entitled '*The Biggest Threat*', which accused the Turkish nationalists of warmongering during the years of war, introduces Peyami Safa as a racist. The brochure, which caused significant discussions in 1943, adds another detail to the fainting event. We learn from the brochure that Peyami Safa, who is mentioned to have stayed silent in the memoirs of Nadi and Bürün, "*although he did not speak German, he shouted 'what a voice, what a voice, o God!' and fainted with excitement and joy*"³⁴ while listening Hitler's speech. Erkman also adds that his narrative is based on hearsay.

One of the famous debates of Peyami Safa was with Aziz Nesin at the beginning of 1959. During the discussions Nesin argued that Peyami, although could not speak one word of German, listened to the speeches of Hitler with great admiration on the radio during the years of war. Nesin presents us another version of the event with the lines: "*There are those at the Cumhuriyet newspaper who witnessed that one day, excited with Hitler's furious cries, he (Peyami) jumped on his feet and rose his both hands, shouting Kahahayy!. Then he fell flat on his face and trembled like having an epilepsy seizure, his mouth foaming, then he could not move.*"³⁵

We meet a similar Peyami in a column article written in recent years with the aim of explaining Hitler's oratory skills: "*The biggest murderer of the previous century Hitler was a strong orator such that even some Turkish Fascists who did not speak German used to lose themselves while listening to Hitler's speeches and shout 'Here is the man who will save the world!'*"³⁶ The silent Peyami portrayed in the anecdotes of Bürün and Nadi is gone; a different Peyami, who speaks, shouts and even cries, is present in the article!

Niyazi Berkes, who mentions Peyami Safa and his fainting event in his memoirs, does not make him speak, but writes of him as "*the man who fainted with the rumble of Hitler's words, although he could not understand a single*

³³ Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, p. 354. This is the most competent monograph written as the result of a comprehensive study on Peyami Safa. We witness the excellent biography authorship of Ayvazoğlu in this work.

³⁴ F. Erkman, *En Büyük Tehlike! Millî Türk Davasına Aykırı Bir Cereyanın İyüzü*, Ak-Ün Printing House, Galata 1943, p. 27.

³⁵ Aziz Nesin, "Bir Sahtecilik", *Akşam*, 25 January 1959.

³⁶ Türker Alkan, "Hitabet ve Siyaset", *Radikal*, 30 December 2004.



word of the speech.”³⁷, because “Hitler was a roaring lion; when he orated, not only the German people but also the whole world listened to him in fear. Hitler was a wonder for a country listening to his clumsy speech, which was far from understandable, caused suspicion and fear. Especially hysterical figures like Peyami Safa and his exact opposites, like braggart types, used to lose themselves when they listened to his speeches.”³⁸ In this citation, we can find a coward Peyami who falls unconscious as the result of the rumble of words. Taking Berkes’s account of the event as base and referring to Nadi’s memoirs, Cündioğlu endeavours to analyse Peyami’s admiration for Hitler and explain the reasons of this affection.³⁹

We also encounter research studies which evaluate Peyami Safa as a writer of Cumhuriyet newspaper and show the narrative of his fainting while listening to Hitler’s speech as an example of the pro-German stance of the newspaper during the years of war.⁴⁰

As it can be seen in the examples given above, references to the event in question lie before us in all kinds of publications regarding Turkey and Peyami Safa during the years of the Second World War, and the remarks that resemble those made by Nadi continue to be accepted.

3. LOOKING FOR THE SIGNS OF PEYAMI SAFA’S ADMIRATION FOR HITLER IN HIS WRITINGS

Peyami, who joined the Babiali at an early age in 1919 with the *Yirminci Asır* newspaper he published with his brother, continuously wrote during the 45 years of his life of 62 years and he was regarded as one the most important columnists in Turkey as from the 1930s.⁴¹ He provided his short features in the column entitled *Hadiseler Arasında*, his voluminous articles in *Meseleler* and his occasional free style writings in *Haftadan Haftaya* in Cumhuriyet newspaper until it was closed for three months with the claim that it published pro-German articles and views before the war and in 1940.

³⁷ Niyazi Berkes, *Unutulan Yıllar* (Ed. Ruşen Sezer), İletişim Publications, 2nd Edition, İstanbul 1997, pp.162, 175-176, 211.

³⁸ Berkes, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

³⁹ Düccane Cündioğlu, “Peyami Safa ve Hitler”, *Yeni Şafak*, 26 June 2004. Cündioğlu, who is known for his studies on the Quran, the relations between religion and the state in the Republic period and the Turkish intellectual life, explains the interest which Hitler drew from Turkey with the following sentences: “Does not the interest shown to Hitler in Turkey, which was the other aggrieved party in Lausanne, have a psychological meaning, even a feeling of consolation, in those days when Hitler’s Germany invalidated Lausanne and brought those countries into line?” The author, who invites us to the appeal of memories in the back streets of history but warns us to be careful, seems to have missed the fact that the Germans were not part of the Lausanne Treaty.

⁴⁰ Aliye Uçar, *İkinci Dünya Savaşında Cumhuriyet Gazetesinin Dış Politika Değerlendirmesi*, Unpublished MA Thesis, İstanbul 1975, pp. 15-16.

⁴¹ Ayvazoğlu, Peyami, p. 10, 68; Peyami Safa wrote for the following newspapers according to years: 1934-35 *Hafta*, 1935 *Resimli Ay*, 1936 *Kültür Haftası*, 1937-40 *Cumhuriyet*, 1939 *Yeni Mecmua*, 1941-44 *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 1941-42 *Çınaraltı*, 1945 *Tasvir*, 1946 *Yeni Çağ*, 1950-52 *Ulus*, 1953-60 *Türk Düşüncesi*, 1954-59 *Milliyet*, 1959-60 *Tercüman*, 1960 *Havadis*, 1960-61 *Son Havadis*, 1961 *Düşünen Adam*. See: Peyami Safa (Toker Publications.), p. 47.



Peyami's admiration for Hitler and his pro-German attitude must have reached the highest degree for the fainting event of September 1939 to happen as told above, and also the signs of this admiration must have affected his writings. For this reason, it would be possible to look for the mentioned signs among issues such as the war, Germany, Hitler and Versailles under the headings given below when we scan the copies of Cumhuriyet published throughout 1939 and in certain months of 1940.

3.1. Versailles and Danzig Issues

The Danzig issue was closely followed up by Cumhuriyet before and after the war started, just like it was done by the press of the period.⁴² This attitude can also be observed in the writings of Peyami. Walking in the alleys of one of the villages of Istanbul in May 1939, Peyami felt *"the real peace in the desolate, sunny and quiet alley"* and breathed the peaceful atmosphere of Istanbul, knowing that the nature with all the beauties of spring had not heard of Hitler's, Mussolini's and Chamberlain's names and been unaware of Danzig.⁴³ One of the wounds of the world in July 1939 was Danzig. The world, which could solve one problem, could also encounter another one. *"Closing the wound of Czechoslovakia with the German blister"* did not save Europe, but increased its fever. The war would be a fatal surgery for the hopeless patient. However, the patient was always optimistic. The nature either saved the patient or knocked him out. *"The mother nature will not grudge her kindness from humanity, her most accomplished child."*⁴⁴

The writer, who carefully followed the developments before the war, wrote that *"Germany could harvest all Danzig like a fruitful yield"* and said that either peace or war, would be mentioned in a few months time. In the meantime, *"Oracles will continuously be uttered and this will result in an overproduction of estimations in the market of ideas"* in Turkey. However, in such times, some men with flurried thoughts may create an atmosphere of defeat and helplessness in a vicious manner or because of their uncontrollable anxiety. Under the circumstances, we; *"should keep our consciousness high and ready. In such days, all shades of lies, from exaggeration to applesauce, hastily travel from door to door and try to penetrate our ears and go down to the depth of our souls. Let us keep our minds as guards of our consciousness and smoke a cigarette in front of eyes swollen with excitement."*⁴⁵ As it can be seen in this citation, these

⁴² The newspaper followed the developments and reported them as news, besides, Muharrem Fevzi Togay, the writer on foreign policy, particularly addressed the issue in some of his articles. M. F. T., "Danzig ve Koridor", *Cumhuriyet*, 8 May 1939; "Danzigdeki Vaziyet", *Cumhuriyet*, 10 July 1939; Almost all of Hitler's speech on 19 September and the reactions of the world to the speech were printed in the newspaper the next day: "Hitler Dün Uzun Bir Nutuk Söyledi", *Cumhuriyet*, 20 September 1939.

⁴³ Peyami Safa, "Otların Üstündeki Gazete", *Cumhuriyet*, 27 May 1939.

⁴⁴ Peyami Safa, "Sinsi Tekâmül", *Cumhuriyet*, 9 July 1939.

⁴⁵ Peyami Safa, "Barış Sigarası", *Cumhuriyet*, 10 August 1939.



are not the ideas of a person who is excitedly waiting for a war that will start with the Danzig problem and consequently Germany's victory and who will lose himself and faint on hearing Hitler's voice; here, we encounter a Peyami who recommends his readers to act with tranquillity and consciousness.

Peyami, who considered the precautions taken to overcome big crises in politics to be palliative, as are also in medicine, asserted that Danzig was a new boil and it was impossible to cure it with Munich ointment and the "case" would not be closed even if not only the Danzig problem, but also all the problems caused by Versailles, Trianon and Neuilly had been solved. A war or a revolution would not also be enough to solve this case, because; *"we are faced with a complete structural defect. As in every crisis, also now the only wish of the entire world is to avoid this disaster. Nobody is in a state to think of more; however, the whole issue is hidden inside that 'more'!"*⁴⁶ It is presumed that today's war started with Versailles, but did bolshevism, which is listed among the reasons for the war, also originate in Versailles? Why couldn't Versailles be better?⁴⁷ The injustice attributed to this treaty might be only one of the reasons which caused this war, but not all! Democrats, communists, fascists,-whoever they are-can only see one face of it.⁴⁸

Here, we find Peyami remarking that the problem does not consist only of dissolving Danzig, Versailles and other post-war treaties; that is, he does not exaggerate Danzig and Versailles, but says that all the troubles are not based on these treaties and sees the world to be in an excessive depression.⁴⁹

3.2. Hitler and Propaganda

Peyami Safa put considerable emphasis on the issue of "*propaganda*" during the war. According to his ideas, propaganda was an important weapon, but it would not be enough alone to win a war. Furthermore, in essence, it could not develop at all since the first war. Although the technology of war had significantly developed, the weapon of propaganda was composed of *"the same old expressions and chants, without a single line of progress within its structure."* The phenomenon called propaganda did not accept that the level of intelligence and experience of the nations had highly increased. *"The lesson taught by the Big War to the whole world is still in sight, like the biggest obstacle to the repetition of the same method once again this time with the same success."* Fine articles were being written now *"against those who use propaganda like a fishing tackle for catching the fool..."*⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Peyami Safa, "Bünye Fesadı", *Cumhuriyet*, 29 August 1939.

⁴⁷ Peyami Safa, "Versay Avrupası", *Cumhuriyet*, 31 October 1939.

⁴⁸ Peyami Safa, "Bu Davanın Kökleri", *Cumhuriyet*, 23 December 1939.

⁴⁹ Peyami Safa, "Bu Dünyanın Derdi Nedir?", *Cumhuriyet*, 31 August 1939.

⁵⁰ Peyami Safa, "Propaganda", *Cumhuriyet*, 18 October 1939.



Some of an individual's political ideas may be affected by the propaganda carried out by the parties from inside or outside. Many signs of foreign influence may be found among the ideas which are supposed to belong to the individual. Major countries, particularly Great Britain, comprehended the significance of propaganda after the first big war. Hitler gave propaganda an important place in *Mein Kampf* and established the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda in July 1933. Peyami, who states the importance of the matter in this wise, classifies propaganda into two as "good and bad". However, he does not attach much importance to bad propaganda, because; "A bad propaganda enters our minds not as a friend, but like a conqueror who forces the iron gates of our perception and disregards our resistance, and provokes our anger in struggle...A bad propaganda smells evil..." For this reason, one should not be afraid of bad propaganda, but worry about the good. A small amount of attention would be adequate to avoid the former. However, attentions may not be alert against a good propaganda which influences the ideas of the individual without making itself felt, the human might be taken by surprise.⁵¹

The people should also be alert against the "fifth column" activities that might emerge in the country during times of war. The biggest achievement of the fifth column is the mysterious atmosphere which it creates through propaganda activities. These are mainly effective on "pessimists and optimists".⁵² Both types of personalities cause the emergence of an atmosphere of defeat. Peyami suggests the first precaution to be taken against this situation as "to be alert against the foreigners' propaganda".⁵³

A typical behaviour of Peyami Safa against a German propaganda is narrated in an anecdote written in a column of *Cumhuriyet* entitled "*Hem Nalma Hem Mihna*". A letter signed "Turkish Nationalist E. V." was sent to the newspaper. A writer of the newspaper, Abidin Daver,⁵⁴ points out that the delivered letter was written in a clumsy manner like every German propaganda material. In the letter, the treaty signed with Britain, consequently the Turkish foreign policy was discredited. The letter heatedly advised the readers to listen to the German radio and informed about the times when the reports were broadcast in Turkish. The letter must have been written not by a Turkish nationalist, but an enemy of Turks. Daver

⁵¹ Peyami Safa, "Propaganda Çeşitleri", *Cumhuriyet*, 13 December 1939.

⁵² Peyami Safa defines an optimistic and a pessimistic person as follows: "A pessimist is not the one who sees the bad as bad, but the one who views the good as bad. An optimist, on the other hand, is not the one who sees the good as good, but the bad as good." Peyami Safa, "Beşinci Kol", *Cumhuriyet*, 31 May 1940.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Although the name of the writer was not mentioned in the column, Abidin Daver later explained in the same column that he had written the article. For more information on this topic, see: Fırat Kozok, *1938-1946 Yılları Arasında Cumhuriyet Gazetesinin Genel Yayın Politikası*, Unpublished MA Thesis, Ankara 2007. p. 54.



describes Peyami's attitude against the letter that was sent to him as follows: *"For instance, what kind of an effect could this letter, which was sent to a rational Turkish intellectual like Peyami Safa, have on him? Let me inform the Turkish Nationalist E.V. about this effect. As soon as Peyami read the first line of the letter starting with the salutation 'My honourable friend' and the signature, he said – German propaganda! and threw the letter to the bin."*⁵⁵ Peyami's attitude against German propaganda is one of the proofs –with Daver's testimony- which can be asserted against the claims about him. Daver, who writes *"Propaganda should not smell propaganda; however, this letter breaks the nose of its reader with the smell of propaganda which is heavier than the heaviest garlic smell."* and Peyami, who writes *"It is a foggy and bad weather, tries to fill our minds by making us dizzy and turning our stomachs. A bad propaganda releases a dirty smoke and a bad propaganda smells dense, just like propaganda"*⁵⁶ are of the same opinion. The Hitler admiration of a person whose *"stomach turns up"* against bad propaganda- in an assertive statement, German propaganda- should definitely be questioned.

Peyami Safa stated that he did not read propaganda books, whoever they were written by, for whatever purpose they were written, either for glorifying or mortifying whoever mentioned. These lines, which he wrote mentioning Hitler's name, serve as a clue for the solution of the problem discussed here: *"Even looking at the cover of impure books written about Hitler or another person, whose only aim is to deceive by drawing us deep into a positive or negative side of criticism such as eulogy, satire, tribute, derision... causes a reaction in me ranging from distrust to hatred, just like looking at the face of a man who is known to lie before he does."*⁵⁷ Introducing a book written by an opponent who was exiled from Germany eight years before the war, Peyami remarks that a number of things mentioned by the writer of the book came true in the course of time. He points out that the book is full of fire, deception and ideas based on claims, speculations, prophecies, imputations and analyses, and finally asks the reader to make the decision himself.

Peyami, who says that he spent many hours of his holidays in the February of 1939 listening to "the news, speeches and commentaries" on the radio at home, reveals his ideas on the speeches of Hitler and other politicians. According to him, neither Hitler's speech nor the public statement of the American president was different from the previous speeches. He opens his collection of newspapers when he arrives at the newspaper. Hitler's "moderate" speech mentions Germany's rightful demands, its need for col-

⁵⁵ (Abidin Daver), "Alman propagandasının Bir Gafı Daha", *Cumhuriyet*, 25 January 1940.

⁵⁶ Safa, "Propaganda Çeşitleri".

⁵⁷ Peyami Safa, "Hitler Bana Dedi ki", *Cumhuriyet*, 2 August 1940.



onies and disagreements with democracies. However, in the course of time, Austria was annexed by Germany, Czechoslovakia was dissolved. The president of the United States stated that he would not allow the solution of disagreements through military power and defended democracies. However, his speech was also silent about the changing of the map of Europe by Germany in the west and the map of Asia by Japan in the east. The United States only watched while Austria, Czechoslovakia and China suffered. After seeing all these events; *"it is not difficult to determine the level of the significance of their political speeches. It would be a more realistic approach to listen to the story of events, rather than believing in Hitler's pacifism and Roosevelt's heroism based on their words."*⁵⁸ The analyses and conclusions given above introduce us a Peyami Safa who is fed up with political speeches and provide us material for criticising what was written about him.

In one of his articles published in October 1939, he says that the war turned into a hassle after Poland was defeated; and Hitler and Stalin on the one side and Chamberlain and Daladier on the other side were the parties of the argument. Hitler told his addressees: *"Make your farewells to the Europe of Versailles... The independence of Poland could be recognised on condition that Danzig and the corridor are ceded to me."* Commenting more from outside would mean *"exceeding the limits of estimation and fantasy"*.⁵⁹ In this article, which was written about two weeks after the Danzig speech, it does not seem possible at all to catch the signs indicating an event in which a Hitler admirer and pro-Nazi columnist shouts in a state of joy and excitement and faints.

3.3. Possibilities Regarding the War

One of the areas where an admiration for Hitler and Germany may be witnessed in Peyami Safa could be his writings about the trend of events and his estimations before and during the war.

The axis powers, particularly Germany, managed to attain all of their goals without fighting a big war until the spring of 1939. Solving the whole issues through avoiding a general war and employing local and sudden raids had merely become a tactic. A fait accompli was simply created. Would it be possible for Germany, who invaded from the Rhine to Vienna and Prague without firing weapons, to attain his further goals? *"The function of spectator democracies has become to watch the stage of Europe from the visitors' lodge and expect a new surprise any moment"*.⁶⁰ In another article where he

⁵⁸ Peyami Safa, "Nutuklar ve Hâdiseler", *Cumhuriyet*, 4 February 1939. For another article of Safa in which he analyses and criticises the foreign policy of Hitler's Germany see: Peyami Safa, "Hacivad ve Sarı Tehlike", *Cumhuriyet*, 18 August 1939.

⁵⁹ Peyami Safa, "Muharebeden Münakaşaya", *Cumhuriyet*, 7 October 1939.

⁶⁰ Peyami Safa, "Yeni Numaralar", *Cumhuriyet*, 16 March 1939.



expresses the predictions made regarding the developments, the writer states that these predictions were not made from a wide perspective, were not inclusive, big historical necessities were not taken into consideration and all the political predictions were inconclusive when history intervened. He also points out that we need to go back to see the distant future in major social issues and only the route of historical evolution can lead us the way to the future.⁶¹

One of the essential mistakes of Europe was to believe that the Big War ended in 1918. Not a bloody war, but a fight which does not resemble a normal struggle has been continuing since that day. Georges Duhamel named this situation as "The White War". The expression, which the French persistently harped on, referred to the state of the world: although not in a hot war, not also in a state of peace. In that case, it would be necessary "*not to swallow the delighting poison of the languishing and lyrical peace song and to stay alert like a sentry at the war front, watchful on every movement and all ears on every click and clamour.*"⁶²

Starting from the September when the war started, the issues Peyami discusses in his writings -naturally- focus on the war. Within the first week, he discusses what the countries that stayed out of the war might do.⁶³ He endeavours to explain the possible behaviour of the Soviet Union, which enters Poland after Germany. He points out that, hasty and precise judgments should not be made and we should be cautious in our interpretations of the events.⁶⁴ He evaluates the possibilities regarding whether the Soviet Union will share Poland with Germany, the Russians, who signed an agreement with the Japanese, will side against democracies, a Soviet-Italian-Japanese block will form and the comments on this topic. However, he stays on the safe side and does not make a definite or partial judgment.⁶⁵ He examines the problems brought by the war under the titles of political, economic, military and ideological issues and states that the elements of reasoning, prediction and inference available would not be adequate to provide answers to the questions brought about by the war: "*While these major problems are in sight, the claims of those who butcher the pitch-black darkness of the future swinging the sword of prediction and assume prophecies without leaving an open door are invalid because of lavish imprudence.*"⁶⁶

⁶¹ Peyami Safa, "İstikbale Bakışlar", *Cumhuriyet*, 25 March 1939.

⁶² Peyami Safa, "Beyaz Harb", *Cumhuriyet*, 13 June 1939.

⁶³ Peyami Safa, "Sovyet Rusya Ne Yapacak?", *Cumhuriyet*, 5 September 1939; "İtalya Ne Yapacak?", *Cumhuriyet*, 6 September 1939; "Balkanlar Ne Yapacak?", *Cumhuriyet*, 10 September 1939.

⁶⁴ Peyami Safa, "Sovyetler Birliğinin Son Hareketleri", *Cumhuriyet*, 16 September 1939.

⁶⁵ Peyami Safa, "Yeni Bir Blok mu?", *Cumhuriyet*, 17 September 1939.

⁶⁶ Peyami Safa, "Harbin Ortaya Koyduğu Meseleler", *Cumhuriyet*, 5 October 1939.



Peyami Safa, who examines whether there is an “open door” in the speech of the British prime minister in the midst of October, says that the door is not entirely open, but ajar. However, he also asks the question “Could Hitler’s pride, which got bigger with political and military victories, endure sacrificing a big part of itself to pass through this gap?” The speeches of the British and the German are used as dry pacifiers for those hopeful for peace. For this reason, it is necessary not to invest too much hope in peace. The style of the speeches becomes softer and the allegations decrease each passing day. The distant hope may possibly come closer if both sides open the half-open door more and decrease the tone of war in their voices. But yet; “Hope is far away for today; so far that it looks like a shiny nought even observed through a telescope.”⁶⁷ His ideas regarding the speeches of German or British leaders are significant in terms of providing a conclusion concerning the issue discussed here. His writings display an attitude contrary to the implied admiration for Hitler.

Peyami interprets the course of the war, that it got caught between the fronts in Europe and the hesitant state of the sides as the state of Mars, the god of war, who can not lift a finger under the repression of fear and reserve. Just like joints placed in a plaster cast for a long time in the end result in ankylosis or paralysis, the result of the war seems to be the so. As it is, the war is not a story of bravery, but can merely be a theme for comics. People would only laugh at it.⁶⁸

Peyami Safa evaluates Mussolini’s speech in which Mussolini says that the war is a world war in the economic sense. According to his classification, there require to be the nations which have individualist and liberal economic systems (The United States, Britain, France) on the one side, and the nations which have statist economic systems (Italy, Germany, Russia and to some extent, Japan) on the other side. However, in the first war, capitalist and economically liberal Germany was the enemy of capitalist and economically liberal France and Britain. Russia, being a monarchy, was the ally of democratic France and Britain. Such a condition has not yet occurred in this war. We might encounter the view set during the first big war if there are impressions above benefits and economic motives and if they will affect the course of events. We are in a period in which economies and the ideologies based on them are put through an examination. It is necessary to wait for the result with the objective attention of a witness.⁶⁹ When we examine these interpretations and his prudent expectance, we can not see a Peyami Safa

⁶⁷ Peyami Safa, “Sulh Ümidi”, *Cumhuriyet*, 14 October 1939.

⁶⁸ Peyami Safa, “Bu Böyle Sürecekse...”, *Cumhuriyet*, 18 November 1938.

⁶⁹ Peyami Safa, “Ekonomi Nazariyelerin İmtihani”, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 November 1939.



who takes sides with the ideologies on the arena of war or the representatives of these ideologies.

The writer, who evaluates the comments on the possibility that the war might spread to neutral countries in the November of 1939⁷⁰, a few days later discusses the possibility of a Russian-German conflict and states that the war will give rise to new surprises.⁷¹ He says that the war will “maybe” end some day or other. His purpose for starting his words with “maybe” is based on the fact that the clash of souls between the grudge of the defeated and the pride of the defeater would be enough as a reason for starting new wars.⁷² The Europe is in a quest for a “rightful peace”, but the result of its mentality is deadlock, because nobody can define the mentioned right. This war will end being a base for the emergence of new wars, just like the others; that is, it won’t! Nevertheless, we should wait in hope, saying “*Maybe humanity will one day, maybe tomorrow, find the secret formula of a strong and true peace and reunite the heaven of permanent peace of his dreams...Maybe!*”⁷³

3.4. What Should Turkey Do in the Face of War?

The conclusion that can be drawn from the articles written regarding what Turkey’s attitude should be towards the war are consistent with the policies adopted by Turkey before and after the start of the war. Furthermore, these articles provide significant information regarding the issue we seek to resolve in this study.

In the April of 1939, propaganda news programs regarding which group Turkey would take sides with were being broadcast by the European agencies. Prime Minister, Refik Saydam precisely stated that Turkey would not leave the path of peace. According to Safa, Turkey should never join any alliance and side against the others. This would be the safest route for us.⁷⁴ We should adhere to our relations and agreements with our friends. We do not side against any of these friend countries unless they proclaim their enmity towards us. Such a partiality would be “*high treason*”. “*We will not intrude in the affairs of history unless it intrudes our affairs. Being unaware of this principle and uttering provocative words full of vulgarity against those who are officially and still our friends and threatening the relations which have not been damaged for any reason are actions which our national conscience avoids and prevents the most.*”⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Peyami Safa, “Ateş Bitaraf Memleketlere de Sıçrayacak mı?”, *Cumhuriyet*, 30 November 1939.

⁷¹ Peyami Safa, “Perşembenin Gelişi”, *Cumhuriyet*, 5 December 1939.

⁷² Peyami Safa, “Bir Şüphe ve Bir Ümid”, *Cumhuriyet*, 8 December 1939.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Peyami Safa, “Bugünkü Avrupa ve Türkiye”, *Cumhuriyet*, 12 April 1939.

⁷⁵ Peyami Safa, “Bir Hakikatin ‘A B C’ si”, *Cumhuriyet*, 14 April 1939.



Answering the frequently asked question of those days, “What would Atatürk do if he were alive?” Peyami repeats his similar views and insistently states that Turkey should not take a side in the war, because we are a country outside Versailles. We cannot be the plaything of the greed of the either side. Atatürk also knew that the issue was an imperialist war for colonies. Turkey does not need the protection of any side in the war. In fact, such a protection would mean falling into the hands of abuse. Unless there is an attack against our country, “*the smallest tendency towards any side of the war would damage our stability in favour of foreign claims and against the Turkish advantage. We cannot present the Turkish army to the interests of any country in the east or the west.*”⁷⁶

One day before the war, Peyami deliberates the Danzig problem, analyses the conditions of Poland and Germany and considers that a war is inevitable.⁷⁷ Peyami’s opinions do not change after the start of the war. According to him, Turkey should preserve its “*calm and manly attitude*”. Unless the enemy crosses the borders of the country, entering into the war and uttering the language of war in this delicate atmosphere is high treason.”⁷⁸ We should stand as a “*prudent, watchful, well-balanced, strong and confident nation*” in front of Europe.⁷⁹ Whatever sides they take, the imperialist states of Europe always seek benefit and new preys. They are like wolves; beat but do not eat each other. “*They surely know that they cannot find the good taste of the lamb in their flesh. All their fights are to proceed earlier.*”⁸⁰

Peyami Safa discusses the course of the war and what the attitude of Turkey and impartial states should be in his subsequent articles and shares views similar to those presented above with his readers.⁸¹ As a fine expression of his view on this topic, he reminds the readers an anecdote of Nasreddin Hodja in his column “*Pazardan Pazara*”.⁸²

Countries that have stayed out of the war should keep their stance. They will provide the emergence and maintenance of a hope for peace through their very attitudes.⁸³

⁷⁶ Peyami Safa, “Atatürk Sağ Olsaydı..”, *Cumhuriyet*, 16 April 1939.

⁷⁷ Peyami Safa, “İki Eylül Arasındaki Fark”, *Cumhuriyet*, 1 September 1939.

⁷⁸ Peyami Safa, “Erkekçe Duruş”, *Cumhuriyet*, 7 September 1939.

⁷⁹ Peyami Safa, “Başvekilimizin Nutku”, *Cumhuriyet*, 11 September 1939.

⁸⁰ Peyami Safa, “Kurtlar ve Kuzular”, *Cumhuriyet*, 19 October 1939.

⁸¹ For more information on this topic, see: Peyami Safa, “Her İhtimale Göre”, 20 October 1939; “Muahedenin Metni Üstünde”, 21 October 1939; “Bitarafılık Humması”, 22 October 1939; “İnönü’nün Nutku”, 2 November 1939.

⁸² “One day they ask the Hodja: ‘O Hodja! What side of the coffin one should walk during a funeral? In the front, in the back, on the right or on the left? The answer of the Hodja is inevitable: “Whichever side you wish, other than the inside of the coffin!” See: Peyami Safa, “Harp Hakkında-Hocanın Meşhur Fikrasi”, *Cumhuriyet*, 15 October 1939.

⁸³ Peyami Safa, “Ateş Ortasında Ümid”, 4 September 1939; “Bitarafılara düşen görev”, 9 September 1939; “Harb Mevzuu”, 14 September 1939.



3.5. Ideologies, War and Peyami Safa's Attitude

We see that Peyami Safa wrote about the ideologies mentioned above, his views on Italy and Germany and occasionally expressed his reactions in his articles in 1939. According to Safa, democracies were in charge of the capitalist and imperialist system. However, there were conflicts among those democracies. Nationalists and their allies came together with their anticommunist attitudes inside and their anti-comintern attitude outside. Turkey should not intervene with any of the leftist-rightist choices of any country. Whichever nation wishes, can be socialist, democrat or nationalist. Turkey's case is discrete and distinct from all.⁸⁴

Looking for the answer to the question "Why are they fighting?", Peyami attributes the situation to the deprivation of humanity from means for measuring qualities in the universe of meaning. Not only of a few organizations, but the evaluation system of the entire world and the 20th century is broken. One should not look for the reasons of what we suffered and what we will in other places.⁸⁵ The writer, discussing whether this is the war of the two ideological poles as one being "democrat" and the other "totalitarian", states that it is still early to label the war as ideological. Since it is not known what tomorrow will bring, it would be too early to establish a diagnosis.⁸⁶ It is necessary to believe that all the actions of human consciousness are not only based on instinct, benefit and desire, but also on an idea. What kind of an idea is this and within the frame of what ideology does it fit? "Does it fit, or overflow? Perhaps, it fits, but without fail it overflows; because life is more intricate, profound and lively than any ideology. One of them is ideology, only a model, the other is, as befits the name, Life!"⁸⁷

Human societies, especially in our day, swing back and forth between the poles of two systems: liberal and statist. Both of these adversary ideas, the former of which desires the freedom of the individual and the latter the intervention of the society, are vain fantasies in their absolute sense. The war, which might turn into peace depending on Hitler's proposal in October 1939, can save neither Germany nor the world. "...because the case is not political alone, but also social and economic. Whatever their political systems are, the nations cannot achieve a long-lasting peace until they reach an agreement on the control of a new world system."⁸⁸

Peyami, who says that none of the existing ideologies can bring a permanent tranquillity and peace to humanity, warns that in case any of these

⁸⁴ Peyami Safa, "Demokrasilerin Mazereti", *Cumhuriyet*, 31 March 1939.

⁸⁵ Peyami Safa, "Terazi", *Cumhuriyet*, 24 November 1939.

⁸⁶ Peyami Safa, "Bu Bir İdeoloji Harbi midir?", *Cumhuriyet*, 3 November 1939.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Peyami Safa, "Dünyanın Muhtaç Olduğu Nizam", *Cumhuriyet*, 11 October 1939.



ideologies attack Turkey with imperialistic tendencies, “we break the thirty three teeth of those who want to take a bite of us. Others know this as much as we do.”⁸⁹ Turkey has not left its politeness against any country. However, one of the Axis powers-implying Italy-; “is swinging its foot in vain to cross over the Mediterranean and step on our country to leave all the dirt of its boots: like a bastard defecating into the sea to frighten it...there lies the large Mediterranean between us and those boots; but the distance between the sole of those boots and the face of their owner is a few spans. When the day comes, we know very well how to defy that face and throw it down the gauntlet.”⁹⁰ The response to the articles written against Turkey in the fascist Italian press and these lines which reflect the attitude of the Turkish press⁹¹ present us a Peyami Safa who takes a nationalist stance against Germany.

Peyami Safa writes that he asked certain questions regarding the Nazi Germany just like he did about fascist Italy, and the answers to these questions were directly provided by Hitler himself. A few years before the war, Safa explained that a propaganda material supporting the superiority of the German race had nothing to do on Turkish land concerning a book printed in Turkish to propagandize for Hitler’s regime in Turkey. He asked “whether the Hitler’s government would permit Kemalist propaganda activities based on the facts of the antiquity and superiority of the Turkish civilization.”⁹² Safa and his newspaper endeavoured to strengthen national resistance against national socialism, fascism, communism and all kinds of foreign ideologies beyond the framework of Kemalism.

4. DETERMINATION OF THE REASONS AND THE CRITIQUE OF THE WRITINGS AGAINST PEYAMI SAFA

Different narrations of the event in which Peyami Safa faints because of his admiration for Hitler while listening to his Danzig speech were mentioned above. It was seen that the most detailed narration was that told by Nadir Nadi. For determining the reasons behind these narrations and the critique of the writings against Peyami, it is necessary to look at Peyami’s attitude towards the left and his anticommunist campaign.

4.1. Peyami Safa and his “Anticommunist-Conservative” Fight

Peyami’s fight as a Turkish Nationalist against the Turkish left started in the middle of the 1930s. He did not have a sharp attitude against the left; in fact, he wrote for the *Resimli Ay* magazine and the *Tan* newspaper published

⁸⁹ Safa, “Atatürk Sağ Olsaydı”

⁹⁰ Peyami Safa, “Küfür Harbi”, *Cumhuriyet*, 8 July 1939.

⁹¹ For another article on the same topic see: Peyami Safa, “Türk Vakan”, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 August 1939.

⁹² Peyami Safa, “Kim Faşist ve Kim Komünist”, *Cumhuriyet*, 21 October 1937.



by Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel.⁹³ He even dedicated his most famous novel, *Dokuzuncu Hariciye Kogusu*, published as a serial in *Cumhuriyet* and printed by Resimli Ay Publications in 1929, to the most important poet of Turkish left, Nazım Hikmet, who was a close friend of his in those days. Nazım was conducting the legal activities of the TKP (Turkey Communist Party) at that time.⁹⁴ Peyami and Nazım were in quest of recruiting each other to their causes.⁹⁵ However, their intimacy ended with the big polemic that arose between them in 1935.⁹⁶ The parties, who were writing for the *Tan* newspaper of Sertels in the summer of 1935, started their argument here; besides, Peyami carried on his polemic in *Hafta* newspaper. Their argument exceeded the limits of a polemic and became “an unfortunate fight which in time turns into almost a vendetta where two old friends, a writer and a poet, who are extremely angry and holding grudge against each other, forget what they have written before and ruthlessly attack each other.”⁹⁷

The use of contemptuous statements about Namık Kemal by Nazım, who included his poetry into the dispute, extended the sides of the dispute and created an exclusive agenda. The most famous figure of the Turkists, Nihal Atsız, answered Nazım with a brochure.⁹⁸ Later on, Nazım admitted that he had made a mistake in this matter⁹⁹ and responded regarding why he struggled against Peyami and those who thought like him.

On the start of an argument between *Tan* and *Cumhuriyet* in 1937 because of a speech by Goebbels, the German minister of propaganda, Peyami took the side of *Cumhuriyet*, which he was writing for at the time.¹⁰⁰

He continued his campaign against communists, whom he named as “the forenamed” until his death. This attitude of his was the reason why he was blamed to be a “fascist”. One of those who had his share of the accusations of communists against everyone who opposed to Marxism was Safa.

⁹³ According to a survey conducted by *Resimli Ay* magazine, Peyami was the first and Nazım was the third among the most popular writers of the time. See: Göze, *Peyami-Nazım*, p. 131.

⁹⁴ Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, pp. 187-191.

⁹⁵ Göze, *Peyami-Nazım*, pp. 127-129.

⁹⁶ For two different narrations of this fight, see: Kemal Sülker, *Nazım Hikmet'in Polemikleri*, Ant Publications, İstanbul 1968; Göze, *Peyami-Nazım*.

⁹⁷ Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, pp.214-215; For more on this argument, see: Emin Karaca, *Türk Basınında Kalem Kavgalan*, Gendaş Publications, İstanbul 1998, pp.98-105.

⁹⁸ Nihal Atsız, *Komünist Don Kişotu Proleter Burjuva Nazım Hikmetof Yoldaşa*, İstanbul 1935; Basri Gocul also joined those responding with a brochure entitled *Bir Nâra* (N. Hikmet'e). See: Fethi Tevetoğlu, *Türkiye'de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faâliyetler*, Ankara 1967, p. 483.

⁹⁹ In 1963, Nazım Hikmet told his friend Sabiha Sertel that he had made a mistake with these words: “Why did we attack the poets admired by the nation with the “Breaking the Idols” campaign in *Resimli Ay* Magazine? Mehmet Akif was allegedly a fanatic, let him be. The man has written folk poems. For example, why did we run against Namık Kemal? He is the one who fought against the tyranny of Abdülhamid, went to prison and suffered in exile. The public know and love him as the poet of the motherland. We, on the other hand, slandered him calling him a bourgeois poet, a petty bourgeois. We even attacked those who joined the war of independence. We distanced ourselves from the people.” See: Zekeriya, Sabiha, Yıldız Sertel, *Sertellerin Anılarında Nazım Hikmet ve Babîli*, İstanbul 1993, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ Karaca, *op. cit.* pp. 122-124.



Turkey Secret Communist Party published a brochure about him signed with a pseudonym and Sabahattin Ali wrote a novel with the aim to insult him and the Turkists of the period.¹⁰¹ Ayvazoğlu determines this case with the following words: *“in fact, it is obvious that Peyami Safa frustrated the leftist intellectuals to the extent that they were forced to use literature as a tool for their personal vendetta.”*¹⁰²

A terrible fight was in progress between the Turkish nationalists and the left during the years of war. This fight gained speed with the signing of a nonaggression treaty between Turkey and Germany in the June of 1941 and the attack of Germany to the Soviets shortly after the treaty. German propaganda increased in this period, and this state caused the emergence of a counter-propaganda attack.

Turkish nationalists of the period were accused of warmongering in the brochure entitled ‘The Biggest Threat’, published with the signature of F. Erkman. In fact, the brochure was written by Reşat Fuat Baraner, the generally secretary of the TKP.¹⁰³ Peyami Safa was listed among the names such as Nihal Atsız, Reha Oğuz Türkan, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, Orhan Seyfi Orhon and General Hüsnü Emir Erkilet. The Turkist magazines of the period; Bozkurt, Gökbörü, Çınaraltı and Ergenekon were particularly accused. According to the claims in the brochure, *“it is required to be a racist, religionist, mythist and war supporter, to show admiration to totalitarian regimes, to be an idealist and mystic in philosophy, to deserve the qualification of a real nationalist.”*¹⁰⁴ The brochure, which mentioned the fainting event and dedicated three pages to Peyami, used certain citations from his articles in Çınaraltı and Tasviri Efkâr and presented him as a war propagandist and an admirer of Hitler who fainted on hearing his voice.¹⁰⁵ In an interview, Peyami Safa replied the accusations written in this brochure with a single word: *“Cowardice!”*¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, he also stated that the person who published such a brochure could not be a patriot. In another interview held in 1943, he answered the question *“Do you believe that the Turkish society can find a remedy in any of the examples of liberalism, communism and fascism?”* with a certain *“No!”*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Kösoğlu, *op. cit.* pp. 22-24.

¹⁰² Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, p.352.

¹⁰³ For detailed information on this topic see: Özdoğan, *op. cit.* p. 99, footnote:12; in addition, see: İlhan Darendelioğlu, *Türkiye’de Komünist Hareketler*, Toker Publications, 4th Edition, İstanbul 1976, p. 253.

¹⁰⁴ F. Erkman, *En Büyük Tehlike! Millî Türk Davasına Aykırı Bir Cereyanın İcütüğü*, Ak-Ün Publications, Galata 1943, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ Erkman, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

¹⁰⁶ Mehmet Tekin, *Peyami Safa İle Söyleşiler*, Çizgi Publications, p. 97; Erkman’s brochure was responded by Reha Oğuz Türkan with *Solcular ve Kızıklar*, F. Oğuzkan and Ziya İlkan with *Asıl Tehlike* and Nihal Atsız with *En Sinsi Tehlike*. See: Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, p. 358.

¹⁰⁷ Tekin, *Söyleşiler*, p. 99.



The topic of another brochure series which was the product of the same environment of struggle was again Peyami Safa. In the brochure¹⁰⁸ written by Rıza Çavdarlı of TKP, Peyami was introduced as “just a Nazi”.¹⁰⁹ The brochure was full of distortions and exaggerations from beginning to end. Çavdarlı, who quoted certain citations from Peyami’s articles particularly those written in 1939, interpreted them according to his own desires. He did not take the articles as a whole and reached conclusions opposite to those of the author’s. He even added statements which did not belong to Peyami to his sentences.¹¹⁰ According to Çavdarlı, Peyami’s words were full of twaddle, written products of ignorant and egoistic ideas. “*He has unintentionally fallen into an inextricable enigma as the result of an external inculcation and has continuously been reciting the same story. He is an ill person with a distorted consciousness whose ideas and words are not connected.*”¹¹¹ The writer turned Peyami into a collaborator, enemy of the nation, and a miserable Nazi propagandist. However, none of the 1939 articles of Peyami mentioned and quoted above confirm this situation.

Sabahattin Ali, who attended to Türk Ocağı (Turkish Hearth) clubs, was friends with Nihal Atsız and wrote for ‘Resimli Ay’ with Peyami Safa for a short time while he was a student, attacked nationalist men of thought and art such as Nihal Atsız, Mükrimin Halil Yinanç, Zeki Velidî Togan, Necip Fazıl and Peyami Safa in his novel “*İçimizdeki Şeytan*”, which he wrote in 1940 and was not appreciated by any literary critic.¹¹² In the novel, all of these intellectuals were presented as “*betrayers, drunkards, self seeking, immoral, and false notables whose writings did not worth a penny.*”¹¹³ Peyami Safa, who was re-imagined as the character İsmet Şerif in the novel, was insulted by using his father İlhami Safa. As İsmet Şerif told in the story, his father did not die for his fatherland in the Balkan War, but was shot from his back while going to surrender to the enemy.¹¹⁴ Nihal Atsız, who was one of those accused in the novel, responded to Sabahattin Ali with a brochure.¹¹⁵ Atsız attributed the character İsmet Şerif to Peyami’s being a nationalist.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁸ Rıza Çavdarlı, *Gafiller Koleksiyonu No. 2 Peyami Safa*, Aydınlık Publications, İstanbul 1943.

¹⁰⁹ Çavdarlı, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ This can be seen by comparing Çavdarlı, *op. cit.* pp.10-11 with Peyami Safa’s articles in Cumhuriyet dated 5 September 1939 and 23 October 1939.

¹¹¹ Çavdarlı, *op. cit.* p. 24.

¹¹² Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, p. 349.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Sabahattin Ali, *İçimizdeki Şeytan*, Yapı Kredi Publications, 8th Edition, İstanbul 204, p.168; Nazim also preferred the same style during his quarrels and frequently called Peyami “*The Orphan of Safa*” referring to his father’s death when he was two years old, as if this was an issue of ridicule. Furthermore, he tried to expose İsmail Safa as an English supporter.

¹¹⁵ Atsız, *İçimizdeki Şeytanlar*, Arkadaş Publications, İstanbul 1940.

¹¹⁶ Atsız, *op. cit.* p.13; Atsız also writes concerning the insult to Peyami’s father in the same work.



We observe that not only newspaper articles, brochures and novels were the works in which this hostility was exhibited, but poetry was also used as a means in the argument. Nazım used also poetry in his polemics with his *“Bir Provokatör Üstüne Hiciv Denemeleri”* and Peyami answered back in the same style with *“Cingöz Recai’den Nazım Hikmet’e”*.¹¹⁷ In the years when Peyami wrote for Milliyet, he appeared in a poem by another poet of the left, Can Yücel, as a cause of a “nightmare”: *“A Sirkeci dog is hunting the morning / In garbage bins / A radio bird is singing, nasty/ Pilgrims have already got up for ablution /With their long pants and ewers / A Milliyet on the chest / A photo of Peyami / I know they are not true / I know, but / Sleep again dare you can!”*¹¹⁸ In fact, these verses clearly exemplify why Peyami Safa, who pursued his efforts as one of the most important figures of Turkish conservatism¹¹⁹ in the years after the Second World War, struggled against the leftists one of whom was Can Yücel, the owner of the verses. One of the reasons for the increasing enmity against Peyami in those years was that together with Zeki Velidi, he was one of the most significant lecturers of the Society for Struggle against Communism.¹²⁰

It is known that some Turkists of the period and Peyami were accused of being reactionaries. In fact, reaction and bigotry were among the targets of his struggle.¹²¹ Yet, these accusations managed to extend to the name he gave to his son, *“Merve”*.¹²² An accusation of reaction and bigotry based on names and places could only be possible in a fantastic scenario similar to the one written by different writers narrating his fainting event as follows: *“Peyami’s father was born in Mecca and he was given the name of a prophet and the Safa Hill near Mecca. Ismail also gave his son the name Peyami, which is associated with prophecy, although he was a friend of the progressive figures like Abdullah Cevdet and Tevfik Fikret. His forename, Osman, was the name of a caliph. Peyami, who gave works on the Turkish revolution, continued to bear the surname, Safa. Furthermore, naming his son as Merve, he collocated the names of the two hills which the pilgrims portrayed with long pants and ewers in the poem of Yücel trav-*

¹¹⁷ Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, pp. 218-225.

¹¹⁸ Göze, *Peyami-Nazım*, p.125.

¹¹⁹ For the studies on Peyami Safa’s conservatism, see: Süleyman Seyfi Ögün, “Türk Muhafazakarlığının Kültür Kökleri ve Peyami Safa’nın Muhafazakar Yanılgısı”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, Issue 74, Autumn 1997, pp.102-154; Beşir Ayvazoğlu, “Peyami Safa”, *Muhafazakarlık Modern Türkiye’de Siyasal Düşünce*, Vol. 5, İletişim Publications, İstanbul 2003, pp. 220-229.

¹²⁰ Özdoğan, *op. cit.* p.89.

¹²¹ For more information on this topic, see: Peyami Safa, *Din İnkılap İrtica*, Ötügen Publications, 4th Edition, İstanbul 1990, pp.169-176.

¹²² Bedii Faik, *Matbuat Basın derken... Medya*, Vol.1, Doğan Kitap Publications, İstanbul 2001, p.191.



elled back and forth.¹²³ Another name of Merve is Ismail, that of his grandfather's." Of course, this would be a funny and fantastic scenario.

Berkes, who mentions of Peyami with similar thoughts, was one of the prominent figures of the Turkish left in the academic world and the aggrieved of the cleanup movement at the Faculty of Languages History and Geography in 1948. That he was discharged together with academics such as Behice Boran and Pertev Nail Boratav must have been one of the reasons for his ideas regarding Peyami. Berkes saw Peyami Safa and Nihal Atsız as the pioneers of the campaign started against them before the discharge event.¹²⁴ According to him, Peyami was one of the "denouncers and slanderers" of the time who "shouts with a strident voice"¹²⁵ in his article depicting them as communists entitled "Deliller Yağıyor".¹²⁶ The fainting event of Peyami was mentioned a few times in the memoirs with expressions insulting him.¹²⁷

Peyami Safa could not save himself from the negative evaluations of his close relatives. In an interview printed in the press, Behçet Safa, the son of his brother İlhami Safa, spoke of his uncle with completely subjective and intentional comments full of misinformation based on ideological hostility.¹²⁸ Behçet Safa, who introduced himself as a hippie, communist, even a "horrorist", could state that Peyami wrote articles praising the coupists in the newspaper after the execution of Menderes.¹²⁹ However, Menderes was executed on 17 September 1961 and Peyami Safa died on 15 June 1961. Furthermore, Peyami continued his support of the Democrat Party in his articles after 27 May, was interrogated twice, had to give up writing. He was even pointed as a target by some coupist officers as "the man whose neck should be twisted and head be ripped off".¹³⁰

It would be stated in certain evaluations regarding his novels which reveal an ideological attitude that some of his works were written "to prove a thesis which could not go beyond the power of conception of a reactionary attitude of mind" and "The Armchair of Mademoiselle Noraliya served to a movement that emerged in a number of countries after the war, which was mystic and the enemy of reason."¹³¹

¹²³ These two hills located near Mecca, where Prophet Abraham's wife Hagar went back and forth to find water for his son Ismail, are also mentioned in the Quran. See: *The Holly Quran*, Al-Baqarah/ 158.

¹²⁴ Berkes, *op. cit.* p. 413.

¹²⁵ Berkes, *op. cit.* pp. 453-454.

¹²⁶ Berkes, *op. cit.* p.273.

¹²⁷ Bak. Berkes, *op. cit.* pp.175, 211, 279-281.

¹²⁸ "Elbe'de Marjinal Bir Türk", *Hürriyet Pazar*, 31 October 2004.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Ali Fuat Başgil, *Ali Fuat Başgil'in Hatıraları*, Boğaziçi Publications, 2nd Edition, pp. 81-82.

¹³¹ Tekin, *Romancı Yönüyle*, p. 26.



4.2. Nadir Nadi and the Changing Attitude of Cumhuriyet

Cumhuriyet was listed at the top among the newspapers which published pro-German articles and views during the years of war. Giving a few examples from the articles of Nadir Nadi, who was the editor in chief of the newspaper with his father, would present the existence of big contradictions between his articles in Cumhuriyet in those years and his style and narrations in *"Perde Aralığı"*. Following the trade agreement and the nonaggression treaty which Turkey signed with Germany and Hitler's subsequent attack on Russia, we meet a Nadi who wrote pro-German articles which praised national socialism. However, after it was understood that Germany would lose the war, he could write against this country and Hitler.

In his memoirs, Nadi always tries to create the impression that he is a Nazi opponent, but it is also observed that he sometimes simply confesses his sins in an apologizing manner.¹³²

Nadi's articles on the trade agreement which Turkey signed with Germany on 25 July 1940 created big discussions in the press. In an article he wrote before the agreement was signed, he *"found a harmony rather than an antinomy between the German economy and our national principles"*¹³³; in his article dated 30 July, he stated that the whole world needed to see the German reality: *"Today, a German power is alive in Europe. The source of this power in terms of quality and quantity is based on German unity. The German unity is not the work of a few individuals, but the achievement of an evolving idea, and hence, the history... The European states should see the reality as it is and determine their routes accordingly. It is also necessary to stay optimistic against the reality. If the history is the evolution of societies, it indicates 'a continuous course to the better'."*¹³⁴ This article attracted strong reactions, caused discussions in the press,¹³⁵ and Cumhuriyet was closed for three months by the government. This event even caused Yunus Nadi to lose his position in the parliament as the deputy of CHP. Nadi mentioned the articles he wrote on this agreement and the discussions and tried to confess his sins in his memoirs.¹³⁶

He expressed similar ideas in his articles on the nonaggression treaty signed between Turkey and Germany on 18 June 1941. There were numerous political, economic and geographical conditions for the mutual friendship of Turkey and Germany. The harmful propaganda activities of those who wanted to undermine the Turkish-German friendship were seen since

¹³² Nadi, *op. cit.* p. 91.

¹³³ Nadir Nadi, "Almanya İle İktisadi Münasebetlerimiz", *Cumhuriyet*, 23 July 1939.

¹³⁴ Nadir Nadi, "Alman Birliği Karşısında Avrupa", *Cumhuriyet*, 30 July 1940.

¹³⁵ Selim Ragıp Emeç from Son Pota also took part in the argument between Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın from Yeni Sabah and Nadi. See: Karaca, *Kalem Kavgaları*, pp.149-160.

¹³⁶ Nadi, *op. cit.* pp. 89-101.



the start of the war, but they did not manage to be successful. *“The real Turkish press and real intellectuals have always avoided publications which could offend the Turkish-German friendship and the Turkish people have always had good feelings for the Germans in their hearts.”*¹³⁷ Nadi would ask his readers to be proud of this agreement on its anniversary and speak of Germany’s Fuhrer with praise.¹³⁸ As it can be seen, writing these lines Nadi distinguished himself as a *“real intellectual”*, but he could bring up the known accusations against Peyami in his memoirs. He wrote statements starting with the lines *“Actually, I never longed for or wished the matter to reach to this extent.”* regarding this agreement in his memoirs in an attempt to hide the reality.¹³⁹ It would not be difficult to multiply the examples.

After the war turned against Germany, Nadi also did the same turn and started to write articles against Germany and Hitler.¹⁴⁰ Hitler, who had previously been praised,¹⁴¹ was now blamed and condemned for being a bad and unsuccessful leader.

Nadi, who accused Peyami Safa of fainting while listening to a speech a single word of which he was unable to understand for he was an admirer of Hitler, wrote the following in an article about the same speech: *“Hitler, whose life passed in struggles for the last fifteen years, has always been devoted with the same faith to the glamorous power of speech on masses. We cannot assume him to be wrong in his faith, because the Fuhrer has all the merits that an excellent orator can possess within his own existence.”*¹⁴² Although Nadi wrote in the September of 1939 that Hitler joined all the qualities that an excellent orator would have in his personality, he described the same voice in that speech as *“irritating and hysterical, like cutting lumber with an electric saw”* in his memoirs in 1965. He described Goebbels as a person with an intense spark of intelligence and a pleasant look in his eyes, with whom he had a chance to talk during his visit in the period when things were going well for Germany.¹⁴³ But somehow,

¹³⁷ Nadir Nadi, “Türk-Alman Dostluğu”, *Cumhuriyet*, 27 June 1941.

¹³⁸ Nadir Nadi, “Türk—Alman Dostluğuna Dair”, *Cumhuriyet*, 27 June 1941.

¹³⁹ Nadi, *op. cit.* pp. 109-110.

¹⁴⁰ For examples of his articles, see: “İstiklal Harbi Buna Denmez”, 22 August 1944; “İki Zafer”, 25 August 1944; “Türk İngiliz Dostluğu”, 21 January 1945; “Bu İhtisas Asrında”, 23 January 1945; “Demokrasilerin Kayıtsız Şartsız Zaferi”, 8 May 1945.

¹⁴¹ Nadir Nadi, “Türk-Alman Münasebetleri”, *Cumhuriyet*, 27 April 1944; Nadi was also accused of being a Nazi admirer, just like he accused Peyami. For example, see: Emre Aköz, “Nadir Nadi Nazi Hayranı mıydı?”, *Sabah*, 23 August 2003; Emre Aköz, “Nadir Nadi’nin Nazi Selamı!”, *Sabah*, 18 December 2003; Nadi criticised the Lebensraum policy of Hitler in some of his articles. See: Nadir Nadi, “Tarihin Dersi”, *Cumhuriyet*, 21 May 1939; “Hitler’in Nutku”, 21 September 1939.

¹⁴² Nadir Nadi, “Hitler’in Nutku”, *Cumhuriyet*, 21 September 1939.

¹⁴³ Nadir Nadi, “Goebbels’le Bir Saat”, *Cumhuriyet*, 21 August 1942.



he does not seem to have forgotten his “*musical and sweet voice*”¹⁴⁴ in his memoirs.

In the years when Nadi praised Hitler and national socialist Germany, Peyami Safa focused on particularly the war, individual and society and ideologies in his articles. He praised single party and single leader regimes in the example of Turkey. He valued the society and the nation above the individual. He argued that the individual would acquire his personality within the society-nation, and defended a classless social structure and corporatism. Although he seemed not to have broken his ties with the Turks outside our borders, he did not put forth a definite Turan ideal and an irredentist idea. Although he gave the impression that his ideas were close to fascism in certain aspects,¹⁴⁵ he endeavoured to look at the issue of Germany and Hitler through the eyes of science¹⁴⁶; examined communist, socialist and fascist systems together¹⁴⁷; stated that we needed to preserve our peace within the reality of war¹⁴⁸; and attracted attention to the fact that Turkey was a stranger to some of the principles of Hitlerism because of the characteristics of its own national, economic and geopolitical structure and was obliged to stay a stranger to those principles.¹⁴⁹

It is clear from the information presented above that Peyami did not hold an attitude that displayed his support for the Nazis and his admiration for Hitler in his writings before and after the Danzig speech. It is also obvious from his articles that it was not the first time he heard Hitler’s voice on the radio. Necip Fazıl tells in his memoirs that one of his greatest enjoyments in the 1920s was excitedly switching from one radio station to the other in Peyami’s house.¹⁵⁰ It does not seem possible to say that Peyami lost his consciousness because of the excitement caused by hearing Hitler’s voice for the first time or an excellent and effective voice which he did not have himself. Although Peyami was a small man with a physically slim and weak body, he had a highly effective and rotund voice. This was one of his characteristics which enabled him to attract the attention of his interlocutor.

¹⁴⁴ Nadi, *op. cit.* pp.190-191; A good example for the exaggerated description of the voices of political figures can be seen in Alparslan Türkeş reading the manifesto which announced the 27 May coup. There are those who describe this voice as rotund and effective, fiery, soldierly, a voice that opens the heart of a person, a voice pervaded by the divine charm of poetry and music. See: Mustafa Arıkan, *Hamdi Ragıp Atademir Hayatı, Eserleri ve Fikirleri*, Kültür Bakanlığı Publications, Ankara 1998, p. 12g3, footnote 296.

¹⁴⁵ For articles written on this topic during the war, see: Peyami Safa, *Millet ve İnsan*, Akbaba Publications, İstanbul 1943.

¹⁴⁶ Safa, *Millet ve İnsan*, pp.106-108.

¹⁴⁷ Safa, *Millet ve İnsan*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁴⁸ Safa, *Millet ve İnsan*, p. 74.

¹⁴⁹ Safa, *Millet ve İnsan*, p. 108.

¹⁵⁰ Necip Fazıl, *Bâbüâli*, Büyük Doğu Publications, 3rd Edition, İstanbul 1985, pp. 96-97.



“Without doubt, he is a great writer. However, it is certain that he uses the power of his voice as skilfully as his pen.”¹⁵¹

Considering that it would not be possible to think of a Peyami Safa who fainted because of the impressiveness of a voice even though he did not understand the language spoken, what is Nadi’s reason for telling this event? We can find the answer to this question in that the line of Cumhuriyet changed after the war and evolved to the left, becoming a popular newspaper. In the 1950s, Peyami Safa and Cumhuriyet and Nadis were now in opposite camps.

4.3. Bürün’s Memoirs

The most important information we can use when questioning the reasons for Peyami Safa’s fainting event is narrated in the memoirs of Vecdi Bürün. For this, it is necessary to determine the date of birth of Peyami’s son Merve. The only information mentioned in literature is the year 1939. In this regard, the *Peyami* of Ayvazoğlu, which is the only reference where the memoirs of Bürün are discussed, does not examine this situation. Bürün writes that Merve was born in June, stating that the birth was on the same days with the Danzig speech. It is obvious that his memory misled him while writing his memoirs.

Merve was born on 3 September 1939. This is understood from the fact that his birth was announced with a note in Cumhuriyet under Peyami’s article *“Ateş Ortasında Ümid”* dated 4 September: *“Birth. Peyami Safa had a son yesterday morning. We congratulate our friend and wish his son a happy and long life.”¹⁵²*

Merve’s date of birth is given as 3 September 1939 also in the birth certificate registration information of Peyami Safa and his family, which is not mentioned in the literature.¹⁵³ This situation shows that it is necessary to pay attention to what Bürün tells in his memoirs.

We do not exactly know how many days passed in pregnancy and in hospital with complications. However, it would be more reasonable and probable to think that the fainting event which took place a few weeks later was because of the exhaustion and physical weakness caused by the days spent in hospital, rather than the reasons asserted by Nadi. It also appears that Peyami, who earned his living by writing and whose articles were published every other day and sometimes had two different articles in the same

¹⁵¹ Faik, *op. cit.* p.184; Göze, *Peyami-Nazım*, pp. 108-109.

¹⁵² Unfortunately, Merve did not live long; he died of a liver disease while he was performing his military service in the Elmali Village of Tercan District of Erzincan on 27 February 1961. He was buried in Edirnekapı Cemetery in Istanbul. Ayvazoğlu, *Peyami*, p.512.

¹⁵³ Peyami Safa’s birth certificate was registered in Istanbul Province Fatih District Alemdar Quarter Vol.70 Order 843. The full name of Merve was İsmail Meral Merve.



newspaper, had a break and stopped writing for about two weeks after 19 September.¹⁵⁴ It does not seem possible to explain this two-week break if we consider that Peyami fainted with excitement and joy or because he was a lunatic who obeyed the call of his mentor. This fascist and Nazi dervish should have been continuously following the path of his mentor.

As Ayvazoğlu also points out, Nadir Nadi was not in the room when the fainting event happened and he created a fantastic scenario based on what he heard regarding the event. Bürün does not mention Nadi's name among those who were at the newspaper at that moment. Bedii Faik recorded in his memoirs that Nadi also had his share of Fikret Adil's gossips. According to Faik, Nadir Nadi and Muharrem Fevzi Togay dropped the coffee cups they were holding in their hands in fear when Peyami fainted.¹⁵⁵

5. CONCLUSION

The reasons which have all along been put forth regarding the fainting of Peyami Safa, one of the most significant personalities of the Turkish literature, journalism and intellectual life who lived all his life in struggle, has not been subjected to a serious critique. It never seems possible in the light of all the evidence at hand that the reasons of his fainting were based on his being an admirer of Hitler, a Nazi supporter, yet a German collaborator. Above all, he could not be a coward, a reactionary or an enemy of Atatürk, which Nadi accused him of being so.

Peyami Safa wrote the first serious critical analysis essays of the Turkish revolution on a book-scale, searched for a synthesis of the East and West¹⁵⁶; managed to write the most analytical texts of the Turkish right on the topics he studied¹⁵⁷; ceaselessly read imbued with the spirit of research to feed his intelligence and mind and stated that he would not easily surrender his brain to the conformism of any ideology with the following words: *"In terms of my nature, I am inclined to doubt rather than to believe. My faith is the victory of research, criticism and knowledge which is won against doubt step by step."*¹⁵⁸ He was called *"the man with a golden brain"* and a French professor described him as *"One of the exceptional brains the world has ever raised. A man of art who can understand and explain everything at an instant... A master of philosophy who got creativity in his hand."*¹⁵⁹ According to Topçu, he was a splendid force of critique, a power which protects our press from primitiveness, a sophist

¹⁵⁴ The first article he wrote after his illness was entitled "Bir Devrin Sonu", which was dated 3 October 1939.

¹⁵⁵ Faik, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁶ Lee, *op. cit.*, pp.11-12-45.

¹⁵⁷ Ögün, "Türk Muhafazakârlığı", p. 130.

¹⁵⁸ Göze, *Peyami Safa*, p. 20, 116.

¹⁵⁹ Kösoğlu, *op. cit.*, p. 46.



master against dogmatists, a Voltaire standing against anarchism.¹⁶⁰ That is, he was not a dreamy and miserable coward who did not know what he was doing, as Nadi says!

Writings against Peyami regarding the fainting event were the result of an ideological attitude. They were based on his being a Turkish nationalist and anticommunist, and his struggle. The particular reason of Nadi's attitude was based on the fact that Cumhuriyet had changed its line and placed itself on the left. He endeavoured to use Peyami as an argument when confessing the sins of the past and take advantage of the hatred of the left towards him.

This example presents how much it is necessary to be careful against memoirs when studied as resources of history.

Regardless of who he is, degrading a Turkish intellectual of the same rank as Peyami Safa to such a low level should be regarded as the insult and even denial of the Turkish intellectual himself.

¹⁶⁰ Göze, Peyami Safa, p.122.



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