

THE PROCESS OF THE POLITICIZATION OF THE KURDISH
IDENTITY IN TURKEY: THE KURDS AND THE TURKISH LABOR PARTY
(1961-1971)

by

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Title: The Process of the Politicization of the Kurdish Identity in Turkey: the Kurds and the Turkish Labor Party (1961–1971)

This thesis examines a much-misunderstood period of mobilization and politicization of Kurds in Turkey, a period that has often been assumed to have been an era of revival for Kurdish nationalism. It rejects the idea of revival of Kurdish nationalism during the 1960s. It postulates that what happened during this period can be seen only as formative years for the next generation of Kurdish nationalist who inherited so much from the interaction between Kurdish ethnicity and socialist terminology of those years. It examines the role and impact of new generation of Kurdish intellectuals on the politicization of the Kurdish identity in the 1960s and the affiliation between the Turkish Labor Party and Kurdish political entrepreneurs between 1960 and 1971.

One of the main points is to examine the relationship between Kurdish nationalism (or Kurdish ethnic awareness) and Turkish Socialism. In addition to the TLP's documents and publications, several publications from the time and interviews with former Kurdish activists were used in the preparation of this thesis. Theoretically, it is based on the concept of an ethnoregional movement which is an amalgamation of ethnic and economic demands, and most of the time attracts relatively a young generation of intellectuals of ethnic minority groups who do not have the same resources as their counterparts and who strive to find new channels to obtain them. Finally, it asserts that the shift from the "Eastern Question," which was regarded as an issue of economic backwardness and that would be swept away once socialism came to power, to the "Kurdish Question," which drew attention mainly to ethnic reasons for the economic backwardness of the East and Southeast regions of Turkey, was a result of the closed doors of the Turkish political system and intra-TLP conflicts as well as intra-Kurdish elite conflicts.

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Başlık: Kürt Kimliğinin Türkiye'deki Politikleşme Süreci: Kürtler ve Türkiye İşçi Partisi (1961–1971)

Bu tez, Kürtlerin mobilizasyonunda ve politikleşmesi sürecinde yanlış anlatılmış ve Kürt milliyetçiliğinin yeniden dirilmesi olarak kabul edilen bir zaman aralığına ışık tutmak için yapılan bir teşebbüstür. Kürt milliyetçiliğinin yeniden canlanması fikrini reddedip, altmışlarda cereyan eden şeyin ancak o yıllarda Kürt etnisitesi ile sosyalist terminoloji arasındaki etkileşimden çok fazla miras alan bir sonraki Kürt milliyetçi kuşağının biçimlendirici yılları olarak görülebileceğini iddia etmektedir. Türkiye İşçi Partisi ile Kürt siyaset girişimcilerinin 1961 ile 1971 arasındaki yaklaşması dikkatle incelenmekte, temel ilgi Kürt milliyetçiliği ile Türk sosyalizmi arasındaki etkileşime verilmektedir. Türkiye İşçi Partisi belge ve yayınlarına ek olarak, dönemle ilgili değişik yayınlar, bu harekette yer almış kişilerle yapılan mülakatlar bu tezin hazırlanmasında kullanılmıştır. Teorik açıdan, etnik ve iktisadi taleplerin bir karışımı olan ve genelde etnik grupların, akranları gibi benzer kaynaklara sahip olmayan, bunları elde etmek için yeni kanallar için çabalayan, nispeten genç entelektüellerini cezbeden etno-bölgesel hareketlere dayanmaktadır. Son olarak, iktisadi bir gerikalmışlık sorunu olarak görülen ve sosyalizmin başa geçmesiyle silinip gideceği iddia edilen 'Doğu Sorunu'ndan, Türkiye'nin Doğu ve Güneydoğu bölgelerindeki bu iktisadi gerikalmışlığın etnik nedenlerine ana ilgiyi çeken 'Kürt Sorunu'na geçişin Türkiye'nin yasal sisteminin kapalı olması ile Türkiye İşçi Partisi içi çatışmaların ve Kürt münevverleri arasındaki uyuşmazlıkların bir neticesi olduğunu iddia etmektedir.

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"This work is dedicated to those who have been tortured and killed anywhere in the world for having different political views from their torturers."

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PREFACE

This thesis examines the politicization and ethnicization of the Kurdish identity in Turkey. First of all, this is an attempt to clarify exactly how it happened. For anyone acquainted with the subject, the very first explanation is that Kurds are Kurds, and they have been so from the beginning of their existence. Furthermore, the Kurdish movement has always been viewed internally as a struggle against oppression, as is often the case in many nationalist movements. Yet the questions remain why so many have struggled for the good of an unborn nation. And specifically why has the greatest effort been made by intellectuals, those who are relatively well-off? Why have the ordinary people, peasants and proletariat, been absent from this movement? Moreover, how can such a narrow movement have become so factionalized and polarized by internal struggles?

The answer to these questions also account for the politicization of the Kurdish identity too. Although there are quite sophisticated answers outside the limits of contemporary political science and history, i.e., human nature, the theory of evolution, etc. which basically argue that reciprocity and expectation of future benefits are the reasons for it, this thesis seeks to answer these questions by scrutinizing the political history of the leading cadres of the Kurdish movement and the affiliation with the Socialist movement in the 1960s.

One of the first explanations is related to the changing and declining living standards and loss of influence that Kurdish intellectuals and notables had in society following the 1960s. A small minority of Kurds were able to strengthen their power by allying with the central authorities. This power came at the cost of maintaining the status quo in regions with large Kurdish populations. As a result, when a more

radical generation of Kurdish students emerged during the 1950s, their greatest opposition was found in the entrenched interests of the established Kurdish leaders. This new generation of Kurdish intellectuals was forced to find new channels from which to acquire power and influence. Following the military coup in 1960, junior Kurdish intellectuals did not have access to the same resources that their predecessors had. This pre-coup generation is called the *58ler* (58ers, who held leading positions in the political movements in the late 1950s and during the 1960s). Although the second generation of Kurdish intellectuals was highly influenced by the work and struggle of the 58ers cohort, by the late 1960s they would adopt a new course of action. This second wave is termed the *68ler* (68ers), eventually followed by the *78ler* (78ers), which was even more radical than the two waves preceding it. These generations came into extreme conflict with one another over the proper ideology and path to national liberation.

These three waves of Kurdish activists grew up in markedly different material circumstances. Principally, the 58ers enjoyed a much higher degree of wealth and social prestige than the 68 and 78ers, who were drawn from much poorer segments of society. There is the example of Musa Anter, who was assassinated in 1992 and had been an indefatigable contributor to Kurdish culture, and for whom many Kurds had great respect. His memoirs capture the changing features of Kurdish intellectuals and elites in the 1950s and 60s. At the beginning of his memoirs he wrote,

Recaizade Ercument Ekrem Talu describes and introduces the place where he was born and his family home as such; ‘the Marmara region is the most civilized region in Turkey; Istanbul is the most beautiful city in the region of Marmara; the Bosphorus is the most elegant neighborhood of Istanbul; Sarıyer is the most lovely district in Istanbul; Yenı McHale is the most distinguished quarter of the Sarıyer and the mansion of the Recaizades is the most wonderful mansion in Yeni Mahalle. ... here is where I was born.

Of course, Anter writes, he was Rezaizade Ekrem's son. Now, let us look at me:

Kurdistan is the most backward region in Turkey; Mardin is the most backward province in Kurdistan; Nusaybin is the most distressed district in Mardin; Stilile (Akarsu) is the poorest rural community in Nusaybin; Zivinge (Eski Magara) is the most backward village in Akarsu, and here I, according to state register of persons, was born in Cave Number 2 of this village.¹

If one does not read the rest of the book his story seems very sad. Anter also mentions that the tribe he belonged to consisted of approximately 20–25 villages and he had as much as 1000 *donum* of land, and other properties and was the son of a landowner and got married to a prominent sheik's daughter. During his election campaign in 1965, he mentioned that his relatives had presented a jeep to him, an extraordinary luxury at the time.² Anter's approach epitomizes the split in Kurdish thinking at the time. Although this generation enjoyed a high level of material wealth, they still claimed to be part of the poorest of the poor. In their minds, compared to the extremely wealthy Turkish elites they were still poor.

When I was studying in the TÜSTAV's archives, I came across a picture of Mehmet Ali Aybar, studying in his villa in Kuzguncuk. I also came across some stories about the village of *Şikevta* (which literally means cavernous) in Batman. Aybar and socialists and Kurdish intellectuals often condemned the fact that people were still living in such conditions and declared that socialism would improve their

¹ “Rezaizade Ercüment Ekrem Talu, yaşantısını anlatırken doğum yeri ve baba ocağını şöyle tanıtır; “Marmara Bölgesi Türkiye'nin en uygar bölgesidir; İstanbul, Marmara'nın en güzel şehridir; Boğaziçi, İstanbul'un en latif semtidir. Sarıyer, İstanbul'un en şirin kazasıdır. Yeni Mahalle Sarıyer'in en üstün mahallesidir ve Rezaizadelerin köşkü Yeni mahallenin en harika köşküdür... İşte ben burada doğdum.”

Tabii, O, Rezaizade Ekrem'in oğlu idi. Şimdi bir de bana bakalım:

“Kürdistan, Türkiye'nin en geri bölgesidir; Mardin, Kürdistan'ın en geri ilidir; Nusaybin, Mardin'in en dertli ilçesidir; Stililé (Akarsu), Nusaybin'in en fakir nahiyesidir; Zivingé (Eski Mağara), Stililé'nin en geri kalmış köyüdür ve işte ben, bu köyün, nüfus kütüğüne göre, 2 numaralı mağarasında doğmuşum.” Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım 1-2* (İstanbul: Avesta, 1999) p.17.

² Ibid., p.214.

livelihoods. A crucial difference between the pioneering 58ers and the following 68ers is their backgrounds. Both Kurdish and Turkish students and intellectuals came into conflict with their predecessors over the solution to the poverty and ethnic divisions in Turkey. The 58ers took a more moderate approach to societal change while the 68ers, who came from poorer backgrounds and in a great uncertainty about their futures, were radical in regards to their demand for immediate social and economic revolution.

Overall, this thesis, which comprises five main chapters including a conclusion endeavors to understand the political history of the 1958 and 1968 generations in general and the affiliation between Kurdish intellectuals and the Turkish Labor Party (TLP) in particular and the way they transformed Kurdish identity. It is far beyond the scope of this study to elaborate on all actors and the matters; this thesis instead is focused on the leading cadre of Kurdish intellectuals who both reconstituted the politics in the East and Southeast regions and changed the meaning of the Kurdish identity by adding a new terminology during the 1960s.

The first chapter starts with a literature survey and argues that the process of the politicization of the Kurdish identity cannot wholly be explained by both the nationalist and historicist approach. Therefore, an alternative approach is used to take the Kurdish movement out of its contentious political and historical context and view it as an ethnoregional movement. The crucial difference between seeing the Kurdish movement as an ethnoregional and nationalist one is to distance what was really a struggle to improve the material and cultural conditions in the region from attempts to paint this period as a struggle for national independence.

While the Kurdish ethnoregional movement of the 1950s to 1960s did not display a high degree of Kurdish separatism, the historical record strongly indicates

that the aims of both generations were to improve the lives of Kurds inside of Turkey and to fully integrate themselves into Turkish society and the political system. Since then the Kurdish movement has become far more nationalist than socialist in character and much of the work and writings of the past generation have been co-opted to this end. I will attempt to separate fact from fiction in this regard and definitively examine the true aims and goals of the Kurdish movement and leaders at the time.

In the second chapter, I provide a historical background of what is called Kurdish nationalism and the transformation of Turkey's social and political life. Then, I elaborate more on political change in the late 1950s and 1960s regarding Kurds. The second chapter also includes a discussion of the infamous arrest of 49 prominent Kurds and the banning of periodicals and journals published by Kurds in the 1960s.

In the third chapter, I examine the Kurdish ethnoregional movement, which blended Kurdish ethnicity and language with developmentalism and was used in an attempt to garner popular support by the TLP. This attempt to fuse economic development with cultural pride was not specific to Turkey, but also can be viewed occurring simultaneously in Europe.

For this study, I used several interviews with the most prominent figures of the Kurdish movement, including Mehmet Ali Aslan, Tarık Ziya Ekinçi, Mehdi Zana, and Ömer Ağin. Journals and dailies published by the Kurds during the 1960s such as *Dicle-Fırat*, *Deng*, *Yeni Akış*, as well as mainstream Turkish newspapers and periodicals such as *Cumhuriyet* and *Yön* were used in this thesis. Memoirs play an important role in this study (almost all of Kurdish activists have written memoirs), as well as a literature survey of a wide range of secondary sources related to the Kurds

and the Turkish Left in Kurdish, Turkish and English languages. The Turkish Labor Party (TLP) is an important unit of analysis, and so the party programmes, statutes and publications were collected from the archive of TÜSTAV (*Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı*) and fully analyzed. Finally, the statistical data used in this study was collected from *Devlet İstatistik Kurumu*'s (State Statistical Institute) publications.

According to my theoretical conceptualization, the Kurdish ethnoregional movement during the 1960s was created not by one single actor, but existed as a dynamic process espoused by many people and factions at the time. The main actors were the New Turkey Party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (clandestine Kurdish nationalist party, founded in 1965, TKDP), the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey (clandestine party, T'de KDP), the TLP, Kurdish students in general and the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (DDKO in its Turkish acronym). The third chapter ends with a final analysis of the three most prominent Kurdish actors of this period, the NTP, the TKDP, and the T de KDP.

The fourth chapter, which constitutes the bulk of this study, deals with the TLP and the Kurdish socialist or *Doğulu* (Easterners). This chapter scrutinizes the affiliation between Turkish socialist and Kurdish groups. It reveals how this affiliation was constructed and how it changed the politics in the south and southeast of Turkey. By focusing on the election results at the regional level, and the demonstrated support by the constituency there, it gives a detailed analysis of the political experience of the TLP and its militants in the region.

The fourth chapter also brings our attention to the conflict that occurred between the different Kurdish groups in an attempt to strengthen their own positions at the expense of those of the other groups. In addition to analyzing the elections, this chapter also goes on to look at the Eastern Meetings, massive protests that were

organized and directed by the TLP and the TKDP militants. The DDKOs, which served as the umbrella organization under which disaffected Kurdish students gathered across the country, proved to have the greatest affect on the ethnoregional Kurdish movement. Unlike the TLP and other 58ers, who viewed the Kurdish question primarily as an economic one, the DDKOs were instrumental in transforming this question into an ethnic and nationalist one. The final chapter concludes my arguments and makes some comments on the similarity between the 1960s and the contemporary situation in terms of party politics in the region.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: ETHNOREGIONAL MOVEMENTS VS. NATION-STATES' NATIONALISM

The first part of this chapter focuses on the existing literature and analyzes how authors approach the subject of this thesis, the Kurdish movement and the affiliation between the Turkish Labor Party (1961-1971) and Kurdish intellectuals. After doing that, the theory of nationalism and the ethnoregional movement, which employed as the theoretical approach, will be scrutinized.

Literature Survey

The Kurdish movement in Turkey has been analyzed in the context of nationalism and regarded as a reaction to the dominant Turkish nationalism. There are numerous studies which tend to portray Kurdish movement as a continuous process the aim of which has been to obtain independence or separation from the Turkish Republic. These studies generally do not give any weight to the particular activities of the Kurds in Turkey in the 1960s. Rather, they either focus on the single-party era rebellions or on the *Partiya Karkerê Kurdistan* (the PKK, in its Kurdish acronym) after 1980. Whether academic or not, they suppose that Kurds' awareness of their distinct identity and the Kurdish ambition to control their own destiny have been there since the advent of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, that is to say from the nineteenth century. Martin van Bruinessen, for example, argues that Kurdish ethnicity is much older than Kurdish nationalism, which, according to him, is as old as other

nationalisms that flourished during the last days of the Ottoman Empire.³ It is true that Kurdish ethnicity is quite old; its politicization, however, still is not. The bulk of Kurdish intellectuals as well as Kurdish society became politicized after the 1960s, along with the ethnicization of Kurdish identity.

Another problem existing in the literature about the Kurds and the Kurdish movement is that while they employ theories of nationalism to explain the suppression of other ethnic identities within the Turkish nation-state, they do not problematize the development of Kurdish self-awareness in any serious way. They simply regard Kurdish nationalism as a natural response to the Turkish state discourse. Moreover, their approach seems to be mostly partial in general since they do not criticize, but rather justify how Kurdish identity has been politicized or, to some extent, created.

Almost all of the great works of Kurdish history in Turkey seem to have a primordialist approach to Kurdish nationalism. It is therefore unsurprising that the question of how the Kurdish identity developed and what it has meant in different periods in time is not tackled. Abbas Vali's article, in which he compares both primordialist and ethnicist approaches and three major nationalist attempts to construct Kurdish history and identity, is an exception.⁴ Vali points out that Kurdish ethnicity and Kurdish nationalism are regarded as the same thing by the nationalist reading of Kurdish history. Ali Kemal Özcan, for example, while arguing, "the new Turkish state, with its new, solid Turkish nationalism, invented a Turkish nation precisely according to the generalizations of Gellner, Hobsbawn and many other

³ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problems," in *The Kurds; A Contemporary Overview*, eds. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p.47.

⁴ Abbas Vali, "Genealogies of the Kurds: Constructions of Nation and National Identity in Kurdish Historical Writing," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), pp. 58-105.

scholars.”⁵ However, throughout his book, he does not discuss how Kurdish nationalism was created or how it affected Kurdish self-awareness. Bruinessen argues in the same vein that “Kurdish nationalism had developed largely in reaction to political and cultural domination by Turks, Persians and Arabs and to their attempts at assimilation.”⁶ Again, a detailed discussion is absent.

The Islamist view that Kurdish nationalism was a product of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the shift between systems of identities based on religion to one based on race and ethnicity has also been influential.⁷ As such, the Kurdism of the pre-republican period expressed in journals such as *Kürdistan* and *Jîn* was completely different to the movement that developed in the 1960s.

Although domestic and international environment are quite important, among the factors which led to the above-mentioned change in Kurdish ethnonationalism is the role of the Kurdish elite. As Hamit Bozarslan accurately demonstrates, early Kurdish nationalism was an intellectual creation which failed to pass beyond the existing social structure and give Kurds a united and single identity.⁸

That in the post-Ottoman world the rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s indicated that Kurdish nationalism played a unifying role in Kurdish society is not convincing in many respects. For instance, as Bozarslan argues, the bulk of the

⁵ Ali Kemal Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds; A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p.83.

⁶ Martin Van Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society and the Modern State: Ethnic Nationalism versus Nation-Building” p.44.

⁷ Mustafa Akyol's thesis is a good example of this approach. See Mustafa Akyol, *The Origin of Turkey's Kurdish Question: An Outcome of The Breakdown of The Ottoman Ancien Regime*, M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, The Atatürk Institute of Modern Turkish History, 2006.

⁸ Hamit Bozarslan, “Political Aspects of the Kurdish Problem in Contemporary Turkey,” in *The Kurds; A Contemporary Overview*, ed. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p.100.

participants in the Kurdish insurrections of the 1920s and 1930s took part in the name of tribes and religion. They were not provoked by the fact that the state was Turkish *per se*, but because the state was perceived as an outsider.⁹

Many scholars who have studied the Kurdish issue in Turkey have focused on the hostility of Kemalism toward opposition and claimed that the Kemalist reforms aimed to suppress only the Kurds in Turkey. However, this thesis dwells on the argument that the Kemalist establishment was against any sort of opposition and was not just against Kurds but all manifestations of opposition to the state's ideology. Walter F. Weiker, in his remarkable book, argues that the Second Group of 1922-3 and the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) of 1924-5 had to be suppressed on two grounds; first that they challenged Mustafa Kemal's personal leadership; second, they sympathized with a public that desired a significantly slower pace of reform.¹⁰ What is missing in the existing literature is that most works do not make any distinction between the forces breaking away from Kemalist ideology. As Anthony Giddens argues, the development of an absolutist state was undoubtedly associated with major advances in internal pacification,¹¹ which is in the Turkish case was a consolidation of powers by the Kemalist movement.

Especially while dealing with Kurds after the single-party era (1925-1945) the issues are generally linked to the Turkish nation-state's policies, most of which aimed to assimilate Kurds, and deny the very existence of Kurds within its boundaries. As

⁹Hamit Bozarslan,. "Why the Armed Struggle?" Understanding the Violence in Kurdistan of Turkey," In *The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey*, eds. Ferhad Ibrahim and Gülistan Gürbey. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p.17.

¹⁰ Walter F. Weiker, *Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1973), p.44.

¹¹ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-state and Violence*, (Berkeley: University of California press, 1984), p.89.

will be shown, the Turkish state's policies towards the Kurds evidently were the strictest of all the states in which Kurds lived.

Yet, the transformation of Kurdish masses cannot be explained in line with what Azad Zana Gündoğan argues in his important thesis on the Eastern Meetings in the mid-1960s. Gündoğan claims that the main reason or force behind the popular support of the Democrat Party (DP, ruling party between 1950 and 1960) among the Kurds was the repressive policies over the Kurdish population during single-party regime.¹² Nader Entessar shares this approach, arguing that the Kurds voted overwhelmingly for the DP in reaction to the suppression of the Kurds by Kemalist policies.¹³

However, Kurdish support was only won when the *traditional Kurdish notables* who had been exiled from the region were allowed to return. The lower orders of Kurdish society most likely swung behind the DP because of the influence of these very narrow elite not because they were alienated from Kemalism. Furthermore, without mentioning the DP's populist policies, which generally favored landed interests, any attempt to explain why Kurds preferred the DP rather than the RPP seems to be incomplete. As Sabri Sayarı pointed out, in the regions where Kurds predominantly lived, "the differential between the combined Justice Party, (successor of the DP)-RPP vote in 1969 and DP-RPP vote in 1950 is nearly 49 per cent in the southeast."¹⁴

¹² Azat Zana Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Political Mobilization in the 1960s: The Case of "the Eastern Meetings"* M.A Thesis, Middle East Technical University, Political Science and Public Administration, 2005, p.80.

¹³ Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), p.87.

¹⁴ Sabri Mustafa Sayarı, *Party Politics in Turkey: Dimensions of Competition and Organization*, Columbia University, 1972, Ph.D. dissertation, p.75-76.

What did the DP do in terms of easing the Kurdish issue? The main contribution was the relaxation of religious restrictions. Otherwise, the DP's policies towards Kurds and Kurdish identity were the same as those of the RPP. Although it is true that the DP won the majority of the seats in the general elections of 1954 and 1957, this particular explanation does not explain why it gained in more or less the same proportion in the other regions as well. Nor does it tell us why Kurds did not vote for the JP in the 1960s as they did for the DP in the 1950s.

With regard to the 1960s and the affiliation between the left and the new Kurdish elite and intellectuals, most existing literature follows the same explanation. First of all, the "Eastern question," "Kurdish issue" and "Kurdish nationalism" are read as the same thing and used interchangeably. It is true that especially after 1908, sophisticated Kurdish nationalist groups and organizations, such as *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Association for the Advancement of Kurdistan-1919), *Azadi* (Independence-1923) or *Xoybun* (Stay origin-1927) were established. However, it is not correct to argue that the Kurdish movement in the 1960s too was primarily nationalist-cum-separatist¹⁵

As Bruinessen emphasizes, in the 1960s, political and socio-economic developments along with migration from the villages to the big cities in western Turkey caused many Kurds to become aware of both the cultural differences between eastern and western Turkey and of the highly unequal economic development.¹⁶ Emrullah Uslu claims that the transformations in the economy, the political space and education were the primary causes for the revival of the Kurdish nationalist

Nor is it correct to see the Kurdish groups that formed between 1908 and 1914 as primarily nationalist. See, Djene Bajalan, *Kurds for the Empire: "the Young Kurds,"* M.A Thesis, Bilgi University, 2009.

¹⁶ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: the Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan,* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1992), p.32.

movement.¹⁷ First of all, I would like to argue that there was no revival of the Kurdish nationalist movement. By contrast, during the 1960s, what prevailed was *Doğuculuk* (Eastism). It was only after the failure of *Doğuculuk* that the Kurdish movement opted for a nationalist solution to the Kurdish issue. Furthermore, even if it were assumed that there was a revival of Kurdish nationalism this cannot be explained merely by socio-political structural transformations. Hence, I argue that Kurdish nationalist movement was a response to the failure of *Doğuculuk* and that the later revival of Kurdish nationalism cannot be explained merely by sociopolitical explanations.

In terms of the co-operation between Leftists and a new generation of Kurdish elites and intellectuals, the following approach seems to be the best example of how the literature on the Kurdish movement views the 1960s. According to Barkey and Fuller, “it was a period of left-wing mobilization, and many politically active Kurds threw their lot in with the Turkish Left in search of their ‘national rights’.”¹⁸ As will be elaborated in the following chapters this argument is not accurate either. Again, there is no mention of the role of the new elites, most of who could not fight with the existing elites (both Turkish and Kurdish) and therefore started to seek different ways to obtain power.

Another striking example is David Romano’s book. All of his information about this period relies on David McDowall’s book. What he argues is that “not surprisingly, Kurds joined the new leftist movements in disproportionate numbers, and the experience they garnered in the Turkish Left would later help provide the

¹⁷ Emrullah Uslu, *The Transformation of Kurdish Political Identity in Turkey: Impact of Modernization, Democratization and Globalization*, Ph.D. dissertation, Middle East Studies/Political Science, University of Utah, 2009, p.119.

¹⁸ Henri J. Barkey and Graham E.Fuller, *Turkey’s Kurdish Question*, foreword by Morton Abramowitz, Lanham (Boulder, New York and Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, inc. 1998), p.15.

foundations for the emergence of a non-traditional, Kurdish intellectual and revolutionary elite.”¹⁹ He does not give any statistics on how many Kurds joined the leftist movement or why they joined. Although McDowall’s book is one of the most important books in the field, the way he describes the result of the new Kurdish elite joining the Turkish Labor Party (TLP) and the subsequent process of this affiliation are confusing. He argues that:

Frustrated with the TLP’s reticence over the Kurdish question, [Tarık Ziya] Ekinici and other colleagues formed autonomous cells within the party from 1966. After he had become party secretary-general in 1968, and a fellow Kurd, Mehmet Ali Aslan, had become party president the following year, a major effort was made to persuade the party to address the Kurdish question head on. Aslan had made a reputation for himself as the editor of *Yeni Akış* which openly advocated recognition of national rights for the Kurds. At the TLP’s Fourth Congress in October 1970 the party affirmed: there is a Kurdish people in the East of Turkey... the fascist authorities representing the ruling classes have subjected the Kurdish people to a policy of assimilation and intimidation which has often become a bloody repression.²⁰

As will be seen in the following chapters, McDowall not only overlooks the split among those Kurds who were members or supporters of the party (generally known as *Doğulu* or Easterners), but also misrepresents the fact that when the party affirmed the above-mentioned resolution, Tarık Ziya Ekinici and Kemal Burkay, two of the most influential members, abstained from voting and did not support the resolution. Moreover, Mehmet Ali Aslan argues that he himself tried to persuade the party not to affirm it since it would provoke the government into closing the party.²¹ In other words, they did not support the resolution which McDowall depicts as a result of their pressure upon the party.

¹⁹ David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movements; Opportunity, Mobilization, and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.41.

²⁰ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p.407.

²¹ Mehmet Ali Aslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31 January 2009.

Another controversial issue is *Doğuculuk* or Eastism, a movement which put great emphasis on the region's underdevelopment and to a certain extent, on Kurdish cultural and political rights, all of which, according to its advocates, were in accordance with the Constitution of 1961. This thesis argues that *Doğuculuk* was the beginning of what can be called the "Kurdish ethnoregional movement." The existing literature mainly argues that *Doğuculuk* was a transitory period in the rebirth of the Kurdish national movement.²² According to Bruinessen, "the East" meant "Kurdistan," as everyone knew, but in order to maintain legality no open reference to Kurdistan or Kurds could be made.²³

However, I argue that the East, for *Doğucus*, meant a constituency, which would bring them political privileges. Therefore, they not only used the socialist rhetoric, but also linked it with the existing situation in the region, that is to say, to the economic backwardness and suppression of the Kurdish ethnicity and identity. I agree with Ebru Erdem when she compares Tajiks and Kurds and argues that "ethnicity becomes salient under conditions where new ethnic elites find it possible and profitable to compete politically and where a potential constituency prefers them over the existing elites."²⁴

Finally, the separation of *Doğuculuk* from the leftist or socialist movement, especially in the late 1960s is worth mentioning here. According to Mesut Yeğen, in addition to the nature of the Kurdish issue, the insistence of Kurdish leftists on

²² Nezan Kendal, "Kurdistan in Turkey" in *A People Without a Country; The Kurds & Kurdistan*, ed. Gerard Chaliand (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1993), p.67.

²³ Martin Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds in Turkey," in Martin Van Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-Building States: Collected Essays*, (Istanbul: the Isis Press, 2000), p.229.

²⁴ Ebru Erdem, *Political Salience of Ethnic Identities: A Comparative Study of Tajiks in Uzbekistan and Kurds in Turkey*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, Political Science, September 2006, p.iv.

organizing apart from their Turkish counterparts was a decisive factor behind the separation from Turkish socialists, who did not deny the existence of the Kurdish question but, however, did not prioritize it.²⁵ On the contrary, Erdem mentions it as a decision made by those Kurds who had been active in leftist organizations and then somehow broke away from the leftist movement.²⁶ The disagreement between leftists and Kurds in terms of the Kurdish issue, especially for the *Doğulus*, was not salient initially. However, with respect to how to attain power or solve the question, both sides, Kurdish leftists and Turkish leftists, became more clear, especially after a younger generation of Kurdish intellectuals, such as students or young graduates entered the debate.

Alice Marcus, in her excellent book *Blood and Belief, the PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, in one of the most thorough studies on the matter, gives us many insights into the personality of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and a deep analysis of his leadership, as well as the organization and the way it deals with Kurdish people. Öcalan, as the leader of the biggest Kurdish organization, ordered the murders of several people in order to secure his leadership, among them some founders of the organization.²⁷ In our case, the issue of leadership is of key importance as well. The authoritarianism of the PKK has to be seen in the context of the importance that the leadership issue had played during the 1960s and 1970s.

To sum up, the existing literature on the Kurdish movement about the 1960s in general and its affiliation with the Turkish socialist and leftist movement does not do justice to the complexity of the situation. Seeing Kurdish nationalism as starting

²⁵ Mesut Yeğen, “Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt.8, Sol*, ed. Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p.1231.

²⁶ Erdem, p.50.

²⁷ Alice Marcus, *Blood and Belief, the PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, (New York University Press, 2007), p.134–135.

from the early nineteenth century and defeated by the Turkish nation-state by the late 1930s, going through a revival in the 1960s due to the relatively more liberal political atmosphere, does not give us a plausible explanation of why the politics in general and in the region in particular changed its direction during and after the 1960s. The existing literature does not give a convincing answer to the question of how the contemporary Kurdish identity, which inherited much from the discussions of the 1960s, was created and how many Kurds became politicized.

It is remarkable that during the 1977 elections the constituents of many provinces in the east voted for those who publicly declared that they were, to some extent, Kurdish nationalists. This pattern has more or less remained a constant feature of eastern politics with those seen as sympathizers with Kurdish nationalism forming one of the most important political blocs in the region. The voting pattern in this region has shown a drastic change in the last forty years, more so than any other region in Turkey. In the 2009 local elections, more than 40 per cent of votes in the region were won by those who either committed themselves to Kurdish nationalism, as a means of identity seeking or to at least pay more attention to the region's socioeconomic situation. In my opinion, this is not because Kurds, by nature, have voted for Kurdish nationalists, but because they have voted for those political parties whose policies have focused on the region in terms of both culture and economy.

As a departure point, the transformation can be linked with the subject of this study, the shift from a national perspective to a regional one. As early publications of Kurdish nationalism such as *Kürdistan*, the first Kurdish newspaper published between 1897 and 1909, and *Jin* (Life), a bilingual journal published in Kurdish and Turkish between 1918 and 1919 clearly show that Kurds were initially quite eager to integrate with the central state in many respects. This was the same even in the early

Republican era. However, their approach changed in the 1960s when many young Kurdish intellectuals endeavored to both regionalize the politics and politicize the constituents of the region, in accordance with a regionalized politics which put great emphasis on the ethnic distinctiveness of the people and economic backwardness of the region. The shift from a national perspective to a regional one also led to the split with Turkish socialists, who did not prioritize the region in the first place.

I argue that the period under investigation in this thesis is pivotal for our understanding of the process in which the modern Kurdish identity in Turkey has been shaped. It can be claimed that what we observe during the 1960s and the early 1970s diverges from the historicist narratives on the rise of Kurdish nationalism. First of all, during this period, most Kurdish organizations and actors, including Kurdistan Democrat Party of Turkey, a clandestine organization established in 1965 in the region, were in the stage of building their perspectives and ideological tendencies. They, contrary to common assumption, were not nationalist in the modern sense of the term that they advocated a political solution based on the creation of a Kurdish nation-state (or even a Kurdish autonomous homeland). They were seeking nothing more than integration with the Turkish public sphere. In this way, the demands were more concerned with integration than with separation.²⁸ However, they were not willing to abandon what they had inherited from their families and previous generations, which can be called “ethnicity.” My analysis led me to conclude that in advance, they were quite eager to participate and become visible in the Turkish public sphere, especially through national politics.

In order to achieve this goal, the Kurdish intelligentsia was quite pragmatic and ambitious in many respects. As I will deal with it more specifically in the next

²⁸ Hamit Bozarslan, “Political Aspects of the Kurdish Problem in Contemporary Turkey,” p.100.

chapters, they would try to participate in national politics through major parties, such as the Republican People's Party (RPP) or the Democrat Party (DP). It was after the foundation of the Turkish Labor Party (TLP) that many of the new Kurdish elites changed their direction from a national perspective to a regional one. Without understanding this, one cannot analyze properly the post-1960s developments in Turkish politics in general and Kurdish politics in particular. The Kurdish ethnoregional movement of the 1960s, by putting its entire emphasis on the region's economic situation and social and cultural problems, also paved the way to a regional perception in terms of politics. Prior to this, socialists and Kurdish activists had not seen the region as separate from other parts of Turkey. To be sure, Kurdish activists and leftists prior to the 1960s had seen that there were some specificities to the east, but generally they felt that these were linked to the problems of Turkey in general.

Contrary the experiences of other ethnoregional movements in the world, the Kurdish ethnoregional movement of the 1960s did not pave the way to autonomy or independence but rather for the emergence of ethnoregional political parties and organizations, as I specify in the following section. Moreover, it led to the politicization of the constituents of the region as well as ethnicization of the region's votes. All those movements that formed after the 1970s that declared that their main aim was the solution of the Kurdish issue or at the very least the promotion of Kurdish interests in Turkey can be seen as products of both the successes and failures of the movement of the 1960s.

In addition to the role of elite politics and power struggles, it is also important to see how these elites changed their views vis-à-vis the Kurdish problem. For example, by the late 1960s, it became clear that the constitution *per se* and the economic development could neither solve the question nor give them any prominent

role. This can be seen as the trigger behind why the Kurdish elites opted to play the ethnic card. As Erdem points out:

where ethnic groups have a regional base, political entrepreneurs can benefit most by playing the “ethnic card” because it allows them to mobilize as many people as possible in the region...the new elites position themselves against the state-local elite alliance, claim to be the true representatives of the ethnic group, and use the threat of secession to strengthen their hand in bargaining.²⁹

With regard to my theoretical arguments, I will argue that since playing the socialist card above the ethnic card during the 1960s failed to win the Kurdish elite a greater role in Turkish politics, and did not bring any results, conditions encouraged them to take a greater risk by focusing on the ethnic card or discourage them from any attempts to attain power in general and from politics in particular. Those who chose to take another risk, in the 1970s, as a result of the previous failure, focused mainly on ethnicity and esteemed only Kurdish nationalism. As a combination of what they experienced during the 1960s with the socialist movement and heritage of the single-party era Kurdish rebellions, modern Kurdish nationalism and its discourse overshadow what can be seen as not having been in the same line with it. Consequently, what we have seen in the previous pages with respect to the literature on the Kurdish movement, especially about 1960s, is a good example of this shift, which reconstitutes the past in accordance with how they want to see it now.

Ethnoregional Movements

The most important characteristic of the 1960s was, undoubtedly, the politicization and the polarization of politics in many countries. In addition to the

²⁹ Erdem, p.18.

socio-economic transformation of almost every society,³⁰ there was a revitalization of cultural and ethnic communities as well. It was an era of new nation-states as well as unprecedented socio-political transformation in many respects. Meanwhile, as Edward Shills indicates, “the separation of the uneducated masses immersed in their traditional culture from their rural backgrounds and the intellectuals who had modern educations were the factors causing changes in the social structure of practically all the new states.”³¹The message in both new states and old European nation-states as well as the United States, was that “if it was beautiful to be black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, or Indian, then it has to be more beautiful still to be Irish, Italian, Jewish, Polish, Ukrainian, Slovak, Greek, Armenian, or whatever your origins indicated that you could now be proud to know that you were.”³²

Along with the above-mentioned transformation, from the 1960s and particularly from the 1970s, a growing disenchantment with “explaining everything in economic and social terms” also led to the creation of another type of historiography, which is called new cultural historiography.³³ However, it was not until the mid-1970s that the omnipotent place of economic and social terms of theories, such as Marxism, and to certain extent Dependency Theory, which I will be briefly touching on in the following section, was challenged by ethnic and cultural terms. In the 1960s,

³⁰ See Eric Hobsbawn, *Kısa 20. Yüzyıl: 1914- 1991 Aşırıliklar Çağı*, trans.Yavuz Alogan (İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2006).

³¹ Edward Shills, “on the Comparative Study if the New States,” in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp.1-16.

³² Harold, R. Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe* (New York, Evanston, London: Harper& Row Publishers, 1975), p.210.

³³ S. H. Rigby, “History, Discourse, and the Postsocial Paradigm; A Revolution in Historiography,” *History and Theory* 45 (February 2006), pp. 110–123.

it was slowly being realized, ethnic identities survived through several generations far from drowning in the confluence of assimilation and acculturation.³⁴

Ethnic identity is important in understanding an ethnoregional movement because not only does ethnic identity, or ethnicity, serve as one of the two dimensions of an ethnoregional movement along with the regional economic situation, but also it serves as a catalyst in it. The other dimension of an ethnoregional movement is the regional economic deprivation or backwardness, which is usually associated with their distinct ethnic identity by the participants of the movement. To many of their followers, ethnicity and regional economic situation are closely interrelated, and in the Kurdish case in particular. Herein, I shall first briefly look at what ethnicity means and what I understand about an ethnic community.

It is important to stress at the outset, as Miroslav Hroch also argues, that we are very far from being able to explain all the major problems posed by the formation of modern nations.³⁵ It is also important to keep in mind that there is no commonly agreed definition for ethnicity or nationalism. As J. Milton Yinger notes, ethnicity, nationality, and country or origin are often used as synonyms.³⁶ Therefore, ethnicity, nationality and culture are generally used interchangeably. This pattern seems to be similar in terms of the ethnoregional movements, too.

Ethnicity can be defined as “a cultural phenomenon based on biological and social heritage; but it includes elements of class and territory as well.”³⁷ On the other

³⁴ Gregory Jusdanis, “Beyond National Culture?” *Boundary*, 2, no.1 (spring, 1995), pp.23–60.

³⁵ Miroslav Hroch “From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation,” *New Left Review* I/198 (Mar-Apr 1993), pp. 3–20.

³⁶ J. Milton Yinger, “Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 11 (1985), pp. 151–180.

³⁷ Charles R. Foster, “Political Culture and Regional Ethnic Minorities,” *The Journal of Politics*, 44, no. 2 (May, 1982), pp. 560–568.

hand, Horowitz argues that ethnicity is connected to birth and blood; group origins count, but exceptions are made. It is based on a myth of collective ancestry.³⁸ Since his definition of ethnicity does not include “culture which is transmitted socially across generations within a group, resulting in patterns of within-group similarity and between group differences,”³⁹ it fails to explain why some members of an ethnically conscious group, although they were born and have the same blood as the rest, do not express their identities in terms of ethnicity as the rest do.

In the broadest sense of the term, an ethnic group or *ethnies* as Anthony D. Smith uses, is supposed to be a cultural category, “distinguished by both members and outsiders as possessing the attributes of: an identifying name or emblem; a *myth* of common ancestry; shared historical memories and traditions; one or more elements of common culture; a link with and historic territory or ‘homeland’; a measure of solidarity, at least among elites.”⁴⁰

From this angle, ethnicity is much more a cultural phenomenon than birth and blood, or so-called biological heritage, which is based on someone’s own decision to accept his or her distinct culture no matter if it is based upon religion, race, language, and so on. In other words, “while the choice is clearly constrained by objective indicators of common ancestry - appearance, language, culture or territory - one cannot overlook the influence of rational considerations of costs and benefits or social

³⁸ Donald L Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley; Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), pp.52–3.

³⁹ David Buss, “Human Nature and Culture, An Evolutionary Psychological Perspective,” *Journal of Personality*, 60, no. 6 (December, 2001), pp.955-956.

⁴⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.13.

conditioning on an individual's identification with either the dominant culture, an ethnic group within it or, in certain circumstances, with both.”⁴¹

Until recently, ethnicity, as well as nationalism, has often been studied in the context of modernization. An important proposition of modernization theories is that the “various processes of modernization—industrialization, urbanization, increases in transportation and communication, the growth of mass education, and so on—lead to national integration and to the fading away of ethnic plurality in particular.”⁴² As Horowitz points out, there are three ways of relating ethnic conflict to the modernization process. “The first is to view ethnic conflict as a mere relic of an outmoded traditionalism, doomed to be overtaken by the incursions of modernity. The second is to regard ethnic conflict as a traditional but unusually stubborn impediment to modernization. The third is to interpret ethnic conflict as an integral part—even a product—of the process of modernization itself.”⁴³ Nonetheless, as Connor argues, as the ethnic demands of those whose ethnic identity had been considered nonexistent or excluded from political analysis, scholars feel compelled to proffer a pile of theories to explain this unanticipated social phenomenon.⁴⁴

Of course, reduced the costs of travel along with effective communications have accelerated social mobilization in general and ethnoregional movements in particular. These developments have made it possible for ethnic communities to

⁴¹ Foster, p.564.

⁴² Arend Lijphart, “Political Theories and the Explanation of Ethnic Conflict in the Western World: Falsified Predictions and Plausible Postdictions,” in *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, ed. Milton, J. Esman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Pres, 1977), p.48.

⁴³ Horowitz, pp.96-97.

⁴⁴ Walker Connor, “Ethnonationalism in the First World: The Present in Historical Perspective,” in *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, ed, Milton, J. Esman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Pres, 1977) p.23.

become much more aware of their distinctiveness than ever. Modernization also has another effect, called the “demonstration effect,” which has had a very discernible, chain-reaction impact upon the evolution of ethnic awareness.⁴⁵ Furthermore, as McCarty and Zald emphasize, means of communication, transportation, political freedoms affect the costs for any individual or organization allocating resources to the social movements.⁴⁶

Concerning the regional aspect, which is the second dimension of an ethnoregional movement, Milton Esman argues that modernization gives a chance to regional people to observe the differences in conditions firsthand, and their impressions are confirmed or accentuated by what they observe of people visiting their regions as well.⁴⁷ Due mainly to mirroring their region’s deprivation in terms of both economy and culture, these developments encourage ethnoregional activists. Finally, development as well as underdevelopment leads to a rise rather than a decline in ethnic mobilization, because it provides resources to ethnic groups increasing their bargaining position and organizational capacity for action.⁴⁸

What many of those who are involved in an ethnoregional movement would want to understand is the chasm between their states or regions and their ethnic groups. One of the first explanations of this was Dependency theory, which dates back to the late 1950s and claims that the underdevelopment of countries, mainly

⁴⁵ Connor, p.29-30.

⁴⁶ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 82, no. 6 (May, 1977), p.1224.

⁴⁷ Milton J. Esman, “Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict in Industrialized Societies,” in *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, ed. Milton, J. Esman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Pres, 1977), p.374.

⁴⁸ Rita Jalali and Seymour Martin Lipset, “Racial and Ethnic Conflicts: A Global Perspective,” in *Political Science Quarterly*, 107, no. 4 (Winter, 1992–1993), pp.596.

Third World countries, was a result of unequal relationships among states. Dependency is the source of underdevelopment.⁴⁹ The only way of avoiding dependency is creating an alternative system of production, a non-capitalist system of production, in one way or another as will be seen in the following sections, socialism was proposed as an alternative.⁵⁰ To recapitulate, the economic underdevelopment and deprivation had to be overcome not with the same path that prosperous countries or regions within a country achieved, but rather with socialism. In the following sections, I will be dealing with this particular emphasis on socialism in detail.

An ethnoregional movement, as mentioned above, is twofold. First, it is based on the ethnic distinctiveness of the population based upon ethnicity, religion, race, and language and so on and so forth, in a region; and second, it is based on the region's economic underdevelopment. It has been argued that ethnic elites' aspirations are governed by various factors such as leadership, the central government's responses, economic circumstances, the degree of distinctiveness, and majority-group attitudes, which can influence the intensity of collective ambitions.⁵¹ This is the case in Kurdish ethnoregional movement, too. An ethnoregional movement differs from social movements in a number of ways. First, although it is itself a social movement, using McCarty and Zald's term, it also undertakes resource mobilization, which has a number of strategic tasks such as "mobilizing supporters,

⁴⁹ Thomas, Martin, 'Marxism and Imperialism' *Workers' Liberty* 28 — available online at: <http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:04sPvohDIJ:archive.workersliberty.org/publications/readings/2001/empire.html+dependency+theory+workers%27+liberty+28&hl=tr&ct=clnk&cd=7>

⁵⁰ See also Harriet Friedmann, Jack Wayne. "Dependency Theory: A Critique". *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 2, no. 4 (Autumn, 1997), pp.399–416.

⁵¹ Marvin W. Mikesell and Alexander B. Murphy, "A Framework for Comparative Study of Minority-Group Aspirations," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 81, no. 4 (December 1991), p.584.

neutralizing and/or transforming mass and elite publics into sympathizers, achieving change in targets.”⁵²

Figure 1, which was drawn by me based on Esman’s and Mikesell and Murphy’s studies, shows how an ethnoregional movement operates and what conditions are needed. In other words, it tries to answer the following question asked by Esman: “What techniques of mobilization and politicization are employed by various ethnic movements, and what new forms of social and political organization have appeared to spearhead these movements?”⁵³

Although Esman does not include what I call “the refusal of assimilation or being a subordinate group,” five conditions are offered by him in order to explain the politicization of ethnic groups, which are applicable to the subject of this thesis as well. According to him, the five conditions seem necessary and sufficient to explain and predict the politicization of ethnic solidarities in the First World are as displayed in Figure 1:

⁵² McCarty and Zald make a distinction between traditional and resource mobilization which is quite important to see what kind of similarities as well as differences exists between two. See John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, p.1217.

⁵³ Esman, pp.371–372.

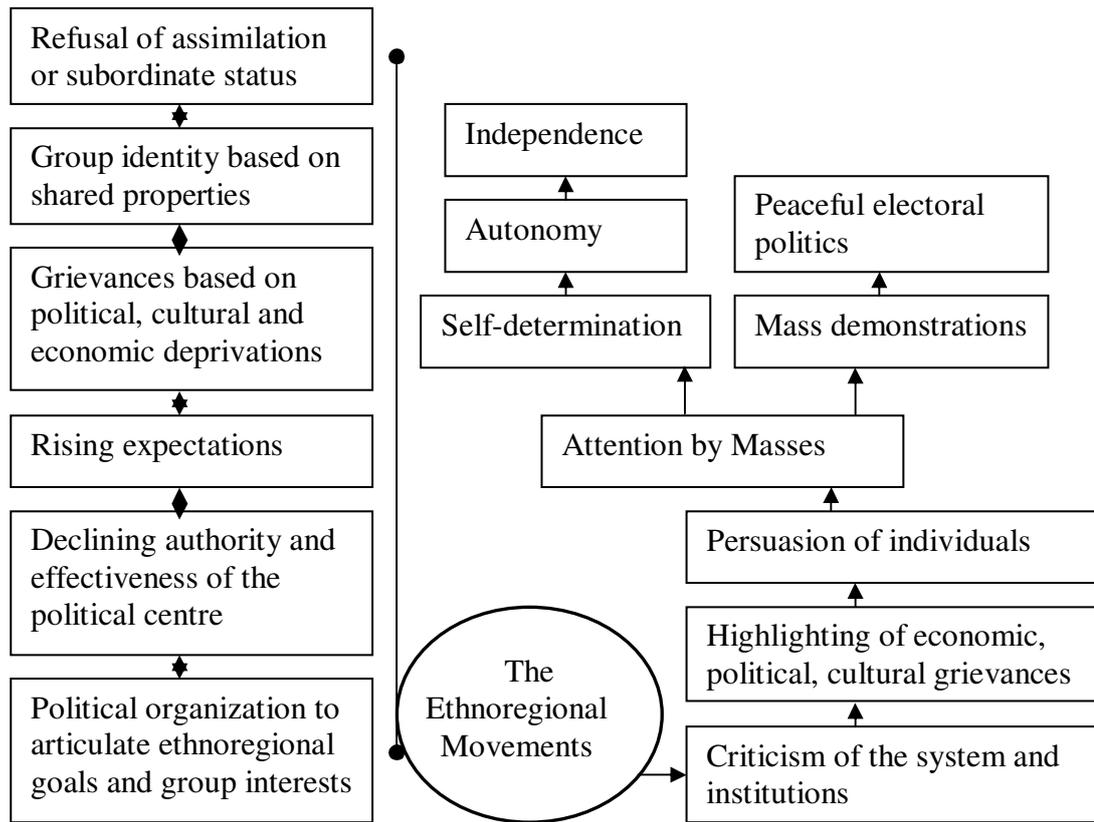


Figure 1 Ethnoregional movements

Source: It is drawn by the author on Milton J. Esman, "Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict in Industrialized Societies,"; and Marvin W. Mikesell and Alexander B. Murphy, "A Framework for Comparative Study of Minority-Group Aspirations,"

In addition to the above-mentioned conditions, the ethnoregional movements may politicize and socialize their members differently from each other. It is also true that they all have some common features, which are more or less the same for each movement. For instance, institutional structures and state policies play a major role in shaping and conditioning the emergence of such movements.⁵⁴ Accordingly, a deep crisis of the old order, with the breakdown of its legitimacy, and of the values and sentiments that sustained it is the precondition for the rise of almost every ethnoregional movements. It also is generally accepted that current ethnoregional movements are related to the rising discontent among the ethnic elites. Therefore, it is

⁵⁴ Jalali and Lipset, pp.596–597.

observed that “a substantial component of the ethnoregional movements consists of relatively well educated persons, including teachers and technicians, whose economic rewards, social recognition, or opportunities for the exercise of power and influence fall short of their expectations.”⁵⁵

As Figure 1 depicts, an ethnoregional movement, first of all, is based on existing grievances such as economic, political, and cultural ones. An ethnoregional movement employs the past as a defining element in the concept of ethnic identity of that population which it endeavors to influence. Therefore, the past, or history, deliberately is reread and hence historical myths as well as legends become more visible than ever. Of course, there is always a gap between the history which they learn from the previous generations, including reading materials, and the dominant one which national history claims to be the sole truth.⁵⁶ Now, however, history is utilized in order to not only bridge that gap but also to give an impetus to the movement *per se*.

The ethnoregional movements virtually lack an ideological form. Initially, they borrow from present ideologies to articulate their grievances. Thus, they use a vague language at the beginning and it is observed that many of the activists oscillate between nationalism, which is seen as a panacea to the cultural and political grievances, and a socialist rhetoric which is regarded as the sole solution to the backwardness of the region’s economy. Despite the fact that there is a different agenda peculiar to every ethnoregional movement, the whole system in general and institutions in particular are judged increasingly by many educated young people in terms of new aspirations for economic equality, group participation, political and

⁵⁵ Esman, p.375.

⁵⁶ Joseph B. Gittler (ed), *Understanding Minority Groups* (New York, John Wiley& sons, inc. 1956), p.129.

cultural rights.⁵⁷ In a similar manner, Esman rightfully argues that in addition to economic grievances which emerge in the regions, and the assistance seen as insufficient to meet rising expectations, cultural grievances are invoked frequently by ethnic activists to demonstrate the injustices perpetrated by an indifferent or hostile central government.⁵⁸

Persuasion of individuals, according to figure 1 is the next step that follows. The crux of the issue is that individuals must be persuaded that their interests are linked with the power of his ethnic group and his region.⁵⁹ Hence, they must be persuaded that their interests are linked with the power of the group representatives, that is to say, the elites who are now at the head of the movement who want to be elected or regarded as the avant-garde of the movement.⁶⁰ This process of shifting loyalties from religious and tribal ones to an ethnoregional one is worth taking into consideration since it changes peoples' allegiances so drastically that the entire society, both the country and the region will be affected by these changes afterwards.

Not surprisingly, as Karl W. Deutsch points out, socio-economic expectations of the people would change especially in such a way that the existing state machinery will not be able to compensate them. Deutsch sums up what is called the social mobilization process in the following words:

As people are uprooted from their physical and intellectual isolation in their immediate localities, from their old habits and traditions, and often from their old patterns of occupation... they experience drastic changes in their needs. They may now come to need provisions for housing and employment, for social security against illness... for medical care... They may need succor against the risks of cyclical or seasonal unemployment, against oppressive charges of rent or interest, and against sharp fluctuations in the prices of the

⁵⁷ Esman, p.375.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.373.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.378.

⁶⁰ Hroch, p.16.

main commodities which they must sell or buy. They need instruction for themselves and education for their children. They need, in short, a wide range and large amounts of new government services. These needs ordinarily cannot be met by traditional types of government.⁶¹

In order to draw a general conclusion about ethnoregional movements, as Hroch argues, we need to know more about the ethnically unconcerned or assimilated intelligentsias as well as ordinary people. However, it is not so easy to make a distinction between those who publicly support ethnoregional demands and those who neither support nor share the same concerns with them.⁶² Leaving aside the assimilated or unconcerned parts of the ethnic groups, it is important to briefly comment on what sort of factors play a role in both the socialization and politicization of an individual.

The home, as the place where socialization and politicization take place in their most basic and enduring forms, is obviously the origin of ethnic identity's most important carriers, such as language and religion.⁶³ As David Kamens points out, "efforts to politicize, or nationalize, the socialization of children as a state responsibility was one mode of both articulating the claims of the state over future citizens and linking the interests of children with those of the state."⁶⁴ As to their ultimate objectives, the ethnoregional movements pursue the same goal as well.

More or less simultaneously, when the ethnoregional movement gains impetus and attracts attention from the masses, social mobilization increases, too. One of the

⁶¹ Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *The American Political Science Review*, 55, no. 3 (September, 1961), p.498.

⁶² Hroch, p.12.

⁶³ Foster, p.568.

⁶⁴ David H. Kamens, "'Statist' Ideology, National Political Control of Education, and Youth Protest: A Comparative Analysis," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 27, no. 4 (December, 1983), p.570.

reasons behind this could be because the elites of the ethnoregional movements succeed in gathering the early socialization and politicization of individuals which used to take place at home around a publicly announced one, which provides new patterns of socialization and behavior.

In pursuit of the goal sensitizing and politicizing the population of the region in order to expand and draw additional support, an ethnoregional movement may focus its attention on some intermediate goals, such as amelioration in terms of economy, or fulfillment of citizenship. As Esman emphasizes, the leaders of the movement who agree on the ultimate goals of self-determination, which is either autonomy or independence in many cases, must decide whether to use violence or peaceful electoral politics, and whether to place an emphasis on cultural, economic, or political issues.⁶⁵ Another point which deserves attention is timing. Timing is crucial because they have to decide, as mentioned above, what sort of tactics and intermediate goals will be used and when they would shift from those to the ultimate goals.

Mikesell and Murphy provide some important insights into the dynamics of interaction between minority groups and governments by using the formula, $\frac{rap}{SAI}$, where the numerator is the combination of letters of “recognition,” “access” and “participation,” the denominator is of “separation,” “autonomy” and “independence”.⁶⁶ As is seen in Table 1, there are essentially two types of policy, concessional and structural, respectively, which ethnoregional movements seek to accomplish. Recognition, access and participation are categorized as concessional, which does not require any structural change in state structure whereas separation,

⁶⁵ Esman, p.377.

⁶⁶ Mikesell and Murphy, p.582.

autonomy, and independence are structural policies which require some changes in the nation-state's structure.

Table 1. Nation-States and Minority-Group Objectives ⁶⁷		
Aspirations	Types of Associated Policy Demands	Types of Cultural- Political Arrangements Sought
Recognition	Acknowledgment of group's existence, respect for group's special attributes	Official language or religion, special cultural institutions
Access	No discrimination, employment opportunities, advancement opportunities	Affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws, economic development assistance
Participation	Power sharing, input into policy making	Proportional representation, ethnic quotas in government, legislative special majorities
Seperation	Exemption from societal forms	Community autonomism
Autonomy	Control of minority region, devolution, regional unilingualism	Confederalism, federalism, regional autonomism, regional administration, decentralization
Independence	New state transfer to neighboring state	Recognized secession

In addition, assimilation is the major policy which is virtually seen in every state as an alternative to these two models and the most used one as well. Among the aspirations and responses displayed in Table 1, I shall briefly mention two of the most striking facets of the ethnoregional movements, the activists, who generally consist of a young educated elite, and intra-elites conflicts. Regarding the former, I have already mentioned that the activists of the ethnoregional movements, especially at the beginning, are relatively well-educated young generation of the population. This trait of ethnoregional movements is also common in the Kurdish movement of the 1960s.

Young generations of educated people, as Esman argues, initially take the greatest risk in shaping ethnoregional movements and in building organizations

⁶⁷ Source: Marvin W. Mikesell and Alexander B. Murphy.

designed to promote their objectives.⁶⁸ Another point is that an ethnoregional movement consists of different people from different occupations and classes as well. I use the term “activists of the movements” in a different sense from adherents or supporters of the movement. As McCarty and Zald reveal, *cadre*, *constituent*, *conscience constituent*, *adherent*, and *supporter* all may be components of a social movement⁶⁹ as well as an ethnoregional movement.

As soon as they, the *elites* or *cadres* of the movement, “experience some success in mobilization within their region, they become a counter-elite to the established ethnic elites, who are linked to the political and economic structures of the centralized state.”⁷⁰ Politicizing and mobilizing the region’s people would pave the way to destruction of old allegiances from which the established ethnic elites mainly profited. The established ethnic elites in the Kurdish movement referred to those who already had been affiliated with mainstream political parties and not the TLP. Therefore, this move would not only change the latter’s attitude but also would make the former much more aggressive. That is why some established political groups find it expedient to embrace some ethnically based symbols and demands in order to co-opt some parts of these movements’ growing constituencies.⁷¹ That is also why some early activists of ethnoregional movements, due mainly to the scarcity of benefits of the movement from the beginning, become uncompromising in many respects.

As a matter of fact, this explains exactly why the Turkish Labor Party in Turkey, although not willing to get involved in the Kurdish movement initially, gave a lot of attention to what they called *Doğu Sorunu* soon after some Kurdish

⁶⁸ Esman, p.376.

⁶⁹ See McCarty and Zald, p.1221.

⁷⁰ Esman, p. 377.

⁷¹ Ibid.

intellectuals joined the party in the mid-1960s. On the other hand, politicized and mobilized constituencies would lead to splits in a united movement. This is crucial in understanding what happened in the Kurdish case in the 1960s. It also a demonstration of intra-elite conflicts, some of which later turned into personal conflicts as well. Leading positions, candidacy for the parliament and so on, can lead to these conflicts more than anything else and threaten the movement as a whole.

Nation-States and Ethnoregional Movements

In this section, first I will be concerned with the following question; “What are the methods by which the governmental and political elites of established states attempt to respond to, and manage the claims of, emergent and dissident ethnic minorities?”⁷² Therefore, the ground in which the nationalism, the ideology of nation-states to provide an alternative to the citizens or people of the states, was rooted needs to be articulated. Secondly, I will try to elaborate the policies of nation-states offered to the ethnoregional movements mentioned above.

As in the concept of “ethnicity,” there is no consensus among scholars on the definition of nationalism. As is well known, nationalism is one of the most hotly debated issues in the social sciences. First of all, we can argue that nationalism is an outcome of modern, industrial society, which Eric Hobsbawn calls the “social engineering” process between 1879 and 1914.⁷³ According to Smith, nationalism is defined as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining identity, unity and autonomy of a social group some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or

⁷² Esman, pp.371-372.

⁷³ Eric, J. Hobsbawn, *Milletler ve Milliyetçilik; Program, Mit, Gerçekçilik*, trans. Osman Akinhay (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2006), p.125-133.

potential nation.⁷⁴ Yet, as Roger Friedland argues, nationalism is not merely an ideology; “it is also a set of discursive practices by which the territorial identity of a state and the cultural identity of the people whose collective representation it claims are constituted as a singular fact.”⁷⁵

Benedict Anderson argues that nationalism and nations are imagined. He also claims that this is a gradual process of forgetting. According to Anderson, it is the sense of fraternity which keeps people together by imagining a certain kind of bond among them.⁷⁶ Hobsbawn argues in the same vein that as has frequently been observed in the case of nationalism, the past is either invented or re-invented.⁷⁷ Accordingly, Renan argues that ‘getting history wrong’ is the precondition of nationalist history because it requires not only collective remembering but also collective forgetting.⁷⁸ “The overall objective of all ‘types’ of nationalism is a *statehood* that is territorially unified, socially re-identified, ethnically re-forged or re-formed.”⁷⁹

Generally, the state as the central actor in national politics dominates every kind of ideology. In order to remain the sole actor, its ideology usually borrows from the political ideologies of a given period, such as socialism. In order to vindicate this role perceived by the state elites, several policies have been used. It is well known

⁷⁴ Smith, p.18.

⁷⁵ Roger Friedland, “Money, Sex, and God: The Erotic Logic of Religious Nationalism,” in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (November, 2002), p.383.

⁷⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Hayali Cemaatler; Milliyetçiliğin Kökenleri ve Yayılması*, trans. İskender Savaşır (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 4th edition, 2007), p.20 and p.215.

⁷⁷ Hobsbawn, p.9.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Hobsbawn, p.27.

⁷⁹ Özcan, p.37.

that nation-state tends to pacify any sources of ideological challenge within its boundaries. As Giddens indicates, “internal pacification without means of violence depends instead on reciprocity between those who are governed and those who govern, and that is only possible with some measure of political democracy.”⁸⁰

At the same time, as figure 2 sets out, soon after securing its power over its territory nation-states, in order to deal with minority groups or ethnoregional movements, two kinds of policies are mainly chosen ; “assimilation” and “accommodation”. It is the ultimate goal of any nation-states to homogenize its people in accordance with nationalist mottos such as unity of language, culture, and territory.

Assimilation can be seen in several different ways and forms. Some of the policies used are exclusion of a group’s language and culture from the public sphere, resettlement, imprisonment of a group’s leaders and activists, banning publications, outlawing the activities of political or cultural organizations of the group, and refusing to legitimate the use of language. Gordon outlines seven variables of assimilation: “absence of prejudice, absence of discrimination, absence of value and power conflict, integration, acculturation, identification, and amalgamation.”⁸¹ According to Yinger, the first three variables can better be seen as causes and consequences of the extent of assimilation, rather than as types of assimilation whereas the last four can be seen as structural, cultural, psychological, and biological aspects of assimilation.⁸²

⁸⁰ Giddens, p.201.

⁸¹ Yinger, p.154.

⁸² For further discussion about Gordon’s classification, see Yinger, pp.154–156.

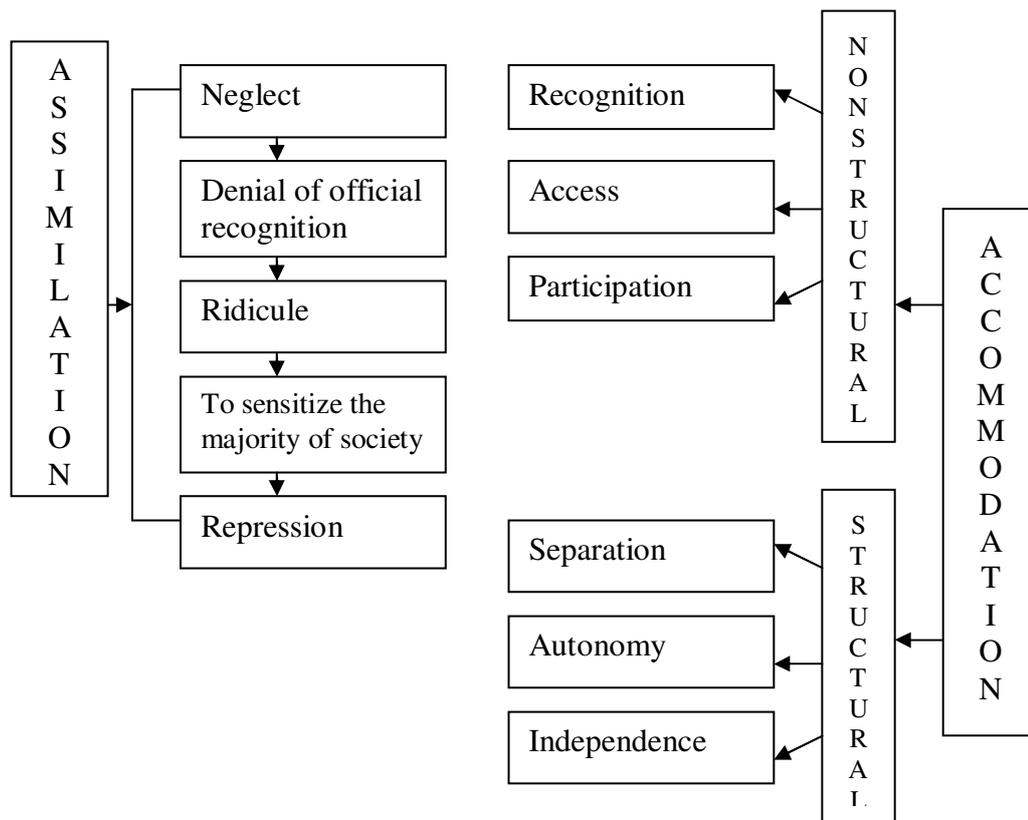


Figure 2 Nation-States and ethnoregional demands

Source: drawn by the author on Milton J. Esman, and Marvin W. Mikesell and Alexander B. Murphy,

It must be noted that assimilation is a multidimensional process, the various aspects of which, although highly interactive, can occur independently at different rates and different sequences.⁸³ When an ethnoregional movement starts to express ethnoregional demands, the response is well summarized by Esman as follows:

The first response to this unwelcome challenge is usually studied, neglect, denial of official recognition, and a refusal to take ethnoregional demands seriously, in the hope that they will die down or go away. If ethnoregional demands survive the pain of neglect, they next evoke ridicule from the center and its political and intellectual allies. The objectives of ridicule are to discredit ethnic spokesman as crackpots or fanatics, to define ethnic claims as nonissues, to forecast the disastrous economic consequences of separation, and to undermine confidence in the movement by depicting its language and culture as backward, unable to survive on its own, and unworthy of international recognition. This form of ridicule can be both sophisticated and

⁸³ Yinger, p.154.

effective... the eventual consequence, however, is to sensitize members of the dominated ethnic community to their identity and their grievances.⁸⁴

Since the nationalism of established states is the dominant ideology, the ethnic particularism, which is embraced by the participants of the ethnoregional movements, is considered backward and even subversive.⁸⁵ Therefore, it is generally regarded as a threat to its national ideology. Also, when ethnoregional demands focus more on economic issues, the central state, as Esman mentions, prefers not to take any initiatives in order to not change its centralist economic policy, since this will be seen as a weakness against the ethnoregional movement. With regard to assimilation, repression is finally used, different from the pacification of the early stage of nation-building process which was mentioned above.

Seen as a remedial policy, repression usually involves outlawing or limiting the activities of political or even cultural organizations, banning publications, harassing or imprisoning, ethnoregional leaders and activities, refusing to legitimate the use of local languages, and excluding minority representatives from positions of political authority.⁸⁶ As will be seen in the next chapters, assimilation, according to our categorization in Figure 2, as a combination of neglect, denial, ridicule, sensitization of the population and finally, repression was used in the 1960s in terms of Kurdish ethnoregional demands.

Robert Dahl rightfully argues that when hegemonic regimes are suddenly displaced by regimes that provide greater opportunities for opposition, “the political preferences and latent oppositions that have been dammed up spout forth like water

⁸⁴ Esman, p381.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p387.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.381-382.

through a collapsing dam.”⁸⁷ Correspondingly, a relatively more democratic atmosphere and greater opportunities not only pave the way to many ethnoregional movements, like the Kurdish ethnoregional movement in Turkey, but also encourage them for further political and social changes.

Accommodation, unlike assimilation, is a policy which pays more attention to easing ethnoregional discontents. In terms of the central states’ response to minority group aspirations, Mikesell and Murphy argue that, in fact, desire for recognition alone, described as the most benign expression of minority-group aspiration, may also entail conflict if such recognition is denied.⁸⁸ Especially, after assimilation has been used for many years it becomes quite hard to adapt any of above-mentioned policies such as recognition or access and so on. However, as Esman argues, when the central elites are unwilling to pay the price in conflict and violence that enforced assimilation may bring, accommodation is tolerated.⁸⁹

Accommodation, as Table 1 has shown, requires a pile of policies for each possible step. First, concessional methods involve the recognition of regional claims of economic deprivation and provision of subsidies or financial assistance to foster economic development on the one hand, involve recognition of group language and special cultural institutions along with anti-discrimination laws on the other.⁹⁰ As Esman points out, where grievances are more cultural than economic, central governments may accept the use of ethnoregional languages in public schools, in

⁸⁷ Robert A. Dahl, “Introduction,” in *Regimes and Oppositions*, ed. Robert A. Dahl, (New haven and London: Yale university Press, 1973), p.10.

⁸⁸ Mikesell and Murphy, p.58.

⁸⁹ Esman, p.380.

⁹⁰ See Table-1.

local and regional governments, and, for limited purposes, even in the structures of the political center.⁹¹

Such concessional forms of accommodation do not require any structural changes or the distribution forms of power within unitary states. Concessional methods, recognition, access and participation can also be seen as what Habermas calls “shared political space,” or “public sphere” which enables every part of society, or all components of a nation-state to participate into politics and articulate their wishes.⁹²

Finally, since the defense of the integrity of the territorial space, as in all nationalist projects, is the medium through which the coherence, identity, and power of the collective subject is known and narrated,⁹³ structural methods are, of course, the most troubled phase of accommodation. Structural forms of accommodation, although they might differ depending on the situation, separation, autonomy and independence in general, need structural adjustments that allow confederalism, federalism, regional autonomism, regional administration or decentralization. As Esman stresses, “regimes usually with great reluctance, are compelled to resort to these adjustments.”⁹⁴ Since it is beyond the scope of this study and was not the case in the 1960s in Turkey, I do not go in detail with each of the aforementioned adjustments. However, one point worth mentioning here is that structural forms of

⁹¹ Esman, pp.381-382.

⁹² Jürgen Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity,” in *The Condition of Citizenship*, ed. Bart van Steenbergen (London: Sage, 1994), pp.290–291.

⁹³ Friedland, p.396.

⁹⁴ Esman, pp.381-382.

accommodation are usually determined by the intensity of the movement, to wit, by the power and ability of the ethnoregional movement rather than states' preferences.⁹⁵

Political Parties, the Left and Ethnoregional Movements

My purpose in this section is to examine political parties as “essential agencies of mobilization,” having a historical role in shaping states in ethnoregional movements.⁹⁶ In his pioneering study, Duverger argues that “a party is not a community but a collection of communities, a union of small groups dispersed throughout the country and linked by coordinating institutions.”⁹⁷ This definition, as we will see in the next chapters, seems to be appropriate in the Turkish case in terms of political parties, especially in the Turkish Labor Party.

In many countries that have multiethnic populations, political parties address constituencies comprised of more than one ethnicity. Ethnicity-based parties, argue Gunter and Diamond, instead of focusing on society as a whole, goals and strategies are narrower “to promote the interests of a particular ethnic group, or coalition of groups. And unlike national parties, they are content using existing state structures to channel benefits towards their particularistically defined electoral clientele.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ This has been studied as *irredentism*, which includes a claim of the territory of an independent state. For this discussions see, David Carment and Patrick James, “Internal Constraints and Interstate Ethnic Conflict: Toward a Crisis-Based Assessment of Irredentism,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39, no. 1 (Mar., 1995), pp. 82–109.

⁹⁶ G. Bingham Powell, Jr., p.863.

⁹⁷ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties; Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, trans. Barbara and Robert North, (London: University Paperback, 1964), p.17.

⁹⁸ Gunter and Diamond, p.186.

In the Turkish case, unless the particular emphasize is given to ethnicity, Turkish ethnicity is mentioned in party policies and as the leitmotif of the Turkish party system, it seems to be almost impossible to understand why the Left in general, and the TLP in particular, was unwilling to affiliated with the Kurds initially or, although it is different from the former, with the Alevis in Turkey. Horowitz states that in an ethnic party system, the choice for a Left party is to adopt and become essentially an ethnic party or to wither and die.⁹⁹ If they do not become essentially an ethnic party, leftist parties usually show much interest in ethnic conflicts on the one hand, and regional underdevelopment of a region or a country as a whole on the other.

As is well known, there is no theory of nationalism in Marxism.¹⁰⁰ According to Marx and Engels, national differences among peoples will gradually die out as economic intercourse among nations grows.¹⁰¹ Moreover, they view nationalism as a fading phenomenon, while they urge the proletariat to establish itself as the nation.¹⁰² In its battle to become the national class, the proletariat will have to win over the "intermediate elements" of society the peasants, small businessmen, the intellectuals and assimilate them into a single class, the proletariat.¹⁰³ While class struggle is the main concern of Marxism, nationalism and ethnicity generally are seen as follows:

Until recently, there was considerable consensus among many Marxist and non-Marxist scholars that ethnicity reflected the conditions of traditional society, in which people lived in small communities isolated from one another

⁹⁹ Horowitz, p.338.

¹⁰⁰ Umut Özkırımlı, *Milliyetçilik Kuramları* (İstanbul: Sarmal Yayınları, 1999), p.41-42.

¹⁰¹ Neil A. Martin, "Marxism, Nationalism, and Russia," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 29, no. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1968), p.231.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 252.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.234.

and in which mass communications and transportation were limited. Many expected that industrialization, urbanization, and the spread of education would reduce ethnic consciousness, and that universalism would replace particularism. Marxists were certain that socialism would mean the end of the ethnic tension and consciousness that existed in pre-socialist societies.¹⁰⁴

In agreement with the Communist Manifesto's motto, the ultimate goal of communism seems to be internationalist only on the surface. Anti-imperialism was the notion seemed to get many communists around one plan which was indicated in Manifesto; *Proletariats of all lands unite!*¹⁰⁵ Lenin writes,

The proletariat of the oppressor nations must not confine themselves to general stereotyped phrases against annexation and in favor of the equality of nations in general, such as any pacifist bourgeois will repeat. The proletariat cannot remain silent on the question of the *frontiers* of a state founded on national oppression, a question so 'unpleasant' for the imperialist bourgeoisie. The proletariat must struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means that they must fight for the right to self-determination. The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by 'their own' nation. Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words; neither confidence nor class solidarity would be possible between the workers of the oppressed and oppressed nations...¹⁰⁶

In spite of Lenin's clarion message for fighting by the side of oppressed nations, meaning national minorities, it must be noted that the aim is the proletariat nation, rather than prioritizing national self-determination. The idea of self-determination was embraced by many movements even those not socialist in essence. However, as Hobsbawm asserts, although anti-imperialist revolutionaries were internationalist in rhetoric, actually they were not interested in anything but the liberation of their countries.¹⁰⁷ In other words, the abstract formulations on

¹⁰⁴ Jalali and Lipset, p. 585.

¹⁰⁵ Bertram D. Wolfe, "Nationalism and Internationalism in Marx and Engels," *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (December, 1958), p.404.

¹⁰⁶ Lenin, *Selected Works*, quoted in Özcan, p.49.

¹⁰⁷ Hobsbawm, p.177.

internationalism are forgotten as soon as it comes to the concrete questions of day-to-day national policy.¹⁰⁸ As can be clearly observed in the TLP and other socialist and communist groups' case of the 1960s in Turkey, their internationalism and to a certain extent, anti-imperialist rhetoric were confined to national issues, such as criticism of foreign credits or full independence of Turkey. In fact, anti-imperialist rhetoric of socialism and communism, that is to say to govern its own destiny along with the emphasis on development in terms of economy were the features of socialism and communism of the 1960s that seemed most attractive for the ethnoregional movements.

Activists of ethnoregional movements, as Esman emphasizes, mainly in the Western World, have demonstrated a leftist strain in their rhetoric. "The struggle for socialism, they proclaim, is an essential complement to the struggle for national liberation."¹⁰⁹ This approach is in agreement with Marxism's approach to nationalism. Socialism alone, by putting its emphasis mostly on class lines, did not virtually meet ethnoregional demands. Thus, when socialist parties which are organized to do battle on class lines get involved into the ethnoregional movements would be compelled to change their policy and to some extent, the identity of the enemy in some cases.¹¹⁰ In other words, so long as ethnic grievances are more prominent than economic ones in the ethnoregional movements, if a socialist party wants to benefit from the movement, it cannot advocate bridging ethnic grievances by building alliances across only class lines.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Wolfe, p.15.

¹⁰⁹ Esman, p.379.

¹¹⁰ Horowitz, p.334.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.337.

It can be concluded that both the ethnoregional movements and socialist parties are likely to change their discourses depending on the circumstances. In time, ethnoregional movements may see socialism as the only way to obtain ethnic and cultural demands, while socialist parties may opt to include ethnicity and ethnic demands into their rhetoric. When it is deemed to invest in the affiliation between socialist parties and ethnoregional movements, as been pointed out above, after ethnoregional movements experience some success, become more conspicuous. This affiliation which can be termed “ethnosocialist,” blends the ethnic demands of the ethnoregional movements and the socialist rhetoric of economic development.

CHAPTER TWO

A POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR THE KURDISH ETHNOREGIONAL MOVEMENT

In this chapter, the historical evolution of Kurdish nationalism and the Turkish nation-state are analyzed. After touching on the single-party era developments, the emphasis is put on multi-party era developments in general and its effects on the Kurds' self-awareness and their way of life. The historical arrest of 49 prominent Kurdish intellectuals and students is examined and an evaluation of the state policy on Kurdish and Eastern issue is questioned.

The Kurds and Their Aspiration: A Historical Background

Recently it has been argued that there has been no dramatic break in the continuity of Turkish history. The legacy of the 1908 movement, it is argued, is crucial to understanding the subsequent reforms of the Kemalist single-party era, just as the latter period is pivotal to understanding the multi-party Turkey.¹¹² The Young Turk movement, composed of all those who were against Abdulhamid II, through their organization, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), took over in July 1908 and remained in power until 1918. Although the movement promised equality to all Ottoman subjects without distinction of religion and race,¹¹³ these promises were never carried out. Initially Ottomanist, namely a patriotism based on the Ottoman

¹¹² Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.48.

¹¹³ Uriel Heyd, *Foundation of Turkish Nationalism; the Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*, (London: Luzac& Company LTD and the Harvill Press LTD, 1950), p.130.

millet system as soon after the Unionist take over, they began to pursue an intensive policy of cultural and economic Turkification.¹¹⁴ In this sense, the Young Turk era can be seen as the initiator of the Turkification process and the background to the Kemalist ideology.

The transformation of connotations of the term “Türk” is a history of the nation-building process in Turkey. In the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire, the term “Türk” used to have “derogatory reference to the ignorant peasant or nomad of Anatolia.”¹¹⁵ First emerging as an intellectual movement, Turkish nationalism which not only glorified the past but also promised a better future to its followers, invented the modern term “*Türk*”. Contrary to the multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure of the Ottoman Empire, in which identity was not formulated on ethnic foundations, was politicized, especially after 1908 when Turkist-nationalist thinkers moved out of the academic realm in order to articulate political ideas and to systematize them into an ideology.¹¹⁶ The conversion from Ottomanism to Turkism paved the way to a politicized perception of the term ‘Turk’. It also should be mentioned that nationalism was the key idea for other *millets* (nations) even earlier than for Turks. In other words, the Empire went through a “nationalist wave” and Turkish nationalism was quite late among other nationalisms such as Greek and Arab nationalisms.

Kurdish nationalism, as an attempt to politicize and bring all Kurds together under a broader sense of belonging, can be traced back to the early twentieth century. Initially, it was cherished by a tiny group of Kurdish intellectuals whose objectives

¹¹⁴ For the early Turkist periodicals and associations, see Heyd, p.109–110.

¹¹⁵ David Kushner, “Self-Perception and Identity in Contemporary Turkey,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 32, no. 2 (April, 1997), p.219.

¹¹⁶ Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları, “The Ultrationalist Right,” In *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*. eds. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.178.

did not deviate much from those of their Turkish counterparts. The Kurdish intelligentsia, using the press as a crucial instrument in spreading their ideas in auspices of awakening the Kurdish people as their Turkish counterparts,¹¹⁷ could not go beyond small circles. Traditionally, as it was soldiers who were prominent in Turkish politics starting from the late nineteenth century, Bruinessen points out that in virtually all Kurdish parties and organizations the traditional leading stratum, aghas and sheiks played leading roles.¹¹⁸ It is striking that in *Kurdistan*, the first Kurdish journal, most of the time the writings started with “O, Aghas and Sheiks of the Kurds”¹¹⁹ and the main purpose seemed to deal with them rather than the Kurdish society. The nationalism prompted by them was, to a large extent a sort of Ottomanism by which they endeavored to integrate with the center rather than separate.¹²⁰

This approach, however, especially after the Young Turks took over and began a Turkification process, changed. For instance, in *Roji Kurd* (Kurdish Days), monthly the journal of the *Hevi* (Hope) association published in 1913, great attention was put on Kurdish society. Their objective was to educate and enlighten the Kurdish people in contrast to *Kurdistan*.¹²¹ Since both those who were associated with

¹¹⁷ Martin Strohmeir, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes*, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), p.ix.

¹¹⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State; the Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, p.316.

¹¹⁹ Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, (trans.), *Kurdistan: Rojnama Kurdi ya Peşin (Ilk Kürd Gazetesi, 1898-1902, Cild I*, (n.p, n.d.)

¹²⁰ Kürt Teavun Cemiyeti, for example, the first association that was established by the Kurds in 1909, was a very good example of it. See Tarık Zafer Tunaya *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, (İstanbul: n.p. 1952), p.429.

¹²¹ For example, in the second issue, they introduced Latin alphabet and showed how to use it. For Latin transcription see, “Belgeyên Kurdi:1/3,” Kovara Roji Kurd/1913,” *Weşanen WAR*, Istanbul: 2002.

Kurdistan and *Roju Kurd* did not have to deal with the existence of the Kurds, they were preoccupied with how they could bring the Kurdish people to the same level of civilization. Lütfi Fikri, who was not Kurdish, wrote, “Today no one questions who is a Kurd, an Arab or an Albanian. The acknowledgement of existence of those nations was a requirement of social laws.”¹²²

However, Kurdish nationalism as well as Turkish nationalism cannot be thought of without mentioning the role of Islam. As Friedland points out, religion and nationalism partake of a common symbolic order and that religious nationalism is therefore not an oxymoron.¹²³ Furthermore, as Hobsbawn argues, that religion paradoxically serves as cement for nationalisms.¹²⁴ As Martin Strohmeir points out, the Kurds were first Muslims, then Ottomans; their Kurdish identity was subordinated to the other two.¹²⁵ It is quite apparent in both above-mentioned journals and in *Jin* (Life), published between 1918 and 1919. *Jin*, a bilingual Kurdish and Turkish journal, is important not only because it represents an amalgamation of ethnicity and religion, but also conjures up the preliminary effects of the process of denial of Kurdish ethnicity as a distinct from that of the Turks. In the seventh issue, in response to the question that “are city dwellers in Kurdistan Turks? (*Kürdistan’daki Şehirler Sekenesi Türk müdür?*), it is argued that even there were no Turks in

¹²² “Bugün kimse Arap nedir, Arnavut nedir, Kürd nedir, demiyor ve bunların neler demek olduklarını pek güzel anlıyor....er geç o milliyetlerin varlığını kabul etmek mecburiyetinin zorunlu oluşu, sosyal kanunların gereği idi.” Lütfi Fikri, “Kürd Milliyeti”, *Roju Kurd, Hejmar-4* in *Weşanen WAR*, Belgeyên Kurdi:1/3, Kovara Roju Kurd/1913, (Istanbul: War, 2002), p.98.

¹²³ Roger Friedland, “Money, Sex, and God: The Erotic Logic of Religious Nationalism,” *Sociological Theory*, 20, no. 3 (November, 2002), p. 381.

¹²⁴ Hobsbawn, *Milletler ve Milliyetçilik*, p.83.

¹²⁵ Strohmeir, p.39.

Kurdistan.¹²⁶ The Kurdish language and history are glorified, and a call for working only for their nation is made.

It is a widely held view that Kurdish nationalism developed in reaction to dominant nationalisms of the Turks, Persians and Arabs and their nation-states and has been both stimulated by their development and restricted by their hegemony. Also, as Entessar argues, the formation of the modern nation-state system in the Middle East in the aftermath of collapse of the Ottoman Empire led the growth of the politicization of Kurdish ethnicity.¹²⁷ This early politicization of the Kurdish ethnicity was mainly confined to a small circle of Kurdish intelligentsia. And the bulk of the population, just like the Turks, did not identify themselves with the wishes advocated in the above-mentioned journals.

The transformation of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Ottoman Empire into nation-states, where identities were based on ethnicities did not affect the majority of the Kurds, yet it led to the politicization of the Kurdish intellectuals' identity.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, it did not lead them to think of themselves as apart from the Ottoman realm. In other words, as opposed to what is commonly believed, their aspirations were to remain within the Ottoman system in general. Having defeated external forces, the Kemalists turned their faces to any kind of internal opposition to their nation-state project. In order to not only to unite the scattered dimensions of national identity around the ideology of a nation-state, but also to enforce the rule of the elites, as Renan stressed, both the possession of rich remembrances and a shared

¹²⁶ M. Emin Bozarslan, (trans.), *Jin: Kovara Kurdi-Tirki (Kürtçe-Türkçe Dergi), 1918-1919, Cild 2*, (Uppsala: Deng Yayınevi, 1985), pp.332-339.

¹²⁷ Entessar, p.1.

¹²⁸ M. Hakan Yavuz, "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 7, no.3, (Autumn 2001), p.1.

amnesia, a collective forgetfulness¹²⁹ were utilized to create the new man or citizen of the state. Using the judiciary machinery of the state, in the new Turkish republic many laws and regulations, including the Constitution, aimed at accomplishing national unity. Kemalism, as Stephane Yerasimos pointed out, as the official ideology of the Turkish nation-state, was presented as the only possible path, justifying every action by the past not only during the single-party era, but it became as the ideological model and framework for the state.¹³⁰

The ambiguity of Republican Turkey in terms of its identity perception, demonstrates that the nationalism of nation-states requires some imagination some forgetting on the past of the people who do not identify themselves with the national identity. One of the most important features of Turkish nationalism of the Republican era was that it endeavored to break away from the Turanist and Islamist aspirations of the Ottoman Era. On the other hand, what the Kemalist elites and intellectuals of the Republic aimed to do was not the awakening of Turks to national consciousness,¹³¹ but rather to create a new man whose identity would be consonant with the Republic's objectives of reaching contemporary Western models of life and development. This approach required cultural assimilation, which was seen as the only remedy to bring together the heterogeneous population inherited by the new nation-state.

¹²⁹ As a striking example, in the provinces of Mardin 91 percent, in Bitlis, Siirt, Bingöl, Hakkari, Muş and Van, all with a proportion of over 75 percent of new place names were replaced with Turkish ones. See. Kerem Öktem, 'The Nation's Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponymes in Republican Turkey', *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Thematic Issue, no. 7 (n.d.) Demographic Engineering - Part I.

¹³⁰ Stephane Yerasimos, "The Monoparty Period," in *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*, eds. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.66–100.

¹³¹ Ayşe Kadioğlu, "The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 32, no.2. (April 1996) pp.177–193.

In addition to the abolition of *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth) in 1931 and establishment of *Halk Evi* (People's Houses) and *Halk Odaları* (People's Rooms) in 1932, (closed down in 1951 by the DP) with the affirmation of the Turkish History Thesis, the state elites aimed to channel its ideology and to reach the people, to urban areas generally, in such a manner that under full control of the center a new view of Turkishness was propagandized. The History Thesis, which puts its great emphasis on the long glorious history of the Turkish race and ethnicity, along with the Sun Language Theory which claimed that Turkish was the language from which all other languages stemmed, were just two of the attempts to provide the base for at least, educated people to be proud of their identity.¹³² However, as Şerif Mardin points out, those policies did not attempt to alter the place of the peasant in the system nor did the nationalist elite do much to establish contact with the rural masses.¹³³

As Kirişçi and Winrow stress, the endeavor of the state elites to melt the territorial nationality and ethnic nationality of the people into a united notion of citizenship, in simultaneous nation-building and state-building process made it almost impossible to draw the boundaries of Turkishness.¹³⁴ Soner Çagaptay, in his important book, summarizes the boundaries of Turkishness, or as he puts it, three zones of Kemalism as follows:

-the first was *territorial*; this definition, the most inclusive of the three, was embodied in the 1924 constitution.

¹³² Soner Çagaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey; who is a Turk*,(London: Routledge, 2006), p.52

¹³³ Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" in *Political Participation in Turkey; Historical Background and Present Problems*, ed. Engin D. Akarlı with Gabriel Ben-Dor, (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Publications, 1975), pp.7-32

¹³⁴ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict*, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p.12.

-the second definition, less inclusive than the first, was *religious*. Due to the legacy of the *millet system*, the Kemalists saw nominal Islam as an avenue toward Turkishness; all Muslims in Turkey were potential Turks.

-the third, and the least inclusive, definition of Turkishness under High Kemalism was *ethno-religious*.¹³⁵

Assimilation, as a means of creating a homogenous society, was the main objective of Kemalist in terms of culture. This was, to a large extent, limited to urban areas. During the single party era (1925-1945), the state had almost absolute power over the press, individuals, associations, etc; moreover, this was granted by newly adopted laws.¹³⁶ Along with the abolition of both the Sultanate (November 1, 1922) and the Caliphate (March 1, 1924), the proclamation of republic (November 29, 1923), one of the most important laws passed by the assembly in 1925 worth mentioning is the Law for the maintenance of order. This law gave the legal authority to deal not only with the Kurdish rebellion in the east, but also all political opponents.¹³⁷

The Kemalists, like their predecessors, the Young Turks, especially after the consolidation of their power or the internal pacification, embarked on an intensive policy of assimilation. In the meantime, in order to achieve this many people who previously had been a part of the state machinery and were members of the assembly were excluded from power. This attitude also had a great impact on subsequent resistance to the center. In my opinion, this was after the suppression of the first major Kurdish rebellion in 1925, in which for the mass of participants, as Bruinessen

¹³⁵ Çagaptay, p.159.

¹³⁶ Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı ve Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri* (İstanbul: Cogito, 3rd edition, 1999), pp.318-319.

¹³⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.275.

argues, religious and nationalist loyalties were not separated from each other.¹³⁸ During this period, as Mesut Yeğen stresses, any attempt to resist the policy of the consolidation of power by the Kemalist elites would have been labeled reactionary.¹³⁹

During the single-party era, according to a military source, 18 uprisings, except for one that took place in Menemen, took place against the center by the Kurds.¹⁴⁰ Though most of them were small scale, three of them are worth mentioning: the Sheik Said Rebellion (1925), the Ağrı Rebellion, (1926-1927-1930) and the Dersim Rebellion (1937-39). There were, to a large extent, no coherent nationalist sentiments, but rather local and tribal unrests. Except for *Azadi* (Independence) established in 1921, both organized and took part in Sheik Said Rebellion in 1925 and *Xoybun* (stay origin) established in 1927, took part in Ağrı Rebellion 1930. These rebellions lacked of a united front, the way that they expressed their aspiration was somehow ambivalent. In addition to the Kemalists' hostility to any Kurdish organization, the use of leading positions among the Kurdish elites, the state's approach to Islam, to wit the abolition of the Caliphate, which had connected the two peoples together were the major reasons for those rebellions in insurgents' view.¹⁴¹

The reaction of the Kemalist center to the rebellions would influence how other groups, such as Communists, viewed them, too. Equally significant is the way

¹³⁸ Bruinessen, Agha, *Shaikh and State; the Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, p.299.

¹³⁹ Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), p.141.

¹⁴⁰ Em. Kurmay Albay Reşat Halli, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar 1924-1938* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Harp Dairesi Yayınları, 1972) quoted in Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması, 1923-1931* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 4th edition, 2005), p.134.

¹⁴¹ For an excellent analysis of these rebellions, see Hamit Bozarslan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919-1925)," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), pp. 163–190.

in which the state presented the Kurdish rebellions and sought to legitimize the state's claims and justify its domination and absolute use of power.¹⁴² They, the rebellions, were framed as having been instigated by foreign powers and as threats to the national integrity of the Turkish Republic and a counter-revolution to Kemalism. As Horowitz rightly argues, ethnic conflict was often treated as if it were a manifestation of something else rather than any references to the ethnicity itself.¹⁴³ The part that was missing in the presentation of these rebellions by the Kemalist was the ethnic characteristics, albeit not prominent, which I mentioned earlier that were interwoven with religion.

After each rebellion, the government used massive deportation¹⁴⁴ and banned anything that might be associated with Kurdishness, regarding it as feudal and reactionary.¹⁴⁵ As already mentioned, it led to the third and the least inclusive definition of Turkishness, the ethno-religious definition of Turkishness. Gradually, the Turkish public sphere was cleared both of Islam and of Kurds. Those who participated in Turkish politics no longer had to advocate for either of them. All those efforts and emphasis put on centralization and secularization of the public sphere, as Kirişçi and Winrow argue, contributed to the spread of Kurdish ethnic awareness.¹⁴⁶ However, due to the success of the center in suppressing those rebellions and by not

¹⁴² Yavuz, p.8.

¹⁴³ Horowitz, p.13.

¹⁴⁴ Resettlement Laws, especially one in 1934, which divided the country into four regions and aimed to disperse those Kurds who either participated in rebellions or did not show clear obedience to the center into first two regions where Turkish culture was dominant is worth mentioning here. See *2510 sayılı Iskan Kanunu*, quoted in Celadet Ali Bedirxan (1933), *Bir Kürt Aydınından Mustafa Kemal'e Mektup*, (İstanbul. Doz Yayıncılık, 1992), p.81.

¹⁴⁵ Özcan, p.85.

¹⁴⁶ Kirişçi and Winrow, p.101.

allowing any kind of articulation and expression of resisting ideas while rewarding those who collaborated with the center, Kurdish ethnic awareness did not become politicized at large scale until the 1960s.

As Strohmeir points out, the main problem between Kurds and the Turkish Republic derived from the state's perception of Kurds and their way of life.¹⁴⁷ The very existence of the Kurds would not be acknowledged since they were seen as "pure Turks" who had somehow forgotten their Turkishness and thought of themselves as Kurds. As a matter of fact, despite all, the state elite did not do much in order to make Kurds believe that argument. The Kurdish region, excepting some developments, was governed by special methods.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, the "tacit agreement" which was the main policy of the Ottoman center over the Kurdish areas, was continued. On the other hand, the question of security and control seemed to be more important than anything else. For instance, as Donald Everett Webster wrote in 1939, "after three rather serious revolts in the Kurdish region, the government is still talking about reforms for these people, and a part of the reforms is the building of *karakols* (gendarme stations)."¹⁴⁹

To sum up, what is true is that except for those rebellions, the majority of the Kurdish population remained aloof from politics in general and from nationalistic discourse in terms of both Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms. It is also important that even the party branches of the ruling single party, the Republican People's Party were

¹⁴⁷ Strohmeir, p.3.

¹⁴⁸ Inspectorate Generals for example, which were decided to be established throughout the country, "in practice, however, the Inspectorates were created only in regions that were considered strategic or turbulent areas by Ankara, or had witnessed Kurdish uprisings." Çagaptay, p.47.

¹⁴⁹ Donald Everett Webster, *The Turkey of Atatürk; Social Process in the Turkish Reformation* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1939), p.282.

set up in almost none of provinces where the Kurds overwhelmingly lived. Kurdish nationalism, on the other hand, even during those rebellions could not reach the masses and did not have a coherent discourse in many respects. The Kemalists succeeded in eliminating the last segment of Kurdish nationalists either by executing them or having them exiled to other countries such as Syria.

Moreover, Kurdish reactions also paved the way of getting rid of any opposition in Turkey for almost two decades, that is to say until 1940s, when the new opposition came from within the state elite and demanded further relaxations in terms of political and economic liberalism. Equally significant is that the countryside would continue to be suspected as separatist and reactionary.¹⁵⁰ With respect to subsequent developments, it is also worth mentioning that these rebellions and their suppression would give the Kurds a strong sense of a shared past which would also be used in the 1960s when the new Kurdish generation, rediscovered the past.

The Multi-Party Era

After two decades of single-party rule, due to a number of reasons, such as international pressures, social structural changes, the personal belief system and leadership of İsmet İnönü (successor of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the president of the republic after 1938),¹⁵¹ the Turkish Republic adopted a multi-party political system in 1945. As Asım Kararömerlioğlu points out, the willingness and enthusiasm

¹⁵⁰ Şerif Mardin, “Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?” in *Political Participation in Turkey; Historical Background and Present Problems*, ed. Engin D. Akarlı with Gabriel Ben-Dor (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Publications, 1975), pp.7-32.

¹⁵¹ Cemil Koçak, “Parliament Membership during the Single-Party System in Turkey, (1925-45)” *European Journal of Turkish Studies, Thematic Issue No 3*, available online at: <http://www.ejts.org/document497.html>

of the ruling elites, especially of İnönü, for a multi-party system was mainly because the ruling elites envisaged keeping such a “development in a controlled, limited, top-down manner by which he and his entourage could still maintain their privileged position in a new and different political manner.”¹⁵²

However, the 1950 general elections that brought the Democrat Party (DP) to power marked the beginning of the emergence of new social groups in the political arena and the end of the unity of the state elite. The DP was the predominant political party in all three general elections that were held in 1950, 1954 and in 1957. The secret of the DP success at the polls during the 1950-1960 period came from its constant attention to the benefits of the peasantry.¹⁵³ As Çağlar Keyder writes, “for the first time in Turkey’s politics, the peasantry became an active force that had to be won over.”¹⁵⁴ Another point worth mentioning is that the party itself, by establishing local branches, was an effective instrument in introducing the masses to politics. For instance, until the decision of the DP to open branches in the east provinces, the RPP had virtually no organizations in the eight provinces overwhelmingly inhabited by Kurds.¹⁵⁵

The most significant outcome of the initial multi-party period was the integration of the peasantry, more than 70 per cent of the population, and urban masses into the political and economic life of the country. Meanwhile, in terms of

¹⁵² Asım Karaömerlioğlu, “Turkey’s “return” to multi-party politics: a social interpretation,” *East European Quarterly*, March 22, 2006, pp. 89–107.

¹⁵³ Szyliowicz, Joseph S, “The Political Dynamics of Rural Turkey,” *Middle East Journal* 16, no.4 (1962), p.430.

¹⁵⁴ Çağlar Keyder, “The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy,” in *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*, eds. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 27–65.

¹⁵⁵ Webster, p.177.

demography, mass migration from countryside to towns and rapid urbanization accelerated the transformation of society into a much more mobile one. Meanwhile, the economy as a whole grew at a rapid rate of between 11 and 13 per cent during the DP rule.¹⁵⁶ As a result of the liberal economic policies, the rural areas became increasingly market-oriented.

Frederick Frey, in his important study about the Turkish political elite, brings our attention to the “the new man in Turkish politics” whose main focus was concentrated to local considerations, free enterprise and religious freedom rather a man who prioritized the national problems and a forced top-down reforms.¹⁵⁷ In addition to above-mentioned social, political and economic developments, Frey’s emphasis on the shift of the new actors in Turkish politics is relevant in the Kurdish case too. For instance, politicians visited small towns and villages and attempted to persuade the local people that they had political importance. As for the Kurds, as Abdülmelik Fırat, Sheik Said’s grandson and who became a member of parliament, notes in his memoirs, during the 1950s some candidates spoke Kurdish to the people when they went to villages.¹⁵⁸

What changed during the DP era in terms of the Kurds was not the state’s standpoint or policies but rather the entry of a new group of Kurdish aghas and sheiks into politics, which meant a great challenge to those local notables who had not previously faced any competition in order to gain parliamentary seats. It is generally agreed that local notables from the region did not have any loyalty to the

¹⁵⁶ Eric Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994), p.235.

¹⁵⁷ Frederick Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: The M.I.T Press, 1965), p.197.

¹⁵⁸ Abdülmelik Fırat, *Fırat Mahzun Akar* (İstanbul: Avesta, 1996), p.51.

parties and they changed parties easily or ran against the parties as independents. Therefore, the idea that the DP was preferred because of its policy on the Kurds, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, does not seem conceivable since the party policies did not have a great influence on the political alignments in the region up until the mid-1960s.

Equally significant is that during the DP era, the dominance of Islam was reinforced in the region. For example, after 1950, within a year, 250,000 Quran and thousands of religious books, many of which aimed to lessen Kurdish nationalism, were sold in the region.¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, as already mentioned, the Turkish republic as a whole became more market-oriented and a new network of railroads as well as mechanization of agriculture not only stimulated the emergence of new social groups but also changed the social and economic structure of the country.

Finally, communism and socialism was declared illegal and in January 1951, the largest campaign of arrests of communists, known as *1951 Tevkifatı* (the arrest of 1951), attested that there was no room for the Left in multi-party politics in Turkey.¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, several new Turkist organizations such as *Türk Kültür Ocağı* (Hearth of Turkish Culture), *Türk Gençlik Teşkilatı* (Turkish Youth Organization), *Türk Kültür Derneği* (Turkish Cultural Association), *Milliyetçiler Birliği Federasyonu* (Federation of Union of Nationalists) were permitted to appear.¹⁶¹ Although the political spectrum would be partly open to the Left after the May 27, 1960 coup

¹⁵⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi; Sosyal, Ekonomik, Kültürel Temeller* (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1967), p.244.

¹⁶⁰ Cem Eroğul, "The Establishment of Multiparty Rule: 1945–71," in *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*, eds. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.109.

¹⁶¹ Ayşe Neviye Çağlar, "The Greywolves as Metaphor," in *Turkish State, Turkish Society*, eds. Andrew Finkel and Nukhet Sirman (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p.84

d'état, in addition to the above-mentioned organizations, rightist politics would be encouraged by new association, such as *Komünizmle Mücadele Dernekleri* (the Struggle with the Communism Associations), too.

Especially after the 1954 election, factors such as the oppressive press laws, the anti-Greek riot in Istanbul (6-7 September 1955), the increase of prices and cost of living, and the government's inability or unwillingness to contain the deteriorating economic and financial position¹⁶² led to discomfort among the people. For instance, inflation increased to 40 percent by 1958. All those developments led to the crumbling of support among city-dwellers and intellectuals and affected especially wage earner civil servants and army officers, who as we will see, would be very angry to the DP rule and paved the way toward the 1960 military intervention.

The End of a New Beginning: the Event of 49s in 1959

In December 1959, five months before the military coup d'état, 52 Kurdish intellectuals, almost half of them students, were arrested for being involved in separatist, and communist activities. Since two of those arrested were not put in jail and a student, Emin Batu, died, the number was reduced to 49, the number by which this pivotal event would be remembered.¹⁶³ Despite the controversies about why it

¹⁶² Richard D. Robinson, *The First Turkish Republic – A Case Study in National Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p.190.

¹⁶³ They were: “Şevket Turan, Naci Kutlay, Ali Karahan, Koço Elbistan, Yavuz Çamlıbel, Mehmet Ali Dinler, Yusuf Kaçar, Nurettin Yılmaz, Ziya Şerefhanoglu, Medet Serhat, Hasan Akkuş, Örfi Akkoyunlu, Selim Kılıçoğlu, Şahabettin Septioğlu, Said Elçi, Said Kırmızıtoprak, Yaşar Kaya, Faik Savaş, Haydar Aksu, Ziya Acar, Fadıl Budak, Halil Demirel, Esat Cemiloğlu, Ferit Bilen, Mustafa Nuri Direkçigil, Fevzi Avşar, Necati Siyahkan, Hasan Ulus, Nazmi Balkaş, Hüseyin Oğuz Üçok, Mehmet Nazım Çiğdem, Fevzi Kartal, Mehmet Aydemir, Abdurrahman Efem Dolak, Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım, Emin Kotan, Ökkeş Karadağ, Muhsin Şavata, Turgut Akın, Sıtkı Elbistan, Şerafettin Elçi, Mustafa Ramanlı, Mehmet Özer, Feyzullah Demirtaş, Cezmi Balkaş, Halil Yokuş, İsmet Balkaş,

happened, it is obvious that the arrest of the 49ers was a milestone in the modern Kurdish movement. According to Abdülmelik Fırat, grandson of Sheik Said, a deputy in the assembly at that time, in a meeting in which prime minister Adnan Menderes, president Celal Bayar, and some generals were present, the Commander of the Army presented a secret report about the East which claimed that Kurds were about to rebel against the state. Although most of politicians did not agree with that allegation, they decided to arrest at least some of those Kurdish activists who stood out.¹⁶⁴

In the same period, Turkey, as a result of its close relations with the United States after the end of World War II, became ever more oppressive towards the communist and socialist movements. According to Naci Kutlay, both one of the 49s and later a prominent figure in the TLP, the main reason behind the arrest was the intention of the government to present it to the United States and the Western public opinion as a “Communist Kurdish” movement in order to get the aid it needed from the United States. The “Red” aspect of the arrests, rather than its “Kurdish” (*Kürtçü*) face was the side that was presented in the media to the people of Turkey.¹⁶⁵ In making the arrests, as Gündoğan correctly points out, the government planned to kill two birds with one stone. It would force the USA to grant the country a loan and at the same time put a break on the development of Kurdish activism, which was seen as

Said Bingöl, Mehmet Bilgin, Fethullah Kakioglu.” Naci Kutlay, *49’lar Dosyası*, (İstanbul: Fırat, 1994), p.11; and Yavuz Çamlıbel, *49’lar Davası: Bir Ülkenin İdamlık Kürtleri*, (Ankara: Algıyayın, 2007), p.109–235. In Çamlıbel’s book, there are many pictures and detailed information too.

¹⁶³ Çağlar Keyder, “The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy,” In *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, eds. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak. (New York: Oxford University Press,) 1987: 27–65.

¹⁶⁴ Fırat, p.71.

¹⁶⁵ Naci Kutlay, *21.Yüzyıla Girerken Kürtler* (İstanbul: Peri Yayınları, 2002), pp.533-34.

a threat to the discourse of Turkish nationalism by wiping out Kurdish activities in Istanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakir.¹⁶⁶

Although after the 1960 coup most of the political convicts were given a pardon, the military junta moved ahead with the trials, which began in January 1961. Defendants were accused of segregation, secession and communism.¹⁶⁷ Their trial lasted almost six years and they were in the end acquitted due to lack of evidence. As for those who were arrested on the grounds that they had been attempting to create an independent Kurdish state, the disseminating communist ideas, and according to Şadillili Vedat, and *Cumhuriyet* newspaper,¹⁶⁸ for founding a clandestine party called the “Kurdish independence Party,” not only did they deny all accusations, but also showed no sign of unity.

Musa Anter, who was one of the most influential writers in the 1950s and 1960s, argues in his memoirs that they did not demand anything directly associated with Kurdishness such as Kurdish cultural rights.¹⁶⁹ However, some of them such as Sait Elçi hinted at the reality of a distinct Kurdish culture. According to Derk Kinnane during the trial of the 49ers, demonstrations took place in “Mardin, Derik (a town in Mardin), Siverek (a town in Şanlıurfa), Diyarbakir, Bitlis and Van and the marching Kurds carried signs which read ‘We are not Turks, we are Kurds’, ‘Down with Gürsel, Menderes, İnönü—All Tyrants’, ‘The Turkish Government must

¹⁶⁶ Azad Zana Gündoğan, p.87.

¹⁶⁷ *Milliyet*, January 1, 1961, quoted in Malmisanij, p.124.

¹⁶⁸ Şadillili Vedat, *Türkiye’de Kürtçülük Hareketleri ve İsyamlar 1*, (Ankara: Kon Yayınları, 1980), p.231; and *Cumhuriyet*, May 22, 1966.

¹⁶⁹ Anter, *Hatıralarım, 1–2*, p.172.

recognize our national rights’.”¹⁷⁰ Yet, as Mehmet Ali Aslan argues, this does not seem to be accurate, since many families did not know how to react or what to do with respect to their children’s arrest. In addition, I have not come across this event anywhere else.

What is striking is the ideological split, on which almost everybody agrees in the literature and which divided the 49ers roughly into rightists and leftists. During the time in the jail, although it was not as evident as a right and left conflict, the way the activists looked at Kurdish society and its religious and tribal structure also paved the way to a separate action. Those who considered themselves leftists or Socialists were Canip Yıldırım, Naci Kutlay, Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Musa Anter, Örfi Akkoyunlu, Nazmi Balkaş and Hasan Akkuş.¹⁷¹ Subsequently, they would not only play a very crucial role in the TLP, but also persons such as Sait Kırmızıtoprak, known as Dr. Şivan, would change the course of the Kurdish movement. The class background of the 49ers will be touched on in the next chapter. For now, the discussion will take a closer look at the political developments after the military coup.

The Military Coup d’état and the Politics: “Tutelage Democracy”

The DP followed a relatively different path from that of Kemalism, as discussed before, by putting its emphasis on the masses and also by relaxing pressures on religion. In addition to a socioeconomic decline in young officers’ living standards, the change in the ruling political elites and the consequences of this shift were prominent reasons for the military intervention, although it was not mentioned by the

¹⁷⁰ Derk Kinnane, *The Kurds and Kurdistan* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.33.

¹⁷¹ Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım* (İstanbul: Avesta, 1998), p.95.

army.¹⁷² Protecting the country from degenerated politicians and safeguarding Kemalist principles were some of the reasons put forth by those who overthrew the government, the National Unity Committee (NUC).

The military coup of 27 May 1960 against the DP and the group they represented symbolized the particular role of the army as the guardians of Kemalist principles, of “tutelage democracy.”¹⁷³ It is worth mentioning that the first military intervention in politics after Mustafa Kemal’s success at keeping the army officers under his control in the mid-1920s, affected especially the new generations of what Ernest Gellner calls the Kemalist Ulema and bulk of the Leftists up until the late 1960s.¹⁷⁴

As Tanel Demirel emphasizes, even though the army was willing to return to multi-party politics, they never wanted to return to pre-coup conditions.¹⁷⁵ Henceforth, in order to prevent their exclusion by a rural majority, a constitution was designed with the help of prominent political scientists. Despite its progressive character, especially in terms of civil rights and liberties, the new Constitution contained elaborate systems of checks and balances which would allow the ruling elite to repress its opposition.¹⁷⁶ The establishment of the Senate and the Constitutional Court aimed to strengthen this system of checks and balances by overseeing the legislation and the assembly.

¹⁷² Semih Vaner, “The Army,” in *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*, eds. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.237.

¹⁷³ Zvi Yehuda Hershlag, *The Contemporary Turkish Economy* (London; New York: Routledge, 1988) p.21.

¹⁷⁴ Ernest Gellner, “The Turkish Option in Comparative Perspective,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, eds. Reşat Kasaba and Sibel Bozdoğan (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp.233-244.

¹⁷⁵ Tanel demirel, *Adalet Partisi, İdeolojisi ve Politika* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 27.

¹⁷⁶ Doğu Ergil, “Class Conflict and Turkish Transformation (1950-1975),” *Studia Islamica*, no. 41 (1975), p. 144.

The new Constitution, contrary to previous one, put a great amount of emphasis on individuals and democracy. Article 12 states that “all individuals are equal before the law, irrespective of language, race, sex, political opinion, philosophical views, or religion or religious sect. No privileges shall be granted to any individual, family, group or class.”¹⁷⁷ It is also concerned with economic issues such as land reform. Article 37, for example, states that “the State shall adopt the measures needed to achieve efficient utilization of land and to provide land for those farmers who either have no land, own insufficient land.”¹⁷⁸ The other major reform was a return to economic planning, with the establishment of the State Planning Organization in 1960 that was to prepare the new Five-Year Development Plans, the first of which was initiated in 1963. Another article worth mentioning is Article 57, which defines the conditions for the closure of political parties. Political parties, which were for the first time regarded apart from other associations, would “conform to the principals of a democratic and secular republic, based on human rights and liberties, and the fundamental principle of the State’s territorial and national integrity. Parties failing to conform to the provisions would be permanently dissolved.”¹⁷⁹

When talking about Turkey with regard to its social and political changes in the first two decades of the multi-party system, first of all, one should emphasize the politicization of the whole country. For instance, the number of non-religious associations and clubs jumped from less than 1,000 to 27,000 while religious one

¹⁷⁷ *Constitution of Turkish Republic*, Ankara, 1961 trans. Sadık Balkan, Ahmet E. Uysal and Kemal H. Karpat, available online at www.anayasa.gen.tr/1961constitution-text.pdf

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*,

increased from less than 1,000 to about 10,000.¹⁸⁰ Between 1960 and 1970, urban population increased by 5 million, reaching 39 percent of the total whereas, unionization increased from 296,000 in 1963 to 1.2 million in 1971 (30 percent of wage earners), following the liberal clauses of the new constitution.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, towards the beginning of the 1960s the proletariat of the country numbered about two million, of whom 600,000 were agriculture workers. After 1960, the Turkish workers succeeded for the first time in the country's history at achieving official recognition of their right to form trade unions and also strike.¹⁸²

Despite the above-mentioned changes, the most important sector of society was peasantry since they made up more than 60 per cent of the population.¹⁸³ In terms of party politics, with the adoption in 1961 of a system of proportional representation, parliament better represented small parties and differences within society as well.¹⁸⁴ In addition to the RPP, the four new parties that stood out on the political scene in the early 1960's were the Justice Party (JP), the New Turkey Party (NTP), the Turkish Labor Party (TLP), and the re-founded Nation Party (NP).

As Ahmad indicates, despite the coup, neo-Democrats returned. Since the socio-economic basis of power remained unaltered, the old political forces were

¹⁸⁰ Ahmet N. Yücekök, *Türkiye'de Örgütlenmiş Dinin Sosyo-Ekonomik Tabanı (1946-1968)* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1971), p.132.

¹⁸¹ Keyder, "The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy," pp. 48-49.

¹⁸² Landau, p.11.

¹⁸³ Demirel, p.81.

¹⁸⁴ William Hale, . "The Turkish Army in Politics, 1960-73." In *Turkish State, Turkish Society*, eds. Andrew Finkel and Nukhet Sirman, (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), p.65.

bound to come to the front.¹⁸⁵ The electoral results between 1961 and 1969 show that if we add the NTP to the JP, the successors of the DP, the “neo-Democrats” were most successful in the elections even during the period between the two military interventions.

Turkey, between 1960 and 1971, experienced an unprecedented plurality in terms of participation in politics and the visibility of different kind of social movements. Although the constitution and other judicial reforms aimed to create a democratic country, for anyone even remotely acquainted with the 1960s, the dominance of the military over civil politics as well as the arrest of numerous publishers and authors, especially those who were involved in socialist and communist movements, stand out. It is also important that the “others” of the state and the regime, namely, anything associated with Kurdish nationalism or the socialist and communist movements, despite a relative relaxation, were still excluded from political life.

Keyder, like many other scholars, purports that “the 1960s provided an atmosphere of unusual freedom in Turkey with an almost complete freedom of expression.”¹⁸⁶ This argument seems to be untenable in many respects. First of all, the expression of Kurdish rights was out of the question and the socialist movement, though not illegal, was under strict control. For instance, several journals and books about the Kurdish question were either banned or seized and their publishers were arrested. Likewise, many socialist publications, books, articles etc. cost their authors

¹⁸⁵ Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy 1950–1975*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), p.186.

¹⁸⁶ Keyder, “The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy,” p.52.

some times more than six years in prison for violating the penal code, especially the laws numbered 141 and 142, which prohibited any propaganda of communism.¹⁸⁷

As the Barzani movement was gaining momentum, the Turkish authorities were already alarmed by it. As such, one of the main fears behind the arrest of the 49ers was the return of Mulla Mustafa Barzani to Iraq after many years in the Soviet Union. In addition to this international development, the authorities, by no means, wanted to debate the “red lines” of the regime, that is to say, to face another challenge by Kurds or socialists to their nation-state project.

Regarding the Kurds in Turkey, the constitution clearly stated that, except for individual rights, no one could propose any national or cultural demands. Furthermore, the law on political parties, which was the first law concerning political parties in Turkey, explicitly banned any claims for any minority groups.¹⁸⁸ This was in agreement with the state discourse that on the Turkish territory there was no other national or cultural group but Turks. The Turkish Labor Party, as will be seen at length in the next chapters, was closed down just for having claimed that there were other cultural and ethnic groups.

In addition, the NUC had started to change the Kurdish and Armenian names of villages and towns into Turkish ones. Law 1587 states that those “names which hurt public opinion and are not suitable for our national culture, moral values, traditions and customs shall be changed into Turkish ones.”¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile, 485

¹⁸⁷ There are plenty of examples of such arrests. see Feroz Ahmad and Bedia Turgay Ahmad, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Politikanın Açıklamalı Kronolojisi (1945–1971)* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınları, 1976), pp. 312-323.

¹⁸⁸ Before this law, the political parties, as any other association, were under the *Cemiyetler Kanunu*, which had been changed a few times and had a very limited place for political parties. See *Resmi Gazete*, No: 12050, 16.7.1965, *Siyasi Partiler Kanunu*, No.648, approved on 3. 7,1965.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in McDowall, p.403.

Kurdish intellectuals and notables, mainly pro-Democrat party, were held in custody in Sivas. Furthermore, the president of the Republic, Cemal Gürsel summarized the policy on the Kurds as follows:

If the mountain Turks do not keep quite, the army will not hesitate to bomb their towns and villages into the ground. There will be such a bloodbath that they and their country will be washed away.¹⁹⁰

This is important because not only was it the President of the republic who spoke, but also a closer look would summarize the general policy of the 1960s regarding the Kurds. The terms Kurd or Kurdish were taboo. In the same line with the state ideology, the Kurds in Turkey were also regarded as Turks, or “Mountain Turks,” who were of pure Turkish stock, but had somehow, forgot their Turkishness and used a broken language that was a mixture of Persian and Turkish. The Commando operations in the east and southeast regions in the late 1960s under the guise of collecting illegal guns and capturing bandits would be a bitter example of this approach. Finally, although the state did not recognize the Kurds and Kurdish in the country, a decree passed in 1967 displays the concern of the authorities with Kurdish. According to the decree, “it is illegal and prohibited to enter or distribute in the country, any materials in Kurdish in any form of published, recorded, taped or such.”¹⁹¹

What is *Kürtçülük*?

Kürtçülük, or Kurdism, first, can be described as any attempt to argue or claim that the “Mountain Turks” are Kurds or have a distinct ethnicity, language and culture

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Özcan, p.86.

¹⁹¹ T.C. Resmi Gazete, 24 Şubat 1967 sayı: 12527 Karar sayısı: 6/7635.

from those of the Turks. Since the existence of the Kurds as a separate group was denied any argument in disagreement with that would be labeled as *Kürtçülük*. Second, any specific emphasis on the Kurdish region in terms of economic backwardness and underdevelopment was part of *Kürtçülük*. However, *Kürtçülük* also was a way for the state authorities to validate their anxiety about Kurdish mobilization. *Kürtçü* or Kurdist, on the other hand, was any group or person advocated *Kürtçülük*, that is to say, would put forward the above-mentioned issues.

In a letter to the journal *Yön* (direction), a teacher from the Kurdish region wrote that “in the region there was a development in Kurdist activities. The reason, he argues, was that eastern people did not know that they were actually Turkish. If only we teach them that they are pure Turks, then they would not be deceived by separatist propaganda. It was our duty, village teachers and civil servants, to do that...yet the situation is getting worse than ever.”¹⁹² In this case, *Kürtçülük* means the existing situation of the region’s people, still speaking Kurdish and listening Kurdish radio broadcasting.

According to the 1965 Census of Population, more than two and a half million people, which were 8.43 % of the total, indicated their language as Kurdish. In 10 provinces Turkish was the second most spoken language after Kurdish. They were Adıyaman, Ağrı, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Urfa, and Van.¹⁹³ These data brought about great concern in the national media. Many

¹⁹² “Doğu bölgemizde gizli bir Kürtçülük faaliyeti vardır. Bunun sebebi de, Doğu halkının Türk soyundan geldiklerini bilmemeleridir. Eğer Kürtçe konuşan ve propagandalara kendini kaptıran vatandaşlara Türk soyundan geldikleri öğretilirse, vatandaş da bu bölücü propagandalara kendini kaptırmayacaktır.’ Bu görevi de köy öğretmenleri ile memurlar yapacaktı ve bizler, bu görevi yaptık... bu görev yapılmıştır, ama yara kangren olmaya devam etmektedir.” *Yön*, no. 204, (24 February, 1967).

¹⁹³ T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *Genel Nüfus Sayımı: Nüfusun Sosyal ve Ekonomik Nitelikleri*, 24.10.1965, Yayın No: 568, (Ankara, 1969), p.184-186.

commentators regarded it as a scandal that such a large population had yet to be integrated into the fold of Turkish culture and language.

A number of the 258,907 persons born in the region were residents of other regions in Turkey.¹⁹⁴ Due to the lack of data about those who migrated to the city for reasons other than for educational purposes, we cannot be sure of how they became integrated to city life. Yet, since this thesis is mainly preoccupied with those Kurds who were students and then became leading figures in politics in general and in the Leftist movement in particular, I shall make some remarks on those who were assumed to be *Kürtçü* in the 1960s.

¹⁹⁴ These figures probably include those who were exiled during the single-party era. See Majeed R. Jafar, *Under-Underdevelopment; A Regional Case Study of the Kurdish Area in Turkey* (Helsinki: Social Policy Association, 1976), p.87.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KURDISH ETHNOREGIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROCESS OF THE POLITICIZATION OF KURDISH IDENTITY IN THE 1960S

This chapter examines the class nature and ideological orientation of the first generation of Kurdish activists that came to political maturity during the 1940s and 1950s. It will discuss their role in the “so-called Kurdish revival of the late 1950s”. It will also attempt to define what their political objectives were. It will go on to discuss the shift in the ideological orientation of the second generation of Kurdish activists that came of age during the 1960s and the impact of Turkish socialism and socialist discourse on approaches to the Kurdish question.

Kurdish Students, the Role of Student Dormitories

Obtaining a higher education was a privilege of the notable and wealthy of Kurdish society up until the late 1950s. In a very minor way, boarding schools and the Village Institutes partly change this pattern.¹⁹⁵ The difference between those who obtained higher education before the 1950s and after 1960s, particularly in the mid-1960s, in terms of socioeconomic background is a fact that needs to be underlined. As will be seen, the leading positions in the 1960s would be held by those who got their education prior to 1960s. Meanwhile, those who were students or who had graduated during the 1960s, that is to say, the new generation of Kurdish intellectuals either would follow the path set out by the earlier generation or as it became evident in the

¹⁹⁵ Virtually all Kurdish students at that time went boarding schools. For example, see Naci Kutlay, *Anularım*.

fractionalization of the *DDKOs* (Turkish acronym for *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*, Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths) would try to organize separately.

The *Dicle Talebe Yurdu* (Dicle Student Dormitory) founded in 1943 by Musa Anter, is the first association that brought together a significant number of Kurdish students.¹⁹⁶ Mustafa Remzi Bucak, who was a deputy from the DP in the 1950s and left the country in the early 1960s, was the head of the dormitory. Yusuf Azizoğlu, Mustafa Ekinci, Faik Bucak, Musa Anter, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Ali Karahan, Edip Karahan, Ziya Şerefhanoglu, Edip Altınakar, Necat Cemiloğlu, Enver Aytekin and many other persons who would become very important figures in politics also stayed there.¹⁹⁷

Yusuf Azizoğlu, who became Minister of Health in the early 1960s and leader of the New Turkey Party, was accused of being “Kurdist” due to the attention he paid to the development of the Eastern regions. Tarık Ziya Ekinci was the most influential *Doğulu* in the Turkish Labor Party, was elected to the parliament from Diyarbakir in 1965, and was party general secretary in the TLP. Faik Bucak was also active in politics during the 1950s and was head of the Republican Peasant’s Nationalist Party branch in Urfa. In the general elections in 1965, his candidacy was turned down by the Justice Party. Although he campaigned independently, he lost the election.¹⁹⁸ He was also founder of the clandestine Kurdistan Democrat Party in 1965. Ziya Şerefhanoglu was elected to the senate from Bitlis. Ali Karahan, too, was elected to the parliament.

¹⁹⁶ See Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım, 1-2*.

¹⁹⁷ Mustafa Remzi Bucak, *Bir Kürt Aydınından İsmet İnönü’ye Mektup* (İstanbul: Doz Yayıncılık, 1991), p.8.

¹⁹⁸ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Vol.7 “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler”(İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları,1988) p.2129.

To sum up, almost everyone who stayed in the Dicle Student Dormitory later became influential in politics. Although many of those figures did not deny their political allegiances, that is to say affiliation with any political parties that would lead them to the parliament, they considered that as the only option they had during that time and used this argument to explain why they did not pay much attention to the Kurdish issue at that time. It is commonly argued that the importance of the Dicle Student Dormitory comes from its role and place in shaping modern Kurdish nationalism. Also, it is argued that the dormitory functioned, in the 1940s, as a Kurdish university; however, as noted above, the importance of the dormitory was that it provided a suitable environment for those Kurdish students to form networks.

This first generation of Kurdish students, most of whom were from the leading stratum of society in the 1940s, and to some extent, in the early 1950s, for a number of reasons chose not to play the ethnic card in politics. It is true that with their Kurdish backgrounds, they would have been unable to reach high office had they emphasized their ethnic identity. It seems that their main interest was to become a part of national political life through the existing channels and to use the existing discourses. Moreover, as Bozarslan points out, the new generation, due to the success of Kemalism in terms of pacifying the earlier generation of Kurdish nationalists, based its references in accordance with Turkish political culture.¹⁹⁹

Many, however, would recognize that their ethnic and cultural identity was dissimilar to the places in western Anatolia where they studied. For almost every student during this period was confronted with a different culture. While the first generation of Kurdish students say that they were not even aware that they were Kurds, the next generation would, on the other hand, emphasize how they were

¹⁹⁹ Bozarslan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği,” p.850.

stunned when they first saw the discrepancy between their region and the western part of the country. This is very important for our understanding of the subsequent developments in the Kurdish movement. First, as noted above, those who mentioned the ethnic and cultural differences came from relatively wealthy families. However, many of those who were most struck by the economic gap between eastern and western Turkey came from poorer backgrounds.

Tarık Ziya Ekinçi in an interview pointed out that he had had no idea about the Kurdish identity since in Diyarbakır, his hometown, there was virtually nothing to remind him of anything of the sort. Like many other examples, he stated that he recognized his Kurdishness only when he was accused of being a Kurd.²⁰⁰ Musa Anter tells a similar story about how he distinguished himself from the rest of the class in Adana where he was a student.²⁰¹ Another significant example is of Kemal Burkay, who also was very influential in the TLP in the 1960s. In his memoirs, Burkay states that he used to believe that there were no difference between the Kurds and the Turks; “even I assumed that there were no Kurds except for those who lived around their village.”²⁰²

However, the next generation, that is to say, the one in the late 1950s and early 1960s, were astonished by the regional inequalities, which encourage their leftward drift. Ruşen Aslan, an activist in the leftist movement in the 1960s, as well as Kemal Burkay and Mehmet Ali Aslan, who also became the TLP leader in 1969, stated that their first observation was the chasm between eastern and western parts of

²⁰⁰ *Interview with Tarık Ziya Ekinçi, in Amidalılar; Sürgündeki Diyarbekirliler, Compl. Şeyhmus Diken (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007) pp.44-46.*

²⁰¹ Anter, *Hatıralarım*, p.43.

²⁰² Kemal Burkay, *Anılar, Belgeler, Vol.I.* (İstanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2002), p.66.

Turkey.²⁰³ This observation, in addition to a new environment, in which socialists started to voice their demands more than ever, would lead many Kurds to encounter socialism. Contrary to the previous generation, the new generation of Kurdish students who migrated to big cities, faced new economic and cultural problems.

Student dormitories remained one of the most secure places for many Kurds in Istanbul and Ankara. What is interesting is that, *hemşericilik* (fellow townsmanship) was more decisive than Kurdishness. For instance, the *Diyarbakır Öğrenci Yurdu*, (Diyarbakır Student Dormitory) in Istanbul was the first stop for many students from Diyarbakır.²⁰⁴ In addition, many eastern cultural organizations or *hemşeri* associations not only gathered around Kurdishness, but also strengthened their cohesion in terms of their local identities. As will be seen later, prior to the Eastern Meetings in 1967, nineteen of these associations signed a joint paper and condemned Turkist writers who assaulted Kurds. However, *hemşericilik* turned into *Doğulu* (from the East), a relatively broader identity but narrower than the Kurdish one owing to its emphasis on only the economically deprived segments of the Kurds, which was anyway out of question due to the political atmosphere in the 1960s.

In addition to the increasing number of Kurdish students in the 1960s, there was another important phenomenon, the emergence of Kurdish literature and the eruption of debates concerned with a solution to the Eastern question in the Turkish media. I will take a closer look at the journals, which were regarded as Kurdistans by the authorities and many of which were closed down after just a few issues.

The Reemergence of Kurdish Literature and Historiography

²⁰³ Ruşen Aslan, Interview by Delal Aydın, Ankara, Turkey, March, 2005.

²⁰⁴ Ömer Ağin, *Alev, Duvar ve TKP*, (İstanbul: Gendaş A.Ş, 2003), p.15.

The prevailing idea of proving that the Kurds were Turks, too, had been cherished by the authorities long before the multi-party era. However, it took on a new form in the 1950s and 1960s. Kurdism was seen as a threat to the state's discourse and was brought to the public attention mainly by the ultra nationalist media, such as *Milli Yol*, (National Path) in the late 1950s, and *Ötüken*, in the 1960s. Avni Doğan, inspector of the First General Inspectorate in the 1940s, published a serial in daily *Vatan* (Motherland) in 1958 in which he warned the authorities about recent developments in neighboring countries, especially about Iraq. There he called for “a common national atmosphere to defend national unity” which was under great threat from rising Kurdism.²⁰⁵

Another example was the book titled *Doğu Vilayetleri ve Varto Tarihi* (The Eastern Provinces and the History of Varto), written by Mehmet Şerif Fırat who was a Kurd himself. The book was reprinted in 1961 and claimed that the Kurds in fact were Turks. Cemal Gürsel wrote a foreword for the book in which he reiterated this view by arguing that the citizens in eastern Anatolia, despite the fact that they thought that they were distinct from Turks and had a unique language, were of pure Turkish stock.²⁰⁶ It is necessary to give a brief account of what Kurds wrote starting from the late 1950s but especially in the 1960s.

Musa Anter, one of the most prominent Kurdish writers of the time, published a journal entitled *Dicle Kaynağı* (Tigris Spring) along with three other friends from Dicle Student Dormitory in 1948. According to Anter, for the first time, they learned about and discussed the massacres of the Kurds, such as the Zilan massacre of 1930,

²⁰⁵ Avni Doğan, “Tehlike Çanı,” *Vatan*, 19-23 November 1958, quoted in Azad Zana Gündoğan, p.84

²⁰⁶ Mehmet Şerif Fırat, *Doğu illeri ve Varto Tarihi* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1961).

Dersim in 1938 or *Otuzüçler* (33s).²⁰⁷ In the late 1950s, Anter again published a daily Kurdish oriented journal under the title *İleri Yurt*, (Advanced Country). The journal was based in Diyarbakir and founded in 1958. To mark its 500th issue, on September 31, 1959, Anter published a poem called *Kıml* (insect pest) in Kurdish. The poem was one of the first attempts to voice the economic grievances of the region. He ended his poem saying “wait sister, your brothers are coming to save you from what you suffer.”²⁰⁸ As a result, Musa Anter along with the journal’s editor, Canip Yıldırım and owner, Abdurrahman Efhem Dolak were arrested in September 1959.²⁰⁹ Although they were accused of offending public sensitivities and damaging the state’s image, the expert opinion of the court was that publishing a Kurdish poem did not constitute an attack on the unity of Kurds and Turks.²¹⁰

Musa Anter’s subsequent writings attracted not only the attention of the Turkish state, but also of the new generations of Kurdish intellectuals. In 1962, in a liberal Turkish journal called *Barış Dünyası* (world of peace), Anter proposed a full solution to the Eastern Question. After noting that they did not aim at the establishment of any Kurdish state or separate from Turkey, he declared that, “development of the East is the development of Turkey. The East can be a sun for our nation. Why do not we open schools which would teach our citizens whose mother tongue is Kurdish and who do not speak any other language except Kurdish? Why does the university in the region not study literature and philology of this language?

²⁰⁷ 33 Kurdish villagers were executed arbitrary by General Mustafa Muğlalı in Van in 1943.

²⁰⁸ *Bekle Bacı, seni çektiğin bu zulümlerden kurtaracak kardeşlerin yetişiyor.*”

²⁰⁹For the poem and the reactions, see Musa Anter, *Kıml* (İstanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1962).

²¹⁰ Çamlıbel, *49’lar Davası: Bir Ülkenin İdamlık Kürtleri*, p.34.

Why are Kurdish newspapers not published? Why does not a local radio station broadcast in Kurdish?”²¹¹

He underlined the fact that Kurdish radio broadcasts from abroad were already popular among Kurds. In addition, he added that teaching in Kurdish in primary education would be helpful for getting a good education in Turkish afterward.

However, in another Turkish weekly, *Yön* (direction), 15 Kurdish intellectuals responded to *Bariş Dünyası* in a way that seem to give the first signals of the split among the Kurds with regard to the approach with which they sought to deal with the Eastern Question. In the article titled “Eastern Youngsters Respond to “*Bariş Dünyası*”: Our Eastern Matter,”(*Doğulu Gençler “Bariş Dünyası”na cevap veriyor: Doğu Davamız*), although they did not disagree with what had been argued in *Bariş Dünyası*, it was argued that the remedies and solutions which had been put forth by the article were insufficient to solve the question.²¹²

In another article, Sait Kırmızıtoprak responded to Avni Doğan’s serial published in daily *Dünya* (the World) according to a socialist model. However, he also put great emphasis on the systematic denial of Kurdish ethnicity. According to Kırmızıtoprak, Kurdish people, as Avni Doğan had agreed a few years earlier, had a distinct ethnicity, literature, poetry and culture. Yet, people like Avni Doğan and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir had backtracked from an acceptance of the Kurdish ethnic identity. They had adopted a line based on the book *Doğu Vilayetleri ve Varto Tarihi* (Eastern provinces and the History of Varto), which denied the existence of a separate Kurdish identity. However, denying the existence of Kurdish people did not halt

²¹¹ Anter, *Kımlı*, pp.74-76.

²¹² “Doğulu Gençler “Bariş Dünyası”na cevap veriyor: Doğu Davamız” *Yön*, no 26, 13 June 1962, pp.12-13. They were listed as follows: Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Selahattin Kemaloğlu, Kahraman Aytaç, Sait Kelekçi, Gıyasettin Eroğlu, Hasan Kocademir, Mehmet Ali Aslan, Yusuf Karagül, Vefa Alpaslan, Mehmet Ali Dinler, Tahsin Bilici, Ali Ekber Eren, Hamdi Turanlı, Süleyman Bayramoğlu, Haydar Kova,

interest in the Kurdish identity and if anything, helped promote conflict between Kurdish and Turkish thinkers. Despite conflicts, socialism was still seen as the main framework for the solution of the Eastern Question. Sait Kırmızıtoprak argued that “We, *Doğulus*, with our entire strength, claim that only an organization which is populist [Halkçı], democratic and based on labor, through effort and with knowledge of Turkey’s people could ensure the development of the East.”²¹³

In the early 1960s, the influence of Socialism can be discerned easily. Starting from the early 1960s, writings concerning the region and the Kurds were published both in the mainstream media and in journals founded by Kurds. The debate revolved around the socialist rhetoric of development and justifications for greater cultural and political freedom based on adherence to form the ideological basis of both *Doğuculuk* (Eastism) and the emerging Kurdish nationalism among new generations.

The new Constitution promulgated after the 1960 coup, in contrast to the pre-coup one, allowed people to form associations and publish without permission notification.²¹⁴ This gave rise to independent, bilingual Kurdish and Turkish journals. Among them, *Dicle-Firat* (Tigris and Euphrates, 1962), *Deng* (Voice, 1963), *Roja Newe* (New Day, 1963), *Yeni Akış* (New Current, 1966), *Doğu* (East, 1969), *DDKO Haber Bülteni*, (DDKO’s monthly bulletin, 1970) were the most important.²¹⁵ All of them, as noted above, had two features. They attempted to solve the

²¹³ “Biz *Doğu*’lular bütün kuvvetimizle şunu diyoruz: “Halkçı, demokratik, sosyal Türkiye insanının emek, bilgi ve çabasına dayanan bir organizasyon içerisinde *Doğu* kalkınması tahakkuk edebilir ancak.” Dr. S. Kırmızıtoprak “Kimler için çan çalıyorlar?...” *Yön*, no. 40, (19 September 1962), pp.14-15.

²¹⁴ Republic of Turkey, *Constitution of Turkish Republic*, Article 23 and 29, Ankara, 1961.

²¹⁵ For a full list, see Malmisanij and Mahmud Levendi, *Li Kurdistana Bakur u li Tirkiyé Rojnamegeriya Kurdi (1908–1992)* (Ankara: Özge Yayıncılık, 1992).

underdevelopment of the East with socialism, and considered the constitution as a safeguard for Kurdish cultural and political rights.

Edip Karahan, the owner of the *Dicle-Fırat* under the pseudonym of Edip Osmanoğlu, in the first issue declared, “The East has been neglected for centuries and as a result of this became a land of deprivation. This neglect continued during the Republican era. No matter what political parties they belonged to, all of the politicians, in order to assimilate and pacify the people in the East and its intellectuals deliberately introduced the East as a land of ignorance and barbarity to the Turkish and the world public.”²¹⁶ Although it only published eight issues, it made a great contribution to the reemergence of the old Kurdish masterpieces. There were fruitful debates about present issues such as the issue of 55 aghas who had been sent into exile or other Turkish publications especially those that provoked Kurdish feeling.²¹⁷

Deng, (the Voice) a bilingual Kurdish and Turkish journal, owned by Ergün Koyuncu could only publish two issues.²¹⁸ *Deng*, too, put a great emphasis on negligence of the East and welcomed the new political atmosphere.²¹⁹ In *Deng*, Kurds such as Kemal Badilli and Faik Bucak wrote and published Kurdish poems.²²⁰ *Roja*

²¹⁶ “Doğu, yüzyıllardan beri ihmal edilmiş, bu ihmal neticesinde bir mahrumiyet bölgesi haline gelmiştir. Bu ihmal, Cumhuriyet devrinde de devam etmiştir. Hangi partiye mensup olursa olsun gelmiş geçmiş bütün politikacılar, Doğu halkını ve aydınlarını sindirmek için Doğu’yu, sistemli ve maksatlı olarak Türk ve Dünya efkarına taassup, cehalet ve medeniyet düşmanı bir yer gibi göstermişlerdir.” Edip Osmanoğlu, (Karahan) “Neden Çıkıyoruz?” *Dicle-Fırat*, Yıl:1, no 1, 1 November 1962. online at <http://www.edipkarahan.com/>

²¹⁷ For example, See.Edip Karahan, “Kırılan Potlar,” *Dicle-Fırat*, , no.8 available online at <http://www.edipkarahan.com/>

²¹⁸ Malmisanij and Lewendi,

²¹⁹ Azad Zana Gündoğan, p.109.

²²⁰ Kutlay, *Anılarım*, p.102.

Newe, (the New Day) bilingual monthly newspaper, was closed down like other journals on account of having separatist aims.²²¹

In June 1963, 23 prominent Kurdish writers and students who wrote for *Dicle-Firat*, *Deng*, and *Roja Newe* were arrested.²²² They were accused of being Communist Kurdist and attempting to establish an independent Kurdish state in Turkish territory.²²³ All of the above-mentioned publications were banned. As a result, they earned a negative image in the eye of the Turkish public.

Despite the threat of being arrested, writings on the East and the Kurdish issue continued. A striking example is the publication of *Yeni Akış* (the New Current) in 1966. The journal ran for six issues and continued the tradition of writing about the east, and amalgamation of socialism and Kurdish ethnic pride. Socialism and compliance with the constitution proposed a solution to both the economic backwardness of the region and emancipation of Kurdishness. For example, one article proclaimed that “there exists a Kurdish people who have their unique language, culture, custom and tradition in the eastern part of Turkey.”²²⁴ However, the journal did not advocate Kurdish independence. In an article entitled *Socialism and the Kurds*, it is argued that socialism allowed ethnic groups to enrich their

²²¹ Malmisanij and Lewendi, p.159.

²²² These included Edip Karahan of *Dicle-Firat*, Doğan Kılıç Şihhesenanlı and Hasan Buluş of *Roja Newé*, Musa Anter, Mehmet Serhat, Ergün Koyuncu and Yaşar Kaya of *Deng*, Ziya Şerefhanoglu of *Reya Rast*, Ali Anagür, Kemal Bingöllü, Fetullah Kakioglu, Mehmet Bilgin, Enver Aytekin and nine persons from Iraq and Iran who were mainly students in Turkey. See *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol.7 “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler,” p.2126.

²²³ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 July, 1963.

²²⁴ “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler” *Yeni Akış*, no.3 October 1966. Available online at <http://www.mehmetaliaslan.com>

national culture and ethnic characteristics and its language.²²⁵ The journal also published some Kurdish poems by Faik Bucak, Kemal Badilli and Ihsan Aksoy.²²⁶ However, *Yeni Akış* also was banned and Kemal Burkay and Mehmet Ali Aslan were put in the jail for six months.²²⁷

Another journal, *Doğu* (the East) followed the same line as above-mentioned publications, but was able to publish only two issues. According to Musa Anter, who also wrote for the journal, the Eastern Question was analyzed within the framework of scientific socialism.²²⁸ For example, Mihri Belli in an article entitled *Millet Gerçeği* (the reality of the nation), argued that for a genuine unity between Kurds and Turks, as well as for the greater good of the country, the state policy of suppression and assimilation of the Kurds should be put to an end.²²⁹

Alongside the journals, there were also a number of publications on the Kurdish language. Kemal Badilli, for example, published a Kurdish grammar book, Musa Anter published a Kurdish-Turkish dictionary and Mehmet Emin Bozarslan translated and published Ahmede Xani's *Mem u Zin* (Mem and Zin) the classic of Kurdish literature.²³⁰

To recapitulate, starting with the late 1950s, the Kurdish question was discussed both by Turkish and Kurdish intellectuals as Eastern Question. Initially,

²²⁵ "Türkiye'nin doğusunda yaşayan, kendisine has dili, kültürü, örfü, adeti olan bir Kürt Halkı vardır." Ibid.,

²²⁶ "Kürt Halkının Yeri" *Yeni Akış*, no. 4, November 1966.

²²⁷ Mehmet Ali Aslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31 January 2009.

²²⁸ Anter, *Hatıralarım*, 1-2, p.216.

²²⁹ Malmisanij and Lewendi, p.197; and Mihri Belli, *Milli Demokratik Devrim* (Ankara: Aydınlık Yayınları, 1970)

²³⁰ For an excellent analysis of Bozarslan's personal and intellectual evolution, see Metin Yüksel, "A "Revolutionary" Kurdish Mullah from Turkey: Mehmed Emin Bozarslan and His Intellectual Evolution," *The Muslim World* 99, 2: (April 2009) pp.356–380.

they seemed to use a vague language with regard to the ethnic aspect of the question, focusing more on economic development and the need for a socialist solution. Undoubtedly, their arguments were shaped by a myriad of social and political developments of the 1960s. As will be seen in the next chapter, many Kurdish activists' affiliation with the Leftist movement would be central to how they viewed the issue. Kurdish ethnicity, which encountered both Turkish nationalism and Socialism in the 1960s, would be cherished by Kurdish intelligentsia. However, the general political atmosphere of the 1960s, as well as Kurdish intelligentsia's confusion and fear with respect to ethnicity would prevent them from prioritizing ethnicity in their discourse.

Yet, although the early Kurdish activists would define their problems in primarily economic terms, this led to new questions, such as why and how it was so. The answers that each group and person would give to those questions also would determine the path they would follow. Given the fact that most Kurdish activists were attracted to leftist ideas during the 1960s, socialism was seen as the panacea to both inequality and economic backwardness. This would lead to an affiliation with socialist ideas in general and with the Turkish Labor Party in particular. This facet of the Kurdish movement will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

Both those Kurds who inhabited in the region and those who had migrated to the big cities were not immune from Turkey's economic, political and demographic transformation. These transformations provided part of the inspiration for all of the above-mentioned publications. Yet, one should not exaggerate their influence. During this period, nearly 70 percent of Kurds were illiterate. What is important though is the fact that they made a great contribution to the intellectual development of many young Kurdish students and intellectuals.

As Mikesell and Murphy argue, when dominant nationalism generates feelings of xenophobia or megalomania, the other linguistic and religious groups, especially if it is thought that they are disloyal and inferior, are more likely to express keen feelings of resentment.²³¹ This point is evident from the above-mentioned journals. However, the increased visibility of Kurdish ethnicity did not go unnoticed. Not only did the state authorities have to deal with the new sense of Kurdish ethnic pride, but these developments also elicited a response from non-state actors. The socialists were one such group. Turkish nationalists as well paid increasing attention to the Kurdish movement. Turkish nationalists in particular engaged in bellicose discourse against the Kurds. The following paragraph is an example of such vulgar discourse:

If they [the Kurds] want to carry on speaking a primitive language with vocabularies of only four or five thousand words, if they want to create their own state and publish what they like, let them go and do it somewhere else. We Turks have shed rivers of blood to take possession of these lands; we had to uproot Georgians, Armenians and Byzantine Greeks...Let them go off wherever they want, to Iran, to Pakistan, to India, or to join Barzani. Let them ask the United Nations to find them a homeland in Africa. The Turkish race is very patient, but when it is really angered, it is like a roaring lion and nothing can stop it. Let them ask the Armenians who we are, and let them draw the appropriate conclusions.²³²

Nihal Atsız, an ultra-nationalist writer, and İsmet Tümtürk, another radical Turkish nationalist suggested ethnic cleansing if the Kurds did not except assimilating.²³³ The anti-Kurdism of the ultra-nationalist Turkish right would provide part of the impetus behind the Eastern Meetings in 1967, a point that will be looked at in greater depth in Chapter Four.

²³¹ Mikesell and Murphy, p. 600.

²³² Quoted in Kendal, p.77.

²³³ For what they wrote in Ötuken and Milli Yol, see Uslu, pp.127-128.

One final point needs to be mentioned, the constitution and references to it. Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, in his influential book *Doğunun Sorunları* only started with an article from the constitution, but also argued that unless the constitution was put in practice, the problems of the East would not be solved.²³⁴ To give another example, in *Yeni Akış*'s second issue there was an attempt to legitimize the journal's publication along constitutional lines.²³⁵ It was not only Kurds who paid attention to the constitution but also Turkish writers who tackled the subject. Although his real influence came after his arrest with the TLP and DDKOs activists in 1971, İsmail Beşikçi, an assistant at Erzurum University, began to publish books on the Kurds and argued that the constitution was an important part of the solution.²³⁶ Furthermore, İbrahim Yasa, a professor at Ankara University, in his book *Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı ve Temel Sorunları*, (Turkey's Social Structure and Fundamental Problems), discussed the situation of the Kurds and the East concluding with the articles from the constitution.²³⁷

The Source of the Kurdish Ethnoregional Movement in the 1960s

The Kurdish ethnoregional movement in the 1960s was made up a number of actors and groups (see Figure 3). The TKDP and the T'de KDP were non-socialist

²³⁴ Mehmed Emin Bozarslan, *Doğunun Sorunları* (Diyarbakır: Şafak Kitabevi, 1966), p.7.

²³⁵ *Yeni Akış* no.2 September, 1966 (back cover).

²³⁶ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğuda değişim ve yapısal sorunlar: Göçebe Alikan Aşireti* (Ankara : Doğan Yayınevi, 1969); *Doğu Anadolu'nun düzeni : Sosyo-ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller*, (Ankara : E Yayınları, 1969) were among his first publications on the Kurdish issue.

²³⁷ İbrahim Yasa, *Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı ve Temel Sorunları* (Türkiye ve Orta Dogu Amme Idaresi Enstitusu Yayinlari, no.119 (Ankara: Sevinc Matbaasi, 1970), p.174.

sources of the movement. This section addresses the three actors of the movement, except for the TLP and Kurdish students.

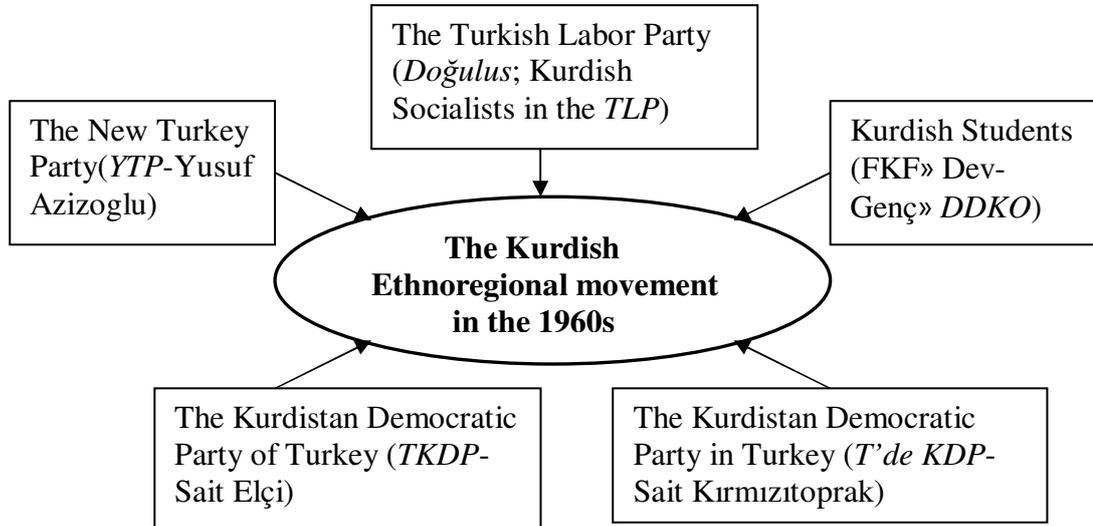


Figure 3. The sources of the Kurdish ethnoregional movement in the 1960s.

The general socialist posture of the Kurdish intellectual classes had a great impact on the Kurdish ethnoregionalist movement. This aspect of the development of Kurdish politics will be looked at in greater detail in the following chapter. However, before looking at the socialist parties and their impact, it is important to look at other non-socialist groups that influenced the development of Kurdish politics: the New Turkey Party (*Yeni Türkiye Partisi*, NTP) and two clandestine parties, respectively, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi*, TKDP) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey (*Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi*, T'de KDP).

The NTP was founded in wake of the military coup in 1961 when the ban on political parties was lifted. Like the Justice Party, the NTP claimed to be a continuation of the DP and attempted to gain the former DP votes. The NTP was unsuccessful in the end and it was JP that gained the former DP voters.

Ekrem Alican, the chairman of the party, and Yusuf Azizoglu who became party leader in the late 1960s were both Kurds. In fact, Azizoglu was one of the exiled aghas allowed to return to the East by the Democrats in the 1940s and had left the DP to set up Freedom Party (FP) in 1955.²³⁸ Many politically active Kurds in the 1960s had supported the FP until it was closed down in 1958, after which they turned to the RPP. This support was part of an attempt by the Kurdish elite to achieve the maximum amount of political influence and is in fact contrary to what they claimed later. For instance, Musa Anter, Niyazi Usta and Canip Yıldırım²³⁹ turned to the RPP.

The NTP got the bulk of its support from the Kurds due to Yusuf Azizoglu's personal contacts and the local notables influence in the party.²⁴⁰ The NTP took part in three short coalitions between 1961 and 1965 and obtained some ministerial positions as well. For instance, Yusuf Azizoglu became Minister of Health and paid great emphasis on Kurdish cities and cultural associations.²⁴¹ During his ministry, he was accused of not working for the national interest, but for local and separatist ones. When Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, the RPP Minister of the Interior resigned, he claimed that some individuals in the coalition were not working for the whole nation, which was a veiled reference to Azizoglu.²⁴²

²³⁸ McDowall, p.406.

²³⁹ Orhan Miroğlu, *Canip Yıldırım'la Söyleşi: Hevsel Bahçesinden Bir Dut Ağacı* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p.165.

²⁴⁰ For example, the 55 Aghas who had been exiled in the wake of the coup were allowed to return their land while the NTP was in coalition. Furthermore, they, the 55s were welcomed with drums and clarions by the NTP and the JP. See Ahmad and Ahmad, p.252.

²⁴¹ Ruşen Arslan, *Cim Karnında Nokta: Anılar* (İstanbul: Doz, 2006), p.85.

²⁴² *Cumhuriyet*, 5 October 1963.

Losing its strength in the western part of Turkey, NTP concentrated on the Eastern region especially after 1965, utilizing *Doğuculuk* in its propaganda and trying to form an alliance with the local notables and aghas. Although the NTP was unsuccessful, its approach demonstrates as striking example of the shift in terms of political propaganda in the region. The Party Program, in addition to its network among local notables and alike, paid great attention to the economic development of the region, while rejecting any form of separatism.²⁴³ For example, Yusuf Azizoglu, as the party chairman, claimed that their sole concern was the development of the East. He also denied any connections with *Kürtçülük* and such ideologies.²⁴⁴

The First Phase of Politicization of the Kurdish Ethnicity

As noted, the Kurdish ethnicity and language gained an increasingly high profile during the 1960s. Although economics was the main lens through which Kurds saw the Eastern Question, increasing ethnic awareness also had a subtle effect on politics. Part of this was an endeavor to prove that their ethnicity and cultural identity were real when faced with the denial of the Kurdish and the opposition of the political right. Bozarslan argues, in addition to a collective memory of the past events

²⁴³ Article 4 of party programme states that “Our understanding of nationalism reflects a moral solidarity based on our citizens’ who regard s/himself as a nation within the Turkish language and culture, common desires and refuses the separator currents born of race, religion, culture and local customs.” In Turkish, “*Milliyetçilik anlayışımız, vatandaşlar arasında, ırk, din, kültür ve mahalli gelenek farklarından doğan ayırıcı cereyanları reddeden, Türk dili ve kültürü içinde kendisini bir millet olarak kabul eden vatandaşların müşterek arzularına dayanan, manevi tesanüdü ifade etmektedir.*” In Ferruh Bozbeyli, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partilerin Ekonomik ve Sosyal Görüşleri-Belgeler; Parti Programları*, (İstanbul: Ak Yayınları, 1970), p.376.

²⁴⁴ Yusuf Azizoglu, in Abdi İpekçi, *Liderler Diyor ki; Röportajlar* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1969), pp.80-82.

and the new Kurdish intelligentsia, the Barzani revolt in Iraq also promoted politicized expressions of the Kurdish ethnicity.²⁴⁵

The Barzani Revolt,²⁴⁶ between 1961 and 1970, was confined to Iraq and involved only with a small proportion of the Kurds.²⁴⁷ However, it caused great anxiety amongst the Turkish authorities and at the same time encouraged some Kurdish nationalists in Turkey. Although people who had been to Iraq during that time and had seen Barzani personally claimed that Barzani would never support a Kurdish movement in Turkey,²⁴⁸ it has been argued that the clandestine Kurdistan Democrat Party of Turkey (TKDP) was directly founded by him. Whatever the truth, given the party's name, it is beyond doubt that at the very least the KDP of Iraq provided the inspiration for the organization.

According to Bozarslan, the TKDP, which was founded by Faik Bucak and Sait Elçi in 1965, was the first Kurdish organization established after *Xoybun* in the 1930s.²⁴⁹ Along with the TLP, the TKDP was the most important channel through

²⁴⁵ Hamit Bozarslan, "Political Aspects of the Kurdish Problem in Contemporary Turkey," pp.96–97.

²⁴⁶ The Kurdistan Democrat Party in Iraq (KDP) was founded after its Iranian counterpart, under the direct influence of communism. In 1958, the party issued a resolution which can also be seen as its ultimate purpose: "1-recogniton in principle of the rights of the Kurdish people, including the right to self-determination. 2- Fighting separatist thought and movements, and striving to solidify solidarity between the Arab and Kurdish nationalities. 3- Upholding Article 3 of the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of Iraq and working to implement it by legislating laws guaranteeing Kurdish national rights. 4- Caring for the interests of the Kurdish people with regard to industrialization and raising agricultural production and living standards, as well as social, educational, and health standards. 5- Strengthening fraternity between the Kurdish people and the minorities living in Kurdistan, and guaranteeing their ability to exercise their rights." See, Massoud Barzani, *Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement* (New York: Palgrave, MacMillan, 2003), p.203

²⁴⁷ Edgar O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Revolt, 1961-1970* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973), p.164.

²⁴⁸ Orhan Miroğlu, *Canip Yıldırım'la Söyleşi*, p.180.

²⁴⁹ Bozarslan, Hamit, "Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898–2000)" p.854.

which Kurdish issue could be discussed.²⁵⁰ It was established initially in Diyarbakir, and then in Silvan, Batman, Sason, Garzan, Hazzo, Baykan, Bitlis, Siirt, Tatvan, Muş, Bulanık, Lice, Patnos, Van, Hizan, Siverek, Cizre, Nusaybin and Kızıltepe.²⁵¹ It participated in the Eastern Meetings in 1967 and most of the time its members collaborated with the Easterners in the TLP.

The party was culturally nationalist and put great emphasis on the political and cultural rights of the Kurds in Turkey. However, their ultimate purpose, according to the platform, was not separation, but rather integration with a united Turkey. Interestingly, its discourse was influenced by developmentalism and leftism. Although McDowall argues that the party was unwilling to examine the inherent tensions between ethnic nationalism, social traditionalism and social development,²⁵² the party platform, in the part entitled economic rights, explicitly called for a resolution to regional underdevelopment.²⁵³ Moreover, the Party program was influenced by the all-pervasive constitutionalism of the era. In fact, the TKDP cited from the constitution and argued that their goals did not oppose adherence to the 1961 Constitution.

One of the first explanations for their approach might be made in accordance to our theoretical approach. The Kurdish movement in the 1960s was turning into an ethnoregional movement. Ethnicity was one of the two catalysts of the movement.

²⁵⁰ Şeref Yıldız, *Fırtınada Yürüyüş* (İstanbul: Sarı Defter9, 2008), p.48.

²⁵¹ Şakir Epözdemir' s study is one of the rare studies on the TKDP. The author himself was the party member and arrested in 1968 along with other members of the party and stood trial in Antalya. See Şakir Epözdemir *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi: 1968/235 Antalya Davası Savunması* (İstanbul: Peri Yayınları, 2005), p.9.

²⁵² McDowall, p.406.

²⁵³ Epözdemir, , p.24.

The new elite, in order to cooperate with the rest of their community, needed to accept at least some of the present conditions and would try to highlight the existing grievances as much as they could. Therefore, whereas the Easterners dealt with the economic part of the movement, the Kurdish nationalist elite focused on ethnicity and culture. Both borrowed from each other. In the case of the TKDP, it is also evident that while they tried to extend their influence within the region they would sometimes have to challenge not only the existing elite, but also the new generation of socialist Kurds. This promoted a leftward shift in the party's discourse.

The TKDP furnishes a striking example of personal conflict as well. Whereas the first party leader, Faik Bucak was killed in 1965, Sait Elçi and a friend of his were assassinated by Sait Kırmızıtoprak while in Iraq. Sait Kırmızıtoprak then was killed by the Barzanis.²⁵⁴ Sait Elçi was very influential among Kurdish intelligentsia in the 1960s. Both Elçi and Kırmızıtoprak were involved in the TLP and on many occasions, they were as influential as the Easterners. After the arrest of members of the TKDP in 1968, the party was dissolved and Sait Kırmızıtoprak, known as Dr. *Şivan*, formed *Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi*, (T'de KDP, with the only difference in its name, *de*, means in Turkey). By contrast, T'de KDP was a communist party whose regulations were a copy of those of communist parties.²⁵⁵ Although it was not so successful in the late 1960s, pro- *Şivan* groups developed in the 1970s.

To sum up, starting in the mid-1950s, the Kurdish movement was dominated by a tiny number of people consisting of the traditional leading stratum of Kurdish society, sheiks and aghas and their relatives, and an emerging generation of Kurdish intellectuals from poorer backgrounds most of whom had a higher education. Those

²⁵⁴ interview with Şakir .Epözdemir: "Dr. Şivan Olayı-23'ler ve 55'ler olayı ile ilgili bir söyleşi" Ankara, 2006. available online at: http://www.kurdinfo.com/s_epozdemir_soylesi_c_yilmaz.pdf

²⁵⁵ *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1*, (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p.386.

who stayed in Dicle Student Dormitory formed the backbone of the Kurdish intellectual class. After their arrest in the *49'lar Olayı* they were joined by a new generation of intellectuals. Those who were in active politics, again, until the late 1960s would consist of more or less the same people. No matter which party they joined, their ultimate purpose was to integrate with the political system.

As for the Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish ethnoregional movement, many activists did as much as they could to secure their positions within the Turkish political system. Although it was culture for the first generation that provided the basis for the critique of Turkish society, for the newer generations it was economics and underdevelopment. Therefore, it is important to examine Turkish socialism in general in order to provide a better context for the development of the Kurdish movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

Turkish Socialism in the 1960s

Socialism, as an ideology, is as old as Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms in Turkey. The first socialist party, *Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası* (Ottoman Socialist Party) goes back to 1910, two years after the establishment of the first ever legal Kurdish organization.²⁵⁶ Just like Kurdish nationalism, socialism and Marxism were banned after the Kemalists managed to consolidate power. The Kemalist movement, as it did with some Kurdish notables in the 1920s, not only put an end to any further communist movements in Turkey, but also included and embraced some communists such as Vedat Nedim Tör, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, who in the early 1930s were

²⁵⁶ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1952), p. 303

allowed to publish the journal *Kadro* (Cadre).²⁵⁷ As Harris points out, they were provided opportunities to use their talents in government service and, indeed, to play important roles in the ideological development of Kemalism.²⁵⁸

In 1946, two Socialist parties, *Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi* (Socialist Workers Party of Turkey) and *Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi* (Socialist Proletarian Peasants' Party of Turkey) were founded but were soon closed down. As already noted, socialism and Marxism were suppressed even more harshly by the DP. Kemalism's success and legacy, upon socialist and Marxist ideology, especially in terms of radical progressive policies imposed from above, would be discernible in the 1960s.²⁵⁹ Parallel to the worldwide developments, socialism and Marxism gained increasing currency amongst the intellectual classes.

To nearly all Turkish socialist groups, the two-stage revolution theory developed by the Stalinist regime in the 1920s and 1930s became the *de facto* ideology. This formulation claimed that although Turkey was not ready for a full socialist revolution, it was ripe for a national democratic revolution which would open the way for state-led development and provide complete national independence. It would also allow for the elimination of the political power of the big bourgeoisie, the feudal landowners and corrupt politicians who relied on the ignorant peasants.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Cem Eroglu, p.104.

²⁵⁸ George S. Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey* (Stanford, California; Hoover Institution Publications, 1967), pp.129-130.

²⁵⁹ Ahmet Samim (Murat Belge) "Turkish Left," in *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*, ed. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 151.

²⁶⁰ Erkan, Oktay, *A Comparative Study of National Democratic Revolution Movement in Turkey*, M.A. Thesis, POL, Bogazici University, 1998, p.10.

Equally important was that the fact that Kemalist ideology in general and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in particular also provided an ideological base for Marxism and socialism in Turkey. Since Marxism and communism were still banned in the 1960s, socialism as a means of rapid development and elimination of poverty and inequality attracted many Neo-Kemalists who brought together the radical statism of Kemalism and socialism in the ideology of *Türk Sosyalizmi* (Turkish Socialism). Therefore, the Turkish style of socialism was constructed on four ideological points, Kemalism (Kemalist nationalism and anti-imperialism), socialism, developmentalism, and finally Social democracy.²⁶¹

For example, Mahir Çayan, a student leader in the late 1960s, to most Turkish leftist students at the time, argued that Mustafa Kemal had raised the banner of national liberation against imperialism and occupation and as such, he had been a leftist.²⁶² Doğan Avcıoğlu, one of the most influential Kemalist intellectuals in the 1960s, maintained that the path of national revolutionary development as a means of catching up the modern civilization and rapid development was nothing but the continuation of Atatürk's reforms and the Kemalist thesis.²⁶³ Mehmet Ali Aybar, the leader of the Turkish Labor Party, made the same points by arguing that independence, populism and a national platform where all revolutionary intelligentsia, workers and other progressive powers were the main features of the Turkish socialism.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Sabiha Sertel, *Türkiye'de İlerici Akımlar* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1969), pp.217-218.

²⁶² Mahir Çayan: "Kesintisiz Devrim 2-3" in Turhan Feyizoğlu, *Mahir; On'ların Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 11th edition, 2007), p.636.

²⁶³ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Düzeni; Dün-Bugün-Yarın* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi,1968), p.526.

²⁶⁴ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Bağımsızlık, Demokrasi, Sosyalizm; Seçmeler 1945-1967* (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1968), p.494.

The weekly *Yön* (published between 1961-1967),²⁶⁵ the Socialist Cultural Associations, (established in 1962), the students clubs, especially the *Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu* (Federations of Idea Clubs) and *Dev-Genç* (Turkish acronym for Revolutionary Youth), Mihri Belli's National Democratic Revolution group and finally the Turkish Labor Party, as the most important manifestations of Turkish socialism in the 1960s, sought to harmonize the relations between individuals and society in a new social order.²⁶⁶ Shocked by the economic conditions of Turkey, they combined Kemalist principles with the existing situation's problems.²⁶⁷ In the view of these radicals, the entire history of the Republic as well as the present time was to be examined through Kemalism and socialism. The statist policy of the single-party era was translated as *Kapitalist Olmayan Yol* or the non-capitalist path and was regarded as the only road to rapid development.

The above-mentioned parties, especially *Yön* and the TLP, played pivotal roles in spreading socialist ideas.²⁶⁸ Instead of questioning the system as a whole, they sought to gain the allegiances of some segments of the existing order such as the army. According to the communiqué of the Socialist Cultural Association, which was signed by hundreds of intellectuals and published in *Yön*, both the Kemalist

²⁶⁵ Among its regular contributors were Doğan Avcıoğlu, Cahit Tanyol, Niyasi Berkes, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, İlhan Selçuk, Mümtaz Soysal, Turan Güneş, Taner Timur, Sırrı Hocaoğlu, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Fethi Naci, Sadun Aren, Cetin Altan and also some Kurds, as quoted in the previous chapter, such as Sait Kirmizitoprak. For a comprehensive study of *Yön*, see Hikmet Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: YÖN Hareketi*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986).

²⁶⁶ For a good example, see Şevket Süreyya Aydemir: "Türk Sosyalizminin ilkeleri (Sosyalist Kültür Derneğine sunulan özel muhtıra)" *Yön*, no.56, (9 January 1963).

²⁶⁷ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Az Gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye* (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1971), p.1670.

²⁶⁸ Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı, 1961–1971* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi,1993), p. 209.

movement and the May 27 coup endeavored to remove social and economic dependence of the population and their exploitation.²⁶⁹

As with the early Kemalist elite, who viewed themselves as men of progress who brought development to the people *despite the people*, the leftists looked down on the democratic process. Elections and the democratic progress would always result in bringing dominant-conservative groups to government. From their point of view, “speedy economic development, progress and social justice could be achieved only by a strong government headed by progressive intellectuals.”²⁷⁰ Murat Belge points out that the misreading of the events in the 1950s and 1960 led the Turkish Left to wrongly expect an alliance between working masses and so-called “progressive” forces, that is to say, the intelligentsia, students and the army.²⁷¹

The Turkish socialist movement, especially after the second half of the 1960s, struggled over the way they would achieve political power. The split was between the Socialist Revolutionists (SR), who aimed to take political power through peaceful elections, and the National Democratic Revolutionists (NDR), who sought a coalition of vigorous powers, intelligentsia, army and students.²⁷² As Belge underlines, the question of power became an obsession for the left. Indeed, the power question became so pervasive that the left spent more time on it than on other social issues such as the impact of urbanization, factory condition and healthcare.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*,6 (İletişim yayınları,1988), pp. 471-472.

²⁷⁰ Karpas, *Recent Developments*, p.320.

²⁷¹ Samim, p.154.

²⁷² Although it called for a coalition of all progressive forces, it envisaged these three forces as avant-garde. See Belli.

²⁷³ Samim, p. 170.

To the Turkish left, the Kurdish question was regarded as a natural outcome of social and economic exploitation of the people in the region and one that would be solved without any major effort after socialism had been achieved. Indeed, Turkish socialists would repeat many of the same points made by the Kemalists as to the reactionary and feudal nature of Kurdish nationalism.²⁷⁴ Historically, the communist and socialist movements did not only shy away from a discussion of the national oppression of the Kurds, but did not make any ideological concessions to the Kurds until the 1970s. The Turkish Communist party (TCP), for example, as early as 1930, interpreted the Kurdish rebellions as the result of British imperialism and their collaborators.²⁷⁵ Although the party recognized theoretically the right of self-determination for the Kurds, this was seen conditional upon working together with Turkish proletarian. As such, Kurdish rights were only accepted at the most abstract level. In practice, they saw Kurdish people as reactionary and hostile to modernization, a view they bequeathed to socialists and Marxists of the 1960s.

Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, one of the rare communists who got into touch with the Kurds while he was in prison in Elazığ, argued that the Eastern Question was in general a nationality question and Kurdish nationality in particular.²⁷⁶ By contrast, he argued that the question of Kurdish nationality had remained as a tool for reaction in the hands of imperialism.²⁷⁷ This standpoint was common to many other figures too. What had changed by the 1960s was that for the first time, the party, for its own sake,

²⁷⁴ Hamit Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980)”, p.29.

²⁷⁵ *İnkılap Yolu Temmuz-Ağustos 1930* in Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye’de Sol Akımlar-II (1925–1936)*, (İstanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1991), pp.185-205.

²⁷⁶ Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Uyarmak İçin Uyanmalı* (İstanbul: Tarihsel Maddecilik Yayınları, 1970), p.28.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.210.

would seek an alliance with Kurdish activists in order to strengthen the “common struggle” against imperialism or “common enemy”.²⁷⁸ However, although there was no change in their reading of the past events until the 1960s, the TCP declared that it supported Turkey’s Kurds’ demands for recognition of their national existence and democratic rights *within Turkish borders*.²⁷⁹

In general, the Turkish socialists and neo-Kemalists in the 1960s invoked a form of orientalist discourse. They denied that the Kurds had any independent agency and regarded them as the tools of imperialism. According to socialists, aghas and sheiks in the Kurdish regions all belonged to the same group of feudal reactionaries. However, as Beşikçi rightly points out, both the Turkish left and Turkish socialists could not distinguish between the two types of sheiks and aghas, the one who collaborated with the system and imperialism and the one who devoted himself to the Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish culture.²⁸⁰

The Affiliation between Kurds and the Leftists or the Second Phase of Politicization of Kurdish Ethnicity

Socialism affected many Kurds in many ways. Foremost is the fact that until the mid-1960s, the great emphasis on development had a positive effect on many Kurds who also strove for the same ends. From the very onset of the second half of 1960s, although it was not the issue for the 1960s, when they, the Kurdish intellectuals and students, began to voice cultural and political rights, they

²⁷⁸ “Zeki Baştımar’ın Raporu,” in, *TKP MK Dış Bürosu 1965 Tartışmaları* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV 2004), p.80.

²⁷⁹ “Yakup Demir’in Bilal Şen’in Grupçu ve Fraksiyoncu Faaliyeti Üzerine Raporu-26 Nisan 1965,” in *TKP MK Dış Bürosu 1965 Tartışmaları* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV 2004), p.96.

²⁸⁰ İsmail Beşikçi, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası’nın Tüzüğü (1927) ve Kürt Sorunu* (İstanbul: Komal, 1978), p.249.

rediscovered the right of self-determination with which justified their demands. At the same time, as mentioned above, socialism in Turkey in the 1960s had undergone some changes in terms of its attitude towards the Kurdish question and the struggle of young Kurdish intelligentsia. While it remained in alignment with the Soviet policies of supporting the Kemalist “progressive movement against the reactionary Kurds”, in the 1960s, not only communists but also Turkish socialists, including some of neo-Kemalists, due to increasing interaction with the Kurdish activists changed their attitude.²⁸¹ Indeed, Ömer Ağın, who was active in the TLP in the 1960s and joined the TCP in the 1970s pointed out the Communist movement, did not have a serious organization base in the East until the 1970s.²⁸²

Marxism (or perhaps more accurately Marxist-Leninism) as an ideology, in contrast to Turkish nationalism, not only recognized the national struggle but also provided a relatively much more inclusive identity one based on class. Moreover, Marxists and socialists in the 1960s opposed to the political right, which underlined the unity of nation-state and its citizens, but legitimized national struggle on a class base.²⁸³ However, Kurdish nationalists, socialists and Marxists’ concept of “common enemy” and their ultimate goals and priorities did not come to together. For instance, when Kurdish activists began to insist on the existence of Kurdish ethnicity and language in addition to struggle against underdevelopment and inequality, Turkish

²⁸¹ For instance, Doğan Avcıoğlu furnishes a striking example of this interaction. Even though he remained loyal to his Kemalist vision, he himself wrote an article titled “Kürt Meselesi.” See Doğan Avcıoğlu, “Kürt Meselesi,” *Yön*, no. 194, (1966).

²⁸² Ömer Ağın, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 7 April 2009.

²⁸³ Hamit Bozarslan, “Türkiye’de Kürt Sol Hareketi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt. 8 Sol*, ed. Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007) pp. 1170-1171.

socialists considered it petty bourgeois nationalism and detrimental to the socialist movement.²⁸⁴

In the relatively liberal atmosphere of the 1960s, Marxist and socialist literature appeared and drew the attention of students and intellectuals. Many young Kurds also followed leftist journals and read Marxist classics (which had often been deliberately mistranslated into Turkish). Most of the Kurds who later joined the TLP joined the Socialist Culture Association (SCA). Naci Kutlay and Tarik Ziya Ekinci, for example, were active in the SCA.²⁸⁵ As Ekinci points out, those who found the TLP branch in Diyarbakir in 1963 were the offspring of the SCA.²⁸⁶ In addition, the election of Mehmet Ali Aybar to the TLP leadership encouraged some other Kurds, such as Canip Yildirim, to join the socialist movement.²⁸⁷

However, the Turkish socialists' shift towards supporting Kemalism and the army as agents of progress accelerated the split between the Kurdish activists and Turkish socialists.²⁸⁸ As many of those affiliated with the socialist movement in the 1960s would confess later, although the Turkish socialists seemed to be against any kind of nationalism, they were quite nationalist and did not even question their attitude. Yet the Kurds were accused of being chauvinist and divisive since they did not focus on the economic aspects of their common enemy. As Mehdi Zana, one of the most important figures both in the 1960s and in 1970s, writes, their relationship

²⁸⁴ *Yeni Akış* for example, was regarded so. Mehmet Ali Aslan interview.

²⁸⁵ Kutlay, *Anılarım*, p.102.

²⁸⁶ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, "Kürt sorunu ve Aybar" *Cumhuriyet*, Mehmet Ali Aybar Özel Eki, 21 July 1995, p.14.

²⁸⁷ Miroğlu, p.242.

²⁸⁸ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları; Türkiye İşçi Partisi ve Kürt Aydınlanması* (İstanbul: Cem Yayıncılık, 2004), p.313.

with the Turkish socialists in the 60s was a unilateral one, especially in terms of the national question. He argues that since the Kurds had not decided what to do, they were expected to follow socialists and support whatsoever the Turkish socialists decided to do.²⁸⁹

All in all, whereas initially both the Kurdish and Turkish socialist shared the same concerns such as the development of the country and the region and eliminating social injustice, starting from the mid-1960s when the Turkish Socialist movement as a whole witnessed a fundamental split in terms of ideology and personal conflicts, the Kurds, too, although they remained loyal to the TLP until the late 1960s, deviated from mainstream Turkish socialist thought.

²⁸⁹ Mehdi Zana, *Sevgili Leyla; Uzun Bir Sürgündü O Gece* (İstanbul: Belge yayınları, 1995), p.56.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TURKISH LABOR PARTY AND THE KURDS; THE “DOĞU MESELESİ” 1961-1971

This chapter deals with the relationship between the new generations of Kurdish intellectuals and the Turkish Labor Party. This relationship is essential to understand, given that the TLP was the organization in which many Kurds got their first taste of politics. It is also important to consider because of the importance the Kurdish activists played in the Turkish socialist movement in general. During this period, it is still not possible to talk about a fully developed Kurdish movement. Kurdism, or rather Eastism, was still very much tied to the general socialist struggle in Turkey. However, many of the experiences of Kurdish activists during the 1960s would prove central in the development of a more defined Kurdish movement during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Turkish Labor Party

In 1960, there was already a Socialist Party operating under the name of the Turkish Socialist Party. Cemal Gürsel, who became president after the coup, gave an interview to the daily *Vatan* and commented on the existence of the socialist party. He stated that, “There exists a socialist party in Turkey. I tolerate their activities. A socialist party is not a danger for the country unless it involves itself in malign goals. However, it seems that it is still not strong enough to enter onto the political stage.”²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰“Türkiye’de bir sosyalist partisi vardır. Onların faaliyetine müsamaha ettim. Sosyalist bir parti Türkiye için zararlı değildir. Belki de faydalı olacağı kanaatindeyim; işin içine kötü maksatlar girmedikçe...ama görünüşe göre bu parti sahneye çıkacak kadar kuvvetli

However, the older Turkish Socialist Party was subsumed into the TLP in the next year, just after newer party's establishment. In early 1961, twelve trade unionists combined to support the foundation of a party to promote workers' rights in 1961. The result was that on 13 February 1961 the Turkish Labor Party was officially registered.²⁹¹ In the following day, the party founders stated, "The party was founded in order to protect the rights of the working class. Hitherto worker have been melted into various parties' cadre, however, now there exists a party which represents the working class *per se*."²⁹²

However, due to a number of factors, perhaps most significantly the lack of experience of the party's founders, the TLP was unable to gain much attention. In January 1962, when the idea of establishing another party, *Çalışanlar Partisi* (Workers' Party) supported by *Türk-İş*, was announced, the trade unionists started to search for a party leader who would both secure their party and promote its expansion. The proposed candidate was Mehmet Ali Aybar, a Marxist intellectual who had been active in socialist and leftist movement since the 1940s²⁹³ and with

değildir." *Vatan* , 10 October. 1960, quoted in Aybar, *TİP Tarihi*, (İstanbul: BDS yayınları, 1988), p.74.

²⁹¹ Founders were Avni Erakalın (chairman) Kemal Türkler (vice-chairman), Şaban Yıldız, İbrahim Güzelce, Kemal Nebioğlu, Salih Özkarabay, Rıza Kuas, İbrahim Denizciler, Adnan Arkın, Ahmet Muşlu, Hüseyin Uslubaş, Saffet Göksüzoğlu.

²⁹² "Ezilen işçi sınıfının haklarını korumak için kurulduğunu, şimdiye kadar işçilerin, çeşitli partilerin kadroları içinde eriyip gittiğini, ama artık işçi sınıfını temsil eden bir parti bulunduğunu" *Vatan* 14 February 1961. Quoted in Uğur Mumcu, *Aybar ile Söyleşi; Sosyalizm ve Bağımsızlık* (Ankara: Tekin Yayınevi, 1990), p.27.

²⁹³ According to Kemal Sülker, following names were among those whom the founders thought to propose the party leadership, Prof. Z.F. Fındıkoğlu, Ali Rıza Arı, Dr. Ekmel Zadi, Mehmet Ali Aybar, Orhan Arsal, Sabahattin Zaim, Sedat Erbil, Yaşar Kemal, Prof. Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil, Esat Tekeli, Nadir Nadi, Esat Çağa. See, Kemal Sülker, *100 Soruda Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi* (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1973), p.151.

some of his comrades had also attempted to found another socialist party after the 1960 military coup.²⁹⁴

As Sabri Mustafa Sayarı argues in his important book on political parties, personal leadership is a salient feature of all Turkish parties.²⁹⁵ Aybar became the party leader on May 12, 1962. Together with Aybar, many other socialist and Marxist intellectuals joined the party, too. This included even those Marxists and socialists who had been banned from politics due to their violation of Laws 141 and 142 of the Turkish penal code. Indeed, not only did they support Aybar but also were affiliated with the party.²⁹⁶

In addition, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Naci Kutlay and Kemal Burkay, all of whom were involved in Socialist Culture Associations, joined the party. This group, along with Mehdi Zana, his colleague Niyazi Usta (Tatlıcı), Mehmet Ali Aslan, Canip Yıldırım and Tahsin Ekinci, was the first and to large extent the most important section of the Kurdish intelligentsia to join the party and were responsible for the establishment of almost all of its local branches in Kurdish Anatolia. They together formed a group that earned the name the *Doğulular* (Easterners). As such, the party became a platform for trade unions, leftist intellectuals and Kurds (See figure 4).

²⁹⁴ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *TİP Tarihi;1*, pp.111-112.

²⁹⁵ Sayarı, p.135.

²⁹⁶ Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye'de Soldaki Bölünmeler, 1960–1970: Tartışmalar-Nedenler- Çözüm Önerileri* (Ankara: Toplum Yayınevi, 1970), p.232.

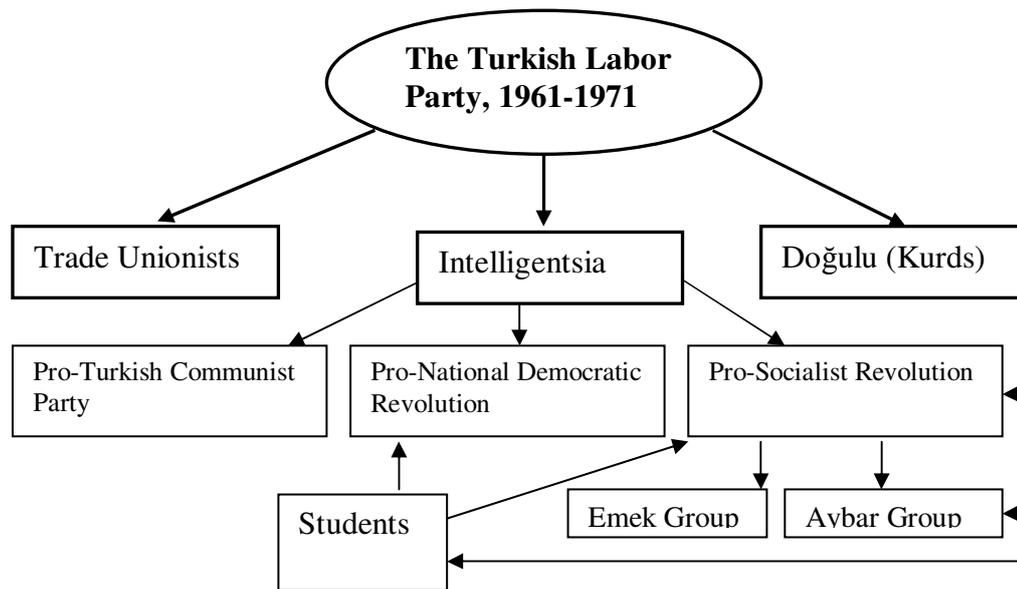


Figure 4. Composition of the Turkish Labor Party.

Under the leadership of Aybar, the party managed to bring together all socialist groups, including students, under the rubric of non-capitalist development and anti-imperialism. This unity, despite some minor clashes, survived until 1965 when the party also proved its success in the general elections and sent fifteen deputies to the assembly. However, each group in the party, specifically, the trade unionists, the intelligentsia, consisting of members of the pro-Turkish Communist Party, pro-National Democratic Revolution (also known as pro-Mihri Belli), and pro-Socialist Revolution as well as the *Doğulus*, sought to strengthen their position. This led to serious conflicts especially after 1965, which will be discussed in the following pages.

Shortly after Aybar's participation, the Turkish Socialist Party merged with the TLP. Aybar then embarked on an extensive tour of the East after he assumed the leadership of the party. In 1963, the TLP received a further boost when Niyazi

Ağırnaslı, a senator from Ankara, also joined the party. All above-mentioned developments strengthened the party and increased its public profile.²⁹⁷ Moreover, some popular figures such as the journalist Çetin Altan also contributed to the party's expansion. The students, who played a major role in creating the pre-coup atmosphere, and who had become increasingly politicized and prone to bouts of civil disorder²⁹⁸ also took great interest in the TLP.

Formation of the Party Identity

Although the party is known as having been the first and most important socialist and Marxist party in Turkey in the 1960s, as is evident from its program and regulations, the TLP's socialist and Marxist identity was constituted gradually. Indeed the party leader, Aybar, did not even use the term "socialist" until 1966. According to its first regulations, "the TLP is a party of all citizens irrespective of race, religion, sect, complexion, sex or class who adopts party program and regulations."²⁹⁹

However, the party regulations after the election of Aybar declared:

the TLP is a political organization marching to power by legal means, and is of the Turkish working class and all strata and classes of proletariats (of laborer and of small peasants, of salaried employees and wage earners, of artisans, of small tradesmen and self-employed persons of small income, and of progressive youth and *toplumcu*³⁰⁰ intellectuals) which gather around its leadership.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Aren, *TİP Olayı, 1961–1971*, pp.90-91.

²⁹⁸ Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), pp.29-30.

²⁹⁹ "TİP, ırk, din, mezhep, deri rengi, kadın-erkek ayrımı gözetmeden ve hangi sınıftan gelirse gelsin, parti program ve tüzüğünü benimsemiş, emekten yana olan bütün yurttaşlara saflarını açık tutar." Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tüzüğü 19 Nisan 1962*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası), p.5.

³⁰⁰ The term *Toplumcu* is translated to English as 'Socialist'. However, in Turkish and the way the party used this term does not mean Socialist. The party would use the term *Sosyalist* in 1966.

The party programme, which was accepted in 1964, states that,

The Turkish Labor Party is a political organization of *toplumcu* intellectuals, of laborers, of landless peasants and of peasants in need of land, of artisans, of small tradesmen, of salaried and wage earners, of self-employed persons of small income, in short, of all citizens who live on their labor, and who have gathered around the Turkish working class and its historical and democratic leadership which is based on science.³⁰²

At the same time, the TLP placed much hope in the 1961 Constitution.

According to the party leadership, once entirely fulfilled, the constitution would lead them to solve many of the problems they faced. Behice Boran, a TLP deputy elected in the 1965 elections and who would go on to become party leader in 1970, declared that the TLP's mottoes were "a precise and complete fulfillment of the Constitution with its economic and social content...[they called for] full national independence...the abolition of bilateral agreements between Turkey and the United States and the shutting down of all American bases...[and posited that]a second national liberation war was in motion under the leadership of the working class."³⁰³

The TLP was not the only party to adopt this form of leftist anti-imperialist discourse.

³⁰¹*Türkiye işçi partisi, Türk işçi sınıfının ve onun demokratik öncülüğü etrafında toplanmış bütün emekçi sınıf ve tabakalara (ırgat ve küçük köylülerin, aylıklı ve ücretlilerin, zanaatkarların, küçük esnaf ve dar gelirli serbest meslek sahipleri ile ilerici gençliğin ve toplumcu aydınların) kanun yolundan iktidara yürüyen, siyasi teşkilatıdır.*" Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tüzüğü*, (Ankara. Ankara Basım ve Ciltevi, 1967)

³⁰² "Türkiye İşçi Partisi, Türk işçi sınıfının ve onun tarihi, bilime dayanan demokratik öncülüğü etrafında toplanmış, onunla kader birliğinin bilinç ve mutluluğuna varmış toplumcu aydınlarla ırgatların, topraksız ve az topraklı köylülerin, zanaatkârların, küçük esnafın, aylıklı ve ücretlilerin, dargelirli serbest meslek sahiplerinin, kısacası, emeğiyle yaşayan bütün yurttaşların kanun yolundan iktidara yürüyen siyasi teşkilatıdır." TİP, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı* (İstanbul: Eser Matbaacılık, 1964), p.14.

³⁰³ "Ekonomik-sosyal muhtevasıyla 'anayasanın eksiksiz ve tastamam uygulanması', 'tam milli bağımsızlık', 'ikili antlaşmaların, Amerikan üstlerinin kaldırılması, Nato'dan çıkılması', 'emekçi sınıfların öncülüğünde 2. Milli Kurtuluş Savaşı' TİP'in başta gelen sloganlarıdır." Behice Boran, *Türkiye ve Sosyalizm Sorunları* (İstanbul: Gün Yayınları, 1968), p.274.

From the mid-1960s onwards, the concept of a second national liberation struggle against US imperialism was an integral party of Turkish leftist discourse. Much like the Yön Declaration of 1961, which hundreds of intellectuals signed, Aybar's call for the formation of a National Front, a common stage for all progressive forces to protect country from more corruption and dependency and from which to launch the struggle for the rights, liberties and interests of laborers also is worth mentioning.

Atatürkçülük, or Atatürkism, a new way of romanticizing Atatürk's persona and his period, also constituted one of cornerstones of the TLP's discourse. Barış Ünlü argues that this was a tactical move and that the party and Aybar deliberately overemphasized Atatürkism to avoid accusations.³⁰⁴ However, Artun Ünsal claims that they, the TLP leadership as well as the rest of the socialist movement, sincerely believed in Atatürkism.³⁰⁵ It is quite striking that both Aybar and Boran, the two most influential figures in the party, evaluated the single-party era and Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] from a socialist perspective, and neither of them criticized the single-party era or Mustafa Kemal's policies.

Aybar argued that Kemalism, the ideology of unconditional independence, was Leftist.³⁰⁶ Boran stated that "the single-party government, took its most severe shape after the death of Atatürk, suppressed the working class movements and left political activities much more than the *irtica*³⁰⁷ (meaning the DP) did."³⁰⁸ The party

³⁰⁴ Barış Ünlü, . *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Mehmet Ali Aybar ve Dönemi*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p.205.

³⁰⁵ Artun Ünsal, "TİP'in Ulusal Bağımsızlık Anlayışı," in, Gündüz Vassaf, *Mehmet Ali Aybar Sempozyumları, 1997-2002; Özgürleşme Sorunları*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), p.249.

³⁰⁶ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *TİP Tarihi;1*, pp.126–130.

³⁰⁷ *Irtica* lit. objector is used as a synonym for conservative and reactionary political movement.

program also confirmed this stance by stating that after Atatürk's death, free thought increasingly was more and more suppressed and *toplumcu* publication was banned.³⁰⁹ Also, the party viewed itself as the true Atatürkist movement since it was a hundred-percent indigenous doctrine and acted in accordance with *Atatürkizm* although it was inspired by contemporary realities.³¹⁰

The TLP as well as all other socialist groups in the 1960s evaluated the pre-coup era DP government as having been a deviation from the independent Turkish policy and as an *irtica* (reaction). Therefore, the party and all other socialist groups cherished the military coup and on many occasions were eager to show their appreciations for the “revolutionary” army. When Muzaffer Karan, a military officer who had been exiled along with his 13 fellows from the National Unity Committee joined the party (and was elected to the assembly from Denizli in 1965), Aybar gave a statement to the press declaring that a connection had been made between the TLP and the 27 May movement. There was a connection already; however, it was consummated in a very real way.³¹¹ In addition, 28 other officers from various ranks joined the party before the 1965 general elections.³¹²

It is important to mention the TLP's stance on issues such as land reform, urbanization, and peasantry. Although the party always insisted on being the political organization of the working class, except for the *DISK* (Revolutionary Workers'

³⁰⁸ “Atatürk'ün ölümünden sonra... en sert şeklini alan tek parti yönetimi irtica kadar, hatta ondan da fazla, sol siyasi hareketleri, işçi hareketlerini bastırdı.” Behice Boran, *Türkiye ve Sosyalizm Sorunları*, p.30.

³⁰⁹ *Türkiye İşçi Partisi II. Büyük Kongresi (20–24 Kasım 1966 Malatya)*, (İstanbul: Okur Matbaası, 1966), p.3.

³¹⁰ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Bağımsızlık, Demokrasi, Sosyalizm; Seçmeler 1945-1967*, p.222.

³¹¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 28-29 May, 1965, also quoted in Ahmad and Ahmad. p.291.

³¹² *Cumhuriyet*, 11-May July, 1965, Ahmad and Ahmad, , p.293.

Confederation) established in 1967 by those who broke away with the *Türk-İş*, it could not build strong ties with the working classes.³¹³ For example, Aybar stated that they had become acquainted with the workers by the help of the workers who had founded the party.³¹⁴ Even when the historical strike broke out on June 15, 1970 the TLP as well as all other socialist movement groups, especially the pro-NDR students, were not even aware of what was happening.³¹⁵

Since the peasantry consisted of more than sixty percent of the population, the party soon realized that without their support it could not attain power. Therefore, the peasantry was one of main concerns of the party. Boran declared that the road to socialist government ran through the villages. Without their votes, it would be impossible for the party to achieve an electoral breakthrough ever.³¹⁶ As will be mentioned later, especially during the election campaigns the party paid great attention to the peasantry, promising that if it came to power, it would ameliorate their living conditions, expropriate more than 500 *dönüm* owned by individuals and distribute the rest of the land free to those who either did not have any land or who had insufficient amounts of land.³¹⁷

Regarding leftist students, who were among one of the most dynamic segments of the society, the TLP seemed to be a progressive organization. The TLP

³¹³ Even though trade unions were allowed in 1952, and the recognition of the right to strike came in 1963. It is true that the number of workers was increasing. However, *Türk-İş*, the biggest and the only confederation until 1967, for example would declare that it would not support the TLP in the general elections in 1965. On the other hand, the Turkish working class was quite nationalized and it did not seem that it would gather around class bases.

³¹⁴ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *TİP Tarihi*;1,p.217.

³¹⁵ Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı, 1961–1971*,p.113.

³¹⁶ Behice Boran, *Türkiye ve Sosyalizm Sorunları*, p.159.

³¹⁷ Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *Çalışma Raporu (Üçüncü Büyük Kongre 9-12 Kasım 1968, Ankara)*, (İstanbul: Latin Matbaası, 1968).

promised both to open up new universities across the country and a new curriculum which would meet the country's needs. Although the students generally supported the party up until the late 1960s, they broke away from the party due mainly to their increasing radicalization. Prior to the 1960 coup, the objective of the leftist students had been to protect the Kemalist legacy against the perceived Islamist reaction represented by the election of the DP. However, in the post-coup era, the TLP discourse of anti-imperialism and of a second national war of liberation gained popular currency amongst students.³¹⁸

Finally, one of the most important documents produced by the party apart from the party's regulations and program was a small booklet entitled *TİP.li'nin El Kitabı* (the manual for party members), which dealt with various questions such as migration and religion. In this booklet, the party's final transformation in terms of its identity can be distinguished.³¹⁹ The party sought a holistic worldview and tried to tackle the major issues Turkey faced during that time. For instance, the TLP put forward a solution to the Cyprus issue, which had become a major concern during the mid-1960s. The party suggested a federative solution and advocated the island's full independence.³²⁰

Although the party engaged in a wide range of issues, from the agrarian question to the students to Cyprus to, one of the most important issues to the party was the economy. State led development and the nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy were seen as formulas what would ensure not only rapid

³¹⁸ Igor Lipovsky, *The Socialist Movements in Turkey 1960–1980* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1992), p.118.

³¹⁹ For the party's stand on other issues see Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *TİP.li'nin El Kitabı* (Ankara: Çınar Matbaası, 1969).

³²⁰ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları*, p.230.

economic growth and a “non-capitalist way of development,” but also full national independence.³²¹ However, it should be pointed out that the TLP always was in favor of remaining within the framework of the constitution and pledged to come to power through the peaceful electoral process.

The impact of the TLP was much greater than its electoral success. It provided a new set of ideas not only for the Kurdish militants and young activists, but also for the mainstream political parties, most notably the RPP. In fact, the bulk of votes of the TLP came from well off workers, intellectuals and students, groups which had previously supported the RPP. As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons that the term socialist was favored instead of *toplumcu* was that in 1966 the RPP had started to use similar language. In fact, the RPP’s slide to the center left (*Ortanın solu*) had resulted in a serious factional struggle within the party.³²² Moreover, the TLP discourse greatly affected the student movements of 1968.

Intra-Party Conflicts and the Party Congresses an End to Discussions

The TLP, which had started out as an interest group for the trade union movement, under Aybar’s leadership broadened into an umbrella group encompassing all areas of the leftist movement and influencing even those groups which were not tied to the party. The TLP radically developed a holistic critique of Turkey’s political establishment and developed an ideology which combined elements of neo-Kemalism, neo-statism and socialism. The party managed to bring together almost all leftist discontent against the country’s situation. Gün Zileli, in his

³²¹ TİP, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı*, pp.64-66.

³²² Yunus Emre’s MA thesis is focused on this subject. See Yunus Emre, *The Genesis of the Left of Center in Turkey: 1965-1967*, M.A. Thesis, the Atatürk Institute, Boğaziçi University, 2007.

noteworthy book, argues that the all schisms that occurred among student movements and among other socialist groups, essentially derived from intra party strives of leaders for the power.³²³ Zileli's remark is pertinent to the TLP's case.

However, starting from 1962, when the party announced its view that the working class was the vanguard of the movement, splits began to appear. Tensions exploded after the 1964 Party Congress in İzmir, when Aybar was reelected and his program was accepted. The ensuing incident, known as *13ler Olayı* (incident of 13s) resulted in the expulsion and resignation of 13 members of the party.³²⁴

The second Congress, which was held in Malatya between 20-24 November 1966, witnessed further division within the party. In the Congress, the pro-National Democratic Revolution group (NDR) led by Mihri Belli, a former Communist who opposed the Socialist Revolution (SR) faction. The NDR faction envisaged a two-phase revolution on the way to socialism and as such focused on peaceful electoral process which was the party official strategy. However, it soon became apparent that they would be unable to take over the party. It is significant that this split occurred after the great success of the party in the general elections in 1965 when it sent 15 deputies to the assembly. Thereafter, the pro-NDR group would not only act as a party within the party but also would severely criticize party policy and leadership. Furthermore, after 1968, Belli's ideas started to become influential among students. This prompted the majority of students to break away from the party. Even the most influential leftist student organization, *Dev-Genç* (Revolutionary Youth), successor of the FKF (Federation of Idea Clubs) declared that it would not support the TLP.

³²³ Gün Zileli, *Yarımla (1954-1972)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), p.395.

³²⁴ Rasih Nuri İleri, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi'nde Oportünist Merkezîyetçilik (1966-1968)* (İstanbul: Yalçın Yayınları, 1987), pp.8-9.

In 1968, however, the most stunning conflict occurred among pro-SR (Socialist Revolution) intellectuals. The proposal of five, known as the *5'li Önerge*, signed by Sadun Aren, Nihat Sargın, Minnetullah Haydaroglu, Şaban Erik and Behice Boran stated that the party was not responsible for Aybar's statements. The signatories claimed that Aybar had deviated from socialism and he wanted to establish his own personal administration, which was against the party regulations.³²⁵ This five's group was also known as the *Emek* (Labor) group, on account of the journal that they published. Although it is commonly argued that the dispute occurred because of the disagreement over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Boran states that she herself criticized the event as strongly as Aybar did.³²⁶ The third grand congress of the party met in November 1968. Despite the fact that Aybar was reelected to party leadership and Sadun Aren was elected to party general assembly, it prefigured the inevitable dissolution of the party.

By 1969, almost all opposition within the party was silenced. The TLP had managed to get rid of the pro-NDR and the pro-TCP (Turkish Communist Party) groups. This prompted students who were either part of the pro-NDR or already had turned to extra-parliamentary opposition, to turn to armed struggle in the early 1970s, a shift which the TLP denounced.³²⁷ On November 15 1969, in the aftermath of a disastrous electoral performance which saw the party's parliamentary contingent reduced from 15 to 2, Aybar resigned from his role as party leader. Mehmet Ali Aslan, a young *Doğulu* lawyer, was elected to party chairmanship where he stayed

³²⁵ Uğur Mumcu, *Aybar ile Söyleşi; Sosyalizm ve Bağımsızlık*, p.56.

³²⁶ Uğur Mumcu, *Bir Uzun Yürüyüş* (Ankara: Tekin Yayınevi, 1990), p.63.

³²⁷ Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Yönetim Kurulu Raporu, (Dördüncü Olağan Büyük Kongre, 29.30.31 Ekim 1970- Ankara)* (Ankara: Şenyuva Matbaası, 1970), pp.24-25.

just a month. Although Aslan was elected as party chairman, Aybar's defeat led also to a decline in *Doğulu* group's support to the party.

The Party's Fourth Congress, the last one, held in Ankara on 29-31 November 1970. Behice Boran became the party leader, while almost no one from the Aybar group was elected to party organs in the Congress.³²⁸ As will be examined later, in this congress, although both *Doğulu* group and pro-Aybar group withdrew their support of the party, Boran took great pains to keep the young Kurdish students of the DDKO on their side since the students of the pro-NDR were no longer aligned with the party.³²⁹ The next section will focus on the shift within the TLP which resulted in the party's historical resolution declaring that there were a Kurdish people living in the East of Turkey. Finally, the same period saw the TLP redefine itself from a mass party to a Leninist party. Specifically, a party that saw itself as a vanguardist movement based on scientific socialism.³³⁰

Easterners, the Turkish Labor Party, and the Eastern Question

As already mentioned, up until 1960, the Kurds had remained aloof not only from the Leftist groups, but also from Turkish nationalism, in its opposition to some of the actions of the state. The Turkish Labor Party was no exception regarding its understanding of the region and the population that lived there. The presence of Aybar attracted some Kurdish socialists, who considered themselves *Sosyalist Doğulular* (Socialist Easterners) who functioned as a bridge between the leftist

³²⁸ Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi IV. Büyük Kongresi (29-31 Ekim 1970 Ankara); Alınan Kararlar ve Yapılan Seçimlerin Sonuçları*.

³²⁹ Mümtaz Kotan, "Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi Üzerine: Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Somut bir örnek DDKO" *BİR*, no. 6 2006, (originally derived from Mümtaz Kotan, *Yenilginin İzdişümleri*, 2003, pp. 374-451)

³³⁰ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları*;... p.315.

movement and Kurdish Anatolia. This group represented the militants of the party in the region, employing Duverger's term, those "who form the nucleus of the party's basic groups and regularly attend meetings, spread the party's slogans, help to organize its propaganda, and prepare its electoral campaigns."³³¹

Yet, as will be seen below, those whose identity was already ethnicized and considered themselves Kurds, and who mainly resided in the Kurdish regions also became party militants. Although it is hard to make a clear distinction between the two groups, Easterners and Kurds, save for the fact that in some sense both were ethnically Kurdish, it can be argued that the following conflicts derived essentially from the way they chose to describe themselves and the problems that they faced.

Those who can be considered to have been militants of the party comprised three different groups. Firstly, the group of young socialist Kurdish intellectuals, many of whom had higher educations and worked mainly as either lawyers, medical doctors or publishers, established and organized virtually all party branches across the region. Among them were Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Naci Kutlay, Mehmet Ali Aslan, Kemal Burkay, Tahsin Ekinci, Edip Karahan and Canip Yıldırım, Örfi Akkoyunlu, Yaşar Kaya, Enver Aytekin and Musa Anter.

The second group consisted of those who were either supporters of the TKDP or nonpartisan Kurds (primarily the Kurdish mullahs or artisans). This group included Sait Elçi, Abdulkerim Ceylan (Mele Abdülkerim), Mahmut Okutucu (Mele Mahmut), Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Muhterem Biçimli, Hüseyin Musa Sağnıç (Feqi Hüseyin), Nazmi Balkaş and Osman Aydın, Mehmet Emin Bozarıslan, Fehmi Fırat (Fehmiyé Bilal) Niyazi Tatlıcı (Usta) and Mehdi Bilici (Zana) and Abdurrahman Uçar. This group

³³¹ Duverger, p.110.

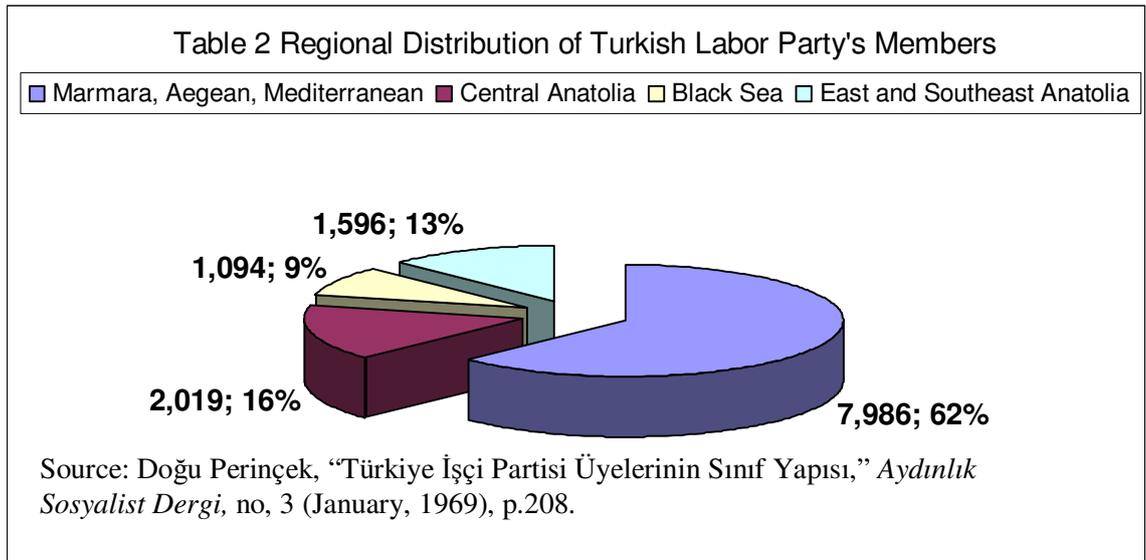
also supported the formation of TLP branches in the region and helped to spread the party's base.

The third group, though there is a scarcity of information, consisted of Kurdish students, not only in Istanbul and in Ankara, but in Kurdish Anatolia as well. They also helped the party organization and played a considerable role in the election campaigns. By the 1970 there were dozens of Kurdish student associations and clubs, most of which functioned as *hemşeri* (fellow townsmen) support groups and associations. The DDKO was an attempt to unite all these disparate Kurdish associations on the part of the Kurdish youth. It should be pointed out that the borders between the above-mentioned groups were not entirely clear. As such, many of those belonging to the first or second group were also involved in the foundation of the DDKO.

These three factions of Kurds within the party generally got along with each other and did not clash, for two major reasons; namely political ambition and ideological differences on the Kurdish issue. Despite this, they faced a deep crisis in 1970. At the same time, the participation of these groups in the TLP not only changed the party's stance towards Kurdish Anatolia and its population, but also encouraged the party and its *militants* in the region. This led the Kurds within the TLP to focus more on the region and its unique problems, to wit, the suppression of Kurdish ethnicity and economic backwardness.

However, as the following Table shows, party expansion in terms of party members was limited to less than two thousand people. The table relies on the party's documents and represents the peak of the party expansion in terms of membership, specifically in the year 1968. As a result of the party's policy which gave priority to the organization and sought to transform itself to be a grassroots labor party, the party

branches were formed in 22 provinces and 184 districts within just thirteen days.³³² As noted above, Kurdish socialists participated in the formation of many of these branches. Although it was generally hard to find enough people to form the party, it also striking that none of the party's members was women.³³³



Whereas the party had been organized only in Diyarbakır in 1963 and ran in local elections in the same year, prior to the general elections of 1965, with the exception of Bitlis, Erzincan and Hakkâri,³³⁴ party branches were formed in eleven cities and several districts in the fifteen provinces of the region. As in other parts of the country, the TLP was suppressed and faced severe attacks, which made it almost impossible to form party branches. The impetus for the rapid expansion of the party

³³² Artun Ünsal, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi (1961–1971)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2002) p.235.

³³³ Doğu Perinçek, "Türkiye İşçi Partisi Üyelerinin Sınıf Yapısı," *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, no. 3 (January 1969), p.220.

³³⁴ Although the TLP in first place was organized in the province of Gaziantep, which was deemed as the East as well, in my analysis, I do not include Gaziantep.

in the Eastern region, though not so easy, was undoubtedly the first group of Kurdish socialists and their collaboration with the other two groups.

The expansion of the party in Kurdish Anatolia went as follows: First, in Diyarbakır, the most important eastern city in the region, then Malatya, Urfa (in Siverek), Mardin (in Derik), Van, Muş, Ağrı, Kars, Siirt, Elazığ and Tunceli.³³⁵ As a matter of fact, except for the Malatya branch, which was formed by Hayrettin Abacı, a former socialist, and Siirt branch which was formed by Enver Aytekin, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Tahsin Ekinci, Naci Kutlay, Mehmet Ali Aslan and Kemal Burkay were the main force behind it.³³⁶ In addition, prior to the 1969 elections, Mehmet Ali Aslan formed party branches in Erzurum and Bitlis, too.³³⁷

The first group managed to gain influence within the TLP through participation in the General Committee. Influential easterners included Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Mehmet Ali Aslan in 1966, and in 1968 Naci Kutlay, and Kemal Burkay. However, none of above persons was elected to the party administration in the Fourth Grand Congress in 1970, which was held after Aybar resigned from the party leadership. As will be discussed below in detail, besides intra-party conflicts, the competition among Kurdish groups and their influence within the party would determine its stance on the Kurdish question. However, with the exception of a few minor clashes such as the TKDP's attempt to seize control of the TLP Diyarbakır branch,³³⁸ and a conflict between Musa Anter and Tarık Ziya Ekinci and Canip

³³⁵ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları*, p.300.

³³⁶ For more details, see Burkay, Kutlay, T.Ekinci and Aslan.

³³⁷ Mehmet Ali Aslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31 January 2009.

³³⁸ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları*, p.302.

Yıldırım,³³⁹ relations between all three sections of Kurdish activism remained peaceful up to the late 1960s.

The Turkish Labor Party and the Formation of *Doğu Meselesi*

In light of what was discussed above, it is important to recognize that the party's stand on the Eastern Question was not constant. Aybar, just after his election as TLP leader, embarked on a tour of the East. The party's first approach to the issue appeared in 1963 during the party's General Meeting held in Gaziantep. Aybar's statement at the meeting, which was also included in the party's program and remained as the main policy of the party on the region until the late 1960s, declared under the title of "development of the East" that;

Today, the East and Southeastern provinces, according to masses of their citizens and civil servants, are a region of destitution...parallel to the region's underdevelopment, those citizens inhabit there are socially and culturally backward. Besides, from those citizens who speak Kurdish and Arabic or belong to *Alevi* sect, are being discriminated against owing to this situation. We confront the difficult issues of the cause of this state of affairs. It is a national duty to be taken serious to find an optimum and humane remedy in accordance with our national interests.³⁴⁰

It continues:

Secondly, the East and Southeastern provinces must be freed from being a region of destitution. Taking into account the fact that hitherto they have been neglected, factories, hospitals, libraries, theaters and roads must be constructed in these provinces. The most qualified, humane and public-minded civil servants must be sent to those provinces so that these citizens will feel that they are real children of the motherland and would not be seized

³³⁹ Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım 1-2*, p.213.

³⁴⁰ "Bugün doğu ve güneydoğu illerimiz büyük vatandaş ve memur kitleleri gözünde bir mahrumiyet bölgesidir...bölgenin ekonomik geriliğine paralel olarak buradaki vatandaşlar sosyal ve kültürel bakımdan geri durumdadırlar. Üstelik bu vatandaşlarımızdan kütçe ve Arapça konuşanlar veya alevi mezhebinden olanlar bu durumları sebebiyle ayırımı uğramaktadırlar. Bunun doğurduğu çetin meselelerle karşı karşıyayız. Ulusal menfaatlerimize en uygun, en insanca çözüm yollarını bulmak ihmal edilmeyecek bir yurt vazifesidir."TİP, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı*, p.110.

with the instigations of internal and external enemies. There is no other way but this for solution.³⁴¹

Furthermore, the party programme promised to solve the economic problems of the region with a comprehensive land reform that promised to redistribute land to those who had insufficient holdings or none at all. The party both in its documents and in its electoral campaigns frequently mentioned that it would give priority to the development of the region.³⁴² Accordingly, the party in its later publications put great emphasis on the economic underdevelopment of the region.

This is remarkable for various reasons. First, as will be seen below, the party underlined the ethnic characteristic of the region, mainly the language, during its electoral campaigns. Furthermore, thanks to the TLP's overemphasis upon independence, dependence and other such leftist jargon, as well as its stress on the economic backwardness of the region, many Kurdish groups starting from the late 1960s reinvented the "theory of developmentalism" and interpreted it as "theory of dependency." They would argue that it is not because the region was neglected that there was an Eastern Question, rather it was because Kurds were being exploited due to their ethnic identity. Moreover, if Turkey was not independent, then the Kurdish regions were not, since they were exploited by Turkey. As Aslan argues, this theory of dependency attracted the younger Kurdish socialists.³⁴³

³⁴¹“İkincisi Doğu ve Güneydoğu illeri bir mahrumiyet bölgesi olmaktan kurtarılmalıdır. Şimdiye kadar ihmal edildiklerini de göz önünde bulundurarak okulun, fabrikanın, hastanenin, kütüphanenin, tiyatrunun, yolun en çoğu bu illerde açılmalıdır. Memurun en iyisi, en insancılı ve yurtseveri bu illere gönderilmelidir. Ta ki, bu vatandaşlarımız anayurdun öz evlatları olduklarını kalplerinde duysunlar ve iç ve dış düşmanların kışkırtmasına kapılmasınlar. Bu meselenin başka bir çözüm yolu yoktur.” Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Bağımsızlık, Demokrasi, Sosyalizm; Seçmeler* pp.281-282.

³⁴² Mehmet Ali Aybar, *25 Eylül 1965 TİP 10 Ekim 1965 Radyo Konuşmaları, Yaşasın Emekçiler, Yaşasın Türkiye* (Ankara: Sosyal Adalet Yayınları, 1966), p.14.

³⁴³ Mehmet Ali Aslan, *Sabancı'ya Mektup; Kürt Sorunu, PKK Realitesi, Sosyalizmin Geleceği* (Ankara: Söğüt Ofset, 1996), p.165.

TLP conceded that the Eastern Question had some ethnic aspect to it. However, the issue was primarily one of, poverty and underdevelopment. The TLP never clearly formulated the ethnic aspect of the Eastern Question. The party promised that those who were treated as “second class citizens,” namely, workers, those whose mother tongue was Kurdish and those who belonged to the Alevi sect would be treated as “first class citizens.”³⁴⁴ The Party’s program stated that:

The party will treat these compatriots as full citizens...make sure they enjoy the rights and freedoms acknowledged in the Constitution. It is written in the 12th Article of the Constitution that all citizens are equal before the law irrespective of religion, language, race, group or class; this order of our Constitution will be implemented word for word.

However, it went on to note:

The Turkish Labor Party, as is manifested in the 3rd Article of the Constitution, enounces the indivisibility of the Turkish state as a whole comprising its territory and people and definitely disallows any kind of separatism and regionalism.³⁴⁵

It is striking that the 3rd article also includes the provision; “Its [Turkey’s] official language is Turkish,” a point the party programme does not mention. According to Aybar, the Eastern Question would be solved alongside the other issues that affected the country.³⁴⁶ Interestingly, as will be discussed below, the Party’s election manifesto for the 1965 election declared that “our nationalism disapproves the idea of fascist nationalism, which is contemptuous and aggressive, and takes the

³⁴⁴ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Bağımsızlık, Demokrasi, Sosyalizm; Seçmeler*, p.632.

³⁴⁵ “...bu yurttaşlarımıza tam bir yurttaş muamelesi yapacaktır. Anayasa’da tanınan hak ve hürriyetlerden bu yurttaşlarımızın da yararlanmaları sağlanacaktır. Anayasa’mızın 12.maddesinde yurttaşlar arasında din, dil, ırk, sınıf ve zümre ayrımı gözetilmeyeceği yazılıdır; Anayasa’mızın bu emri harfi harfine yerine getirilecektir. Türkiye İşçi Partisi Anayasa’nın 3. maddesinde belirtildiği gibi Türkiye’nin ülkesi ve milleti ile bölünmez bir bütün olduğunu ifade eder ve her türlü bölücülüğü ve bölgeciliği kesinlikle reddeder. Her şeyden evvel, Toprak Reformunun uygulanması, adaletli gelir dağılımı, sosyal ve iktisadi nedenlerden dolayı elzemdir.” TİP, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı*, pp.110-111.

³⁴⁶ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Bağımsızlık, Demokrasi, Sosyalizm; Seçmeler*, p.594.

lead of policy of expansionism of imperialism.”³⁴⁷ According to the Party’s manual, the primary reason for the disdain of “our eastern citizens,” was because they were poor. “There are such aghas and *beys* who speak Kurdish and are accredited and respected well enough.”³⁴⁸ Accordingly, Boran after one of her tours from the region declared,

Aghas, Sheiks and other local men of weight as well, support the idea that the Eastern and Southeastern regions are backward and poor because of ethnic distinction, the intentional negligence and different treatment on account of that reason. During my last journey, I noticed that this idea is deliberately disseminated...³⁴⁹

Moreover, during one of the party meeting in Diyarbakir in 1964, Boran stated that:

The working class is deliberately to be divided against itself by the kindling of race issues. In Turkey, distinctions such as Kurdish, Circassian, Abaza, Alevi, and Sunni are instigated by the self-seeking classes. Administrators discriminate between regions. Diyarbakir is only one of them; the wretchedness of the East is not Kurdish versus Turkish. Those who say this are liars.³⁵⁰

Of course, there are plenty such examples. However, now it is necessary to move to a discussion about how this issue was referred to by the Kurdish socialists. As examined in the first chapter, an ethnoregional movement is twofold, the economic underdevelopment and ethnicity. The affiliation between a region’s new

³⁴⁷ Türkiye İşçi Partisi, *Seçim Bildirisi*, (İstanbul: Yenilik basımevi, 1965), p.18.

³⁴⁸ Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, *TİP.li'nin El Kitabı*, p.33.

³⁴⁹“Ağalar, şeyhler, öbür mahalli nüfuzlular da Doğu ve Güneydoğu bölgelerinin daha geri ve yoksul kalmasını etnik farka ve bu fark dolayısıyla ihmal edilmesine, farklı muamele görmesine atfeden görüşü desteklemektedir. Son gezimde şöyle bir iddianın yayılmak istendiğini sezdim.” Behice Boran, *Türkiye ve Sosyalizm Sorunları*, p.191.

³⁵⁰ *bütün dünyada işçi sınıfının, ırk sorunu ortaya çıkarılarak bölünmesi üzerine konuştu: “Türkiye’de Kürt, Çerkez, Abaza, Alevi, Sünni gibi ayrımların, çıkarıcı çevrelerce körüklendiğini...Yöneticiler bölge bölge ayırım yapıyorlar. Diyarbakır bunlardan yalnız birisi, doğunun sefaleti Kürtlük-Türklük değildir. Bunu söyleyenler yalancıdırlar” Sosyal Adalet, Aralık 1964, p.45. quoted in Ahmad and Ahmad, p.281.*

elites and socialist movement after a while, as the first chapter pointed out, tend to be ethnosocialist. While the socialists emphasize the economic situation, which is the source of other problems as well, the ethnic elites also include the issue of their ethnicity, which they argue causes the region to stand out from the rest of the country and feeds economic backwardness.

In this regard, the socialist part of the ethnoregional movement, that is to say, the TLP's leadership and militants as a whole, including the vanguard Kurdish socialists, believed that socioeconomic restoration in accordance with the socialist economic approach would solve all other questions at once. Land reform, the fulfillment of the constitution, and state-supported industrialization together were regarded as remedies. This view also deeply influenced those who considered ethnicity as a part of the problem. For instance, Mehmet Emin Bozarslan's early book strikes a similar tone.³⁵¹

Furthermore, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, as a deputy from Diyarbakir, argued in the assembly that implementations of land reform and a just income distribution for social and economic reasons were indispensable.³⁵² He also responded to ultra-nationalist articles which called for ethnic cleansing and the expulsion of the population,³⁵³ by arguing that showing the economic deprivation of the region justifiable, because of its population's ethnic characteristics was treacherous.³⁵⁴

However, it must be underlined that the party used a dual language in terms of Kurdish ethnicity and its suppression. Furthermore, as mentioned above, there was

³⁵¹ Mehmed Emin Bozarslan, *Doğunun Sorunları* (Diyarbakır: Şafak Kitabevi, 1966), p.145.

³⁵² Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Doğu Dramı Türkiye İşçi Partisi Mecliste:5* (Ankara: Ankara Basım ve Ciltevi, 1967), pp.15-16.

³⁵³ Among them were Ötüken and Milli Yol, which I already mentioned in the previous chapter.

³⁵⁴ Ekinci, *Doğu Dramı*, p.25.

more than one group within the party. Especially during election campaigns, the party militants would employ Kurdish ethnicity. As a matter of fact, the second group of Kurds had already started discussions about Kurdish ethnicity and language. In 1963, when 23 Kurdish writers and publishers, three of whom were members of the TLP, were arrested, Niyazi Ağırnaslı, senator of the TLP, refuted the claims made by the Minister of the Interior. He asserted that the party was not behind either their individual crimes nor did it support any such activities against the indivisibility and unity of the state and the nation.³⁵⁵

Apparently, the party endeavored to keep away from ethnic discourse-leaning accusations. For example, after the publication of *Yeni Akış*, in 1966, Boran and her colleagues accused the publisher, Mehmet Ali Aslan, of supporting bourgeois nationalism, which conflicted with the party program and Marxist ideology.³⁵⁶ Moreover, despite the resolution accepted in the Fourth General Congress of the Party in 1970, the party would refuse to support Kurdish nationalism since it was against any kind of nationalism owing to the fact they were against the constitution.³⁵⁷

Horowitz argues that ethnicity offers political leaders the promise of secure support.³⁵⁸ Owing to the fact that playing the ethnic card explicitly was out of question due to legal restrictions in the 1960s, the party and its militants preferred to use a rather vague language. Therefore, since they could not apply to the ethnic card explicitly they avoided any connections with the ethnicized parties in public. In this sense, although they applied to the ethnic card implicitly, and indeed some groups

³⁵⁵ Turhan Salman, *TİP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi) Parlamentoda 1963–1966* (İstanbul: Tüstav, 2004), p.32.

³⁵⁶ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Kürtlerde Sosyal Değişim Süreçleri ve TİP'in Katkısı*, 19 Eylül 2008 (Unpublished Paper). Aslan also confirmed this.

³⁵⁷ Turkish Republic, Resmi Gazete, 6 Ocak 1972, Karar Sayisi;1971/3 pp.3–16.

³⁵⁸ Horowitz, p.295.

within the party, such as the TKDP, mullahs and, to some extent, students focused on the ethnic aspect of the issue, the party militants generally used the existing ties to attain as many as votes as they could. The last section of this chapter is devoted to the responses of the Kurdish groups to above-mentioned TLP policy on the Kurdish issue. We first look at the election results in the region to reach a general conclusion on the Eastern Question and the TLP.

The Elections, the Turkish Labor Party and the Region

Between two military interventions, 1960–1971, constituents voted eight times in Turkey, three times in national elections (1961, 1965 and 1969), twice for local elections (1963 and 1968), and three times for renewal elections for the Senate (1961 with the general elections, 1964, 1966 and 1968). Interestingly, the participation rates consistently declined from 81.4 percent in 1961 to 64.3 percent in 1969. The decrease occurred for a number of reasons, such as the military intervention and the radicalization of youth in the late 1960s. As Table 2 reveals, while no single party won the majority of the seats in the assembly in 1961, the Justice Party (JP) successor of the DP, was the winner in 1965 and 1969 general elections. At the national level, the TLP received 0.39 percent and 2.72 percent in 1963 and 1968 local elections, 2.97 percent and 2.68 percent in 1965 and 1969 general elections, while it obtained 3.9 percent and 4.7 percent in renewal elections for the Senate. In contrast to the 1965 elections, from which the party obtained 7.9 percent of the votes in Istanbul, 4.3 percent in Ankara and 3.9 percent in Izmir and sent four representatives from these three large cities, in 1969 general elections, it

garnered only 5.7 percent, 2.5 percent and 2.9 percent, respectively in these cities. In fact, the only seats that the TLP managed to win in 1969 were from Istanbul.³⁵⁹

	1961		1965		1969	
Population	28 227 000		31 14900		31 443 000	
Number of registered voters	12 925 395		13 679 753		14 788 552	
Number of actual voters	10 522 716		9 748 678		9 516 035	
Participation rate (%)	81.4		71.3		64.3	
Number of valid votes	10 138 035		9 307 563		9 086 296	
	Votes (%) Seats		Votes (%) Seats		Votes (%) Seats	
Justice Party (JP)	34.79	158	52.87	240	46.55	256
Nation Party (NP)	-		6.27	31	3.22	6
Nationalist Action Party (NAP)	-		-		3.02	1
New Turkey Party (NTP)	13.72	65	3.72	19	2.17	6
Republican People's Party (RPP)	36.74	173	28.74	134	27.37	143
Republican Peasant's Nationalists Party (RPNP)	13.96	54	2.24	11	-	
Republican Reliance Party (RRP)	-		-		6.57	15
Turkish Labor Party (TLP)	-		2.97	14	2.68	2
Turkish Union Party (TUP)	-		-		2.80	8
Independents	0.80	-	3.18	1	5.62	13

Source: T.C. Başbakanlık Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, *İstatistik Göstergeler; 1923-2005*, Publication Number: 3047, Ankara, 2006, p.136-140.

As Table 3 reveals, the change of the electoral system in the 1969 election, from proportional representation, which allowed small parties to gain greater representation in a “first past the post system,” led to a great discrepancy among party votes and seats in the assembly. The TLP got its 12 deputies thanks to the electoral system in 1965. While the Turkish Union Party, which had been founded by leading Alevis and drew its support mainly from the Alevi community,³⁶⁰ was able send 8

³⁵⁹ See Appendix A.

³⁶⁰ Mehmet Ertan's M.A. Thesis is a thorough study of the TUP and gives us some insights into the party. See Mehmet Ertan, *The Circuitous Politicization of Alevism: The Affiliation between the Alevis and the Left Politics (1960–1980)*. M.A. Thesis, The Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, Boğaziçi University, 2008.

representatives with 2.80 percent of the vote. However, in 1969 The NTP won six seats even though it polled less than the TLP. It should be noted that four out of six deputies of the NTP were elected from the East and Southeast regions due to the fact that the new system favored party's which had strong local concentrations of support. The electoral system favored the two big political parties, the JP and the RPP. Although both parties obtained less than they had in 1965, they increased their seats. The JP, the ruling party, got the most votes and seats in 1969 as it had earlier in the decade.

In the case of the East and Southeast region, the JP made rapid progress and it became the largest party in the region. As the following diagram demonstrates, in the early 1960s the JP had been unable to organize properly in the East and won 11.7 percent (1961) of the vote. This early weakness mainly had been because of the presence of the NTP, which had strong support in the region. However, in the later elections, the JP fared better. It obtained 30.9 percent (1965) and 30.3 percent (1969) of the total amount of votes in fifteen provinces in the region.

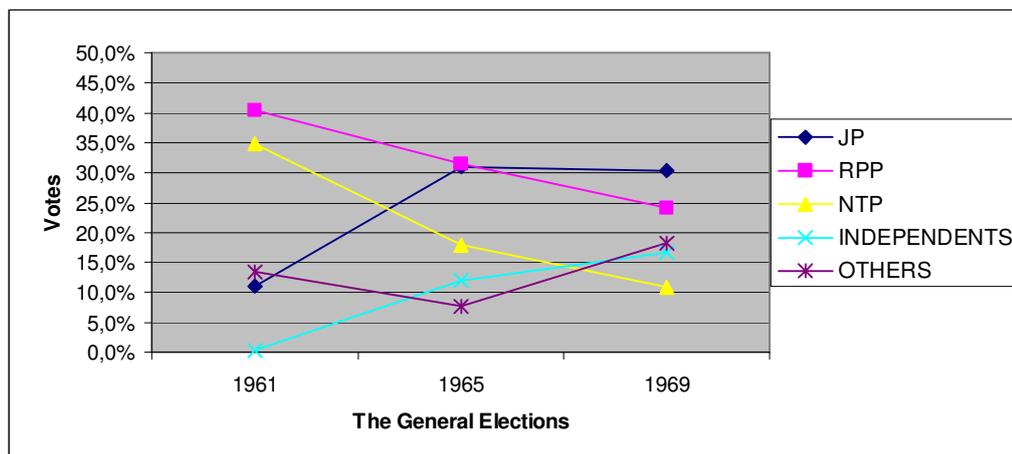


Figure 5 Parties' votes in the fifteen provinces in the East and Southeast.

At the same time, the percentage of votes for the NTP went down from 34.9 percent (1961) to 18 percent (1965) and to 10.9 percent (1969). The same decline can be observed in the RPP's case; while it was the first party in the region in 1961 (40.4 percent), the RPP obtained only 31.4 percent in 1965 and this was reduced to 24 percent in 1969. Other parties, comprising of the Republican Peasants Nationalist Party (RPNP) which became Nationalist Action Party in 1969 (NAP), the Nation Party (NP), the Republican Reliance Party (RRP), Turkish Labor Party (TLP) and Turkish Unity Party (TUP), however, saw an increase in the vote in Kurdish Anatolia. These groups gained 13.3 percent in 1961, 7.7 percent in 1965 and 18.2 percent in 1969, while independent candidates increased their votes from 0.3 percent in 1961 to 7.7 percent in 1965 and 18.2 percent in 1969.³⁶¹

First of all, the dramatic decline of the two political parties, the JP and the RPP, is worth mentioning here. While the two major political parties, the JP and the RPP together obtained a 75.7 percent average in the three elections at the national level, the two managed to get only 28.1 percent of the Southeastern region's votes, which was almost three times less than the national average.³⁶² The NTP faced a decline at the national level due to its failure to win over the JP's voters or former DP supporters. While it got 14 percent in 1961, it obtained only 3.7 percent and 2.2 percent in the 1969 general elections. Likewise, at the national level, the RPP also fell from 36.7 percent (1961) to 28.7 percent (1965) and to 27.4 percent (1969). In addition, the RRP of Turhan Feyzioglu, which broke off the RPP, played a great role in the RPP's decline in the region. The RRP managed to split the RPP vote in 1969 by obtaining 36.9 percent in Hakkari, 31.1 percent in Ağrı and 23.6 percent in Van.

³⁶¹ For more details, see Appendix B.

³⁶² Calculated from three general elections results. See Table 3 and appendix B.

Finally, the decline of the two biggest parties in 1961 was based on the increase of independent candidates and the other political parties, too.

When looking on the previous page, the first question that comes to mind is how these deviations could have happened. First of all, as Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, a Kurdish mullah from Diyarbakır who was affiliated with the TLP, points out, “the Easterners vote for his Agha or Sheik or his acquaintance.”³⁶³ On the other hand, almost 75 percent of the population was made up peasants and the illiterate. Furthermore, as Lale Yalçın-Heckmann underlines, the tribal way of life and its impact on political life were primary reasons for the fluctuation of votes in the region.³⁶⁴ This is because, the political power in the region was in the hands of an elite group of aghas, sheiks, and some intellectuals and their relatives. Therefore, tribal membership and religious authority could be political assets for garnering support. When the notables shifted their alignment, they brought with them a ready-made voting bloc.

Despite some very small changes by the 1960s, this pattern and structure of the Kurdish political landscape remained more or less the same until late 1970s. In terms of figures, the TLP’s participation in the elections did not change this situation either. Even the TLP itself used these traditional channels in the elections on many occasions. If one looks at the fluctuation of TLP votes, it appears to be more or less the same as the other political parties. In other words, the candidates themselves were the most decisive factors behind either the success or failure of the party in the region.

³⁶³ Mehmed Emin Bozarslan, *Doğunun Sorunları*, p.141.

³⁶⁴ Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, “On Kinship, Tribalism and Ethnicity in Eastern Turkey,” in *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, comp. and ed. Peter Alford Andrews (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1989), p.626.

Table 4 The Turkish Labor Party's Votes in the Fifteen Provinces								
Province	1965 General Election			1968 Local Elections		1969 General Election		
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Votes	%	Seats
Agri	3466	4.90	0	894	1.1	1290	1.65	0
Bingol	830	2.12	0	1668	3.5	778	1.58	0
Bitlis	---	---	--	---	---	346	0.78	0
Diyarbakir	8867	8.00	1	3037	2.3	3330	2.75	0
Elazig	2062	2.63	0	2505	3.0	1410	1.75	0
Erzincan	---	---	---	---	---	958	1.39	0
Hakkâri	---	---	---	1320	4.7	154	0.55	0
Kars	9333	5.97	1	12932	4.9	13003	8.26	0
Malatya	4707	3.71	1	12409	10.1	6952	5.24	0
Mardin	1965	1.66	0	---	---	317	0.23	0
Mus	2062	3.72	0	614	1.0	2282	3.69	0
Siirt	1190	1.96	0	1140	1.4	911	1.20	0
Tunceli	2387	5.84	0	2369	5.2	7187	16.80	0
Urfa	3771	3.17	1	6018	5.2	2578	2.00	0
Van	1869	2.62	0	2732	3.3	952	1.17	0
TOTAL	42509	3.09	4	47638	3.04	42448	3.26	0

Source: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *1950-1965 Milletvekili ve 1961, 1964 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üye Seçimleri Sonuçları*, Yayın No: 513 Ankara, 1966, pp. XXII-XXXVII; T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *17 Kasım 1963 Mahalli Seçimler Sonuçları*, Yayın no: 474, Ankara, 1963; ---2 *Haziran 1968 Mahalli Secimler Sonuclari*, Yayın no: 555, Ankara, 1969.

Because the TLP could not participate in the 1961 general elections, contested only in Diyarbakır in 1963 local elections, and got 1.5 percent, this analysis is mainly based on three elections, the 1965 and 1969 general elections and the local elections in 1968. Party branches, as pointed out above, were opened in almost all provinces except for Bitlis, Erzincan and Hakkari due primarily to local notables' disapproval.³⁶⁵ However, except for some branches such as in Diyarbakır, Tunceli, Ağrı, Kars, Malatya, Muş and Urfa, party organizations to some extent were symbolic and hollow. Therefore, the attention was directed at the above-mentioned cities. In the 1965 elections, the TLP ran candidates from the region such Tarık Ziya Ekinci in

³⁶⁵The strongest objection to organization of the party usually came from the local groups mentioned above. For instance, in Erzincan where the majority of population was Alevi, Kemal Burkay was told to not to divide Alevi constituency by opening the party branch there. See, Burkay, *Anılar, Belgeler, I.Cilt*, p.236.

Diyarbakır, Mehmet Ali Aslan in Ağrı, Kemal Burkay in Bingöl (Burkay had in fact never been to Bingöl), Behice Boran in Urfa, Şaban Erik in Malatya, Adil Kurtel in Kars. Among fifteen deputies, four were elected to the Parliament from the region: Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Adil Kurtel, Şaban Erik and Behice Boran.³⁶⁶

As Ekinci mentions in his book on the TLP, prior to the 1965 elections, each group within the party wanted to dominate by choosing and directing the delegates and candidates for the parliament. This is evidenced by the efforts of the pro-TKDP group to assume control of the Diyarbakır TLP branch.³⁶⁷ Musa Anter was asked to run for the Mardin TLP candidacy against Canip Yıldırım, another prominent Kurd in Diyarbakır. Anter refused to do so and ran as an independent.³⁶⁸ Due to this dissension among parties, the TLP was unable win in Mardin and got only 1190 votes (1.9 percent), while Anter himself obtained 10,000 votes, the highest amount in the fifteen provinces. However, Anter was not able to win a seat. On the other hand, Faik Bucak, although he had been rejected by the JP, ran for the Urfa seat as an independent. He, too, got a quite large number of votes, about 15, 000. However, he too was unable to enter parliament.³⁶⁹

All these candidates were more or less of the same class base. All were educated, with strong tribal and family ties, middle-class or upper class individuals. On the other hand, despite the fact that the party put forward 382 candidates for the

³⁶⁶ The rest were: Mehmet Ali Aybar (İstanbul), Rıza Kuas (Ankara), Muzaffer Karan (Denizli), Sadun Aren (İstanbul), Yahya Kanbolat (Hatay), Cemal Hakkı Selek (İzmir), Yunus Koçak (Konya), Yusuf Ziya Bahadınlı (Yozgat) Ali Karcı (Adana), Kemal Nebioğlu (Tekirdag), Çetin Altan (İstanbul), for detailed information see Turhan Salman, *TİP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi) Parlamentoda 1963–1966*.

³⁶⁷ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları*, p.302.

³⁶⁸ Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım 1-2*. p.213.

³⁶⁹ Ömer Ağin, *Kürtler, Kemalizm ve TKP* (İstanbul: VS Yayınları, 2006) p.139.

Parliament, 216 of whom were proletarian, as Aren point out, three out of the 15 deputies were trade unionists and the rest belonged to the intelligentsia.³⁷⁰ Naci Kutlay, in his memoirs, says that even in his province, Ağrı, those who supported the TLP were generally middle class, although there was some interest from the aghas. He goes on to tell that in Malazgirt, the head of party was Halis Agha and during the campaigns, he, in a comical way, propagated for land reform by saying, “vote for this party, they will give the land of people like me to you.”³⁷¹ The party candidate for Tunceli, according to Burkay, was not even a socialist; he was a person who was well aware of the opportunities of the national remainder system.³⁷² In Kars, Adil Kurt, who was elected deputy for the parliament, succeeded thanks to his connections and influence.

In 1969, the TLP increased its poll only in three provinces; Kars, Malatya and in Tunceli. However, these increases were related to specific local conditions. Regarding the province of Kars, where the party in 1969 obtained 8.3 percent in contrast to 5.9 percent in 1965, Adil Kurtel, who had been elected to the parliament in 1965, again was a key factor behind this increase. In addition, the pro-NDR group also supported Adil Kurtel in Kars, while in other provinces they openly attacked the party.³⁷³

In Tunceli, the Party gained 16.8 percent of the votes in 1969, in contrast to 5.8 percent in 1965, due to Kemal Burkay’s personal success and efforts. He had worked there as a lawyer and had taken a leading part in the Eastern meetings in

³⁷⁰ Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı, 1961–1971*, p.105.

³⁷¹ Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım* (İstanbul: Avesta, 1998), p.117.

³⁷² Kemal Burkay, *Anılar, Belgeler*, pp.164-167.

³⁷³ Turhan Feyizoğlu, *Mahir; On’ların Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 11th edition, 2007), p.179.

1967. Finally, regarding Malatya, despite the fact that the pro-NDR group supported another candidate, whom they dubbed the “independent proletarian candidate,” the TLP candidate, Sabri Tanrıverdi, a big landowner and an *Alevi dede* (religious leader), who saved the party’s fortunes.³⁷⁴ Despite the pro-NDR clique, the party’s votes jumped from 3.7 percent to 5.2 percent.

According to a study done in the wake of elections, the TLP’s votes in the villages where a village voted entirely for one political party was related to the candidates’ individual influence. While the TLP could get almost no votes from the majority of villages in the country, in Malatya or in Diyarbakır it received almost all votes in some villages.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, 23 of 24 villages, which voted entirely for the TLP, were in the east with the single exception being a village in central Anatolia.³⁷⁶ In Adıyaman, as I mentioned, owing to the person who was candidate in 1969, eight villages as a whole voted for the TLP.

Among those provinces in which the party fared less well than it had in 1965, Diyarbakır is worth commenting on. Whereas the proportion of the TLP’s vote was 8 percent in 1965, it fell to 2.7 percent in 1969, which was more than half. Paramount among those factors was Tarık Ziya Ekinci’s nomination to Ankara. This move was related to the fact Ankara seemed to be a safer seat. Although Ekinci and his family or tribe had supported the party in 1965, it seems that due to Ekinci’s candidacy in Ankara, the actions of the pro-TKDP group, and the conflict between Ekinci and Canip Yıldırım all contributed to this decline.

³⁷⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 12 September, 1969, quoted in Ahmad and Ahmad, p.374.

³⁷⁵ Arslan Başer Kafaoğlu, “TİP’in Köy Oyları” Yön, Sayı 196, 30 Aralık 1966.

³⁷⁶ Cenap Nuhurat, “Türkiye Köylerinde Olagandisi Oy Verme,” *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, (Volume: XXVI, March 1971 No: 1, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara), pp.219-244.

Since this decline happened after the historical events of the Eastern Meetings, which are seen as a major landmark in the development of Kurdish mobilization it leads us to look at the role of individuals. It is very important for our theoretical approach, which argues that ethnoregional movement and ethnosocialist rhetoric is primarily based on individuals, most of whom participate in politics to attain as much as power they can. It also confirms the case of province of Ağrı where the party received 1.65 percent of the votes in contrast to 4.90 percent in 1965. Regarding the latter, Mehmet Ali Aslan was put forward for Izmir's primary candidacy, while the Emek group, that is, Sadun Aren and Behice Boran, shared positions further down on party lists.³⁷⁷

The party militants who formed the party's branches virtually overnight were also negotiators between the party center and the constituency as well. Politics even in the TLP's case was a negotiation with influential local notables and intellectuals. What is evident is that the TLP's militants were not as powerful or capable as their opponents in mobilizing the electorate. Henceforth, these new counter-elite tried new channels through which they aimed to politicize and mobilize the region's population so that the old allegiances could be replaced by new sets of ideas and commitments. Nevertheless, they initially used the existing channels, specifically, tribal affiliations and the cult of personality.

It was in the local elections of 1963 when the party participated in some areas and made its propaganda over the radio. Although those radio speeches caught the attention of quite a lot of people due to their unprecedented language, the party was unable to translate this interest into electoral success. The TLP was further damaged by rumors fueled by the JP, which alleged that the TLP supporters were communists,

³⁷⁷ Şeref Yıldız, *Fırtınada Yürüyüş* (İstanbul: Sarı Defter9, 2008), p. 68.

supporters of Soviet Russia and that if they were elected would launch a merciless assault on Islam. The anti-TLP propaganda sometimes erupted in acts of civil disorder, such as sudden attacks on the TLP and its organizations or physical attacks on members of the party.³⁷⁸

In addition, during the 1965 election campaign, the JP's accusation was that the TLP had been sought to bring communism to the country and followed Stalin's policies.³⁷⁹ As virtually all the party's militants in the East say, while forming the party branches, they were asked for money and many landlords and other local notables refused to have contacts with them due to these accusations.

At the same time, the TLP policy mainly was conditioned by the need to prevent the party from being closed down and to expand its message as far as possible in order not only to the refute accusations against it, but as to convince the constituency to follow its path.

Soon after Niyazi Ağırnaslı joined the party in 1963, the party started to appeal in the Constitutional Court not only to make the constitution workable, but also to help amend the laws which they felt were out of step with the constitution. Between 1963 and 1971 when the party dissolved, the party had made 41 appeals to the court, 20 of which were successful and had led to the cancelation of various laws.³⁸⁰

The TLP published almost all of its activities, such as radio speeches and the assembly records under the title of "Turkish Labor Party is in the Assembly" and was

³⁷⁸ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *TİP Tarihi*;1, pp.223-224.

³⁷⁹ Nermin Abadan, *Anayasa Hukuku ve Siyasi Bilimler Açısından 1965 Seçimlerinin Tahlili* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1966), p.135.

³⁸⁰ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, "Türkiye İşçi Partisi'nin Anayasa Mahkemesi'nde Açtığı Davalar," in Gündüz Vassaf, *Mehmet Ali Aybar Sempozyumları, 1997-2002; Özgürleşme Sorunları*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), pp.209-231.

quite successful in distributing its ideas through publications. In addition, most of the prominent figures in the party wrote periodically in *Yön*, *Sosyal Adalet*, *Emek* and other leftist journals. In a booklet entitled “TLP’s radio speeches for October 1965 Elections,” the policies as well as the lively discourse can be seen. Aybar said, “Workers, poor peasants, artisans....Ataturkist Youth, officers...citizens, Turkey cannot develop with a capitalist meaning.”³⁸¹ In Ankara, more than three thousand people gathered to listen³⁸² to Sadun Aren, Çetin Altan, Yaşar Kemal and Anteppli Hamdoş, a local storyteller.

It is easily discernible that both groups in the party preferred to use their own vocabulary. Aybar appealed to his audience, which included Ataturkist Youth and officers: however, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, as spokesman of the *Easterners* struck a different tone. He stated, “with the arrival of your sole party, the Turkish Labor Party, this is to say your power, because the bondage of one man to another will wither away, the gap between race, religion, sect and language, and the situations created by this gap will be terminated.”³⁸³ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, as the only representative of *Doğulu* group in the Assembly between 1965 and 1969, brought to attention both economic and social and cultural problems of the region several times. For instance, in one of his speech to the assembly during the second Five-year Development Plan, he focused on the underdevelopment of the East arguing that the plan did not include the particular needs of the region comprehensively. He further

³⁸¹ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *25 Eylül 1965 in TİP 10 Ekim 1965 Radyo Konuşmaları*, p.8.

³⁸² “*TİP, Ankara’da demokratik hayatın en büyük kapalı salon toplantısını yaptı:*”*Yön*, no. 131, (1 November 1965).

³⁸³ “*Senin biricik siyasi partin olan Türkiye İşçi Partisi’nin yani senin iktidara gelmenle her türlü sömürme, kula kulluk son bulacağından ırk, din, mezhep ve dil ayrılıklarıyla bunların sebep olduğu elim vaziyetler son bulacaktır.*” Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *TİP 10 Ekim 1965 Radyo Konuşmaları*, pp.55-60.

quoted from *Ötüken* and *Milli Yol*, journals that had used pejorative language against the Kurds and argued that according to the constitution it was illegal to write such articles. He further explained that private investments would not solve the economic backwardness of the region.³⁸⁴

From Eastern Meetings to the DDKO (Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths), or the End of the TLP

Starting from the late 1950s, as the previous sections explain, Kurdish ethnicity under the guise of *Doğulu* or *Kürtçü* (Kurdist) either through the arrest of Kurdish intellectuals or publication of some Kurdish journals, timidly started to appear in the public domain. In addition, the presence of a growing number of Kurdish students in Turkey's two greatest cities, Istanbul and Ankara, the relatively free political atmosphere, migrations, the expansion of the market, and the increasing number of actors in politics were some other factors which contributed to this reappearance of Kurdish ethnicity after almost three decades of suppression.

As already mentioned, the interaction between the leftists and the Kurdish elites did not lead to a parallel interaction between the state authorities or the nationalist and rightist segment of society and the Kurds. Therefore, when the Kurdish ethnicity was seen in the public sphere, there were some fixed labels, such as Kurdist. However, these so-called Kurdists were extremely shy about ethnicizing their demands. They framed most of their discourse in terms of constitutionalism. As Mehdi Zana, one of the initiator of those meetings, points out, this same approach demonstrated itself in the Eastern Meetings. These meetings, while encouraging the population as a whole to raise its voice against the economic situation of the region,

³⁸⁴ Tarık Ziya Ekinici, *Doğu Dramı*, pp.25-26.

also stimulated the young generation of Kurdish intellectuals, and university students' ethnic demands, which focused on language and culture.³⁸⁵

These meetings resulted in outbreaks of popular protest. In 1967, seven big demonstrations were held in Silvan (a district of Diyarbakir), Diyarbakir, Siverek (a district of Urfa), Batman (used to be a district of Siirt), Tunceli and Ağrı, respectively. Also, in 1969, in Lice (Diyarbakir), Siverek (the district of Urfa), Varto (the district of Mus) and in Hilvan (Urfa), Suruc (Urfa) five similar demonstrations were held.³⁸⁶ In addition to those meetings, in Ankara and Istanbul, equally important were “*Doğu Gecesi*” (Eastern Night) in which hemşeris gathered around and listened, and sang local songs and shared ideas.³⁸⁷

The Eastern meetings, as many of their participants argue, started as a reaction to articles of the ultra-nationalist *Ötüken* and *Milli Yol* periodicals. In addition, the TLP, other political organizations such as the TKDP were active during those historical events. However, these events were arranged mainly by the first group of TLP militants, such as Mehdi Zana, Naci Kutlay, Kemal Burkay and Mehmet Ali Aslan.³⁸⁸ However, Mehmet Ali Aybar in Diyarbakir, Behice Boran in Batman and Tarik Ziya Ekinci in Ağrı and Diyarbakır also took part in the meetings. At the same

³⁸⁵ Mehdi Zana, interview by Delal Aydın, Ankara, Turkey, February 2005.

³⁸⁶ *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), pp.30-33.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*,

³⁸⁸ İsmail Beşikçi's early study, which was published in the same year, is the first handbook of these meetings. İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi*, (Ankara: Yurt-Kitap Yayın, 1992); and Azad Zana Gündoğan *ibid.*; also Yaşar Karadoğan, “Kürd Demokratik Mücadelesinde Bir Kilometre Taşı: 1967-1969 Doğu Mitingleri ve Kürd Uyanışı,” *BİR: Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi: DDKO-I*, no. 5, (2006), pp.254-283.

time, the TKDP was also influential. In Silvan, for example, Sait Elçi of the TKDP and Tarık Ziya Ekinci gave speeches at the same time.³⁸⁹

Though these outbursts of popular activism were to some extent spontaneous reactions to specific events, the militants of the TLP and the TKDP were the two groups that provided the organizational basis for the public outcry. The majority of demands and speeches were based on the economic backwardness of the region. People were told to raise their voices against inequalities and underdevelopment of their region. On some occasions, such as in Silvan, people were agitated by a Kurdish poem, according to Mehmet Ali Aslan, who had recited it. It was for the first time in the Turkish republic's history that a Kurdish poem had been recited in the public.³⁹⁰ In Batman, the speaker Nevzat Nas, a student, recited Kurdish poems from Ahmedé Xani, Cigerxwin, and Kemal Badilli.³⁹¹

Despite its official disapproval, these meetings much of the time were a platform for TLP propaganda. In addition to those meetings, the TLP also embarked on a 10-day Eastern Tour to almost all provinces where Aybar, Boran, Kurtel and Ekinci as the party deputies gave speeches and told people about the Eastern question, which they argued was an “outcome of unemployment, destitution...all of which derived from the coalition of Aghas and comprador bourgeoisie.”³⁹² For the first

³⁸⁹ Ömer Ağın, *Kürtler, Kemalizm ve TKP*, (İstanbul: VS Yayınları, 2006), p.141.

³⁹⁰ Mehmet Ali Aslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31 January 2009

³⁹¹ Abdullah Kaya, *Hévriz Ağacı*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p.138.

³⁹² “Doğu'daki vatandaşların sosyal ve kültürel haklarının tanınmadığını, halkın ekonomik gerilik, eğitimsizlik, işsizlik, yokluk, yoksulluk, topraksızlık ve sefalet içinde kendi kaderiyle baş başa bırakıldığını, bunların nedeni olarak da toprak ağalarıyla ittifak içindeki sermaye düzeni olduğunu anlatıyorlardı.” Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Kürtlerde Sosyal Değişim Süreçleri ve TİP'in Katkısı*.

time, these meetings demonstrated the divergence of point of views very clearly.³⁹³

The struggle between the TLP and the TKDP to achieve dominance over the subsequent mobilization of the population became a salient bone of contention.

One important feature of the meetings was the participation of many Kurdish students, some of whom already had worked for the TLP's in 1965 general election campaign. This younger generation of future members of the Kurdish elites and intelligentsia, as with the TKDP, did not agree that the Eastern Question was just about economic backwardness and social injustice. They forcefully put forward the ethnic characteristic of the region and related it to backwardness and underdevelopment. In other words, for them, the economic underdevelopment in the Kurdish regions of Turkey was not economic happenstance. On the contrary, it was due to social and cultural factors associated with the Kurdishness of those regions.

The next important development was the 1969 foundation of the DDKOs (Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths) in Ankara and Istanbul in 1969. Between 1970 and 1971, first in Diyarbakir and then in Silvan, Ergani, Kozluk and Batman the DDKOs were founded by TLP militants such as Tahsin Ekinci, Naci Kutlay, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Abdurrahman Uçar, and Mehdi Zana.³⁹⁴ Other activists included Mümtaz Kotan, Orhan Kotan, İbrahim Güçlü, Nezir Şemmikanlı, İhsan Aksoy, Fikret Şahin, Sabri Çepik, Sıraç Bilgin, Ali Beyköylü, İhsan Yavuztürk, Ferit Uzun, Faruk Aras, İsa Geçit, Hikmet Bozçalı and Ümit Fırat.³⁹⁵ Like the coalition in the TLP, the

³⁹³ Soon after one of articles disdaining Kurds and Kurdish culture, in September 1967, 19 students associations, and clubs signed a notice, condemning the articles and their writers. see, Nezir Şemmikanlı, "Geçmiş Olmadan Gelecek Olmaz!," *BİR: Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi: DDKO-I'*, (5), 2006: 71–97.

³⁹⁴ Interview with Tarık Ziya Ekinci, in Diken. p.61.

³⁹⁵ İsmail Beşikçi, "Hapisteki DDKO (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları)" *BİR: Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi: DDKO-I'* (5) (2006) 99–156.

DDKOs also included various groups: Pro-Sait Kırmızıtoprak (also known by his sobriquet Dr. Şivan,) group, T'de KDP, pro-Dev-Genç group and pro-TKDP.³⁹⁶ In addition, activists who were not even members, such as Deniz Gezmiş, a charismatic and influential student leader, visited the DDKO several times in Ankara.³⁹⁷ According to Yavuz, Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, took part in the activities and established connections with other students when he was in Istanbul in 1970.³⁹⁸

First of all, it should be noted that the DDKOs, despite the fact that their founders were mainly members of the TLP, were not subsidiaries or organs of the party. Nor did they do only propaganda for the party. They developed during the chaotic experienced by the Turkish socialist student movement and in an environment where their Turkish counterparts virtually as a whole were longing for a revolution lead by the intellectuals, students and the army. Kurdish university students founded these organizations in order to gather around a bigger association rather than small and scattered fellow townsmen associations.

At the same time, the attacks of the ultra-nationalist students and the chaotic political atmosphere of the late 1960s, all together channeled Kurdish students toward uncertainty in many respects. What was crucial for them was the legality. Unlike their Turkish counterparts, they tried to remain within the legal framework of the constitution.³⁹⁹ It can be argued that these organizations made much more

³⁹⁶ Şeref Yıldız, *Fırtınada Yürüyüş*, p.66.

³⁹⁷ Orhan Miroğlu, *Canip Yıldırım'la Söyleşi*, p.219.

³⁹⁸ Yavuz, p.10.

³⁹⁹ Zerruk Vakıfahmetoğlu, one of the members of the DDKO, when he argued with friends at the Diyarbakir DDKO and expressed his thoughts for an armed-struggle, was accused of being a Dev-Gencist, which referred to the radicalism of the Turkish Left in 1970. Soon after he resigned, he and some of his friend went Diyarbakir to start a guerilla war; however,

contribution to the young Kurdish students' worldview than anything. Its monthly bulletin was circulated among thousands of students. In addition, seminars and talks regarding the Kurdish issue and the economic situation of the region given by various people such as İsmail Beşikçi, and Mehmet Emin Bozarslan were organized. Moreover, in Diyarbakir and other provinces, the DDKOs functioned as an open university in which many issues such as socialism and self-determination were taught.⁴⁰⁰

The DDKOs were also founded at a time when the army was launching Commando Operations against Kurdish villagers. İsmail Cem, a journalist at the time, described these as having a long-term effect on the politics of the region.⁴⁰¹ Dozens of villages and towns were searched simultaneously for illegal guns and bandits, villagers were treated as sub-human and most importantly, they were scorned by the officers for being Kurds.⁴⁰² The DDKOs militants paid great attention to this issue and sent a telegram to the president.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, the militants went to the region to investigate the conditions and most of the time paid great attention to reminding the population of their rights and warned them that these commando operations were against the constitution.

the DDKO in Diyarbakir did not let them to even enter the building there since they were told that they are for violence by which they would cause troubles. See interview with , Zerruk Vakifahmetoglu in Diken, p.204.

⁴⁰⁰ Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım*, p.180.

⁴⁰¹ *Milliyet*, 12-19 July 1970, in İsmail Cem, *Türkiye Üzerine Araştırmalar* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1970), p.29.

⁴⁰² , *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁴⁰³ “D.D.K.O Aylık Haber Bülteni9,”in DDKO, *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Davası Dosyası 1*, pp.573- 581.

The DDKOs' emphasis upon commando operations caught the attention of the TLP, too. Both in the Parliament and in the Senate the party representatives condemned the operations. Fatma İşmen, the party's only senator (from Kocaeli), claimed that these operations were "more evidence of the effort directed towards creating a fascist order. Suppression by the government is the heavy repression of our citizens in the East and Southeast region under the banner of searching guns and criminals."⁴⁰⁴

However, the 1969 general elections as well as the radicalization of students paved the way for the devastation of the party. Aybar resigned just after the elections, while Mehmet Ali Aslan was elected party chairman. He remained about a month and then he too resigned. The party by 1970 was *de facto* inactive. The pro-Aybar group, including many Kurds, students and other groups, had left the party. The Fourth Congress of the party was held amidst the chaotic situation in Ankara on 29-31 November 1970. The proposal of the DDKO, "*Halklar Tasarısı*" (proposal of peoples) was passed in the congress. According to decision, the party accepted and declared that:

There live a Kurdish people in the East of Turkey;
The Ruling classes and fascist governments have been implementing a policy of terror and assimilation upon Kurdish people, which from time to time has been in the guise of bloody persecution activities;
One of the fundamental reasons for the backwardness of the region where the Kurdish people lives, in comparison with the other regions of Turkey, is in addition to the capitalism's unequal law, an outcome of the social and political policies executed by the ruling class governments, which take into account the fact that the other region is inhabited by the Kurdish people;
For this reason, considering the "Eastern Question" as a question of regional development is nothing but an extension of the chauvinist-nationalist views and attitudes of the ruling class governments.

⁴⁰⁴ "*Hükümetin baskısı, bir faşist düzen kurma çabasının diğer bir delili, son sıralarda Doğu ve Güney-Doğu bölgemizdeki silah ve suçlu arama bahanesi ile oradaki vatandaşlarımıza yapılan ağır baskıdır*" in Fatma Hikmet İşmen, *Parlamento'da 9 Yıl; TİP Senatörü Olarak 1966–1975 Dönemi Parlamento Çalışmaları*, (Ankara: Çark Matbaası, 1976), p.228.

It went on to state that the party would:

Support the struggle of the Kurdish people to enjoy its constitutional citizenship rights and to realize that their all other democratic aspirations and demands is an ordinary and necessary revolutionary duty...

The party regards the Kurdish problem in accordance with the requirements of working class' socialist revolutionary struggle.⁴⁰⁵

During the Congress the pro-Aybar Kurdish group, including Kemal Burkay who gave a speech there, underlined the fact that the TLP was to be protected.⁴⁰⁶

They clearly were worried that the passing of such a resolution would lead to the closure of the party. Tarık Ziya Ekinci abstained from voting. Mehmet Ali Aslan tried to persuade the rest of the Eastern delegates and the party not to pass the resolution.⁴⁰⁷

Moreover, Burkay maintains that he proposed a moderate proposal, which was turned down by the other delegates whom were under the influence of Dr. Şivan, the leader of the T'de KDP and who in fact wanted to get the party closed down.⁴⁰⁸ The party

⁴⁰⁵ “Türkiye'nin Doğu'sunda Kürt halkının yaşamakta olduğunu; Kürt halkı üzerinde, baştan beri, hakim sınıfların faşist iktidarların, zaman zaman kanlı zulüm hareketleri niteliğine bürünen, baskı, terör ve asimilasyon politikasını uyguladıklarını; Kürt halkının yaşadığı bölgenin, Türkiye'nin öteki bölgelerine oranla, geribırakılmış olmasının temel nedenlerinden birinin, kapitalizmin eşitsiz gelişme kanununa ek olarak, bu bölgede Kürt halkının yaşadığı gerçeğini göz önüne alan hakim sınıf iktidarlarının, güttükleri ekonomik ve sosyal politikanın bir sonucu olduğunu; Bu nedenle, “Doğu sorununu” bir bölgesel kalkınma sorunu olarak ele almanın, hakim sınıf iktidarlarının şoven-milliyetçi görüşlerinin ve tutumunun bir uzantısından başka bir şey olmadığını; Kürt halkının Anayasal vatandaşlık haklarını kullanmak ve diğer tüm demokratik özlem ve isteklerini gerçekleştirmek yolundaki mücadelesinin, bütün anti-demokratik, faşist, baskıcı, şoven-milliyetçi akımların amansız düşmanı olan Partimiz tarafından desteklenmesinin olağan ve zorunlu bir devrimci görev olduğunu;... Partinin Kürt sorununa, işçi sınıfının sosyalist devrim mücadelesinin gerekleri açısından baktığını kabul ve ilan eder.”Türkiye İşçi Partisi Genel Merkezi, Türkiye İşçi Partisi IV. Büyük Kongresi (29-31 Ekim 1970 Ankara); Alınan Kararlar ve Yapılan Seçimlerin Sonuçları, pp.6-7; and Sadun Aren, TİP Olayı (1961-1971), pp.71-72.

⁴⁰⁶ Nihat Sargın, TİP'li Yıllar (1961–1971) (İstanbul: Felis Yayınları, 2001), pp.967-973.

⁴⁰⁷ Mehmet Ali Aslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 31 January 2009.

⁴⁰⁸ Kemal Burkay, Anular, Belgeler, p.279.

was closed down on the pretext of the resolution above. According to the indictment, the problem was approached only as the Kurdish Question and “other democratic aspirations and demands” was just a euphemism for separation and secession.⁴⁰⁹

Even before the March 12, 1971 coup, Turkey’s socialist movement underwent a series of internal conflicts. Although the constitution was amended and thousands of young socialists and Kurds were arrested, the Socialist movement and the history of the Kurdish movement, of course, did not end. Indeed, in the case of the Kurds, it is possible to argue that actually a fully developed Kurdish movement in and for itself only developed after 1971. While many leftists and Kurds were in prison, the conflicts and contradictions between Kurdish militants of the TLP and the DDKOs became salient. They went before the court with three separate groups; the first group was comprised of those who accepted the Kurdish ethnicity and language as a social reality of Turkey, and made no more demands. The second group, the one also known as the *Ocak Komünü* (January Commune), representing a more radical group, included persons such as Mümtaz Kotan, İbrahim Güçlü, Yumnu Budak, and who also received so much help from İsmail Beşikçi during the preparation of their hearings. This group focused on building a romanticized argument based on the broken promises of the founding fathers of the Republic to the Kurds and the unique nature of the Kurdish language. The third group, on the other hand, consisted of those individuals who denied all charges.

The best way to conclude this chapter is to call attention to a very crucial process in those years, and afterwards: the time Kurdish militants shared in prison, that is to say in 1959-60, in 1963 and in 1971-4. Far beyond the scope of this thesis, somehow those arrestments turned out to be the best way to gather scattered Kurdish

⁴⁰⁹ Turkish Republic, Resmi Gazete, 6 Ocak 1972, Karar Sayisi;1971/3 pp.3–16.

militants together under a roof where they could debate several issues, gain cohesion, even learn Kurdish. At the same time, this situation also facilitated the factionalism that occurred with both the 49ers of 1959 and in the TLP and the DDKOs of 1971. In other words, another big split after the arrest of 49ers in 1959 happened among the Kurdish activists of the TLP in 1971. In prison, the Kurds divided into several groups and descended into mutual recriminations, each group claiming the other group was a splitter or too radical or unrealistic. In the case of the DDKO and the TLP, the split brought about irreversible changes both for the future of the Kurdish movement and Turkey's politics in general, changes that would be felt for decades to come.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE

The politicization of the Kurdish identity in the 1960s was a symptom of the politicization of Turkish life at the time. Starting from the 1950s Turkey's politics acquired an increasingly local characteristic, with political movements feeding off intense local support and issues rather than national problems. A new generation of Kurdish intelligentsia joined the established traditional Kurdish elites in the late 1950s. The political turmoil in the 1950s and 1960s was related to this new wave of Kurdish activism. The 58ers, many of whom were arrested in 1959, were the principal actors in the development of the Kurdish ethnoregional movement. The regionalization of politics was blended with the growing prominence of ethnic identities among constituents in the mid-1960s.

This Kurdish identity also was supported by the rise of Kurdish periodicals, which served as a means for the transmission of cultural and political thought for many young intellectuals and members of the Turkish Labor Party. Despite a growing recognition of a collective Kurdish identity among intellectuals and students, the movement was not transformed into a full-fledged ethnic struggle. First of all, the label "Kurdish," which was applied by the Turkish state to anyone making demands for ethnic or cultural recognition, was not to be taken lightly. The state fiercely discouraged all ethnic expression within any political or legal framework, often with the arrest of the offender, their family and friends. This served to strongly discourage Kurdish intellectuals from couching their demands as ethnically derived, and so they constituted themselves as a movement fighting for economic equality. As a result the

58ers adopted the vague term “Doğulu,” to describe themselves, which did not prioritize their ethnicity.

The importance of the TLP in the case of Kurdish mobilization and the politicization of the Kurdish identity were not because the TLP was an important actor in Turkish or even Kurdish politics as such. Quite the opposite, the TLP never managed to gain any more than a small percentage of the national vote. It provided an organizational framework under which Kurds for the first time could articulate and debate their situation. This experience was not lost on the emerging Kurdish leaders. While the TLP ultimately failed to deliver the change it promised, this failed experiment served to discourage the 68 and 78ers from attempting to integrate into mainstream politics.

The result was the articulation of a separate Kurdish ethnic identity and political structure. The previous iterations of Kurdish identity had been fused with socialist and leftist rhetoric, and viewed as subordinate to the cause of national development and freedom. The new Kurdish politics of this era made no claim to any sort of universal motive. They were not couched in the religious language of the past, and although they used the leftist ideology which they had learned, the Kurdish question was now one of ethnicity. The new Kurdish elite sought to make room for a powerful Kurdish identity that was tied to the Kurdish language, not any broad conception of Islam or socialism.

If the 58ers had been preoccupied with solving the social and economic problems throughout the country, and the Southeast in specific, the arrival of the more radical 68ers served to take the Kurdish issue out from under the TLP and the dominance of socialist ideology. The trials of Kurdish and TLP leaders in 1971 created as a schism between the 58 and 68ers. The persecution of the previous

generation convinced the 68ers that political representation and legitimization would be impossible under the current system: the leftist parties such as the TLP were incapable of prioritizing the ethnic component of the struggle, and the Turkish state was entirely unwilling to recognize Kurdish identity and ethnicity.

The trials of 1971 began a period of intergenerational conflict between Kurdish leaders, as the 68ers fought with the 58ers over who would be the legitimate face of the Kurdish movement. Furthermore, the key issue was how to describe the ubiquitous Kurdish problem. The 58ers strongly argued that a resolution of the Kurdish question required little more than economic development and social revitalization. The 68ers refused to define the Kurdish issue so narrowly, and took cultural and ethnic rights as integral to the emancipation of the Kurdish people. Underneath the ideological struggle lay a strong current of power politics. Political favors and cronyism were rampant elements of political life, and holding the right office would make a politician rich. The Kurdish movement at this time was strongly influenced by the various personalities and egos competing for power.

The 78ers movement, which comprised many of 68ers as well, was less focused on the acquisition of political power within the Turkish system, and turned its sights on the realization of a greater Kurdistan. They viewed Kurdistan as being occupied by Turkey and sought to create a new political and economic system, borrowing heavily from socialist ideology. During 1960s as well as 70s, individuals' identification generally was based on one's family and tribal ties in the region. The most important means of identification was someone's birthplace, which led to mushrooming of *hemşeri* associations (fellow townsmanship association) among Kurdish students. This is why the term *Doğulu* was essential—it served to put all these regional identities under a larger banner. By identifying themselves broadly as

Doğulu, Kurdish students were able to maintain their overriding *hemşeri* identities while becoming part of a greater movement. This was one crucial step along the development of a historical identity.

The transition from regional, to leftist, and then to what would become a more universal Kurdish identity defines the limits and aims of the Kurdish movements at the different periods. The adoption of these terms was far from automatic and far from easy. The term Doğulu was not widely accepted by the Kurdish population. Likewise, leftist ideology was not easily adopted by Kurds in the Southeast. This ideology would eventually give way to an ethnically derived Kurdish identity, but this too required a large amount of propaganda before it was accepted by the masses.

It would be misleading not to take into consideration the evolution of the state discourse in Turkey. First of all, the absolute denial of the existence of Kurds as a distinctive and dissimilar group and of the Kurdish language needs to be underlined. Yet, in order to understand the transformation of state discourse, one needs to look at the struggle and the interaction of Kurdish activists with the authorities. In comparing the lawsuits of the DDKOs and the DDKD (the Turkish acronym for Revolutionary Democrat Culture Associations, opened in the mid-1970s and closed down in 1980), I realized that the state discourse in the DDKOs case was based on the denial of a distinct Kurdish people and language. In the DDKDs case, the state was preoccupied with separating nationalism from Marxism and communism. The difference between these two lawsuits is that the Turkish state opposed the DDKD militants, and regarded the DDKDs as nationalist rather than communist whereas it portrayed the DDKO militants as separatist.⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ See *KİP/DDKD Davası; Kesinleşmiş Karar*, (Bromma: Jina Nu Yayınları, 2006); and DDKO, *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Dava Dosyası 1*.

The Kurdish problem has become particularly acute since the 1980s. The growing severity of the Kurdish problem has politicized and distorted the history of the Kurdish movement. Nowadays, the majority of Kurdish politicians who rose to prominence in the 1960s conflate past events with the current situation. What they relay is not true, however, and understanding the difference between then and now has never been more important. One of my interviewees, Ömer Ağın, felt the need to correct me when I asked him about Kurdish nationalism in the 1960s. He claimed that the whole history of the Kurdish movement must be studied within the context of “*Kürt ulusal demokratik hareketi*,” or the Kurdish democratic national movement as it is known today. Tarık Ziya Ekinci argues the same thing in one of his unpublished papers. Their point is that the Kurdish movement is teleological in all steps leading up to the nationalist movement of today. As was shown, this was not the case, and the Kurdish political movement and militancy of the 1960s to the 1980s was of a markedly different character than that of today.

While they embarked on their political journey as young and ambitious middle-class intelligentsia, highly influenced by socialist rhetoric, they were frustrated by the socioeconomic conditions of their region, and so they promised to eliminate economic deprivation in the region via developmentalism. With regard to ethnic demands, many Kurdish activists of the time did believe that the 1961 Constitution would save them from prosecution since their demands were convenient to the constitution.

Kurdish nationalism, as a means of demanding both cultural and political rights for the Kurdish population within the Turkish republic, is one of the most prominent factors in the region’s political life today. The existence of a much more coherent and forceful Kurdish nationalism is undeniable. Current Kurdish

nationalism has attempted to re-write the history of Kurdish movements to better suit its narrative. To this end, individuals who took part in the region's political life describe their past actions as part of a larger struggle that continues today. Many of them stake out the claim "We got there first." Yet, what had happened during 1980s and 1990s diverges substantially from what was the case in the 1960s.

Today, Kurdish nationalism must be studied with its history and development in mind, and not be taken as one indivisible movement. The divisions within the Kurdish movements are tremendous, and its internal schisms have done more to shape the movement than any conflict with Turkish socialist and nationalist groups. The story of the Kurdish movement is not one of constant struggle against an oppressor, but of a continual attempt to refine and redefine the concept of Kurdishness. The Kurdish movement of today has little in common with the aspirations and efforts of the 58 and 68ers.

Up until the 1960s, Kurdish politicians, traditionally from the leading stratum of Kurdish society, seemed far more concerned with their own political survival than advocating Kurdish nationalism or the development of the region. Accordingly, Kurdish Leftists, especially those who held leading positions in the TLP, did not take any greater risk in terms of propagating Kurdish nationalism. Yet it was the use of socialist rhetoric and the language of equality that transformed the Kurdish movement into the "ethnoregional" movement that it is today. The 1968 and 1978 generation of Kurdish intellectuals and students, who would become even more radicalized than past generations, believed that there was nothing to be gained by cooperating with the current political system, and had less and less to lose by opposing the system as a whole.

Regarding the ethnoregional argument here, the affiliation with the socialist movement, which particularly affected the subsequent developments of the Kurdish movement, had two major consequences. First, given the emphasis that Turkish socialism placed on the dependent nature of Turkey within the world system, the Kurdish leaders used this same construction in arguing that the Kurdish regions were being exploited by the Turkish state. Second, another tenet of Turkish socialism was that it alone held the solutions to Turkey's problems, and that competing ideologies were insufficient. This led Kurdish leaders to conclude that a Turkish socialism was specific for Turks and Turkey, that the Kurdish problem too required its own unique solution. Furthermore, if Turkish socialism could singularly provide the answer to every ethnic, social, and economic problem in Turkey, then a Kurdish movement could be likewise all-encompassing. The Kurdish problem, complex as it was, did not require a multifaceted approach. Rather a single party was all that the Kurdish problem required.

This is not to say that the Kurdish movement existed in a monolithic form. An essential part of the Kurdish movement's DNA was intense factionalism. This had been transmitted from their experience in the TLP and other leftist parties which had been undoing mitosis on an almost daily basis. The atomization of Kurdish politics to the personal level nullifies any claim of a teleological or united movement.

Finally, the Doğulu group's appearance on the political stage overlapped with the period when Turkey in general and Kurdish society in particular underwent fundamental social, economic and demographic changes. Whereas they broke away with some of the 58ers, during their arrest in 1959, the next generation of Kurdish students and intellectuals, namely the generation of 68, who formed the *DDKOs* and the *T'de KDP* would separate from their elder brothers while they were under arrest

in 1971. Those personalities and groups which appeared after the 1971 would do completely different things. They would not only burn bridges with the Turkish socialists, but also would fight against each other in order to take control of the same *turf*. However, in the late 1970s, for many active Kurdish organizations legality would lose its credibility and the struggle to liberate “ the colony of Kurdistan,” and overemphasize the *uniqueness of its conditions*, the very lesson they learned from the discussions of underdevelopment or that is to say from Turkish Socialism.⁴¹¹

The contemporary period of the legal Kurdish movement begins with the formation of the HEP (Labor Party of People) in 1990. This new party at first attempted to call together the disparate Kurdish organizations that had so often been working at cross-purposes. This call was initially answered, yet continued ideological and personal divisions within this umbrella structure led to the exclusion of the very groups it had once sought to unite. The DTP (Democratic Society Party), albeit most inclusive, and the heir to the legacy of the HEP, tries to monopolize its position as the one legitimate mouthpiece of the Kurdish movement today. This does not mean that the marginal groups that surround and compete with DTP are unimportant. Rather, the diversity of political thought and ideology within the Kurdish movement must be recognized. This is not to say simply that the issue is complex, although it is, but that any broad discussion of a “Kurdish movement” requires a significant amount of specification for the particular time, place, and people who are involved. Although it is in the interest of the leaders of both the leading Kurdish parties and the Turkish state to portray the Kurdish movement as a united front, this could not be further from the truth. The reality of the growth of the

⁴¹¹ Kemal Burkay’s *Kurdistan Socialist Party*, influential rather in Europe, is a very good example of this interpretation. Its programme starts with the section titled, “Kurdistan’in Sömürge Haline Gelişi” (transformation of Kurdistan into a colony) available at http://www.kurdistan.nu/psk/bername_program/psk_program.htm

Kurdish movement is one of intense rivalries, and divisions which have not ceased multiplying.

A good example in the changes that the Kurdish movement has undergone comes in the comparison of two mass protests, one in the 1960s and one in the 1990s. The historical events in the Kurdish movement, *Serhildans* or (uprisings), in the early 1990s in comparison to the subject of this study are reminiscent of the Eastern Meetings of the 1960s. During that time, thousands of people in Cizre, Batman, Diyarbakir and so forth were called to revolt against the state. Also, songs were composed with the lyrics; “*Berxwedan, Serhildan...Jiyan e*” (Resistance, Uprisings are life). By contrast, during and after 1960s, thousands of Kurds were called upon to demonstrate in a peaceful fashion. A Kurdish folk song that be sung was “... [ji] *Me ra bişin sosyalizme, Ew dermané hemi derdan*” (send out to us socialism, it is the remedy of all sorrows)⁴¹²

Beyond demonstrating the difference in popular sentiments, this shows how the movements were shaped by external events and forces as well as by different leaderships. The movements changed with the times and their leaders, but so did the state. If the 1960s marchers had been met with state opposition, by the 1990s they were met with oppression. These were mass movements, Kurdish in nature, but it is difficult to connect the two given the differences in the organizations themselves, and the environment in which they inhabited. The changes that the Kurdish movement underwent in the 1960s cannot be exaggerated, especially given the upheavals that Turkish politics, economics, and society at large have undergone. In terms of what the first chapter tries to conceptualize, both events are remarkable. Following the step,

⁴¹² The song was about the Koçgiri Rebellion and goes as “*Me ra bişin Şahe Merdan*” Mehmet Emin Bozarşlan, (Trans.), *Kurdistan: Rojnama Kurdi ya peşin (Ilk Kurd Gazetesi,)* 1898-1902, Cild I, p.32-33.

the highlighting of economic, political, cultural grievances and persuasion of individuals by the way they were represented both events epitomize the step “attention by masses” which either goes toward concessional or structural demands. As materialized both in the Doğulus and in the PKK’s maneuvers throughout history, there is not a clear demarcation of demands in terms of structural and concessional demands. This is primarily because of the essence of the movement, which depends highly on leading figures and their personal decisions.

It may be too early to speculate about how things might have been otherwise, yet a question comes to mind as to whether the DTP would have been as successful and influential in the 1960s, if it had been allowed to participate in politics with its current political standpoint? In my opinion, the DTP of today serves a constituency that did not exist in the 1960s. The Kurds fifty years ago were far more preoccupied with questions of economic and social justice than of any ethnic questions. As a result, the DTP would have been irrelevant to the Kurds of that era. Likewise, it is the experiences of state oppression, and political failure and international discourse on minority rights that have produced a far more radical Kurdish movement than in the past. The socialist movements of the past would be unintelligible to the current demands for ethnic rights and recognition. Therefore, further studies, instead of fixing on Kurdish nationalism should look at this perspective of the region’s political life and the struggle amongst Kurdish groups as well as intra-persons conflicts and the shift of the state discourse, which, in my opinion, constitutes the historical reality of Kurdish nationalism more than anything else.

APPENDIX A

Table 5 Results of the Election of Provincial General Council Members and the Senate					
	1963	1964*	1966*	1968*	1968
Votes polled by political parties and independents (%)					
Justice Party (JP)	45.5	50.3	56.9	49.9	49.1
Nation Party (NP)	3.1	-	5.3	6.0	3.5
Nationalist Action Party (NAP)	-	-	-	-	-
New Turkey Party (NTP)	6.5	3.5	2.4	-	0.7
Republican People's Party (RPP)	36.2	40.8	29.6	27.1	27.9
Republican Peasant's Nationalists Party (RPNP)	3.1	3.0	1.9	2.0	1.0
Republican Reliance Party (RRP)	-	-	-	8.6	6.6
Turkish Labor Party (TLP)	0.4	-	3.9	4.7	2.7
Turkish Union Party (TUP)	-	-	-	-	1.7
Independents	5.2	2.3	-	1.7	6.8

* These are renewal elections for the Senate.
Source: T.C. Başbakanlık Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, *İstatistik Gostergeler;1923-2005*, Publication Number:3047, Ankara, 2006, p.142

Table 6 Results of the General Elections of Representatives in Three Big Cities (1961-1969)										
Province	JP	NP	NAP	NTP	RPP	RPNP	RRP	TLP	TUP	IND.
Istanbul	61-	41.8	---	---	3.3.	38.2	12.3	---	---	4.4
	65-	53.2	4.9	---	0.9	29.7	1.5	7.9	---	1.9
	69-	47.8	2.7	2.6	0.8	33.9	---	2.3	5.8	2.8
Ankara	61-	19.8	---	---	5.1	38.7	35.6	---	---	0.8
	65-	46.5	14.2	---	1.6	30.2	2.5	4.3	---	0.6
	69-	42.7	7.6	3.5	0.8	34.3	---	3.8	2.5	4.4
Izmir	61-	55.0	---	---	1.5	39.6	3.1	---	---	0.8
	65-	62.2	2.8	---	---	29.8	1.1	---	3.9	0.2
	69-	53.2	1.1	1.1	0.6	35.1	---	3.9	2.9	1.6

Source: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *1950-1965 Milletvekili ve 1961, 1964 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üye Seçimleri Sonuçları*, Yayın No: 513 Ankara, 1966, pp.XXII-XXXVII, : T.C. Başbakanlık Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, *İstatistik Gostergeler;1923-2005*, Publication Number:3047, Ankara, 2006, p.136-140

APPENDIX B

Table 7 Result of the General Elections of Representatives in Fifteen Provinces, 1961-1969 (%)											
Province		JP %	NP %	NAP %	NTP %	RPP %	RPNP %	RRP %	TLP %	TUP %	IND. %
Ağrı	61-	11.0	---	---	22.3	32.4	34.3	---	---	---	--
	65-	20.8	0.9	---	42.8	18.6	11.8	---	4.9	---	--
	69-	36.2	3.0	1.6	0.48	26.0	---	31.1	1.6	---	---
Bingöl	61-	---	---	---	54.6	31.1	11.7	---	---	---	2.6
	65-	25.3	3.8	---	30.9	35.7	---	---	2.1	---	2.3
	69-	14.2	0.3	---	22.5	12.2	---	7.0	1.6	---	42.1
Bitlis	61-	---	---	---	46.9	30.8	22.3	---	---	---	---
	65-	49.2	1.4	---	10.4	17.4	---	---	---	---	21.5
	69-	41.9	---	---	23.3	32.2	---	1.7	0.8	---	---
D.Bakır	61-	19.2	---	---	42.8	32.8	5.2	---	---	---	---
	65-	28.8	1.7	---	23.1	23.2	3.4	---	8.0	---	11.7
	69-	35.5	7.9	0.8	26.4	7.3	---	3.0	2.7	---	16.4
Elazığ	61-	42.3	---	---	0.6	35.3	21.8	---	---	---	---
	65-	48.6	---	---	4.0	39.6	3.3	---	2.6	---	1.9
	69-	35.1	0.8	5.4	2.9	26.8	---	7.9	1.8	3.3	15.9
Erzincan	61-	4.8	---	---	44.2	48.5	2.0	---	---	---	0.5
	65-	43.8	---	---	3.9	28.8	---	---	---	---	23.6
	69-	42.2	1.1	4.5	0.7	43.4	---	3.1	1.3	13.1	3.6
Hakkari	61-	3.1	---	---	25.3	41.3	---	---	---	---	30.3
	65-	5.5	1.0	---	55.1	37.5	0.8	---	---	---	---
	69-	27.7	0.5	0.2	0.2	34.0	---	36.9	0.5	---	---
Kars	61-	21.5	---	---	30.5	48.0	---	---	---	---	---
	65-	37.3	2.9	---	9.7	34.3	---	---	6.0	---	9.8
	69-	42.9	1.6	5.8	2.4	33.3	---	4.0	8.3	---	1.7
Malatya	61-	4.2	---	---	23.1	67.2	5.5	---	---	---	---
	65-	31.0	3.5	---	2.9	51.2	2.9	---	3.8	---	4.7
	69-	14.5	0.4	2.7	1.6	41.4	---	2.3	5.2	11.8	20.1
Mardin	61-	---	---	---	34.9	43.3	21.8	---	---	---	---
	65-	22.7	---	---	12.3	22.5	1.8	---	1.7	---	39.1
	69-	27.4	0.7	0.2	12.1	12.0	---	8.0	0.2	---	39.0
Muş	61-	20.4	---	---	43.9	31.4	4.3	---	---	---	---
	65-	18.3	8.0	---	13.6	19.1	18.0	---	3.7	---	19.3
	69-	10.3	0.5	---	14.3	16.8	---	5.2	3.7	---	49.2
Siirt	61-	---	---	---	51.0	47.7	---	---	---	---	1.3
	65-	36.7	2.0	---	14.1	35.8	---	---	2.0	---	8.8
	69-	25.3	0.5	---	24.2	18.5	---	15.6	1.2	---	14.6
Tunceli	61-	---	---	---	35.4	35.1	7.1	---	---	---	22.3
	65-	26.9	---	---	29.8	33.5	---	---	5.8	---	12.0
	69-	23.3	0.5	---	14.9	18.9	---	1.1	16.8	6.9	17.6
Urfa	61-	20.6	---	---	30.4	42.9	6.1	---	---	---	---
	65-	34.9	---	---	9.1	30.1	---	---	3.2	---	22.3
	69-	43.5	0.8	0.5	9.4	22.5	---	8.2	2.0	---	13.1
Van	61-	7.9	---	---	38.1	32.6	21.4	---	---	---	---
	65-	30.2	---	---	19.7	45.2	---	---	2.6	---	2.3
	69-	27.2	---	9.4	12.1	10.4	---	23.6	1.2	---	16.1

Source: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *1950-1965 Milletvekili ve 1961, 1964 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üye Seçimleri Sonuçları*, Yayın No: 513 Ankara, 1966, pp. XXII-XXXVII; T.C. Başbakanlık Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, *İstatistik Göstergeleri; 1923-2005*,

APPENDIX C

Table 8 The Turkish Labor Party's Votes by Provinces

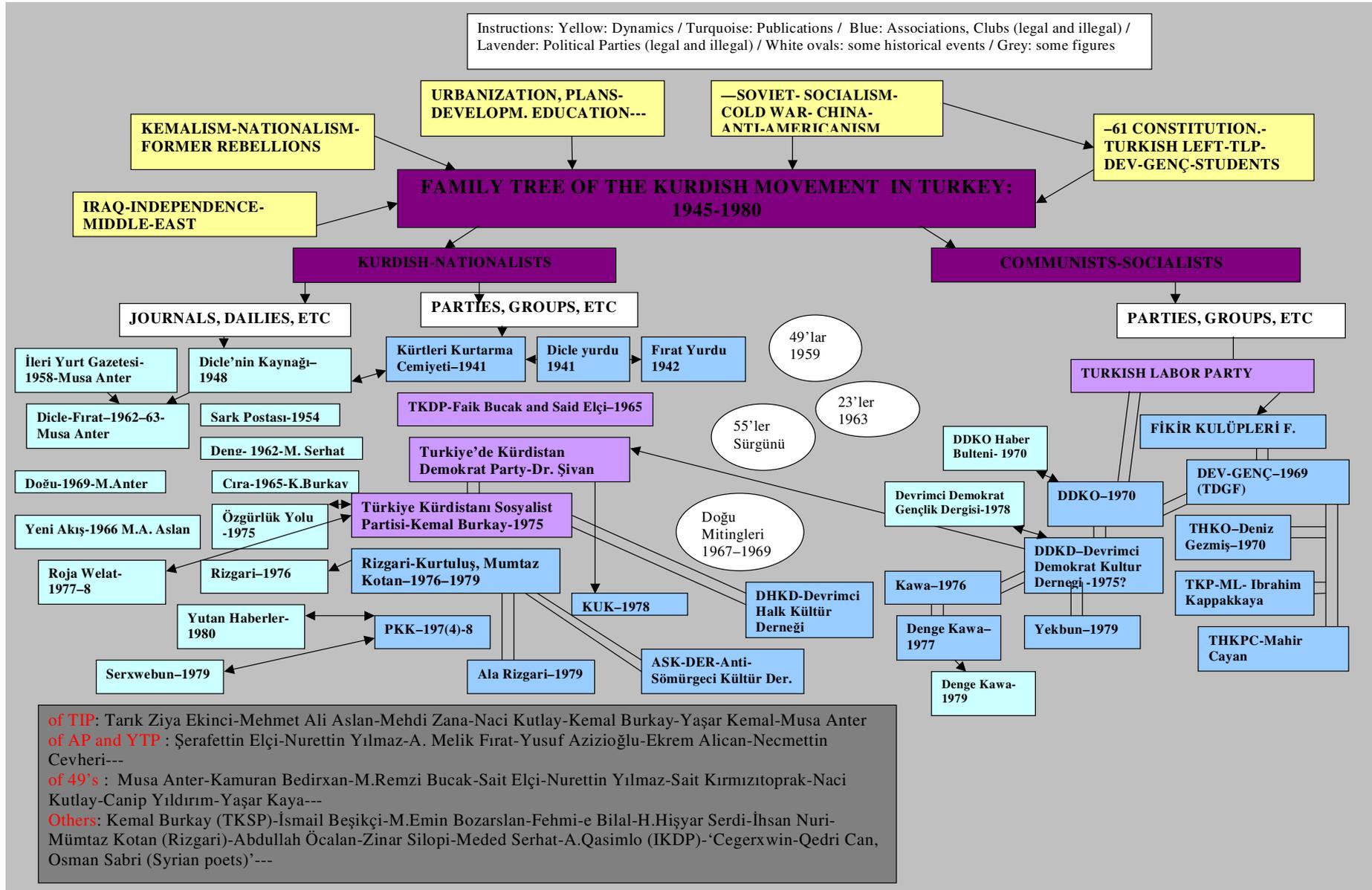
Provinces	1965 General Elections		1969 General Elections	
	Votes	%	Votes	%
ADANA	7.926	3.20	5.247	2.10
ADİYAMAN	1.943	2.77	7.331	8.58
AFYON	2.795	1.90	2.906	2.26
AĞRI	3.466	4.90	1.290	1.65
AMASYA	5.239	5.75	3.308	3.74
ANKARA	20.264	4.31	12.264	2.54
ANTALYA	3.468	2.49	2.132	1.48
ARTVİN	0	0.00	1.021	1.69
AYDIN	6.639	3.68	2.949	1.82
BALIKESİR	5.963	2.45	4.911	2.23
BİLECİK	1.600	3.06	592	1.35
BİNGÖL	830	2.12	778	1.58
BİTLİS	0	0.00	346	0.78
BOLU	2.474	1.84	2.142	1.73
BURDUR	2.233	4.31	912	1.72
BURSA	6.019	2.18	5.382	2.11
ÇANAKKALE	2.479	2.07	2.706	2.23
ÇANKIRI	0	0.00	1.341	1.87
ÇORUM	0	0.00	3.367	2.43
DENİZLİ	2.691	1.90	3.028	2.30
DİYARBAKIR	8.867	8.00	3.330	2.75
EDİRNE	2.891	3.03	4.347	5.07
ELAZIĞ	2.062	2.63	1.410	1.75
ERZİNCAN	0	0.00	958	1.39
ERZURUM	0	0.00	3.387	1.93
ESKİŞEHİR	3.766	2.75	3.672	2.88
GAZİANTEP	5.064	3.41	2.872	1.96
GİRESUN	2.393	1.83	1.984	1.67
GÜMÜŞHANE	0	0.00	720	0.92
HAKKARİ	0	0.00	154	0.55
HATAY	5.371	4.61	5.033	3.65
İSPARTA	0	0.00	780	0.98
İÇEL	4.271	2.84	2.461	1.71
İSTANBUL	49.422	7.93	34.636	5.77
İZMİR	15.840	3.92	11.085	2.86
KAHRAMANMARAŞ	2.284	1.98	2.230	1.86

KARS	9.333	5.97	13.003	8.26
KASTAMONU	0	0.00	3.177	2.44
KAYSERİ	3.700	2.19	4.142	2.70
KIRKLARELİ	2.716	3.10	3.839	5.42
KIRŞEHİR	0	0.00	1.100	2.13
KOCAELİ	3.495	3.29	1.914	1.90
KONYA	6.753	2.16	5.591	1.92
KÜTAHYA	0	0.00	1.494	1.26
MALATYA	4.586	3.71	6.952	5.24
MANİSA	6.504	2.64	5.334	2.36
MARDİN	1.965	1.66	317	0.23
MUĞLA	3.021	2.76	1.766	1.62
MUŞ	2.062	3.72	2.282	3.69
NEVŞEHİR	0	0.00	1.058	1.85
NİĞDE	2.539	2.46	2.525	2.55
ORDU	5.212	3.47	2.362	1.64
RİZE	0	0.00	1.130	1.32
SAKARYA	2.777	2.22	1.825	1.52
SAMSUN	19	0.01	3.914	1.71
SİİRT	1.190	1.96	911	1.20
SİNOP	0	0.00	3.094	4.64
SİVAS	5.699	2.74	5.428	2.98
ŞANLIURFA	3.771	3.17	2.578	2.00
TEKİRDAĞ	2.639	2.86	3.378	4.00
TOKAT	5.981	3.96	2.847	1.80
TRABZON	1.939	1.15	1.642	1.02
TUNCELİ	2.387	5.84	7.187	16.80
UŞAK	0	0.00	1.243	2.40
VAN	1.869	2.62	952	1.17
YOZGAT	7.086	5.28	3.162	2.52
ZONGULDAK	4.856	2.18	4.638	2.11

Source: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *1950-1965 Milletvekili ve 1961, 1964 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üye Seçimleri Sonuçları*, Yayın No: 513 Ankara, 1966, pp. XXII-XXXVII

http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/secim_sorgu.secim_cevreleri?p_secim_yili=1965

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Source: drawn by the author.

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