NARRATING THE PRISON: MASTER AND COUNTERNARRATIVES OF THE 1980 MILITARY COUP

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by
GÖKHAN ŞENSÖNMEZ

Department of
Political Science and Public Administration
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara

September 2022

GÖKHAN ŞENSÖNMEZ
NARRATING THE PRISON: MASTER AND COUNTERNARRATIVES OF THE 1980 MILITARY COUP
Bilkent University 2022

NARRATING THE PRISON: MASTER AND COUNTERNARRATIVES OF THE 1980 MILITARY COUP

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

GÖKHAN ŞENSÖNMEZ

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

September 2022

NARRATING THE PRISON: MASTER AND COUNTERNARRATIVES OF THE 1980 MILITARY COUP
By Gökhan Şensönmez

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

İlker Aytürk
Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

Meral Uğur Çınar
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

Bülent Batuman
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

Aylin Özman
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

Berrin Koyuncu Lorasdağı
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

---
Refet Soykan Gürkaynak
Director

ABSTRACT

NARRATING THE PRISON: MASTER AND COUNTERNARRATIVES OF THE 1980 MILITARY COUP

Şensönmez, Gökhan

Ph. D., Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. İlker Aytürk

September 2022

Based on 344 written autobiographical accounts of erstwhile prisoners, this dissertation examines carceral counternarratives in the memory of the 1980 military coup in Turkey. At the outset, I argue that although the junta's initial narrative reversed with the emergence of an anti-coup wave in the following decades, the dominant conception of prisons as a place of decimating political actors endured. The three counternarratives examined in this study, narrate prison not as a place of decimation, but as a place of strengthening and discovery. According to the militant counternarrative that was employed by the members of radical leftist organizations, the post-coup prisons were valuable in the sense that they tested the discipline of organizations, and eliminated the false revolutionaries. For the gendered counternarrative employed by the women of the Turkish left, women discovered their identities in prisons as the coup brought them together and disrupted the masculine domination of the leftist organizations. Finally, for the religious rebirth counternarrative which was employed by the Ülkücü militants, prisons were

evaluated as places to discover Islam and find meaning in their shocking incarceration.

Keywords: 1980 Military Coup, Memory, Narrative, Prison

ÖZET

HAPİSHANEYİ ANLATMAK: 1980 ASKERİ DARBESİNİN HAKİM VE KARŞI ANLATILARI

Şensönmez, Gökhan

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. İlker Aytürk

Eylül 2022

Bu tez 344 yazılı cezaevi anlatısına dayanarak Türkiye'nin 1980 askeri darbe hafızasındaki karşı anlatıları inceliyor. Öncelikle, askeri cuntanın başlangıçtaki anlatısı takip eden yıllarda darbe karşıtı bir hareket tarafından tersine çevrilse de, hapishaneler politik aktörlerin yok edildiği mekanlar olduğu algısı yeni anlatılarda da yerini korudu. Bu çalışmada incelediğim üç karşı anlatı ise cezaevlerini güçlenme ve keşif mekanları olarak anlatıyor. Radikal sol örgüt üyelerinin kullandığı militan karşı anlatıya göre, darbe sonrası cezaevleri örgüt disiplininin sınav mekanları olduğu ve sahte devrimcileri elediği için kıymetlidir. Türk solunun kadın üyeleri tarafından kullanılan cinsiyetlenmiş karşı anlatıya göre, kadınlar kimliklerini darbeden sonra onları biraraya getiren ve sol örgütlerin maskülen hakimiyetinin kırıldığı cezaevlerinde keşfetmiştir. Son olarak, Ülkücülerin kullandığı dini yeniden doğuş anlatısına göre, cezaevleri İslam'ı keşfetmek ve şok edici hapsedilişlerine bir anlam bulma mekanı olarak değerlendirilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 12 Eylül 1980 Darbesi, Anlatı, Cezaevi, Hafıza

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the end product of a six-year-long chapter in my life. In this chapter, so many people helped me persevere through the hardships of being a Ph.D. student. I would like to thank my mother, Serpil Şensönmez, and my father, Cemal Tankut Şensönmez. Without their diligence and sacrifice, I could not pursue a career in academia at all. Thanks to İlker Aytürk and Meral Uğur Çınar, I never felt lost in my endeavor. Whenever I encountered an obstacle they were always there to offer their guidance. They always treated me as one of their peers and were excellent role models. Also, I am thankful for the insightful comments of Bülent Batuman, who was a part of this dissertation from the beginning, and two members of the dissertation jury, Aylin Özman, and Berrin Lorasdağı Koyuncu. Furthermore, I am forever grateful to Nedim Karakayalı, whose passion for teaching continues to inspire me. My brilliant friend Merve Üstaş suffered reading the earlier draft of this dissertation. Her critical assessment greatly improved my work here, kudos to her. The master of English, Bilal İnci, provided assistance whenever I needed to go beyond the limits of my ability in writing in a foreign language, cheers! To me, the company of smart friends is the best part of graduate school. So, I would like to thank my brothers and sisters in arms, Anıl Kahvecioğlu, Ali Açıkgöz, Uygar Altınok, Mehmet Ali Okan Doğan, Seda Baykal, Burcu Türkoğlu, Mine Çetin, Barış Alpertan, and Eda Bektaş. Finally, I would like to thank the piece of my heart, Selin Özgür, whose support not only in this dissertation but in every aspect of my life is invaluable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii
ÖZET v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS vii
Chapter I: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Literature review 3
1.2. Politics, memory, and narrative 8
1.2.1 The politics of memory 9
1.2.2 Master and counternarratives 15
1.3 Studying autobiographical narratives 20
1.4 The road map 27
Chapter II: THE MASTER NARRATIVE OF THE 1980 COUP 30
2.1 Turkey on the brink of collapse 33
2.1.1 Anarchy and terror 34
2.1.2 Reactionism 39
2.1.3 Separatism 42
2.1.4 Disreputable politicians 43
2.2 The intervention as the saving moment 46
2.3 Restructuring the republic 50
2.3.1 The new constitution and other institutional adjustments 52
2.3.2 Economy 53
2.4 Curing the ideological malady 55
2.4.1 Mass detention and interrogation 56
2.4.2 Establishing the prison regime 68
2.4.3 Decimating political activists 72
2.5 The demise of the master narrative? 87
Chapter III: THE MILITANT COUNTERNARRATIVE 95
3.1 The leftist movement in the 1970s 98
3.1.1 “Collective immaturity” 100
3.1.2 Fetishization of anti-fascist violence 103
3.1.3 Factions and internal conflicts 105
3.1.4 The Kurdish split 108
3.2 Narratives of defeat 111
3.3 Narratives of militant dualism 115
3.3.1 Compromise leading to defeat 117

3.3.2 Pride and pleasure of resisting 121
3.4 Resistance as an aspect of the militant discipline 125
3.4.1 Hunger strike 126
3.4.2 Death fast 127
3.4.3 Suicide 130
3.4.4 Escape 134
3.5 The relentless militant identity 139
Chapter IV: THE GENDERED COUNTERNARRATIVE 142
4.1 Women's critique of left and patriarchy 144
4.1.1 Leftist organizations and disciplining gender 145
4.1.2 The brief period of women's autonomy 149
4.1.3 Masculine domination as an obstacle before resistance 152
4.1.4 Factionalism as an obstacle before solidarity 155
4.2 The joyful prison 158
4.2.1 Education, Entertainment, and Humor 158
4.2.3 Cunning and Wit 162
4.2.4 Care 163
4.3 Triumphant and indomitable women 167
4.3.1 The enfeebled prison administration 169
4.3.2 Prison as a place of strengthening 171
4.4 The revolutionary women's identity 173
Chapter V: THE RELIGIOUS REBIRTH COUNTERNARRATIVE 177
5.1 The Ülkücü movement in the 1970s 179
5.1.1 The leader, the party, and the Ülkücü youth 180
5.1.2 Anti-communist struggle 182
5.1.3 The growing interest in Islam 184
5.2 Narrating the shock of incarceration 189
5.2.1 Mistreatment in the hands of a beloved state 191
5.2.2 Cohabitation with the enemy 194
5.2.3 The loss of organizational integrity 197
5.3 Narrating prison as *Medrese-i Yusufiye* 199
5.3.1 Rewards of the religious life 202
5.3.2 Incarceration as grace of God 206
5.4 Reimagining the past through an Islamic lens 207
5.4.1 Finding a divine meaning in past struggles 208
5.4.2 The goal of the Ülkücü cause 213

5.5 The ascetic prisoner identity 215
Chapter VI: CONCLUSION 220
REFERENCES 230
APPENDIX 247

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to study counternarratives in the carceral memory of the 1980 military coup[1] in Turkey that fundamentally challenges the perception of the post-coup prisons as places of decimating political activists. This perception is part of the junta's master narrative of the 1980 coup which follows this storyline: before the intervention, Turkey was on the brink of collapse. It was ridden with political conflicts and ideological frauds which forced the military to intervene. After saving the country, the generals installed necessary corrective practices to cure the ideological malady and mend the society together. With the subsequent institutional arrangements, Turkey has moved into a new era. Despite several parts of this storyline having been challenged and altered, carceral discipline and torture constitute an important aspect of the coup's legacy. The dominant perception of the post-coup prisons continues to be one of atrocity, and subjugation that decimated and victimized political activists. This perception eclipses counternarratives that aim to

[1] Instead of "12 September" (*12 Eylül*), which has a far more popular use in Turkey, I will be consistently using "the 1980 military coup," "the 1980 coup" or simply "the coup" in referring to the military intervention to be in tune with the academic literature in English.

narrate prisons not as places of decimation, but as places of strengthening and discovery.

I will specifically focus on the employment of themes and plotlines, the historical trajectory of political movements, as well as counternarratives' attachment to identity claims in the post-coup era. The counternarratives in question are considered Weberian ideal types, meaning they do not exist in reality with their pure and perfect form. Instead, there are similar themes and plotlines across individual autobiographical accounts. When studied together, these similarities also indicate a collective level of analysis. I argue that particular groups use counternarratives and the associated themes and plotlines to give meaning to their incarceration and repair the integrity of their collective identity shaken by the coup. In this instrumentality, autobiographical accounts target, expose and reinterpret the master narrative in a way to supply meaning and coherence to the counternarrative.

For this study, I collected a dataset with 344 written autobiographical accounts of erstwhile prisoners.[2] The dataset is limited to the first-person narrations of prisons of a specific historical period starting with the declaration of martial law that resulted in the transfer of political prisoners from civil prisons to military prisons in 1978 and ends with the ratification of a conditional release order that resulted in the release of the majority of remaining political activists in 1991. These autobiographical accounts were included in the dataset provided that they were published in book format as late as 2020 and that the authors shared their full names rather than pseudonyms.

In line with this summary, this chapter aims to position the present study within the

[2] See Appendix for a detailed list of narratives.

academic literature and set the necessary theoretical and methodological frameworks before elaborating on the analysis of narratives. The first section is devoted to a literature review where I will emphasize the value of this multi-group narrative analysis. In the following section, I will be discussing the relationship between memory and narrative, and between master and counternarratives. The third section discusses the concept of autobiography and the methodology of narrative analysis. Finally, I conclude this chapter by providing a roadmap for the subsequent chapters.

1.1 Literature review

One of the most important qualities of the coup's memory is its multi-group composition that is suitable for comparative work in manifold aspects. Although, there is a considerable number of works that study the memory of the coup, none of those studies utilized this multi-group composition. The existing works ignore the memory of the Ülkücü and the Islamist movements and mostly focus on the Turkish and the Kurdish left. I claim that there are mainly two interrelated causes of the negligence of right-wing memory work of the memory of the coup.

The first one is rooted in the extension of the political polarization between the left and right within the memory of the coup to the academic works. As Lorenzo D'Orsi observed, this memory field is an extremely polarized one.[3] The left-wingers' tendency to overlook the right-wing memory recurs in the works of left-leaning academics. For example, Elifcan Karacan's dissertation-turned-book focuses on the experience of the left by comparing the narratives of those in Turkey and those who

[3] Lorenzo D'Orsi, "Touching History and Making Community. The Memory of the 1980 Turkish Military Coup in the 12 September Museum of Shame," *History and Anthropology* 30, no. 5 (October 20, 2019): 644–67.

fled to Europe.[4] Göze Orhon's once again dissertation-turned-book examines the memory of the 1980 coup, by interviewing both the left and the right-wing witnesses, yet the author disregards the right-wing memory works by claiming that they were mostly silent except for a few incompetent retrospections.[5] The commonality between these works is that they are all inspired by the experiences of the authors' parents who were members of the leftist movement in the 1970s. Karacan and Orhon were open about their leftist upbringing which also ignited their curiosity about the topic. Also, Deniz Ayma explained that she studied the leftist prisoners because her father was one of the prisoners.[6] For me, the ties of researchers with the topic of their study do not render their research of lesser value if a certain degree of objectivity is preserved. The aforementioned works provide important insight and analysis, but they also sustain the political and mnemonical cleavages in academia.

The second potential possible explanation of why scholars ignored the multigroup composition of the memory of the coup is rooted in the view of the left on top of the victimhood hierarchy. For example, Berna Pekesen justifies her focus on the left by claiming that the leftists were "the main victims of the military intervention."[7] Similarly, Hülya Göğerçin Toker asserts that the right-wingers did not leave much behind, and the Islamists were disregarded because "they were not accepted as victims of the coup."[8] It is a continuation of "the left versus the state and its

---

[4] Elifcan Karacan, Remembering the 1980 Turkish Military Coup d'Etat: Memory, Violence and Trauma (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016).
[5] Göze Orhon, *The Weight of the Past: Memory and Turkey's 12 September Coup* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 57.
[6] Deniz Ayma, "78 Kuşağının Hapishane Deneyimleri ve Yaşam Stratejileri (1980-1984)" (Master's thesis, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2019).
[7] Berna Pekesen, "The Left in Turkey: Emergence, Persecutions and Left-Wing Memory Work," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anti-Communist Persecutions*, ed. Christian Gerlach and Clemens Six (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 477–98, 478.
[8] Hülya Göğercin Toker, "İletişimsel Bellekten Toplumsal Belleğe Yazılı Tanıklıklar: 12 Eylül Ile Yüzleşmek" (PhD diss., Ankara Üniversitesi, 2017), 15.

collaborators" dichotomy which is also persistent in the polarized memory field of the coup. In a rare instance where a polarization in memory is realized, Lorenzo D'Orsi rendered it to a "Kemalists and other minorities" formula that also misses to point out the right-wingers and continues to emphasize the leftist memory as "challengers of official state narratives." Although it is plausible to argue that the left was the most popular movement of the 1970s, and therefore, became the main target of the coup, it is difficult to objectively create a hierarchy of victimhood.

Furthermore, the works that focus on the memory of the Turkish Left, and the Kurdish movement treated these movements as producers of monolithic collective memories. This totalizing approach completely misses, on one level, different ways of narrating group-specific nuisances, and on another level, internal conflicts and schisms. For example, Pekesen's "left" includes members of the Kurdish and the Turkish Left. These movements have numerous factions, and their consideration as monolithic entities neglects crucial differences and feuds between them. As a result, Pekesen discusses death fasts and self-burnings as widespread forms of protest while missing out that the latter was exclusively performed by the members of the PKK.[9]

Moreover, a number of studies aimed at analyzing the post-coup prisons by relying on memory works. This reliance is inevitable considering that there is no other available source of knowledge. If there are any official records on the carceral practices in the state's archive, they are kept hidden from the public to this day. For example, Ali Yılmaz's[10] and Arda İbikoğlu's[11] studies examine the mechanisms at

[9] Pekesen, "The Left in Turkey," 489.
[10] Ali Yılmaz, *Kara Arşiv: 12 Eylül Cezaevleri* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2013).
[11] Arda Ibikoglu, "Disciplinary Evolution of Turkish Prisons, 1980s-1990s," *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society* 51 (2015): 67–94.

work in the post-coup prisons by referring to published accounts. A handful of studies specifically focus on Diyarbakır Prison No.5. The works of Serra Hakyemez,[12] Welat Zeydanlıoğlu,[13] and Derya Fırat[14] rely on the autobiographical accounts of the witnesses and emphasize the repression in Diyarbakır without attending to various historical-political motivations behind these accounts. These neglected motivations are potentially decisive on the shared content, considering the prison's importance for the narrative of the PKK in particular.

From another angle, these studies focus on the repressive aspect of carceral power and for the most part, ignore the creative aspect. Despite the existence of a repressive and torturous prison regime, witnesses of the post-coup prisons can also account for their creative ways of survival and resistance. For example, Deniz Ayma's master's thesis brilliantly analyzes strategies of repression as well as strategies of resistance and survival based on interviews with leftist activists.[15] The only other study that focuses on Turkish prisons is Karine Westrheim's work on the education strategies of the PKK in the Diyarbakır Prison No.5.[16]

Works as such resonate with the overall theme of my study which values narratives that view prison as a place of transformation. This transformation occurs in two concurrent ways: the prisoner transforms the prison into something else, and he/she

---

[12] Serra Hakyemez, "Margins of the Archive: Torture, Heroism, and the Ordinary in Prison No. 5, Turkey," *Anthropological Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (2017): 107–38.
[13] Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, "Torture and Turkification in the Diyarbakır Military Prison," in Rights, Citizenship & Torture: Perspectives on Evil, Law and the State, ed. Welat Zeydanlıoğlu and John T. Parry (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2009), 73–92.
[14] Derya Fırat, "Sites of Memory of the 1980 Military Coup in Turkey," in *Excavating Memory: Sites of Remembering and Forgetting*, ed. Maria Theresia Starzmann, John R. Roby, and Paul A. Shackel, Cultural Heritage Studies (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016), 42–63.
[15] Ayma, "78 Kuşağının Hapishane Deneyimleri."
[16] Karine Westrheim, "Prison as Site for Political Education: Educational Experiences from Prison Narrated by Members and Sympathisers of the PKK," *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 6, no. 1 (2008).

transforms himself/herself during this process. This creative aspect was emphasized by scholars studying incarceration in different parts of the world. For Vietnamese political prisoners, Peter Zinoman observed that the main theme of their memoirs is "the transformation of colonial jails into revolutionary schools."[17] The supplementary themes include magnified narrations of endurance, bravery, and cunning.[18] Observing Palestinian prisoners, Esmail Nashif claimed that writing about prison while being incarcerated was a matter of establishing their group identity as well as a means for liberating themselves from the regimented life of an Israeli prison.[19] Similar to this dissertation, both Zinoman and Nashif focus on how prisoners consider prisons as places of transformative practices.

In sum, despite the availability of a multiple-group carceral memory of the 1980 coup, the scholars hitherto neglected the opportunities of comparatively studying prison narratives. A study as such can reveal political motivations, identity construction, and various ways of coming to terms with the past which may cut across narratives of different political groups. To fill this gap and utilize the comparative advantages of the coexistence of multiple memory groups, this study focuses on carceral memory as a common ground. Each group, together with their sub-groups instrumentalized multiple narratives to serve distinct political interests. Juxtaposing the ways in which these prison narratives unfold offers the potential to see beyond group-specific dynamics and theorize why political groups embody certain versions of the past. In other words, this comparative standpoint can help us

[17] Peter Zinoman, "Reading Revolutionary Prison Memoirs," in *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*, ed. Hue-Tam Ho Tai, Asia--Local Studies/Global Themes 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 21–45, 31.
[18] Ibid., 32.
[19] Esmail Nashif, Palestinian Political Prisoners: Identity and Community (New York: Routledge, 2008), 79.

better understand a certain power struggle over representations of the past. In this dissertation, I will be focusing on narratives that reject the dominant view of post-coup prisons as places of the decimation of political actors and instead narrate incarceration as a blessing for their political identities.

1.2. Politics, memory, and narrative

When positive sciences mention memory, they usually refer to a neurological organization located in the brain.[20] On the other hand, social memory studies, as Olick and Robbins observed, is "a nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise."[21] While constituting a welcoming field for inventive approaches, these characteristics also resulted in a conceptual jumble where several terms exist in a nexus.

In this sense, this dissertation is based on a trivet of concepts: politics, memory, and narrative. In terms of politics, I aim to distinguish attempts to deny the mainstream story of post-coup incarceration and to construct alternative identities. In terms of memory, not only my main source material is consisted of people's ways of remembering the past, but also their remembrances challenge the conventional way of remembering. In terms of narrative, these challenges in my source material are in the form of life narratives in which people's claim to truth is based on their witnesses and first-hand experiences. Altogether, the main subject of this dissertation can be conceptualized as a study of the politics of memory narratives. Before delving into discussing the innately political qualities of master and counternarratives, I will

[20] See for example Larry R. Squire, "Mechanisms of Memory," *Science* 232, no. 4758 (June 27, 1986): 1612–19.
[21] Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (August 1998): 105–40, 106.

discuss a rather pertinent concept: the politics of memory.

1.2.1 The politics of memory

Indeed, what is the politics of memory? How can memory be political? A straightforward response will cover the dishonest attempts to use the past as a source of information to deceive others and gain some form of immediate political leverage. For example, Jonathan Boyarin indicated that when we talk about the politics of memory, we are referring to a "rhetoric about the past mobilized for political purposes."[22] This definition already hints at linguistic and historical characteristics of the politics of memory. The term refers to a practice of bringing the past into the present with a certain manner of rhetorical selection and with a certain political motivation and potential leverage. At this point, a crucial question has to be addressed: is there a way of memorizing other than selective representations and distortions?

Boyarin's definition is in tandem with inevitable defects of memory itself: selection and distortion. Selection implies that memory is inherently selective: remembering one means forgetting the other.[23] Distortion implies that memory is inexorably distortive: a pure representation of the past in the present is impossible and every recollection is also an alteration. However, these qualities do not grant us the liberty of remembering the past as we like. Even though it is possible to deliberately distort, or simply, lie about our recollections of past events following our political agenda,

---

[22] Jonathan Boyarin, "Space, Time and the Politics of Memory," in *Remapping Memory*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 1–37, 2.

[23] Michael Schudson, "Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory," in *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter, Joseph T. Coyle, and Harvard Center for the Study of Mind, Brain, and Behavior (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 346–64, 360; Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 46.

there are more subtle factors that affect, restrain and structure memory. Some of these factors may be objects of the discipline of biology, or neurology that can be further studied under these disciplines. Instead, I will consider historical and social factors shaping how we remember the past in this study.

It was Maurice Halbwachs, who claimed that "…at the moment of reproducing the past, our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu."[24] For him, memories should be in accordance with commonsensical attributes and conceptual frameworks. Things that go without saying, or what Pierre Bourdieu would simply call *Doxa,* still determine a large portion of daily life.[25] Since memory exists in a social context, it is bound by the "rhetorical structure to social organization that gives prominence to some facets of the past and not others."[26] Halbwachs emphasized the present in shaping memory, but indeed his argument is different than perceiving memory as solely shaped by present political gains. Michael Schudson briefly summarizes these two prevalent approaches to presentism:

> Memory selects and distorts in the service of present interests. The present interest may be narrowly defined – memory may be called up and shaped in an instrumental fashion to support some current strategic end. Or the present interest may be more a semiotic one than a strategic one. That is, the rememberer may be seeking not to conquer the world through the manipulation of the past but to understand the world – especially the present world – through the use of the past.[27]

People turn to the past not only to distort it and gain political leverage but also to seek answers, belonging, and meaning. This search is a fundamental dynamic in the

---

[24] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 49.
[25] Pierre Bourdieu and Terry Eagleton, "Doxa and Common Life: An Interview," in *Mapping Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2012), 265–78.
[26] Michael Schudson, "Preservation of the Past in Mental Life," *Quarterly Newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition* 9 (1987): 5–11, 7.
[27] Schudson, "Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory," 351.

relationship between identity and autobiographical narrative.

The connection between popular interest in memory and identity crises is a major example of this relationship. In addition to the curative functions of remembering in psychoanalysis,[28] the connection between memory and belonging is explained through the ability to remember in curing insecurities and identity crises of social bodies. As Pierre Nora asserted: "We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left."[29] His awareness of the historical rupture at the end of the century is closely tied to the emergence of a nostalgic society exacerbating problems of social existence in "the age of the individual."[30] It is a society that seeks a cure for its inadequacy for belonging in the past. In this context, Svetlana Boym talks about a "global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world."[31] This diagnosis of the recent memory boom not only highlights the postmodern question of belonging and identity, but it maintains an enlarged perspective to look at politics of memory with social motivations beyond deliberate distortions.

Furthermore, society shares memory. Here, I am referring to both meanings of the word: to have in common and to tell. On the one hand, common recollections of the past form a basic bond among members of a social group, as small as a family[32] and

---

[28] For example, Sigmund Freud claimed to cure his patient Dora once she was able to fill the gaps in her life-story. See Richard Kearney, "Remembering the Past: The Question of Narrative Memory," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 24, no. 2–3 (April 1998): 49–60.
[29] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (April 1989): 7–24, 7.
[30] Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, "Introduction," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–62, 8.
[31] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001), xiv.
[32] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

as big as a nation.[33] On the other, memories are told to others in immediate everyday social communications as well as in "dedicated memory forms," such as monuments, museums, statues, and books.[34] In other words, memorization is social performance as much as it is part of social identity. This performance is an important component of affirming identities, but it also allows individuals and social groups to challenge each other's recollections. For Wilson and Ross, personal pasts may be a useful source of uncontested information to view ourselves however we like, but sharing this information in the public sphere necessarily invites contestation.[35] In this sense, society functions as a cross-check mechanism that limits people's ability to select the past as they please with others who are attempting to achieve the same.[36]

In studying social memory, one inevitably encounters another concept with a wide range of scholarly debate behind it: narrative. What is the value of narrative and how does the concept relates to memory? In its very essence, a narrative should include "characters and a plot that evolves over time."[37] However, as Brockmeier and Harre suspected, inquiring about the descriptive content of a narrative is very different than inquiring about the instrumental quality of a narrative. In other words, studying what a narrative describes is not the same as studying what purpose a narrative serves.[38] Memory and narrative are fundamentally different concepts but memory utilizes

---

[33] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Revised Edition (New York: Verso, 2006).
[34] Schudson, "Dynamics of Distortion," 347.
[35] Anne Wilson and Michael Ross, "The Identity Function of Autobiographical Memory: Time Is on Our Side," *Memory* 11, no. 2 (January 2003): 137–49, 147.
[36] Michael Schudson, "The Past Against the Present versus the Present Against the Past," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 287–90, 290.
[37] Jens Brockmeier and Rom Harre, "Narrative: Problems and Promises of an Alternative Paradigm," *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 30, no. 4 (1997): 263–83, 265-6.
[38] Ibid., 276.

narrative and narrative shapes memory simultaneously at two points.[39]

First point is that sharing a version of the past occurs through the narrativization of the past. When we talk about memory, most of the time, what we actually talk about is memory narratives shared in society. As in the words of David Lowenthal:

> Personal pasts are affirmed, even confirmed, by being passed on to others. Sharing memories sharpens them and promotes their recall; events privy to us alone more shakily evoked. In knitting our discontinuous recollections into narrative, we revise their personal components to fit the communally remembered past, and finally cease to distinguish the two.[40]

For Andrea Smorti, who discussed the relationship between autobiographical memory and autobiographical narrative, "narrating autobiographical memories implies a change of level: from inside to the outside…"[41] When our memories became cognizable to us and passed on to others, it is already in a narrativized form.

Secondly, memory studies intersects with narrative studies on the concept of time. As Jerome Bruner argued, "we seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of a narrative."[42] Our memories are stored in episodic forms and free-floating images which lack the necessary connection with each other to provide meaning to us. As Wertsch argued, narratives bring together "temporally distributed events into interpretable wholes."[43] Narrativization is a process that molds selective

---

[39] For an analysis of academic roots of "the Narrative Turn," see Barbara A. Misztal, "Narrative's Reliance on Memory: The Case for an Interdisciplinary Exchange Between Memory and Narrative Studies," *Life Writing* 7, no. 1 (April 2010): 85–97.
[40] David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country - Revisited*, Revised and updated edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 312.
[41] Andrea Smorti, "Autobiographical Memory and Autobiographical Narrative: What Is the Relationship?," *Narrative Inquiry* 21, no. 2 (December 31, 2011): 303–10, 304.
[42] Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research* 54, no. 1 (1987): 11–32, 12.
[43] James V. Wertsch, "Narratives as Cultural Tools in Sociocultural Analysis: Official History in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia," *Ethos* 28, no. 4 (2000): 511–33, 515.

interpretations of a fragmented past together to constitute a story with a beginning and an end. While connecting this past, Poletta et. al. claimed that a narrative does not rely on "formal logic or probability", but relies on what is called a "plot." A plot structures the story by arranging the sequence of narrated events which makes a normative point.[44] This also brings forth what Margaret Somers emphasized on the relational and network aspects of narrativity. For Somers, "narrativity demands that we discern the meaning of any single even only in temporal and spatial relationship with other events."[45] Historicity and relationality to other events are what provide a narrative meaning and reliability.[46] This point is important considering the necessary vagueness in our attempts to continuously build and revise our identities upon our narrativized memories. In revising identities, we become "historians of [our] own lives," telling and retelling stories of our past.[47]

Overall, politics of memory envisages the coexistence of diverse narratives and a manner of selection that is motivated by two concurrent, yet also potentially discordant tendencies. First, a narrative is instrumentalized as a response to the interests of a political group at a time, such as adapting to radical political changes, ideological vacuums, and identity crises. Second, a narrative is conventionalized through time as it is embedded in-group identity through its reproduction in social interactions, such as sharing in various media and communication and

[44] Francesca Polletta et al., "The Sociology of Storytelling," *Annual Review of Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2011): 109–30.
[45] Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994): 605–49, 616.
[46] Ibid., 617
[47] Elliot G. Mishler, "Historians of the Self: Restorying Lives, Revising Identities," *Research in Human Development* 1, no. 1–2 (March 2004): 101–21, 101.

memorialization in routinized rituals.[48] To put it differently, while the past fuses with people's identities, embedded in tradition and culture, thus conserves; the present implies manifold pressures, offers opportunities, and thus motivates change. There is an intrinsic tension in narrativization that affects the selection of what is to be remembered and what is to be forgotten, how to remember, who is to remember, and who is to commemorate. In the words of Smith and Watson:

> What is remembered and what is forgotten, and *why*, change over time. Thus remembering also has a politics. There are struggles over who is authorized to remember and what they are authorized to remember, struggles over what is forgotten, both personally and collectively.[49]

In short, the politics of memory also refers to a historical struggle among different narratives of the past. In this struggle, one assumes the place of a dominant, master narrative while others aim to challenge and counter it.

1.2.2 Master and counternarratives

A master narrative offers easily adaptable, ready-made articulations for individuals to arrange their life stories. Its value lies in its role of being a frame that can be plotted without much consideration and is also expected to be easily received by its audience.[50] As Talbot et. al. argued

[48] It is not difficult to notice that these concepts are extensions of Weberian terminology on types of rationality (instrumental, value, traditional rationality etc.) and refers to a fundamental question of why people act in a certain way.
[49] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 18.
[50] Michael Bamberg, "Considering Counter Narratives," in *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense*, ed. Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 351–71, 360.

> Master narratives and dominant discourses constrain and enable the personal construction of meaning in particular, predictable ways, without, however, restricting the individual's choice of what to narrate or how to word the account.[51]

In this sense, a master narrative is "a blueprint for all stories" that assists us to give meaning to what is happening to us and others. The source of a master narrative's power is its internalization by a large number of people in a society.[52]

Master narratives are popular tools for making sense of life and they are usually invisible to people subscribing to them. However, master narratives cause dissonance in those who could not fit their stories into its general blueprint. In this sense, the construction of a counternarrative starts with the externalization of a master narrative to be challenged and subverted. For Delgado, this perception of being an out-group, a misfit of master narrative, carries a perception of the dominant group whose stories' "superior position is seen as natural."[53] Through externalization of the master narrative, this naturality is exposed as constructed, and therefore could be reconstructed differently. So, "a counternarrative is morally defined and developed for the purpose of resisting or countering one or more master narrative."[54]

Both master and counternarratives operate in the sphere of group identities through their cognitive function.[55] While this function operates rather invisibly for the dominant group, the out-group brings forth a political demand for recognition and

---

[51] Jean Talbot et al., "Affirmation and Resistance of Dominant Discourses: The Rhetorical Construction of Pregnancy," *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 6, no. 3 (1996): 225–51, 226.
[52] Molly Andrews, "Counter-Narratives and the Power to Oppose," in *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense*, ed. Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 1–7, 1.
[53] Michelle Fine and Anita Harris, *Under the Covers: Theorising the Politics of Counter Stories* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2001), 13.
[54] Marianne Wolff Lundholt, Cindie Aaen Maagaard, and Anke Piekut, "Counternarratives," in *The International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication*, by Robert L Heath and Winni Johansen, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2018), 1–11, 2.
[55] Ibid., 3.

challenges the so-called invisible aspects of the master narrative. Accordingly, the articulation of shared reality is a source of social cohesion naturally for the dominant group. For the out-group, the same reality still functions for bonding, yet this time through positioning themselves opposingly.[56] Therefore, the confrontation of master narratives and counternarratives carries an innately political quality.

However, this confrontation, taken together with the semantic quality of the master narrative, does neither indicate a simple dichotomy nor a clear-cut antagonism between a dominant subject and its mirror image. The semantic feature of master narrative, which provides frames with conveniently communicable meaning, is at the disposal of the subject who wants to fit his/her memories into a meaningful story. As Bamberg argued, "speakers never totally step outside the dominating framework of the master narrative, but always remain somewhat complicit and work with components and parts of the existent frame 'from within.'"[57]

Furthermore, the opposing act does not have to start from scratch. Countering a narrative can well be accomplished by simply employing other ready-made frames.[58] As I argued above, for the subject of the act of countering a master narrative, the story and its frame should consist of a coherent whole. But from a different analytical point of view, the counternarrative of a group does not have to be monolithic. Countering a narrative is indeed the meticulous labor of "juggling several story lines simultaneously."[59] The point is that the employment of

[56] Richard Delgado, "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 71–80.
[57] Bamberg, "Considering Counter Narratives," 361.
[58] Ibid., 360.
[59] Ibid., 363.

counternarratives benefits from the same degree of abstraction of master narratives in congesting diverse life stories together.

There could be multiple counternarratives of a masternarrative, and their plotlines and strategies of narration may be similar, and they may serve different purposes and solve different identity problems. Here, it is important to consider the relationship between counternarratives. As Michael Rothberg conceptualized as "the multidirectional memory," stories of different memory groups may rise from the same source of discontent and their claims carry the possibility of mutual enhancement through continuous "through ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing."[60] Therefore, counternarratives may resemble each other and benefit from each other.

The terms master narrative and counternarrative imply the existence of a hierarchical and antagonistic relationship. A similar version of this relationship is apparent in the problems caused by expanding the field of narratives to the sphere of history and science. This time taking the names metanarrative vs. narrative, this confrontation arises from the unsettled position of history and historiography vis-à-vis postmodern currents. For Enzo Traverso, following what happened in Auschwitz "the witness" emerged at the center of representations of the past. In comparison with the typical historian, who is mostly bound by archival sources, the witness refers to an essentially privileged position in terms of memorizing the past in a detailed, immersive, and intimate way.[61] It is by no means a coincidence that memory studies

[60] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 4-5.
[61] Enzo Traverso, *Geçmişi Kullanma Klavuzu: Tarih, Bellek, Politika*, trans. Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020).

were re-popularized in the late 20th century,[62] a time characterized by distrust towards self-legitimate disciplines and their metanarratives that determine what is to be known and who can know.[63] Memory studies attracted scholars who internalized the postmodern critique that realizes the impurities of science's hegemony over objective knowledge. It is born out of the consciousness that such hegemonic knowledge is neither achievable nor desired. Consequently, the alleged dispersion of hegemonic metanarratives and subsequent memory boom resulted in the valorization of alternative accounts of academic history.[64] In the words of Olick and Robbins:

> If "experience," moreover, is always embedded in and occurs through narrative frames, then there is no primal, unmediated experience that can be recovered. The distinction between history and memory in such accounts is a matter of disciplinary power rather than of epistemological privilege.[65]

The novel argument in this approach is not that history's claim of objectivity is tainted, which has already been established by many critical thinkers. Rather, it is an emphasis on the voice of the repressed or subjugated knowledge that would challenge the hegemonic forms of knowledge.[66] In this sense, counternarrative carries a popular task of challenging and subverting a hegemonic source of the knowledge of the past, such as official histories backed by the state by championing the voice of those who were otherwise silenced and suppressed. It connects to the politics of memory in a way to indicate another process of selection, this time

---

[62] Its telling that Maurice Halbwach's seminal work *La Mémoire Collective* was first published in 1950, but translated in English as late as 1992.
[63] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 8-9.
[64] Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Meditating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 14-19.
[65] Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 110.
[66] See Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, ed. Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, and François Ewald, trans. David Macey, 1st ed (New York: Picador, 2003).

specifically for academics who take it upon themselves to pluralize the epistemic field.[67]

However, as argued above, most of the time, individuals do not seek to construct a counternarrative per se. The motivation is to provide meaning which is not available in the ready-made articulation of the master narrative. In studying individuals' adoption of narratives, a critical approach should always be kept in mind that instrumentality reigns supreme. What they show, on the other hand, is bits and pieces of an ideal-type counternarrative which is attached to an identity claim. Individual narratives may come close to, but cannot perfectly reflect an ideal-type counternarrative. My task is to discern the constitution of counternarratives, their delineation of whichever master narrative, their points of attack, and ways of subverting it through employing/blending narrative frames, and finally promoting meaningful counternarratives that give meaning to their predicament and solve their fundamental identity problems.

1.3 Studying autobiographical narratives

In tandem with the discussion above, Smith and Watson view autobiography as a specific practice that emerged with the Enlightenment and the celebration of the autonomous individual.[68] Autobiography originated from a sequence of ancient Greek words: *autos-bios-graphein*, which can be translated simply as self-life-writing. Thus, it essentially prerequisites 'the self' as a unit that not only transforms

[67] See Esra Özyürek, "Public Memory as Political Battleground," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek, 1st ed, Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 114–37; Géraldine Enjelvin and Nada Korac-Kakabadse, "France and the Memories of 'Others,'" *History and Memory* 24, no. 1 (2012): 152–77.
[68] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 3.

and transcribes but also testifies life as a coherent story. As part of the abovementioned postmodern currents, the emergence of the witness disrupted the hierarchical relationship between the subject and the object of knowledge. Autobiography expresses the disruption of the individual, of the witness, over the traditional forms of generating historical/scientific knowledge.

However, the study of autobiography remains a frustratingly underdeveloped area in social sciences. If not disregarded altogether, autobiographies are treated mostly as supplementary sources in addition to those deemed more reliable. On top of this, conceptual confusion between memoir and autobiography further dissuades those who are interested in this area. However, I argue that social sciences would benefit from integrating autobiographies in many study areas by realizing a number of their advantages in terms of transparency and validity given that the necessary skepticism is preserved .[69] This section is devoted to discussing the possibilities and shortcomings of studying autobiography alongside its practical opportunities and difficulties.

First of all, researchers tend to distance themselves from the rich field of autobiographical work with skepticism towards their validity. Of course, the point here is beyond claiming autobiographies as champions of truth or negating them all together as fiction. Similar to other memory forms, autobiographies are products of distortion and selection. The point is to discover patterns of narrativization, rather than hierarchizing truth claims of one another. I consider autobiography as a

[69] Reliability of official records was questioned long before the aforementioned postmodern turn. Also, for changing attitudes towards oral and biographical accounts in social sciences and history, see Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf, "Introduction: The Biographical Turn," in *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science*, ed. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–30.

historically situated practice of conveying memory from the private to the public sphere with a claim to truth. This transfer ties the study of autobiography to the study of politics of memory. Rather than more aesthetic forms of political messages conveyed in public, such as sculpture or architecture, autobiographies offer the truth of authors' lives in a transcribed form. Egerton claimed that doubtlessly these narrations of life are written according to the "personal and political interests" of the writer, mobilized "to persuade contemporary or future readers."[70] Yet, he limits political intentions to the memoirs of politicians whose cunning fits perfectly well with memory distortion.[71] What about, as in the cited words of Schudson above, those who want to understand the world? Even if they too will possess personal and political interests, they also may follow ideological/social patterns. This brings us to the same tension between the luggage of the past that wants to stand still and the winds of the present that wants to drift in manifold directions. In this sense, narrativization of life in the midst of instrumental gains and conventional frames is the subject of the study of politics of memory.

Secondly, the content of an autobiography can only be commemorated fully by its author, and to a degree, by another witness, rather than the scientist. Especially, narrating traumatic/extraordinary events necessarily creates a distance between the writer and the reader of the autobiography. To employ Stuart Hall's model, the messages encoded by the author could not be fully decoded by the others, including

[70] George Egerton, "Politics and Autobiography: Political Memoir as Polygenre," *Biography* 15, no. 3 (1992): 221–42, 232.
[71] Gabriele Marasco notes that this tendency can be traced back to the antique autobiographies. Gabriele Marasco, *Political Autobiographies and Memoirs in Antiquity : A Brill Companion*, Brill's Companions in Classical Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2011), viii.

the student of autobiography.[72] Thus, studying memory through autobiography already starts with acknowledging a fundamental and unbridgeable gap between the witness's and scholar's comprehension of its content.

Thirdly, there is the question of the reader which refers to a fundamentally biased position. For Bruner, "the 'rightness' of any autobiographical version is relative to the intentions and conventions that govern its construction or its interpretation."[73] In the study of autobiography, the student assumes the position of a reader and re-interprets the life of the author. So, it must be realized that there are distinct political interests and external factors to which neither the author nor the student is immune.

In studies containing sensitive material such as torture, mistreatment, and abuse, the researcher may unconsciously neglect those contents in a similar way to how the author may neglect them. In this dissertation, I focus on narratives that aim to show alternatives to the dominant narrative of prison which is with torture and degradation. As a result, an optimistic prison picture may appear. Yet, what is at stake here is to analyze representations of reality rather than pursuing the historical truth of what happened in prison. While being a perfect fit for the former, autobiographical study comes short for the latter in the aforementioned ways.

Lastly, as Stephen Hopkins noted, those who are inclined to study memoirs are further dissuaded by the challenge of defining and distinguishing memoir and autobiography.[74] It is accurate that despite their frequently recognized similitude, scholars also noted slight differences between these two terms. For Thomas Courser,

---

[72] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall et al. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005).
[73] Jerome Bruner, "The Autobiographical Process," *Current Sociology* 43, no. 2 (1995): 161–77, 163.
[74] Stephen Hopkins, *The Politics of Memoir and The Northern Ireland Conflict* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 4.

for example, both are kinds of life narration, but memoir can be considered as a subgenre of autobiography as it denotes a particular way of sharing life experiences. However, he notes that if memoir focuses on externality rather than the author's life, it shifts to being a subgenre of biography.[75] For Ben Yagoda, autobiography and memoir refer to the same thing: "a factual account of the author's life." Yet, he differentiates a memoir as a book that may be about the entirety or a part of the author's life while memoirs and autobiographies cover the whole.[76] On the same track, George Egerton points out that the terms could be distinguished based on their focus. For him, autobiography refers to works that focus on "the development of the self" whereas memoir refers to works that focus on external events, occurrences, and other people.[77]

In sum, there is not a clear-cut definition of autobiography that scholars agree upon. In this dissertation, I followed the most general definition of autobiography as self-life-writing. Thus, I included first-person prison narratives published in a book format into the data set of this dissertation. One of the most important advantages of studying published autobiographical works is that the sources are available for everyone to check or challenge the work whereas, in many other methods, the raw data is always hidden behind gatekeepers, confidentiality measures, and property rights. In other words, autobiographies exist on their own without any intervention from the researcher. This also implies that in autobiographies, every recurrent theme is very important since they were there on their own. This makes the appearance of a theme an in-itself finding to consider seriously. The absence of a theme, on the other

[75] G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18.
[76] Ben Yagoda, *Memoir: A History* (New York: Riverheard Books, 2009), 1.
[77] George Egerton, *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), 342.

hand, is also a finding in terms of the selection process in remembering.

Another advantage of studying published autobiographical works is the possibility of tracing changes in time. Investigated in a certain temporal limit, the juxtaposition of autobiographies with respect to their publication dates can highlight which elements in memory are emphasized, which formulations are forgotten or modified, and which positions are invented through time and in relation to external changes. It is important to note that the researcher is also historically situated and affected by the discourse of its time. One thing to be sure of is that once memories are shared with the public in written form, they are frozen in terms of their content, but possible ways of interpreting them are always open to change.

Lastly, autobiography offers partial, subjective truths embellished with rich layers of retrospection over the otherwise unavailable experience of the world. Autobiographies are not works of fiction or history. As Paul Ricoeur argued, their epistemological status lies somewhere in between.[78] Contrarily, they refer to reality and are therefore responsible for the history and people they portray.[79] This does not mean that there is no room for distortion. However, autobiographies transform subjective information into an object that can be contested by others. That is why usually influential autobiographies trigger criticisms of those who claim to know and experience those particular events in a different way. In sum, the study of autobiography offers a number of challenges that must be realized and perhaps turned into ways of improving the transparency and reliability of the research.

Another problem I faced during my research is collecting autobiographies. It is

[78] Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity," *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (1991): 73–81, 73.
[79] Courser, *Memoir,* 10.

indeed an arduous task in terms of identifying whether a book is about the desired topic or not. It is more of a hit or miss type of search since most of the time, there is no sign on a book that will show it is related to a certain topic. In order to cope with this uncertainty, I meticulously scanned the 'political-prisoners-Turkey' tag at world.cat website. I also gazed into the pages of online bookstores as well as bibliographies of existing works. As a result, 156 books were accumulated.

In analyzing the autobiographical data, I followed the method of thematic narrative analysis. As Kohler Riesmann explained, this method is a close relative of historical archival research, but it keeps the story intact rather than moving across themes of different cases.[80] Accordingly, the analysis chapters below follow the steps of a case of counternarrative. Although I use numerous individual accounts, the phases of an ideal-type counternarrative is kept intact. I mainly focus on what is said, rather than the structural linguistics of the narrative, and probe into "how stories can have effects beyond their meanings for individual storytellers, creating possibilities for social identities, group belonging, and collective action."[81]

I sub-divided the books according to the political movements and read them in order. After finishing a considerable number of them, I generated my initial codes of counternarratives. Then, I read the remaining books. According to the codes, important passages in these writings were re-transcribed and put in chronological order. After revisiting these transcriptions, I modified my codes and re-organized the data according to the thematic phases of these counternarratives. I denominated the counternarratives which were also chapter titles in three of the four subsequent

[80] Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Sage, 2008), 53.
[81] Ibid., 54.

chapters in a way to encompass their essential identity claims. Similarly, I chose the names for the themes to represent slightly different examples appearing in individual accounts.

As Roland Barthes argued, "a narrative is never made up anything other than functions."[82] For him, narratives are produced in such a pure system that even the most insignificant element signifies something. My engagement with the data proves his point. Sometimes long passages and sometimes a single word provide the essential point made in a narrative. Thus, the data fragments that correspond to a theme vary greatly. Since all but two books were in Turkish, I translated most of the quoted material into English.

1.4 The road map

This dissertation could have been organized at least in three different ways. The first way was partitioning the analysis into prisons such as the Mamak Military Prison, the Metris Military Prison, the Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, and so on, which would have allowed me to underscore the spatial dynamics and particularities better. However, it would also have forced me either to have an unmanageable number of chapters with several of them outweighing the others in terms of data sources or to leave out a considerable number of accounts and focus only on those who have the most accounts. The second way was partitioning the analysis into political movements such as the Ülkücü movement, the leftist movement, the Islamists, and so on, which would have allowed me to present the historical development of these movements in detail and compare alternate versions of remembering the post-coup prisons.

[82] Rolant Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," in *Image Music Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 79–124, 89.

However, it would have also compelled me to repeatedly describe the narrative of the coup in each chapter as well as creating a disproportion in terms of data sources across movements, especially considering the limited number of Islamist accounts. Both ways were thoroughly discussed in periodic meetings of the dissertation committee, and we finally decided on a third way.

So, this dissertation follows a theoretically inspired partition. In the following chapter, I will be examining the master narrative of the 1980 coup which views prisons as places where political activists were decimated. Then, I will move on to analyzing three unique counternarratives that share the common conceptualization of prison experience as something beneficial for conserving or composing their political identity. The Chapter III is entitled "The militant counternarrative." It examines narratives that view prisons as places that sharpen the militant while eliminating pretenders. It predominantly appears in the most radical organizations of both the Turkish and Kurdish left, but it also appears in one Ülkücü account. Also, it is diverse in terms of gender. The Chapter IV is entitled "the gendered counternarrative." It focuses on narratives that view prisons as places of gender discovery and the construction of an identity based on gender solidarity. Although there are accounts of women of the Kurdish left and Islamists, this narrative exclusively appears in the narratives of the women of the Turkish left. The penultimate Chapter V is entitled "The religious rebirth counternarrative." It discusses narratives that view prisons as places of religious discovery and unsullied submission to God. The essence of this narrative appears among many Islamic-leaning intellectuals and devotees, but the militant members of the Ülkücü movement employed it to make sense of their shocking incarceration. Under these three chapters, there will be brief historical backgrounds where I bring together scholarly

analyses and narratives of the pre-coup period. Finally, in Chapter VI, I will conclude this dissertation by providing a summary of chapters, theoretical gains, and questions for future research.

CHAPTER II

THE MASTER NARRATIVE OF THE 1980 COUP

In 1986, a propaganda documentary aired on the state television TRT, entitled "6 Yıl Önceydi" (It was six years ago). The documentary opens with video footage of 6-year-old children looking at newspapers of the pre-coup period. They were interviewed while gazing at the news of violence and were asked what they understood from them. The children, who were all born after the coup, could not make any sense of them. This gave a clear message to the audience: anarchy and terror were completely eradicated by the virtue of military intervention, and a new, safer era to raise children had begun. Then the narrator speaks: "If we try to tell them what happened in Turkey before the day of 12 September 1980, they would listen to it as a tale." Immediately after, the documentary moves on to showcase ex-militants with their confessions and recantations. It presents them as contrasting examples of misguided fanatics of a bygone era.[83]

The junta's master narrative of the 1980 coup was dictated to the public in a series of

[83] ""6 Yıl Önceydi" (TRT, 1986), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHhQ8CgnswM&.

similar propaganda activities.[84] The media outlets were directly controlled or under the influence of the generals.[85] Political forces that would challenge the junta were vanquished. As a result, the junta's master narrative remained largely uncontested in the public sphere. More importantly, this narrative was welcomed by the citizens of Turkey who were weary of the political instability and violence of the pre-coup period.

According to the master narrative, what happened on 12 September 1980 was an intervention (*müdahale*) rather than a coup d'état (*darbe*). This claim advocated the necessity of the intervention vis-à-vis the country's collapsing economy, various political deadlocks that crippled the state authority, and violent ideological polarization with the potential to instigate a full-fledged civil war. For the junta, while those in power and opposition were busy with personal interests rather than the interests of the nation, ideologies foreign to this land spread across the country like a disease and poisoned the precious Turkish youth. By reiterating the chaotic political atmosphere of the 1970s, the junta implied that Turkey was on the brink of collapse, and the intervention was the ultimate antidote.

After allegedly saving the country with an intervention, the junta initiated a massive restorative project to grant stability to the political system and then, authorized the state apparatuses to better control the society. This project included the ratification of a new constitution that will empower the executive branch, issuing a new election

[84] For other examples, see Sadık Çalışkan, "12 Eylül Darbesi'nde Televizyon Yayınlarında Propaganda Faaliyetleri Üzerine İnceleme," *Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10, no. 1 (June 25, 2020): 85–116.
[85] For accounts on practices of censorship and the general state of journalism after the coup, see Hasan Cemal, *Tank Sesiyle Uyanmak: 12 Eylül Günlüğü* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986); Nazlı Ilıcak, *12 Eylül Kazanında Bir Gazeteci* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012).

and political party law that will reward major parties with catch-all policies, activating the previously enacted liberal economic reforms, embedding a conservative amalgam of Ataturkism and the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as the official ideology, and suppress the old actors and political groups that may contest this project. To fulfill this latter aim, the junta launched a massive wave of detention and subsequent incarceration. Prisons were transformed into places where the ideological malady was cured, and the misguided youth was corrected.

The junta's master narrative of the 1980 coup was uncontested during the military regime from 1980 to 1983. Its dominant status endured to a large extent till the end of Kenan Evren's presidential term in 1989. However, the cumulative grievances of several political groups turned into an anti-coup wave that eventually altered the master narrative, reversing most of its fundamental claims. In this anti-coup master narrative, the perception of the 12 September 1980 operation as "a necessary intervention to save the country" was replaced by this wave as "a coup undertaken by power-hungry, ruthless generals". The following restructuring period that allegedly improved stability was viewed as a period that destroyed individual freedoms and the civil society in Turkey.

In the demise of the junta's master narrative of the 1980 coup, carceral memory played an important role with extensive depictions of the violently repressive character of the coup. The allegedly corrective practices were replaced by the memory of practices of brutal discipline and torture. However, the dominance of these depictions also paved the way for preserving the view of prisons as places for decimating political activists. Despite the drastic changes in the master narrative, the dominant image of the post-coup prisons continues to be the one that destroyed

political movements through means of savagery. The counternarratives analyzed in this dissertation contrast this very image by narrating the prison as a substantial stage for preserving or discovering the principles of their struggle and the essence of their political identities.

This chapter aims to analyze the components of the master narrative of the 1980 coup and locate the prison narratives within it. After discussing the junta's master narrative, I will discuss the post-coup detention wave and the formation of the prison regime. Then, I will present accounts of erstwhile prisoners that narrate the carceral practices deployed to destroy their political identities. Finally, I will briefly discuss how this master narrative was altered by an anti-coup wave.

2.1 Turkey on the brink of collapse

The junta claimed that the governments of the pre-coup period failed to address a number of severe social and political issues. Allegedly, these issues compelled the junta to intervene. Accordingly, extensive depictions of how the country was in a terrible state of disarray before the coup comprised the backbone of the junta's master narrative. The junta repeatedly reminded the public of the troubles of the pre-coup period to preserve the legitimacy of the intervention.

At the institutional level, politicians were seen as responsible for these with their uncompromising attitude in the parliament. They failed to make necessary legal arrangements that will equip the police and later the military to fight against violent activism, as well as to form a unified front against pressing issues of the country. On the other hand, these self-interested politicians were also portrayed as having the talent to negotiate even the non-negotiable principles of the republic for political leverage. The examples of tolerating Kurdish separatists and extremist groups were

added to the usual apostasy and intrigue. Altogether, these examples were presented to discredit politicians of the pre-coup period. At the grassroots level, the unprecedented growth of various political movements, and their violent struggle amongst themselves as well as against the state were considered major threats. For the junta, threats that emerged to challenge and undermine the authority of the state were in three categories: anarchy and terror (*anarşi ve terör*), reactionism (*irtica*), and separatism (*bölücülük*).

2.1.1 Anarchy and terror

Anarchy and terror mainly refer to the violence caused by the ideological struggle between the far-right, ultranationalist, Ülkücü movement and various illegal organizations of the far-left. Framed as fratricidal strife, the military perceived this struggle mainly as an artificial discordance. As the Martial Law Commander of the First Army Necdet Üruğ said, "The terror apparatus that we face is not a bodily phenomenon, it is an ideological microbe continuously injected into our national body."[86] For the generals, there is only one true ideology of Kemalism, and all others were twisted perversions that cloud the minds of Turkish youth. Nevertheless, the struggle between the left and the right was increasingly transformed into an armed conflict with an increasing density of incidents. The official records claim that between 26 December 1978 and 11 September 1980, there were 32.893 incidents of anarchy and terror. Roughly in half of these incidents, explosives and guns were used.[87]

---

[86] Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1991), 371.
[87] General Staff's report on "the state of anarchy and terror in Turkey" cited in Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, "Ülkemizde Demokrasiye Müdehale Eden Tüm Darbe ve Muhtıralar Ile Demokrasiyi İşlevsiz Kılan Diğer Bütün Girişim ve Süreçlerin Tüm Boyutları Ile Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Önlemlerin Belirlenmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu," 2012, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/arastirma_komisyonlari/darbe_muhtira/index.htm,747-748.

As the ideological divide initially turned into street-level quarrels and then into armed skirmishes and ambushes, the country entered into a vicious circle of vendettas between the far-right and the far-left. However, the killings did not remain at the street level. Shocking assassinations of politicians, journalists, academics, police officers and chiefs, public prosecutors, and trade union leaders followed one another. Far-right and far-left organizations were increasingly targeting more eminent figures. For example, Kemal Türkler, the old president of the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* - DİSK), and Abdi İpekçi, the head-journalist of *Hürriyet* were killed by Ülkücü militants, while Gün Sazak, a former Minister of Customs of the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP), and Nihat Erim, the prime minister of the technocratic government established after the 1971 coup-by-memorandum were killed by the militants of Revolutionary Left (*Devrimci Sol* - Dev-Sol). The assassination of Kemal Türkler on the day of Nihat Erim's funeral epitomizes the results of the vengeful attitude of both sides. Considering the morbidity of the political atmosphere, the initial relief and celebration of the coup by numerous public figures came as no surprise considering that they had been at gunpoint for years.

In addition to the violent street activism and shocking assassinations, there were massacres with numerous deaths that further underlined the grim aspects of the ideological fraud. In terms of its aftershocks and disputed legacy, one of the most crucial events occurred at Taksim Square on May Day 1977. Hundreds of thousands gathered at the square to celebrate worker's day. Towards the evening, guns were fired randomly at the crowd, causing a massive wave of panic. Then the police intervened with panzers and stun grenades. Since the police closed many roads as a

precaution, the crowd ran at dead ends, and many were trampled by their comrades. 34 were dead in the incident which was remembered as “Bloody May Day” or “the Taksim Square Massacre.” However, by claiming that the Maoists fired their guns at pro-Soviet groups, the junta framed this incident as another calamity of struggle among leftist organizations.[88]

This massacre was followed by massacres in Anatolian towns, especially against Alevi communities, heralding the sectarian aspect of the fraud.[89] In 1978, following the assassination of mayor Hamid Fendoğlu, the fury of the right-winger populace resulted in a massacre at leftist and Alevi neighborhoods of Malatya province. At the end of the same year, in Maraş, word got out that communists bombed a cinema which ignited another massacre against the Alevi community. The law and order could only be restored a week later.

Up until this point, Prime Minister Ecevit abstained from declaring martial law. He was concerned with the intra-party opposition, especially by representatives of Kurdish-populated areas. Yet, three days after the Maraş Massacre, on 25 December 1978, Ecevit declared martial law. Military commanders were assigned to Adana, Ankara, Bingöl, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gaziantep, İstanbul, Kahramanmaraş, Kars, Malatya, Sivas, Urfa and later in Adıyaman, Hakkari, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Siirt, Tunceli, İzmir, Hatay and Ağrı to stop anarchy and terror but to little avail. A couple of months before the coup, there was another pogrom at Çorum, following the assassination of Gün Sazak. For the junta, these massacres were an extension of

[88] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey: Before and After* (Ankara: Ongun Kardeşler, 1982), 17.
[89] Alevism is a branch of Shia Islam. The majority of Muslim population in Turkey are followers of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam.

anarchy and terror, “a bloody quarrel of brothers” provoked through “insidious plans.”[90]

For the junta, the state’s ability to sustain order was weakened to a degree that illegal organizations took hold of the streets. Universities could not stay open as their campuses and dormitories became a battleground between left-wing and right-wing groups. On one hand, there were allegations that commando camps were established to provide combat training for the Ülkücü youth. On the other hand, leftist organizations were creating autonomous zones (*kurtarılmış bölge*) in neighborhoods, especially by distributing and organizing land in urban slums. One of the most iconic examples of this was “the May Day Neighborhood” (*1 Mayıs Mahallesi*) in İstanbul. The shanty town was governed by an assembly. Several leftist groups worked together to sustain this exceptional experience. Only after the coup, the neighborhood was recognized by the state with the name “Mustafa Kemal Neighborhood.”[91] The neighborhood’s socialist experiment was at the scale of a shanty town, but it was enough to raise the eyebrows of the military.

For the junta, illegal leftist organizations were abusing democratic opportunities granted to an unnecessary extent. In 1979, Fikri Sönmez, also known as Terzi Fikri for his profession as a tailor, won the renewed local elections in Fatsa as an independent candidate. Mayor Sönmez’s apparent leftism and his experimental and decentralized style of government were coupled with the support of leftist organizations in creating another socialist experiment. For the junta, the district

[90] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 56.
[91] For a detailed study on local and political dynamics in the formation of the neighborhood, see Şükrü Aslan, *1 Mayıs Mahallesi: 1980 Öncesi Toplumsal Mücadeleler ve Kent* (2004; repr., İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013).

became a base for illegal groups. Together with "the so-called administration" they were tyrannizing the people.[92] Months before the coup, on 11 June 1980, the military undertook an operation to put an end to this experiment. For some, this operation was important for being a rehearsal for the coup.[93] The alleged backing of illegal leftist organizations and the mayor's support for them in return became the main issue in the lawsuit opened after the coup. Terzi Fikri died in prison in 1985.

Anarchy and terror could be prevented by the will of state institutions. For the junta, the state was paralyzed by the same disease that caused ruptures in society. For example, the police were the main force delegated to the internal security of the country, but they lacked the necessary capacity to cope with anarchy and terror. For Martial Law Commander Nevzat Bölügiray, the police force in his field of command was significantly lacking proper training, equipment, and organizational capabilities to cope with anarchy and terror. He noted that police were unable to protect the police centers and he had to assign soldiers to guard them. The inexperienced police officers were sent to the field after completing their training by firing five bullets in total.[94] For Martial Commander Necdet Üruğ, even if the security forces shoot a terrorist during a skirmish, the law was protecting the terrorist in the name of human rights and freedoms while imprisoning the shooter.[95] As young militants of various ideological organizations were struggling to defeat one another, the state's legitimate forces were in fear of using their weapons.

---

[92] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 199.
[93] See Yavuz Yıldırım, "Fatsa Deneyimi ve 'Yeni Siyaset' Arayışı," in *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 187–98.
[94] Nevzat Bölügiray, *Sokaktaki Asker - Bir Sıkıyönetim Komutanının 12 Eylül Anıları* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 2001), 48-49.
[95] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1*, 370.

Also, the police departments were under the influence of ideological divisions. The law allowed policemen to be organized under unions. The police were eventually polarized between the left-wing POL-DER and the right-wing POL-BİR. According to the junta, the malignant tumor of the ideological splits now spread to the very force assigned to stop it. The politicians also continued to bicker about the issue rather than understanding its seriousness and proposing a solution.[96] This meant that actors of street violence were tolerated according to the affiliation of the police, and the police officers were targeted by the opposite groups. For example, the chief of police of Adana province, Cevat Yurdakul was a member of POL-DER. Yurdakul was assassinated by an Ülkücü militant in 1979.

2.1.2 Reactionism

Alongside anarchy and terror, Islamist reactionism was perceived by the military as a clear threat to the republic. The leader of the National Outlook Movement (*Millî Görüş Hareketi*) Necmettin Erbakan and his National Salvation Party (*Millî Selamet Partisi* – MSP) was a key member of the parliament. The MSP was the coalition partner of the first Ecevit government, and one of the two main partners of Demirel's first and second Nationalist Front (*Milliyetçi Cehpe*) governments. Being a constant member of the legislative and executive branches of the state granted a degree of legitimacy to the movement.

However, the military did not welcome the existence of the MSP within the state apparatus. For the junta, defects of the political system paved the way for members of this movement to enter the Parliament.[97] Erbakan's strategy to prioritize economic

[96] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 55.
[97] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 215.

policy, especially by pushing for extravagant industrial investments left the impression of a politician undermining the serious work of serving the nation.[98] His flippant rhetoric on rather serious issues of the country was duly noted by the junta.[99] The junta even avoided mentioning the name of MSP:

> One of the political parties in the meanwhile, protested against the costumes used in the ceremonies, and abstained from taking part in the ceremony at Ataturk's mausoleum, displaying its insolence toward Ataturk.[100]

The representatives of MSP showed signs of discontent in participating in national ceremonies. The generals took offense and duly noted the acts of MSP members to call them into account when the time comes.

Alongside the MSP, there were several grassroots organizations within the Islamist movement.[101] The most notable ones were the National Turkish Student League (*Millî Türk Talebe Birliği* – the MTTB) and the Akıncılar Foundation. Islamists won the control of the MTTB over nationalists in the mid-1960s and the league organized rallies against the rising left. Even so, the league's policy of non-violence caused discontent among those who want retribution for the aggression of leftists and Ülkücüs against Muslim students.[102] Hence, the Akıncılar Foundation was established in 1975 by those who were detached from the MTTB. In a short time, the foundation opened many local and occupational branches, filling in the space left by

---

[98] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1*, 180.
[99] For Evren's perspective on Erbakan's mocking of Demirel's government see ibid., 429.
[100] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 52.
[101] Of course, there is also a complicated layer of Islamic communities (*cemaatler*) in Turkey, which influenced the Islamist movement as well as other right-wing political parties. See Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan: Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar*, 11th ed. (1990; repr., İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2014).
[102] Doğan Duman and Serkan Yorgancılar, *Türkçülükten İslâmcılığa Milli Türk Talebe Birliği*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Maarif Mektepleri, 2018), 186.

the MTTB, which was primarily a student organization.[103] However, the foundation never reached the mass of neither the left nor the Ülkücü movement. The most notable leader of the Akıncıs was Metin Yüksel who was killed in 1979 by Ülkücüs in a quarrel that occurred at Fatih Mosque.

When the very Fatih Mosque hosted a group of protesters against Ataturk, many political figures condemned it but not many were as furious as the Chief of Staff, General Kenan Evren. He was quite straightforward in declaring the army's stance against such incidents:

> As the devoted guardians of the principles and reforms of Great Ataturk, the Turkish Armed Forces, from its highest commander to the youngest enlisted man, is determined to cut off the tongues which dare to insult him.[104]

In addition to the accumulation of dissent towards the Islamist movement, there was one incident that exacerbated the military's fury. The junta presented what happened at the Rally for Liberating al-Quds (*Kudüs'ü Kurtarma Mitingi*) one week before the coup as an open rebellion against the secular establishment of the republic. The rally staged demands for sharia law. For the junta, the members of MSP were already *personae non gratae* but other politicians tolerated reactionaries for political benefit, diverting from the path of Atatürk. In return, the silence of authorities was wounding the public, "the true Kemalists were watching all this with tears in their eyes and a bitter pain in their hearts…"[105]

---

[103] Selman Saç, "Akıncılar," in *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 501–14, 504.
[104] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 193.
[105] Ibid., 217.

2.1.3 Separatism

Lastly, the threat of Kurdish separatism was presented by the junta as a factor that made the coup an absolute necessity. Every organization attached to it was perceived as an ultimate security threat to be eradicated. For Kenan Evren, the Kurds were not a distinct race, but a branch of Turks. The longer the state fails to indoctrinate the people of the region with this truth, the problem will get bigger.[106] Evren noted that he warned the government in 1978:

> In my opinion, the most important and urgent issue is separatism. If every state institution will not give its full attention to this issue, we will soon realize that it is too late. It has been said many times and written many times. But none of them were taken seriously."[107]

He was frustrated with the government since they did not pay attention to the suggestions of generals. The generals asked for more personnel, better equipment, and authorization to crush the separatists. These suggestions were continuously uttered in meetings but according to the junta, the ones in power were busy pursuing their own interests. Evren noted that there was a rumor of around 70 representatives of the CHP having a separatist agenda. He wrote:

> In fact, the majority of the Republican People's Party did not approve of the deeds of this minority. Yet, they had to make concessions to them to stay in power. Perpetuity of the state was not important. Staying in power at any cost was important. That was the point where they were not right.[108]

This was another nuance in a greater narrative of extremists being tolerated by centrist actors because of the dependency caused by the political system.

---

[106] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1*, 239.
[107] Ibid., 198.
[108] Ibid., 235.

Despite its recognized importance, it must be noted that the issue of separatism was not emphasized as much as anarchy and terror. Nevertheless, the issue of separatism became a hot topic immediately after the violent aggression of the PKK against the Turkish Armed Forces in 1984.

2.1.4 Disreputable politicians

With the state's inability to stop the bloodshed, the junta pointed fingers at politicians. When the generals look at the parliament and governments, they observed uncompromising, fractious politicians who put their self-interest before the national interest. Those were responsible for the state's failure to stop violence and sustain order across the country. "The disreputable politician" was a recurrent character of the master narrative of the 1980 coup:

> Because of their futile bickerings and pursuit of their personal interests, the political parties failed to adapt to the necessities of the new situation. The political malaise gradually caused social and economic tensions in society. The respective party leaders were adamant that the country's ills could be cured only through their own prescriptions, and wanted the government programmes to follow their own views and demands. Acute disputes and quarrels arose even between the parties forming successive coalitions. The situation was so bad that often many days were totally wasted in Parliament on bargaining to form new coalition formations even though the country was confronted with problems requiring urgent solutions.[109]

The government and opposition switched sides many times, but the picture was the same. The parties in the parliament should have looked for ways of collaboration to stop the violence. Instead, the opposition parties were content with the rise of anarchy and terror as it weakens the governing party. For Evren, "that is why the anarchy and terror was never ending."[110]

---

[109] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 12.
[110] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1*, 218.

There were more than a few incidents that disgraced the reputation and reliability of institutional politics in governing the country in dire times. Quarrels between party leaders, especially between the leaders of two major parties of this period, Bülent Ecevit of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP) and Süleyman Demirel of the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* – AP) were repeatedly presented by the junta as an "unending fight."[111] Accordingly, one of the greatest sources of discontent for the military was the abstention of these leaders from forming a grand coalition between the CHP and the AP. Instead, Ecevit chose to form a coalition with the MSP, which the military was most allergic to. In 1974, the coalition government declared an amnesty for those imprisoned after the 1971 coup-by-memorandum.[112] The same year, this coalition boldly decided on military intervention in Cyprus which may have increased their reputation among military ranks. However, Ecevit's sudden resignation in hopes of garnering enough votes to form a single-party government not only handed the governing power over to the Nationalist Front governments but also proved the self-interested outlook of the politicians in the eyes of the generals.

Under the rule of these governments, the military had been disgruntled by the influence of minor members of the coalition, the MHP and the MSP over the big member AP. By being part of the government, the far-right Ülkücü groups' confidence in escalating violence was increased. The demise of the Nationalist Front governments occurred after such a repugnant incident that further discredited the

[111] Ibid., 132.

[112] The amnesty was declared yet the MSP representatives managed to keep the left-wingers out of its scope during the voting sessions in the parliament. Similar to the amnesty in 1991, leftists were released after the constitutional court's decision to expand the amnesty in accordance with the principle of equality.

politicians for the generals. Ecevit managed to persuade enough representatives elected from the AP lists to join the CHP. These representatives were fresh out of the election ballot and accepted Ecevit's proposal in return for becoming ministers. Also, Ecevit's cabinet included an independent representative, "known for his devotion to separatism." For Evren, this was not a mistake that could be forgiven.[113] He was referring to Şerafettin Elçi becoming the Minister of Public Works, and people talking in Kurdish in the ministry building.[114]

Although the extent of political intrigues and the fragility of governments certainly affected generals' negative view of politicians, there were two requests of the military which were directly related to the will of parliamentarians and party leaders. One was the enactment of necessary laws to strengthen the state's struggle against anarchy and terror, Islamic reactionism, and Kurdish separatism. The military was engaged with these internal issues which draw them into the malignant politics that they were trying to avoid. The generals were aware that the more the army was involved in politics, the threat of ideological divisions penetrating it increased.

The other request was the conclusion of presidential elections within the parliament as swiftly as possible. The term of Fahri Korütürk ended on 6 April 1980, and the parties in the parliament were not able to reach the necessary consensus to elect the new president. For the generals, Demirel was fine with İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, a man of his party, standing in. The futile turns in the parliament had turned into a display of politicians' lack of seriousness, even in electing the most prestigious chair of the republic. The seat of Ataturk was filled in by the chairman of the Senate until

[113] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1*, 183.
[114] Ibid., 222.

the junta's leader Kenan Evren assumed the title "the Head of the State," and later became the President.

According to the master narrative of the junta, the generals warned the politicians countless times. Some of these warnings were made in public. For example, on 27 December 1979, President Fahri Korutürk received a letter, signed by the Chief of General Staff, Kenan Evren. Then, the president met with the leaders of two major parties and shared the content of the letter, which was openly warning the politicians to take a collaborative course of action to solve the dire circumstances of the country; otherwise implying a military intervention.[115] However, for the military, neither Ecevit nor the incumbent Demirel took the problems on board. Instead, the two endured their endless fight against each other which almost drove the country off the cliff.

2.2 The intervention as the saving moment

On the morning of 12 September 1980, a military intervention named "Operation Flag" (*Bayrak Harekâtı*) was undertaken by the Turkish Armed Forces within the chain of command. With this operation, the military successfully toppled the government and claimed control over the country without bloodshed. That morning, civilians woke up to the view of emptied streets with tank squads garrisoned on crossroads and the radio broadcast of the statement of General Kenan Evren and heroism ballads of Hasan Mutlucan.

Evren summarized the pre-coup part of the master narrative in his speech on the radio: The state was in peril. Those in power were too stubborn to cooperate on any

[115] Mehmet Ali Birand, *12 Eylül Saat: 04:00* (Karacan Yayınları, 1984), 139-153.

urgent subject. Instead of Kemalism, "reactionary and other warped ideologies" took hold. The country and the state institutions were divided, leaving the army as the lone power to save Turkey. All these circumstances compelled the army to fulfill its legal duty to protect and safeguard the republic, to prevent "a possible civil war and fratricide."[116] For the junta, "the whole nation was listening, with tears of joy, to the voice of the Turkish Armed Forces, which had been, ardently long awaited."[117]

The junta presented the military's internal service code (*iç hizmet kanunu*) as the legal basis of the intervention. The code's article 35 was as follows: "The duty of the armed forces is to protect and safeguard the Turkish land and the Turkish Republic as stipulated by the constitution."[118] By fulfilling its duty, the army took over and finally saved the country from collapsing.[119]

The junta declared an immediate country-wide curfew to prevent any resistance on the day of the coup. Then, it was not possible to foresee the reaction of the far-left organizations and Kurdish extremists who were considerably armed. General Nevzat Bölügiray tells that during a visit, Kenan Evren asked him about the potential of resistance in his area of responsibility in case of military intervention, though it is not clear whether he meant troops or civilians.[120] According to Birand, the commanders considered the likelihood of an explosion in terrorist activity alongside a Kurdish resurgence after the coup.[121]

The generals were careful not to cause any violence during the take-over to cement

---

[116] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 221-222.
[117] Ibid., 221.
[118] Ibid., 224.
[119] Ibid., 225.
[120] Bölügiray, *Sokaktaki Asker*, 343.
[121] Birand, *12 Eylül Saat: 04:00*, 201-202.

the success of the intervention. Any unnecessary altercation may cause panic and snowball into deeper chaos. In contrast with the 1960 coup, the treatment of parliamentarians was gentle. The junta sent acquaintances of the leaders of the AP, the CHP, the MSP, and the MHP alongside the military squads that will take them into custody to prevent the possible distress of one morning seeing someone in the military uniform at your door. Additionally, the junta decided to relocate them to certain locations "for safety concerns."

Yet, the leader of MHP and the Ülkücü movement, Alparslan Türkeş was nowhere to be found. The rumors of Türkeş instigating a right-wing coup through his supporters within the army were circulating, but Evren was confident about the intactness of the chain of command. Still, the junta did not want any complications. A specific announcement was made for Türkeş, calling him to submit himself to the army.[122] However, the fears of the junta did not come true except for a few groups protesting the coup and retreating to the mountains for guerilla warfare. Also, Türkeş surrendered to the military three days after the coup.

Archenemies, Bülent Ecevit of the CHP, and Süleyman Demirel of the AP were kept in juxtaposed rooms of a military vacation camp at Hamzakoy, Çanakkale for a month as tokens of how the intervention ended the fraud between the two. Alparslan Türkeş and Necmettin Erbakan were also detained and sent to Uzunada, another military camp at the Aegean coast. Many discordant parliamentarians with unapproved ideological leanings were arrested and brought together in a military school building in Kirazlıdere, Ankara.

[122] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1*, 548.

The junta took precautions in a very short time and diminished the political sphere close to zero. It expanded the martial law to the entire country and the borders were closed for entering and for leaving. The government was abolished, the parliament was closed down and the legal immunity of its members was lifted. Political party activities were banned, and trade union activities were halted. Strikes and lockouts were postponed.[123] The political parties remained open for more than a year, until 16 October 1981. However, with a communique, the junta first banned the pre-coup parliamentarians from making public statements and later with the ratification of a new constitution, banned them from politics for ten years. To save the country, the junta argued that they took a great risk of bringing the army into the heart of politics. Of course, they were not going to hand power over to those responsible for the pre-coup calamities.

However, they were aware that the longer they stay in power, the more risk of internal diversion they will take. In the meantime, Kenan Evren repeatedly aimed to ensure the supra-political status of the military:

> It is incorrect to interpret the Armed Forces' take-over of the state administration on 12 September 1980 as their entry into the political arena. This action was carried through as an obligation, for there was no other way of preventing the breakdown and destruction of the nation and the state. The whole operation, however, was conducted within the framework of the existing chain of command, based on the principle of absolute obedience, to ensure that the Armed Forces themselves did not get stuck in the quagmire of politics.[124]

Indeed, the military enjoyed several advantages over civilian governments. It drove its strength from chain-of-command, could act in a unified manner, and notably,

---

[123] M. Zafer Üskül, *Bildirileriyle 12 Eylül 1980 Dönemi Sıkıyönetimi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2018), 11-13.
[124] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, ix.

possessed a large inventory of weapons. However, politics being a naturally contested sphere, tend to create discord.[125] In the end, the military had to retreat to the barracks. So, the junta initiated several radical changes in haste.

So far, the master narrative of the junta is comprised of two steps: first, depicting the grave circumstances that almost led to a societal rupture, and second, glorifying the intervention as the saving moment for Turkey. The next step in the master narrative is showing how the junta restructured the republic in a way that will prevent the return of the same problems.

2.3 Restructuring the republic

After successfully saving the country, the junta justified a series of adjustments "to secure the functioning of the republican regime."[126] Each adjustment was a response to the problems of the pre-coup period which ended up in a system with high functionality, and swift decision making, in the expanse of weakening the parliament, civil society, and democracy in general. The centrist actors with pragmatist policies managed to cohabitate with the supervising generals. A project of repairing ideological conflicts through a mixture of conservative ideologies was launched with a claim to move beyond the left-right divide.

Between the 1980 coup and the 1983 general elections, Turkey was a military regime, governed by a supreme executive and legislative body called the National Security Council (*Millî Güvenlik Kurulu* – MGK).[127] It was comprised of Generals

---

[125] See Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (1962; repr., New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 2002).
[126] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 237.
[127] The same English translation is used also to refer to *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu,* an active coordination board led by the president of the republic where the highest ranks of military and government meet and discuss country's security and defense once every two months from 1961 onwards.

Kenan Evren, Nurettin Ersin, Tahsin Şahinkaya, Sedat Celasun and Admiral Nejat Tümer. Kenan Evren became the head of the state, a supplementary title for the president.[128] Other members of the junta suggested that Evren also assume the title of prime minister, but Evren firmly rejected this suggestion. So, the junta started searching for candidates for this position. The criterion was simple: the prime minister should not have been involved in the ideological quagmire before the coup. This meant that the candidate had to be a trusted devotee of Kemalism. In the mind of Kenan Evren, Turhan Feyzioğlu, a former member of the CHP and the leader of the Republican Reliance Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi*, CGP) was a perfect fit for this position. Evren envisaged the formation of Feyzioğlu's cabinet with two ministers from the CHP and two ministers from the AP.[129] Yet, when Feyzioğlu and other candidates for cabinet politely rejected the offer, this plan came to naught.[130]

The junta chose Bülend Ulusu as the prime minister. He was the former chief commander of the navy and was present at every stage of planning the intervention. But his term ended on 30 August 1980. Thus, making Ulusu the prime minister was also an act of gesture. The junta was finally able to find someone to lead the executive branch, but it was someone with little to no experience in politics and government. The hand-picked cabinet of Ulusu included eleven former ministers which demonstrates the junta's initial prestige and authority to convince politicians to cooperate. Nevertheless, the cabinet had a very limited function with regard to the MGK being the central decision-making body.

[128] General Cemal Gürsel assumed the same title after the 27 May 1960 coup d'état.
[129] Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 2* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1991), 28.
[130] Ibid., 48-49.

2.3.1 The new constitution and other institutional adjustments

The junta's parliament was a busy one. During the military regime, 838 new laws were enacted.[131] Yet, the greatest legacy that was left behind by the coup was the new constitution. In June 1981, the MGK issued a law regarding the constitutive assembly to prepare a new constitution. The constitution was put to vote in November 1982 and ratified with a decisive 91 percent support. As of 2022, the 1982 Constitution is still in force, despite numerous amendments.

According to the junta, the 1961 Constitution was flawed in many respects. It allowed fringe parties to join the parliament and become key coalition partners. Thus, a ten percent electoral threshold was issued with a system that rewards major centrist parties with catch-all policies and punishes fringe parties with extremist ideologies. The senate was abolished to accelerate law-making processes, hence the bicameral structure of the parliament ceased to exist. The senate's powers were transferred to the president, which meant transferring power from the legislative to the executive. In theory, the president was a neutral actor which would act as a tutelary power to balance the prime minister and his/her cabinet. Almost every president before[132] had a military background which classifies the most prestigious seat in the republic as a usual destination for generals. This delicate balance between legislative and executive could easily shift in favor of the latter whenever the president and the prime minister align.[133] One of the major problems of the pre-coup period was the difficulty of electing a president. With the new constitution, the

[131] Suavi Aydın and Yüksel Taşkın, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 332.
[132] Except Celal Bayar between 1950 and 1960.
[133] See Taha Parla, *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Rejimi (1980-1989)* (1986; repr., İstanbul: Deniz Yayınları, 2009).

president continued to be elected by the parliament, but his/her election required less consensus.

Overall, the junta took precautions to prevent the bickering of self-interested politicians to create a political deadlock. Though, rather than looking for a consensus, a major party succeeding in elections can very well elect a president without requiring the support of another. Evren noted in his memoirs that he wanted presidents to be elected by popular vote, but regretfully he conformed to the majority and did not insist.[134]

Also, illegal organizations took advantage of the former constitution which granted extensive rights and freedoms, especially for organizing and protesting. With the new constitution, these rights and freedoms were curbed and balanced by empowering the state's control mechanisms. According to the generals, university autonomy was abused by organizations to recruit young activists, and turn campuses into guerilla camps. In response, the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu* – YÖK) was established. By the virtue of the 1402nd Martial Law, numerous civil servants and faculty were expelled from the university because of their ideological alignments.

2.3.2 Economy

In terms of economic policies, the most important argument of the junta was the promise of stability. The political turmoil was indeed a restraint before prosperity. Nevertheless, the junta had limited knowledge about the economy and they perceived

[134] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları – 1*, 439. Evren's wish come true 33 years later with the election of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2015 by popular vote.

it mainly as a technocratic matter.[135] What they know fairly well was "the Mixed Economy System based on the teachings of Ataturk." However, by implementing the 24 January 1980 decisions that were previously enacted but could not be operationalized by the civilian governments, the Turkish economy entered a timeline of rapid neo-liberalization and integration into the global market.

The face of this rare continuity between the pre-coup and post-coup periods was Turgut Özal. He was believed to be the man behind the austerity measures of the Demirel Government, but the government lacked political support to implement them.[136] After the coup, not only Özal's measures were backed by an uncontested political power, and thus, rapidly implemented but also the junta made Özal the deputy prime minister to primarily oversee the economy. The military was hesitant about bringing Turgut Özal for his possible ties with Süleyman Demirel as well as for the undesirable political career of his brother Korkut Özal in the Islamist MSP. After two years of service, Turgut Özal resigned and formed his own party, the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi* – the ANAP), and managed to pass through military supervision to enter the 1983 general elections. His victory made him the prime minister, who won successive elections and implemented his economic vision throughout the 1980s.

It must be noted that economic problems by themselves were of secondary importance in the eyes of the military. Accordingly, economic reforms were not a big part of the master narrative compared to pressing matters of ideologically motivated

[135] On that note, see Tanel Demirel, "The Turkish Military's Decision to Intervene: 12 September 1980," *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 2 (2003): 253–80, 260.
[136] Feroz Ahmad, "Military Intervention and the Crisis in Turkey," *MERIP Reports*, no. 93 (January 1981): 5–24, 7.

anarchy and terror. The propaganda book admitted: "Though not at the degree of the achievements in combating anarchy, specific developments and improvements were also noted in solving economic problems."[137] Curing the ideological malady, on the other hand, was seen as the most important task, and thus, the headfirst direction of the junta.

2.4 Curing the ideological malady

The generals were aware that solving the problem of anarchy and terror was one of the most important tasks that would grant legitimacy to the military regime. Kenan Evren wrote:

> The number one issue in the country was anarchy and terrorism. This issue must be addressed as soon as possible. If this task is prolonged, people's trust in us could be shaken.[138]

The junta demonstrated a falling number of incidents after the coup. For example, in the first month of the coup, there were still 1.146 offenses, which fell to 358 in May. In the same month, there 69 people were killed. This number was 13 in May. Similarly, armed assaults fell by 85 percent, and the use of explosives fell by 93 percent.[139] For the junta, in a couple of months, the intervention achieved what martial law could not in years.

To send a strong message to illegal organizations, the junta turned to those who were sentenced to the death penalty but waiting for the parliament's approval. The executions started with the right-winger Mustafa Pehlivanoğlu and the leftist Necdet Adalı on 7 October 1980. Symbolized in Evren's famous sentence "for the sake of

---

[137] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey,* 208.
[138] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 2*, 11.
[139] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey,* 253.

balance, we executed one from the right-wingers and one from the left,"[140] the junta emphasized its neutrality in the executions. In three years, 50 people were executed: 24 for non-political crimes, 15 leftists, 8 right-wingers, and one ASALA militant.[141]

Apart from these executions, the junta's strategy was aimed at dismissing legal and illegal political organizations to showcase the success of the intervention in restoring order across the country and eliminating those who might challenge the military regime in the transitionary period. For these ends, the junta launched a massive detention wave in the immediate aftermath of the 1980 coup and interrogated thousands of people who were later imprisoned to be cured of their ideological malady.

2.4.1 Mass detention and interrogation

There are several claims over the exact magnitude of detentions. Aydın and Taşkın claimed that in the first year of the military regime alone, more than 122.000 people were detained.[142] Amnesty International referred to an article published in *Milliyet* on 21 September 1984 that claims 178.565 people were detained since 12 September 1980.[143] Many others cited a list of numbers that indicates 650.000 people were detained in total, although this number should be treated with precaution. Only one source claims that these numbers cover the period between 12 September 1980 and the elections in 1984.[144] For some, this list was provided by the Ministry of

---

[140] In his defense, Evren verified that he uttered this sentence to prove their impartiality. Fevzi Kızılkoyun, "'Bir sağdan bir soldan astık' açıklaması," accessed May 28, 2022, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bir-sagdan-bir-soldan-astik-aciklamasi-21978372.
[141] ASALA militant Levon Ekmekçiyan was sentenced to death penalty for bombing Esenboğa Airport, killing 9 and wounding 72 people.
[142] Aydın and Taşkın, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 329.
[143] *Turkey Testimony on Torture* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1985), 2.
[144] Haşim Akman, *Otuz Yıldır 12 Eylül: Yaşayanlar Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010), 14.

Justice.[145] For some others, it was provided by the Human Rights Association of Turkey.[146] The list originates from the statement of the president of the Human Rights Association in 1991, but in that statement, methods of generating this information were left unattended.[147] If these numbers are to be trusted and considering Turkey's population which was around 44 million in 1980, more than 1 percent of people living in the country were detained. Of those 650.000 detainees, around 230.000 were sent to court.[148] This means that two-thirds of the population was kept under conditions of detention without any evidence to be offered for further judicial procedures. According to the junta, on 12 May 1981, there were 26.828 people in prisons charged with ideological offenses.[149]The maximum period of detention was first doubled from 15 days to 30 days and then tripled from 30 days to 90 days with an option to extend it to 105 days.[150] However, some claims that they were held in detention for 132,[151] 125,[152] and 110[153] days.

According to the junta, the citizens were reunited with their state and liberated from the pressure of illegal organizations. They started to report the terrorists to the authorities.[154] For Evren, the police also regained confidence with the coup and started to confront the organizations more rigorously. Although the junta knew that

---

[145] See for example Alper Uruş, ed., *12 Sanık 12 Tanık* (İstanbul: Detay Yayınları, 2007), 207.
[146] See for example, Orhon, *The Weight of the Past*, 19.
[147] Hüsnü Öndül, "Geçmişle Yüzleşme: 12 Eylül Travmasını Aşmak," *İnsan Hakları Derneği*, accessed June 11, 2021, https://www.ihd.org.tr/gecmisle-yuzlesme-12-eylul-travmasini-asmak/.
[148] For comparative evidence on the magnitude of post-coup incarceration, see Anthony W. Pereira, "Political Justice under Authoritarian Regimes in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile," *Human Rights Review* 4, no. 2 (June 2003): 27–47, 28.
[149] Ibid., 254.
[150] This period was reduced to 45 days in September 1981. See Turkey Testimony on Torture, 2; Ali Köse, *Tarihçesi ve Yaşayanların Anlatımıyla İşkence* (İstanbul: Anadolu Yayıncılık, 2001), 57.
[151] Muhammed Bahadır, ed., *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler* (İstanbul: Cihad Yayınları, 1990), 30.
[152] Metin Çiyayi, *Verilmiş Sözümdür: "Hücredeki Ateş"* (İstanbul: Arya Yayıncılık, 2002), 42.
[153] Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık*, 166.
[154] The General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 246.

there were people with ties to illegal organizations, the police were largely left untouched in order not to break this confidence.

Captured militants were pompously displayed to the public with their weapons.[155] For Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, the military regime laid the blame for numerous violent incidents on these militants and created mythical figures of anarchy. Those nicknamed "Akrep Nalan,"[156] "Taktak Hasan" had to spend years in prison as tokens of the junta's success in decimating terrorists.[157] On this, Selahattin Civelek narrates an interesting anecdote of how the captives were displayed to the public. After he was detained, the police put him into a house. With cameras and reporters, the house was ambushed by the police, and his re-detention was recorded for television.[158]

With the joint effort of the police force and the military, detention centers were filled not only with militants and leaders of once underground political organizations but also with students whose political involvement was limited to writing slogans on walls or distributing pamphlets, and even with ordinary people who had nothing to do with politics. As an example of this reckless attitude in detaining people after the coup, Avni Özgürel remembers his arrest with eight others. They were sitting on the back of a military truck and with the truck slowing down, one of the eight managed to slip away and escaped. Yet, the officer already reported the number of people as nine and he got one missing. Shortly before reaching its final destination of Mamak Military Prison, the truck stopped once more. The officer called the bagel-seller from

---

[155] Mehmet Kürşat, ed., *12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak* (İstanbul: Hoşgörü Yayınları, 2012), 119.
[156] See Güzin Sarıoğlu, "Bir lâkâp ve bir hayat: Akrep Nalan," *serbestiyet.com* (blog), July 1, 2021, https://serbestiyet.com/featured/bir-lakap-ve-bir-hayat-akrep-nalan-64330/.
[157] Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, *Apoletli Adalet: Bir 12 Eylül Hesaplaşması 2* (İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2006), 243.
[158] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 79.

the bakery and took him into custody, thus reaching number nine.[159]

Running counter to this trawling strategy of detention, the police deployed the strategy of specialization to uncover networks of specific organizations. In other words, the strategy here was to specialize in persons and groups to decipher locations and relationships to capture a large number of people in successive operations. Capturing low-rank militants may lead to the leaders, but capturing leaders usually cracks the entire organizational structure. For example, when the leaders of the Revolutionary Path (*Devrimci Yol*, Dev-Yol) were caught, the entire network of the organization was exposed. Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu remembers that the police caught 204 people associated with the organization in a single operation.[160] Hence, every detention was followed by interrogation, and with the information garnered through torture, every interrogation led to new detentions.

Indeed, specialization required dedicated interrogation squads. If a person was captured by another team, or by plain police officers and soldiers, they wait for the interrogation squad to arrive. Then, the squad would escort him/her to a specific detention house and only then the interrogation phase began. Seemingly, these squads were sometimes allocated for interrogating a couple of other organizations according to the overall population of the initial organization. For Taşyapan, the leftist organizations sprouted out from İbrahim Kaypakkaya's Turkey Communist Party/Marxist-Leninist (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist* - TKP/ML) had a special interrogation squad,[161] and Uyan claimed that the Dev-Yol and the Dev-Sol

---

[159] Avni Özgürel, "12 Eylül'ün Hatırlattığı Tablolar," *Radikal*, September 13, 2009, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yorum/12-eylulun-hatirlattigi-tablolar-954243/.
[160] Adnan Bostancıoğlu, *Bitmeyen Yolculuk - Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu Kitabı* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2011), 252.
[161] Ali Taşyapan, *Eylül Ayazı - Anı 4* (İstanbul: El Yayınları, 2009), 41.

had their own interrogation squads.[162] It is also repeated many times that a special squad was allocated to Ülkücü Foundations.[163]

Also, specialization required special interrogation centers. These centers were located in secluded areas and previously used for other purposes. For example, the detention center at Malatya was in the barracks of an old military airport.[164] In some provinces such as Elazığ, [165] and Kayseri,[166] buildings of regional traffic directorates were selected since they were located on the outskirts of cities. In Rize, an institute was transformed into a detention center.[167] In three important cities in terms of the detainee population, buildings in military barracks became detention centers. Namely 28th Brigade's Mamak Barracks in Ankara, the 7th Army Corps Kurdoğlu Barracks in Diyarbakır, and Harbiye Command Headquarters in İstanbul served as detention centers.

Furthermore, in İstanbul and Ankara, there was a unique tactic of keeping left-winger detainees and right-winger detainees at separate locations. The Ülkücüs captured in İstanbul, such as Yılma Durak, Yusuf Ziya Arpacık, Namık Kemal Zeybek were brought to Harbiye Military Headquarters.[168] As Mehdi Zana was briefly held in Harbiye before being sent to Diyarbakır, he remembers that everybody except him and his fellows was right-winger Ülkücüs.[169] Leftists captured in İstanbul, however,

---

[162] Mahmut Memduh Uyan, *Ben Bir İnsanım* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1989), 45.
[163] Rıza Müftüoğlu, *Copların Askerleri* (Ankara: Ocak Yayınları, 2000), 12; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 69.
[164] Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık*, 46.
[165] Adil Akkoyunlu, *Bir İslamcının 12 Eylül Anıları* (2010; repr., İstanbul: Çıra Yayınları, 2018), 105; Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık*, 143.
[166] Ömer Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar: 75-86 Yaşanmış Anılar* (İstanbul: Su Yayınları, 2015), 49.
[167] Recep Memişoğlu, *Kivamini Tutturamaduk* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2018), 90.
[168] Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık*, 33, 71, 199.
[169] Mehdi Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır* (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1991), 294-5.

were brought to Gayrettepe Police Headquarters in İstanbul.[170] People who were brought to these places claim that both centers consisted of cells. This detail indicates that the locations were specifically designed for keeping detainees, rather than vulgarly being transformed from another building. Furthermore, Ülkücü and leftist detainees in Ankara were similarly separated in two detention centers. The Ülkücü detainees were held at a building called C-5 in Mamak Military Barracks, and the leftist detainees were held at a building near Ankara Police Headquarters called the Advanced Investigation Laboratory (*Derin Araştırma Laboratuvarı* - DAL).

This partition reveals another strategy for allocating special interrogation squads and detention centers. The prison regime instrumentalized the fissure between the left-leaning POL-DER and the right-leaning POL-BİR and allocated officers from each side for interrogating the detainees of the opposite side. Leftist detainees were sent to the DAL. They claimed that their torturers were associated with the MHP.[171] Indeed, the DAL was under the authority of Chief of Police Kemal Yazıcıoğlu and Yazıcıoğlu was an outspoken devotee of the MHP leader Alparslan Türkeş.[172] On the other hand, the Ülkücü detainees gathered in C-5 and were interrogated by the Military Prosecutor Nurettin Soyer and the police squad allegedly consisted of POL-DER members.[173]

Together, the arrangement of space and personnel as well as the techniques that will be elaborated on below were directed towards a single goal: breaking the detainee.

---

[170] Ali Türker Ertuncay, *Görülememiştir: Bir TKP/ML Sanığının Günlükleri* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016), 101; Tanılkan, Gayrettepe Selimiye Metris, 84; Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık,* 88.
[171] Bostancıoğlu, *Bitmeyen Yolculuk*, 317; Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık,* 101.
[172] "'MHP Fanatiği' Suçlaması," *Hürriyet,* August 8, 1998, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/mhp-fanatigi-suclamasi-39032682.
[173] Yunus Meral, *Bir Mahkumiyetin Anatomisi* (Ankara: Taş Medrese Yayınları, 1989), 10; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 179; Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık,* 56.

Once the detainee is broken, it is then possible to make him/her confess the alleged crimes and collaborate with the regime in capturing others. From the first minute to the last, tactics employed and techniques implied were under this strategy of removing the detainee's capacity to resist. Each tactic was narrated by the prisoners to underline the painfully challenging task of keeping composure and sanity during detention.

The first tactic was to put detainees in a state of obscurity by blocking their sight with a blindfold. To create a state of obscurity, detainees were immediately blindfolded after being captured and they did not know where they were heading in the first place. Even if the detention center is nearby, the vehicle usually took a detour to break the detainee's sense of place. Upon arrival, the detainee was put into a cell. Sometimes the blindfold stayed on,[174] but sometimes it was removed in cells in a way that would still keep guardians' faces unseen. When the guardian came to take a detainee from a cell, the detainee should stand facing a wall and was forbidden to look back while he/she was blindfolded.[175] The detainee neither knew the place nor the people he/she was interrogated by. The sense of obscurity was further intensified in walking blindfolded towards the interrogation room. Since detainees could see, they had to follow the instructions of guardians at every step. At this point, the sense of obscurity turned into a practice of obedience. Guardians dictated the movement of detainees with commands such as turn left, turn right, crouch, and stand.[176] Finally, the blindfold became an essential instrument of mental pain inflicted during interrogation sessions. After the first blow received by the detainee,

---

[174] Ali Ekber Gürgöz, *Diyarbakır Gecesi - Türkiye'de Kürt Olmak* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2011),75.
[175] Meral, *Bir Mahkumiyetin Anatomisi*, 18.
[176] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 82; Meral, *Bir Mahkumiyetin Anatomisi*, 18.

he/she could not know when the next one would come which left him/her in an incessant state of stress.

The second and most notorious tactic was to employ techniques to deliver physical pain. These techniques can be separated into three. The first and the most basic one is beating with or without a piece of equipment, such as punching and kicking or beating the detainee's feet with truncheons (*falaka, bastinado*).[177] As the detainee's feet were swollen after falaka, interrogators treated them with salty water, not only to inflict further pain but also to keep the feet in a condition that they could be beaten again. In some cases, the detainee was beaten with sandbags[178] or by being put into a car tire that is tied to the ceiling with a rope. There the detainee was spined and beaten[179] and sometimes swung to walls.[180] While the beatings leave visible bruises, traces of the latter techniques were mostly invisible from the outside as they damaged the interior organs. The second technique is to put the detainee in a state of extreme discomfort. Although some remember other practices that follow the same principle such as throwing ants into clothes[181] or putting hot eggs in armpits,[182] the most widespread practice was forms of hanging. In Palestinian hanging (*Filistin askısı*), the hands of the detainee are tied together with a rope hanging from the ceiling, or the detainee is crucified on a log-like object.[183] Sometimes the detainee

---

[177] Nurettin Yılmaz, *Yakın Tarihin Tanığıyım*, 2nd ed. (Diyarbakır: Veng Yayınları, 2008), 180; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 67, 81, 105, 180; Yılmaz Sezgin, *Sayım Düzenine Geeeç!* (İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 2006), 57; Polat, Edip Polat, *Diyarbakır Gerçeği* (Ankara: İnsan Hakları Yayınları, 1988), 28.
[178] Nuri Sınır, *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru* (İstanbul: Nas Ajans Yayınları, 2016), 86; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 38; Sezgin, *Sayım Düzenine Geeeç!*, 57.
[179] Fatih Binbay, *Renklerden Kızılı Seçmek* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2007), 57.
[180] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 69-70.
[181] Ibid., 28.
[182] Erhan İnal, *Metris Kuşları* (İstanbul: Mephisto, 2005), 47.
[183] Ali Ekber Gürgöz, *Diyarbakır Gecesi - Türkiye'de Kürt Olmak* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2011), 40; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 69, 149, 180; Yılmaz Odabaşı, *Bir Kürdün Eylül Defterleri* (n.p.: Broy Yayınları, 1991), 71; Akkoyunlu, *Bir İslamcının 12 Eylül Anıları*, 24.

was hanged from his/her feet[184] and sometimes hanged with handcuffs.[185] Also, a rare technique called "the bear tie" (*ayı bağı*) was used. In this technique, the detainee is tied with his/her hands and feet together and hung from a wall.[186] In time, the detainee's body was numbed with the pain of necrosis and muscle tears. The third technique is based on the principle of delivering pain through shocking the body, either with electricity, or water. The techniques of hanging are used to deliver gradually increasing pain whereas electricity and water were used to deliver instant pain. In electrocution, probes of a magneto were attached to sensitive points of the body, such as genitals, nipples, or the tongue. One torturer sat in front of the magneto and by turning the magneto's arm, electricity moved in a circuit around the detainee's body. Also, torturers used pressurized cold water[187] as well as boiling water[188] to deliver pain to detainees. It is important to note that these practices were used to inflict pain without killing the detainee. However, it does not mean that the torturers were operating on the body of the detainee with care. On quite the contrary, a significant number of people remembered their torturers being drunk.[189] Complementing this, many remember the panic of the torturers in case of the detainee's health status near death. In this case, the detainee was immediately

---

[184] Erdoğan Şenci, *Firar: 1982 Elazığ Cezaevinden* (İstanbul: Yıldız Kitaplar, 2011), 144; Yılmaz, *Yakın Tarihin Tanığıyım*, 168.
[185] Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 13.
[186] Derviş Aydın Akkoç, *Fırtınalı Denizin Kıyısında: Şansal Dikmen Kitabı* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2014), 198.
[187] Sınır, *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*, 86; Mehmet Çoban, *İki Buçuk Sayfa* (n.p: Artuklu Yayınları, 2020), 27.
[188] Hüseyin Özlütaş, *Felç* (İstanbul: Evrensel Basım, 1992), 73.
[189] Sınır, *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*, 67, Bostancıoğlu, *Bitmeyen Yolculuk*, 250; İsmet Erdoğan, *Tek Başına* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2014), 209; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 99; Mehmet Öztepe, *12 Eylül Adaleti ve C-5* (Ankara: Özen Matbaacılık, 1989), 49; Kader Çeşmecioğlu, ed., *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler: Devrimci Yolcu Kadınlar Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Kalkedon, 2015), 100; Rahime Kesici Karakaş, *5 Noluda Kadın Olmak* (İstanbul: Nas Ajans Yayınları, 2017), 41; Akkoyunlu, *Bir İslamcının 12 Eylül Anıları,* 59.

hospitalized to prevent death.[190]

The third tactic was to deprive the detainee of his/her biological needs to weaken the detainee's resistance to interrogations. In this sense, detainees received little to no food.[191] Some noticed that the food was devoid of salt to further weaken the body,[192] and some claimed that there were special drugs in the food they got. People were forced to sleep on cold concrete with hardly anything to keep their bodies warm and they could rarely use toilets. On top of these, interrogators punished the detainee by prohibiting the fulfillment of a specific need. As the police shifts change, interrogators left a sign of paper hung over the shoulders of the detainee, or on the door of his/her cell saying no bread, no water, no toilet, no sitting[193] to warn the officers in the next shift about his/her castigation. Adding insult to the injuries inflicted during interrogation sessions, the detainee's life in the detention center was mostly with an empty stomach, a shivering body, and a full bladder.

The fourth tactic was to employ techniques to mentally break the prisoners by trying to discover their weaknesses. In this sense, the classic good-cop bad-cop comes into play. After long and tormenting interrogations, some interrogators approached as friends and offered a path to salvation.[194] The good cop portrayed himself as an ally,[195] offered food,[196] and told detainees that the only way out was to accept the allegations. If the detainee refused the offer, he/she was treated harshly again.

---

[190] Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 24; Akkoyunlu, Bir İslamcının 12 Eylül Anıları, 79; Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 81.
[191] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 33, 179.
[192] Tarık Akan, *Anne Kafamda Bit Var* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2002), 42; Ali Türker Ertuncay, *Görülememiştir: Bir TKP/ML Sanığının Günlükleri* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016), 104.
[193] Şenci, *Firar*, 116; Ahmet Kahraman, *Sanık Ayağa Kalk!* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1987), 325.
[194] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 132; Şenci, *Firar*, 112.
[195] Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık*, 67.
[196] Aziz Gülmüş, *Cehennem Kahkahaları: 12 Eylül Diyarbakır Cezaevi Anıları* (İstanbul: Peri, 2011), 30.

Sometimes the detainee was thrown into a cold cell completely naked,[197] and sometimes he/she was stripped during interrogation.[198] Another practice that targeted the mental resistance of the detainee was threatening. The threats uttered by interrogators range from simple threats to kill by putting a gun to the detainee's head,[199] or threats to make them disappear.[200] For the detainees, neither of these threats was unrealistic as many were killed in torture, sometimes framed as being shot in attempting to escape, or vanished.[201] Nuri Sınır remembers how the torturers were rehearsing the execution of Mehdi Zana with gallows constructed within the interrogation room[202] at a time when the junta was rapidly approving and executing the capital punishment of militants. Also, interrogators threatened detainees that they would arrest their relatives for torture which was tied to the next tactic employed in detention.

The final tactic to break the detainee was detaining and torturing others. Among others, Aziz Gülmüş notes that "the most effective torture was not the one implied upon the human body. It is (hearing) the screams and shouts of another tortured person."[203] While detention centers were hardly ever devoid of those screams, the ultimate breaking point was the actual or possible torture of detainees' loved ones. If the person was yet to be captured, his/her relatives were held hostage in detention centers and kept as leverage even after the initial person was captured.[204] The

---

[197] Uruş, *12 Sanık 12 Tanık*, 67.
[198] Ibid., 207.
[199] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 83; Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 34; Memişoğlu, Kivamini Tutturamaduk, 91.
[200] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 81; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 29.
[201] For the full list of those who claimed to be died in detention centers and prisons, see *İşkence Dosyası 12 Eylül 1980 - 12 Eylül 1995*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, 1996), 52-68.
[202] Sınır, *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*, 70.
[203] Gülmüş, *Cehennem Kahkahaları*, 23.
[204] Taşyapan, *Eylül Ayazı,* 28.

detention of mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, wives and children of the detainee was such a wounding experience that was noted in numerous narratives as a breaking point in their resistance.[205] This tactic indeed returns us to the first proposition above, that detention and interrogation were two faces of the same self-feeding mechanism and the regime was reckless in detaining people.

If the detainee survived an uncertain period under torturous interrogation, he/she arrived at the ultimate moment of detention: the signing of the statement. The interrogators prepared a statement that in signing the document, the detainee is accepting all the allegations. After the statement is signed, the detainee is sent to a center to be held before a judge. For example, the Command Headquarters at Selimiye functioned as a distribution center for detainees in İstanbul. With very short hearings, the judge initiated the procedure of pre-trial detention (*tutuklu yargılanma*) and the detainee was finally prison-bound.

Being sent to prison was seen as a relief after the torturous experience of detention.[206] The initial perception of prison was much better than the one of detention. Kerim Ağırakçe remembers his first day in the custody section of a prison. He woke up happy after a long time thinking that "torture, beatings, and insults were no longer." Yet, this relief was a false one in two ways. First, the police could request a prisoner from prison for additional interrogation sessions. For example, Ayşe Gülay Özdemir claims that she was taken to the interrogation eight times after

---

[205] Çiyayi, *Verilmiş Sözümdür,* 11; Gülten Kışanak, "Gerçekten 40 Yıl Oldu Mu?," in *40 Yıl 12 Eylül*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 121–44, 128; Memişoğlu, *Kivamini Tutturamaduk,* 88; Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler,* 22; Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında,* 100; Uyan, *Ben Bir İnsanım,* 31; Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 18; Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır,* 310, Yılmaz, *Yakın Tarihin Tanığıyım,* 171.

[206] Çiyayi, *Verilmiş Sözümdür*, 44; Raşit Kısacık, *Diyarbakır Cezaevi* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2011), 75; Ayhan Güngör, *12 Eylül Düşten Kabusa* (İstanbul: Hivda İletişim, 2013), 62; Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşamak,* 53

the initial one.[207] Thus, the horror of detention houses was never too far away. And second, the prison experience was equally horrid if not worse. So, Ağırakçe continued, "yet, we were to understand in no time that the situation was not what we expected, and we are out of the frying pan into the fire."[208]

2.4.2 Establishing the prison regime

The year 1965 was supposedly the starting point of a new era in punitive practices in Turkey. Echoing penal reforms in Europe, the government introduced a new approach to penal punishment to leave "the social feeling of revenge" behind by employing corrective means of disciplining inmates.[209] Based on the individual's own will, a disciplinary treatment program would aim to prevent further involvement in criminal activity through rehabilitation.[210] In practice, however, the prison administration had neither the ability nor the authority to deploy such disciplinary practices.

Before the coup, political prisoners were a force to be reckoned with for both the prison administration and the rest of the prisoners with ordinary offenses.[211] Their stash included weapons like skewers, knives, and even handguns. They established networks that reach beyond prison which posed a threat to the prison personnel. Political organizations, sometimes in the form of prison councils,[212] were *de facto*

---

[207] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 169.
[208] Kerim Ağırakçe, *Mardin Diyarbakır Zindanlarında Özgürlük Çığlıkları* (Diyarbakır: Kültür Kitabevi, 2014), 127.
[209] For the full text of the government notice see Kutlu, *12 Eylül'ün Cezaevleri*, 15.
[210] The official website of the Ministry of Justice marks 1965 as "the starting point of a new era in punitive exercises". See Ceza ve Tevkifevleri Genel Müdürlüğü, "Türkiye Ceza İnfaz Kurumları Kronolojisi (1850-2005)," accessed May 23, 2022, https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/turkiye-ceza-infaz-kurumlari-kronolojisi-1850-2005.
[211] Kadri Gürsel, *Ben De Sizin İçin Üzgünüm* (İstanbul: Destek, 2018), 299.
[212] Fikri Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)* (İstanbul: Kibele Yayınları, 2014), 53; Taşyapan, *Eylül Ayazı*, 60.

ruling the prisons. The ward doors were always kept open, and prisoners were free to move around the prison as they like.[213] For a political prisoner, considering prison as one of the safest places to be was not an exaggeration at the end of the 1970s.

After the declaration of martial law in 1978, political prisoners were sent to military prisons administrated by military officers to regain some degree of authority over them. Yet, this did not solve the problem. In a speech, Prime Minister Demirel talked about the state of prisons at the 4th Martial Law Coordination Meeting:

> Prisons are a disaster. […] They are schools of anarchy. And they are comfortable schools. It does not bother anyone. Prisoners are getting educated [by extremist organizations] there, and when they escape, they became a disaster. They turn into monsters.[214]

In this sense, the lack of state authority in prisons was the mirror image of the situation in the streets of the country.

In this period, prisons functioned as the hinterland of ideological struggle where young militants rest and sharpen their skills and determination only to rejoin the fighting outside. On arrival, prisoners were welcomed by the associated political organization in wards ornamented with its symbols and slogans.[215] There, they meet experienced militants and legendary leaders[216] and became part of a strict education program. For Alişanoğlu, for example, being prison-bound after the police interrogation was "a relief as great as being set free, soldiers neither conduct interrogations nor do they torment you."[217]

---

[213] Gürsel, *Ben De Sizin İçin Üzgünüm*, 296.
[214] Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları 1*, 406.
[215] Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)*, 38.
[216] Sezgin, *Sayım Düzenine Geeeç!*, 63; İnal, *Metris Kuşları*, 59.
[217] Hilmi Köksal Alişanoğlu, *Netekim 12 Eylül'de Geldiler Bir İdamlığın Trajikomik Anıları* (İstanbul: Aykırı Yayınları, 2005), 105.

The prison administration had no further intentions than to ensure the confinement of prisoners. In other words, if nobody escaped from prison, the administration was content with it. This aim of containment neither required complex structures nor specialized personnel as it followed simple principles of enclosing. While the perimeter was controlled by the prison administration, political prisoners reigned supreme inside. Having all kinds of organizational power to plan and freedoms to execute escapes, breaking out from prison was not a distant possibility for a political prisoner. For instance, the daring of the leftist organizations in the face of a weakened state had reached an extent that on 11 December 1977, two leftist organizations, the MLSBP and the TKP/ML, jointly ambushed the Toptaşı Prison for their comrades' escape.[218] Next year, on 2 November 1978, 13 notorious Ülkücü militants escaped from Sağmalcılar prison.[219] Mehmet Ali Ağca, the Ülkücü murderer of Abdi İpekçi, escaped from prison after six months and later attempted to assassinate Pope Jean Paul II. On 26 July 1980, İsa Armağan and Mustafa Pehlivanoğlu, two Ülkücü convicts waiting for capital punishment escaped from Mamak Military Prison.

In the eyes of the military, those who had been brainwashed by twisted ideologies and sunk into violence had to be punished, cured and corrected in prisons. To this end, the first task was to regain control of military prisons. Those who were in prison before the coup report that the coup arrived in prisons earlier than 12 September 1980. Ertuğrul Mavioğlu claimed that three prisons, Davutpaşa, Mamak, and Diyarbakır were selected as pilot areas. With operations, the military prepared these

[218] Vehbi Ersan, *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 266.
[219] "Sağmalcılar'dan Ülkücü 13 Tutuklu ve Mahkum Kaçtı," *Milliyet*, March 11, 1978.

prisons for the emergence of a new prison regime after the coup.[220] Accordingly, Cafer Solgun mentioned that on the 1st of May 1980, soldiers fired upon prisoners in Davutpaşa Military Prison.[221] On 21 August 1980, the administration brought external forces for an operation to break the prisoners' autonomy.[222] For Erdal Turgut, the coup arrived in full force on 15 September with the enforcement of prisoner uniforms.[223] Similarly, Oral Çalışlar reported that on 28 August 1980, soldiers stormed Mamak Military Prison prison and killed Mustafa Yalçın during the assault.[224] Sükun Öztoklu reported the same incident, but she claimed that it was on 27 August.[225] The bunk beds in Mamak were made of iron, which was used by prisoners for making weapons.[226] The administration wanted to replace these beds with ones made out of wood. However, some wrote that the change in Mamak occurred way before. Following the escape of two Ülkücü prisoners, the infamous Colonel Raci Tetik replaced the so-called prisoner-friendly Captain Hasan Mesci.[227]

Before the coup, prison administrations had already regained control of key prisons. Still, the massive wave of incarceration resulted in a need for buildings that could be used as prisons. Evren reflected on this need:

> The martial law commanders transformed barracks into prisons. What could they do? There were so many detained… in thousands… Selimiye Barracks in Istanbul became a

[220] Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, *Asılmayıp Beslenenler: Bir 12 Eylül Hesaplaşması - 1* (2004; repr., İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2006), 26.
[221] Cafer Solgun, *Demeyin Anama, İçerideyim* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 97.
[222] Ibid., 103.
[223] Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, *Asılmayıp Beslenenler: Bir 12 Eylül Hesaplaşması - 1* (2004; repr., İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2006), 56.
[224] Oral Çalışlar, *12 Mart'tan, 12 Eylül'e Mamak* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1989), 20.
[225] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar: Kadınlar Mamak Cezaevini Anlatıyor* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2011), 38.
[226] Sinan Oza, *En Uzun Eylül* (İstanbul: Amaç Yayıncılık, 1989), 23.
[227] Fikri Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)* (İstanbul: Kibele Yayınları, 2014), 71.

> prison. […] We immediately and swiftly started building modern prisons. We told them to finish Diyarbakır Prison as soon as possible.[228]

The construction of Diyarbakır Prison no.5 was completed as commanded and handed over to the military. Also, the Metris Military Prison was completed in 1981 and became the locus of political prisoners in İstanbul. While transforming available barracks, fortifying existing prisons, and constructing new ones, the military regime tried to catch up with the exponential growth of the prisoner population. These prisons became places of experimentation where ideological illnesses were cured under military supervision and discipline.

2.4.3 Decimating political activists

The military viewed the ideological motivations of political activists as illnesses and the prisons were places of containment and treatment. In this sense, the work of psychiatrist Ayhan Songar is an important example of how social disarray was diagnosed.[229] To unravel the terrorist profile, Songar conducted research on 3279 political prisoners in 1983. His claims include assessments such as "similar to the necessity of a certain microbe to contract pneumonia, external factors were necessary to become a terrorist."[230] The patient has fallen ill with the microbe of ideology, and the aim of imprisonment is to sunder it out of the prisoner's mind and exterminate it. For the military, there is one strategy of treatment. The patient will be subjected to military discipline and become an obedient, in Foucauldian terms, docile subject.

---

[228] 32*12 Eylül 1980 Darbesi Nasıl Yapıldı? | Kenan Evren Anlatıyor | 32. Gün Arşivi*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWsz5Q6OvA4.

[229] For an academic account on Songar's collaboration with the military regime, see Zeynep Bursa-Millet, "Treating the 'Youth Peril': Ayhan Songar, Psychiatrist at the Service of Turkey's Military Regime (1980–1983)," *Le Mouvement Social* 267, no. 2 (2019): 47–61.

[230] See Ayhan Songar, "Türkiye'de Terör Olaylarının Arkasında Yatan Gerçekler Sosyo-Psikolojik Araştırma ve Değerlendirme," in *Ülkemizi 12 Eylül'e Getiren Sebepler ve Türkiye Üzerindeki Oyunlar* (İstanbul: Aydınlar Ocağı, 1984), 309–28.

The cure sought for the ideological malady by the junta was rooted in their diagnosis:

> The principles of education and training, their plans and programmes had been focused in some uncertain directions before 12 September, and thus had been deviated from the Kemalist principles.[231]

For them, Turkish society was poisoned because it has diverted from Ataturkism which is an essential deterrent to harmful ideologies. Therefore, the immune system that will protect the body against a possible relapse would again be Ataturkism.

Even though the military had a clear recipe for treatment in mind, in prisons, tactics of administration and tactics of prisoners were deployed on top of one another in a creative manner.[232] Alongside brutal means of repression, prison administrations deployed experimental tactics to better control and discipline prisoners. In this section, I will discuss some of the major practices of prison administration.[233]

The main legal basis for disciplining prisoners was based on the attribution of private

---

[231] The National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey*, 281.

[232] Creativity of power was one of the most important theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault. Against Reich's repressive understanding and Marx's politico-economic understanding of power, Foucault favored Nietzsche's conceptualization of power as a creative struggle between forces. Here, this Foucauldian understanding of power requires further clarification since Foucault wrote and talked much about prisons himself. His well-acknowledged book, *Discipline and Punish*, is also widely criticized by its lack of empirical precision. For example, in Oxford's 400 pages-long edited volume on the history of prisons, Foucault is cited once in the introduction by Morris and Rothman, only to call him "a moral philosopher" and to attack his historiography. Although, they liked his emphasis on prison as an object of study to understand society, which of course justifies their work as well, they also claimed that Foucault did not respect to the differences between phenomena in different periods, overgeneralized what he observed in France, and most importantly, he "conflated official rhetoric and daily realities; let public officials announce a program for the surveillance or the reform of the criminals, and he presumed realization." See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 53, 91; Norval Morris and David Rothman J., "Introduction," in *The Oxford History of The Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, ed. Norval Morris and David Rothman J. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), viii. See also C. Fred Alford, "What Would It Matter If Everything Foucault Said about Prison Were Wrong? 'Discipline and Punish' after Twenty Years," *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 125–46.

[233] For detailed analysis of other practices see Yılmaz, *12 Eylül'ün Cezaevleri*; Ayma, "78 Kuşağının Hapishane Deneyimleri."

soldier status. Every prisoner in a military prison, including the women, was considered a private soldier, thus part of the military chain of command. According to Oral Çalışlar, this law dates back to Mamak Military Prison after the 1971 coup-by-memorandum. The warden of the time, Colonel M.Kemal Saldıraner wanted to include prisoners in the military hierarchy and convinced the commanders-in-chief of a law that will categorize prisoners as soldiers (*asker kişi*).[234] Gülten Kışanak also argued that this status was there when Behice Boran was incarcerated in 1971.[235]

Even though the law considered a prisoner in a military prison as a private soldier, the practical rank of the prisoners had always been lower. For example, Hüseyin Özlütaş remembered that when entering the prison, the soldier at the gate warned him:

> Here you are counted as a soldier. You will call everybody "my commander" regardless of their rank. You will get a haircut and shave your beard like a soldier.[236]

This meant that political prisoners were practically at the lowest possible rank of the military hierarchy, even below private soldiers. On one hand, by binding prisoners into a chain of command, the prison administration was able to encompass them into military discipline and the regimented life of a soldier. On the other hand, the soldier status overrode the self-acclaimed identity of a political prisoner which implies an entitlement to a certain degree of autonomy and respect from the administration and other convicts of petty crimes. For Alişanoğlu, this status aimed at transforming them from being political prisoners to soldier prisoners. It was nothing but "a denial of their political identity."[237] The infamous warden of Diyarbakır Prison, Esat Oktay

---

[234] Çalışlar, *12 Mart'tan 12 Eylül'e Mamak*, 11-12.
[235] Kışanak, "Gerçekten 40 yıl oldu mu?," 134.
[236] Özlütaş, *Felç*, 96.
[237] Alişanoğlu, *Netekim! 12 Eylül'de Geldiler*, 204.

Yıldıran took this status to the extreme and granted his dog Co the rank of commandership over prisoners[238] and ordered the prisoners to salute it.[239] According to prisoners, during Yıldıran's rule, their status was lower than that of an animal.

The prisoners were expected to memorize anthems and march in order. In addition to the National Anthem, Our Oath (*Andımız*), and Ataturk's Appeal to Youth (*Atatürk'ün Gençliğe Hitabesi*), there were all kinds of nationalist anthems sung by the prisoners. Şebap Kandemir claimed that each prisoner had to memorize 56 military anthems in Diyarbakır Prison No.5.[240] In that prison, the administration also forced prisoners to paint the interior walls with images of notable leaders from Turkish history and Turkish flags,[241] Ataturk's sculpture at Samsun,[242] and the Turkish War of Independence.[243]

Furthermore, the temporal arrangement of prisoners' life in military prisons could be considered an extension of the military's methods of disciplining soldiers. A clear schedule of daily activities was an essential part of sustaining order in prison. On one hand, it allowed the prison administration to have better control over the prisoners. On the other, prisoners were kept busy in a series of activities that will leave little to no time to think or resist.

Burhan Ulucan provided a detailed schedule of an ordinary day at the Mamak Military Prison.

---

[238] İrfan Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a 5 No'lu Cezaevi* (İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 2010), 97.
[239] Sınır, *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*, 149.
[240] Polat, *Diyarbakır Gerçeği*, 45.
[241] Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 96
[242] Sınır, *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*, 187.
[243] Gülmüş, *Cehennem Kahkahaları*, 85; Güzel, *Devlet İşkence Buyurdu*, 123.

> At six o'clock prisoners rise. One hour later, there is the first roll call. At 9 o'clock, the book reading session [in the name of learning Ataturkism] starts. One hour later, there is the second roll call and physical training follows it. At 12:30, prisoners have lunch. After lunch, there is another study session, another roll call, another session of physical training, and then dinner is served. Prisoners are free until they go to bed at 21 o'clock.[244]

Hüseyin Yurdakul remembered the circle of training and rest in the Mamak's infamous cages. He wrote that from morning till dawn, prisoners in the cage were doing physical drills for 45 minutes and resting for 15 minutes. "By the rest, all I mean is squatting and smoking one cigarette at most."[245]

These examples demonstrate that the military deployed a usual strategy of disciplining soldiers in prisons. This strategy was directed toward leaving little to no free time for the soldiers to encapsulate themselves in a strong sense of discipline. For example, Edip Polat argued that the prison administration left them no free time. Similarly, Sinan Oza claimed that everything at Mamak was planned and programmed in detail. There was no room for idleness or arbitrariness.[246] Again, Banu Asena Tosun concluded that this intense training program aimed to "leave no time for ourselves."[247]

The military believed that the ideological malady could be cured in prisons with a strict education of prisoners about the principles of Ataturkism. For example, Oral Çalışlar remembered that they were forced to read a book about Ataturkism. The prisoner had to read it as loud and as passionately as possible.[248] Similarly, Babaoğlu mentioned a book about Ataturkism and another about the Turkish revolution history

---

[244] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 42-43.
[245] Ibid., 86.
[246] Oza, *En Uzun Eylül*, 148.
[247] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 17.
[248] Çalışlar, *12 Mart'tan 12 Eylül'e*, 25-26.

(*inkılap tarihi*) which were forcefully read by the prisoners.

Prisoners looked like soldiers. They were trained and disciplined as soldiers. The only thing they were lacking for being a soldier was adequate uniforms. So, prisoners were forced to wear prisoner uniforms that will underscore their status. According to Haşim Kutlu, the legal basis for the uniform was in the code since 1967 but it was never implemented until the 1980 coup. The reasons for its implementation were reported by Kutlu as:

> To prevent escapes or escape attempts, to avoid smuggling of pills, cannabis, heroin, sharp and pointy objects, and guns into prison. And finally, in prisons, it will neutralize the reign of ward masters (*koğuş ağası*) and other privileged people, and maintain equality among all.[249]

Prisoner uniform was rigorously enforced upon political prisoners to strip them of their political identity and render them into a single category. The implementation of prisoner uniforms is still a matter of controversy in contemporary prisons in Turkey.[250]

Although the prisoners were equalized with the soldier status, the prison administrations further categorized prisoners in terms of their degree of obedience and cooperation. It is a result of the technique developed to reward those who obey and recant their ideologies as well as to better control the wards with the help of collaborating prisoners. The most useful prisoners were labeled as confessors (*itirafçılar*) and informants (*ispiyoncu*).

---

[249] Kutlu, *12 Eylül'ün Cezaevleri*, 47.

[250] See "Tek tip kıyafet uygulaması nasıl olacak? Hangi ülkelerde uygulanıyor?," CNN TÜRK, accessed July 28, 2022, https://www.cnnturk.com/ajanda/tek-tip-kiyafet-uygulamasi-nasil-olacak-hangi-ulkelerde-uygulaniyor; "Yönetmeliğe Takıldı: 'Tek Tip' Kıyafet Uygulaması Beklemede - Diken," January 30, 2018, https://www.diken.com.tr/yonetmelige-takildi-tek-tip-kiyafet-uygulamasi-beklemede/.

Confessors were the ones who changed sides and help the prison administration to break the solidarity and resistance of prisoners and recruit more confessors among them. For example, Şahin Dönmez was a well-known confessor from the PKK. For Edip Polat and İrfan Babaoğlu, he was the first confessor at the Diyarbakır Prison.[251] Dönmez even wrote a propaganda book explaining the interior structure of the PKK.[252] Nuri Sınır claimed that Dönmez joined interrogations himself and forced other people to become confessors.[253] Similarly, İbrahim Küreken claimed that another PKK confessor, Hidayet Bozyiğit, was present in torture sessions.[254] Of course, confessors were not particularly part of the PKK. For example, Mahmut Memduh Uyan mentions the MLSBP's confessor Şemsi Özkan[255] and Dev-Yol's İsmail Ayar.[256] Oral Çalışlar mentioned the Eylem Birliği's confessor Hüseyin Kunter,[257] and Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu mentioned the MHP confessor Hicabi Koçyiğit.[258]

The emergence of confessors harmed the already shaken integrity of political organizations. Şakir Bilgin narrated that they could not know who would be the next one to confess. Also, he claimed that confessors had to actively work together with police like interrogators.[259] These people were collaborating with the police to capture his/her fellow comrades. For example, İbrahim Küreken mentions a confessor named Koçali who managed to get 65 people captured.[260] According to

---

[251] Polat, *Diyarbakır Gerçeği*, 60; Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 58.
[252] Şahin Dönmez, *Bir Terör Örgütünün Iç Yüzü* (Ankara: Anadolu Basın Birliği, 1986).
[253] Sınır, *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*, 199.
[254] İbrahim Küreken, *Parçası, Mahkumu, Tanığı, Sürgünü Oldum* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), 186.
[255] Uyan, *Ben Bir İnsanım*, 48.
[256] Ibid., 51.
[257] Çalışlar, *12 Mart'tan 12 Eylül'e Mamak*, 27.
[258] Bostancıoğlu, *Bitmeyen Yolculuk*, 250.
[259] Şakir Bilgin, *Güneş Her Gün Doğar* (İstanbul: Yön Yayınları, 1988), 194.
[260] Küreken, *Parçası, Mahkumu, Tanığı*, 178.

Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu, the increasing number of confessors created a negative atmosphere in the courts.[261] For Taylan Çoklar, a confessor named Laz Osman was the reason for the court to give him the death penalty.[262] On confessors, Mahmut Memduh Uyan wrote:

> A confessor got his friends ambushed and killed. In the following years, it was revealed that the state made them do the dirtiest jobs. Gangs of confessors were formed. Confessors were providing "sincere pleas" in courts to ensure that the revolutionaries got the maximum punishment possible.[263]

For Edip Polat, a confessor named Hasan Garip was acting like a leader of the confessor gang, organizing others while he was exempted from forced training.[264] Being a confessor meant taking the risk of being an object of hostility for the rest of the prisoners. Leftist Şakir Bilgin claimed that even the petty right-winger Ülkücüs cast out the confessors.[265] The prison administration was aware of the hatred of other prisoners towards confessors. Some noted that the administration provided a pen and an empty page to a prisoner with leadership status and hiddenly show him/her to others as if he/she is writing a confession letter.[266] And finally, confessors frequently appeared in media to recant and reiterate the master narrative of the 1980 coup as living evidence.[267] According to Hasan Hayri Arslan, not all could take this dishonorable change. He mentioned a confessor named Suphi Çevirici who

[261] Bostancıoğlu, *Bitmeyen Yolculuk*, 270.
[262] İsa Aydın, *12 Eylül 1980 3 İdam 1 Müebbet Taylan Çoklar* (Tarsus, n.d.), 102.
[263] Mahmut Memduh Uyan, *Kardeşim Hepsi Hikaye* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2015), 430.
[264] Polat, *Diyarbakır Gerçeği*, 76.
[265] Bilgin, *Güneş Her Gün Doğar*, 196.
[266] Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 112.
[267] Alişanoğlu, *Netekim! 12 Eylül'de Geldiler*, 225.

committed suicide in 1986.[268] Similarly, İrfan Babaoğlu noted the suicide of confessor Remzi.[269]

Still, there is another category of people who were despised by the prisoners more than the confessors. These were called informants (*ispiyoncu*). They comprised the prison administration's network of information.[270] The existence of an informant network is evidence of the administration's lack of reach in wards. In contrast with the modern technologies of surveillance, having to sustain a network of informants was inefficient and carried the constant risk of exposure. However, this does not mean that they were altogether ineffective in terms of control. From the perspective of prisoners, the known existence of an informant in the ward was a bane of existence. Binbay wrote:

> The existence of an informant was a great threat to the ward. You could not talk, you could not laugh, you could not ask anything about your law case, and you could not perform simple acts such as going to the toilet at night, or sharing some cigarettes with a few people.[271]

Mehmet Sait Üçlü labeled informants as "the damned."[272] Whenever prisoners uncover an informant; their attitude was violent towards him/her. For example, Fikri Günay narrates the ambition of the ward's population in punishing the Ülkücü informant. The leftists wanted to beat him, but the Ülkücüs punished him themselves in a worse way.[273]

---

[268] Hasan Hayri Aslan, *Diyarbakır 5 No'lu Cehenneminde Ölümden De Öte* (İstanbul: Patika Kitap Yayınları, 2015), 334.
[269] Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 247.
[270] Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 40, Polat, *Diyarbakır Gerçeği*, 86.
[271] Fatih Binbay, *Renklerden Kızılı Seçmek*, 77.
[272] Üçlü, *Sarı Hüzün*, 25.
[273] Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)*, 136-7.

In contrast with the hideous nature of informants, confessors were out in the open. Among the prisoner narratives, there were some with apparent empathy towards them. For example, Edip Polat provided three categories of confessors: first, those who changed their worldviews, second, those who were undecided about their worldviews, and third, those who confessed because they could not resist torture and repression.[274] Mehdi Zana noted that prisoners were trying not to be too harsh to the confessors to prevent them from turning into informants.[275]

In addition to informants and confessors, there was the category of independents (*bağımsızlar*). As the name suggests, these were the people who started to act independently of their political organization in prison but did not become a collaborator of the prison administration. Cafer Solgun defined the term as "the name given to those who could not bear torture or hunger strikes, but did not become a confessor as well."[276] Unlike informants, they were allocated to separate wards and rewarded with better living conditions. For example, Zeynel Polat remembered that there was a library and a gym in the prison, but they could only be visited by the independents.[277] Similarly, Şakir Bilgin noted that the prison he was in had a painting workshop, a music room, and a theater, yet these were only available for those who declared their independence from the organizations.[278] Fahrettin Masum Budak called these people neutrals (*tarafsızlar*). He noted that promises of the prison administration included retraction of disciplinary punishments, contact visits (*açık görüş*), opportunity to learn arts, and unlimited letter correspondence.[279]

---

[274] Polat, *Diyarbakır Gerçeği*, 61-63.
[275] Mehdi Zana, *Vahşetin Günlüğü* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1993), 87.
[276] Solgun, *Demeyin Anama İçerdeyim*, 151.
[277] Mavioğlu, *Asılmayıp Beslenenler*, 66.
[278] Bilgin, *Güneş Her Gün Doğar*, 57.
[279] Fahrettin Masum Budak, *Giden Canlar Bizimdi* (İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2013), 340-1.

Those who recant from their political ideologies, and either sided with the prison administration or declared their independence from their organizations, gained legal status by the virtue of the ANAP government's repentance law (*pişmanlık yasası*). According to Yılmaz Sezgin, those who want to take advantage of the repentance law, were used by the prison administration as informants and confessors.[280] Based on this law, five confessors of the Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda Unit (*Marxist-Leninist Silahlı Propaganda Birliği* – MLSBP) were released from prison on 14 August 1985.

In order to force prisoners to recant their ideologies, the prison administrations deployed experimental treatment methods. Perhaps one of the most important examples of those was the mixing-for-peace treatment (*karıştır-barıştır*). The treatment was about reconciling hostile groups in military prisons by making them dwell in the same wards and cells. According to Günay, the mixing-for-peace was first installed after the declaration of martial law that transferred political prisoners to military prisons in 1978. Yet, the treatment plan failed and was revoked. Another experiment in 1979 failed as well. It finally succeeded after the coup.[281] Günay remembered the announcement made by an officer at Mamak Military Prison after the coup:

> The brave Turkish Army has taught a lesson to both the [political] right and the left and forbade you to quarrel with each other. Outside, the people are united. Now is the time to make peace. We will make you reconcile just like a father reconciles his children. If there is anyone who disagrees, take one step forward![282]

Oral Çalışlar remembered the announcement as:

---

[280] Yılmaz Sezgin, *Sinop'ta İdam Geceleri* (İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 2002), 107.
[281] Ibid., 37.
[282] Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)*, 129-130.

> From now on, leftists and right-wingers will live together as siblings. You will continue your lives under the watch of the Turkish Armed Forces.[283]

Durdu Gevher also wrote about the first day of mixing-for-peace at Mamak. He wrote:

> One evening, when we were going for a roll call, I saw soldiers laying over battlements. When we were there for the call, another squad of prisoners appeared. They were moving chest out, eyes on the ceiling, approached us at attention, and kissed us. Those kissing us were moving so fast! I could not see any of their faces.[284]

Like Gevher, Günay narrated the ceremony. He narrated that everyone hugged each other unwillingly.[285] The mixing-for-peace meant spending years in an uncertain environment where a small quarrel with the other may turn into a deadly brawl. Oğuzhan Cengiz wrote on the first days of mixing-for-peace treatment:

> A difficult life is beginning for all of us. Those who fired bullets at each other are together. Really, this will be a great test for each side. There is a constant battle of nerves in the ward. We are agitated by every move of the communists and they are agitated by our every move… The one that has steel nerves will win. There is bafflement in the first days. Our world views and our manners were all different. We are watching each other. Small quarrels had started.[286]

It is important to note that the Ülkücü prisoners were all male which prevented the expansion of mixing-for-peace to women's wards. Also, the number of Ülkücü prisoners was far lower than the number of leftist prisoners. the trial of the MHP and Ülkücü Associations gathered Ülkücüs at Mamak Military Prison.[287] When both limitations are considered, men's wards of the Mamak were the locus of the mixing-

---

[283] Çalışlar, *12 Mart'dan 12 Eylül'e*, 24.
[284] Durdu Gevher, *Mamak Ardından Tavşan Yaşamı* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2015), 75.
[285] Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)*, 130.
[286] Oğuzhan Cengiz, *Kapıaltı* (İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2004), 34.
[287] For example, on 29 January 1981, Ülkücü prisoners were brought from Istanbul prisons to Mamak. Mehmet Öztepe, *12 Eylül'den Sonra Mamak Hatıralarım* (Ankara: Yusufiye Yayınları, 1991), 55.

for-peace treatment.[288]

The implementation of mixing-for-peace underlined the success of the intervention in moving beyond ideological ruptures and mending the country together once again. For example, Journalist Emin Çölaşan was invited to Mamak Prison in December 1980, shortly after the coup. The infamous article about his observations of the prison was emblazed with sentences such as "a place that proves the existence of the state", where "right-winger, left-winger, revolutionary, Ülkücü, Akıncı live in the same environment without a fight," where "leftist and right-wingers say, 'we have no resentment towards/against each other.'"[289] Once again, a documentary aired on TRT showcases inmates of Mamak Military Prison with their military marches, emphasizing the intervention's success in establishing order. The narrator uttered: "Those in Mamak Military Prison, both leftists, and right-wingers, chat with each other as friends during their free time, read newspapers, and study for the exam about Ataturk and principles of the republic in the evening." Prisoners appeared in interviews as graceful for the military for saving the country, and the Ataturkist education they receive. The reporters also visited cells of Mamak where leftists and right-wingers kept together. They interviewed yet other graceful people who fought each other but now made peace with the virtue of the intervention.[290] As a response to international concerns about torture and mistreatment in Turkish prisons, another propaganda documentary was distributed to media outlets. It focused on Elazığ

[288] For a more detailed analysis of the treatment as well as its mnemonic repercussions see Gökhan Şensönmez, "Politics of Remembering the Enemy: Prisoner Narratives of the 1980 Military Coup," *Turkish Studies* forthcoming (May 8, 2022)."
[289] Emin Çölaşan, "Milliyet, Mamak Cezaevi'nde," *Milliyet*, December 6, 1980.
[290] The documentary of TRT was removed from the official website, yet some parts are reuploaded by individual users. The mentioned sequence is available on youtube.com. See *Ülkücülere Mamak Askeri Cezaevinde Kemalist Işkence*, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5H6B4N5NjA.

Military Prison with similarly positive images of young prisoners playing volleyball and learning about Ataturkism under military discipline.[291]

The prison personnel was an important part of the practices deployed in prison. On top of the hierarchy, there was the Martial Law Commander of that particular region. Then, there were military officers, such as lieutenants, majors, and captains who served as wardens and administrators. There were also non-commissioned officers, such as sergeants serving as chief prison guards. The majority of prison personnel was comprised of private soldiers who joined the army through conscription. No layer of this hierarchy had any expertise in carceral reeducation. The only available body of knowledge was the military discipline which was faithfully applied in prisons.

Furthermore, other ways of experimental treatment of the prisoners were undertaken by external staff. These people tried to convince prisoners to recant by using various techniques of persuasion. One of them was to convert them into believers of Islam. For example, Yusuf Ziya Arpacık remembered that in the Gaziantep Special Type Prison, a group of ten teachers was visiting them every day. Among them, there was a psychologist as well as the mufti of the province who taught them how to read in Arabic.[292] According to Lütfi Ayık, the mufti of the province were visiting them and asking them to repent.[293] Similarly, İrfan Babaoğlu mentioned an imam visiting his ward to teach them Islam.[294] Furthermore, Mahmut Esat Güven noted the introduction of courses on reading the Qur'an in civilian prisons. Some noted that in

[291] *1981 Yılında Türkiye: Askeri Darbe Sonrası Siyasal ve Sosyal Yaşam*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlSTJkB8L1Q.
[292] Yusuf Ziya Arpacık, *Başeğmediler* (İstanbul: İlteriş Yayınları, 2004), 248.
[293] Lütfi Ayık, *Anılar* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2019), 58.
[294] Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 182.

the juvenile ward of Diyarbakır Prison No.5, the Islamist hijackers[295] were appointed for the education of children. Mehdi Zana claimed that the hijackers were trying to brainwash kids with Islam and force them to fast during Ramadan.[296] Others also mentioned that sharia education was forced onto children.[297]

Finally, some noted the existence of civilian personnel of specific professions as extensions of the prison administration. According to Şakir Bilgin, there were psychologists in Metris in 1982. Those having mental problems were sent to a psychologist and they told the prisoners to become independent from their political organizations.[298] On the same track, Cafer Solgun narrated that those psychologists in Metris were trying to persuade them to give up on the hunger strike.[299] Erhan İnal also mentioned that there were face-to-face meetings with psychologists in Bartın Prison.[300]

From the junta's perspective, their greatest success was eradicating anarchy and terror in such a way that the same chaotic situation will not occur again in the future. The military's iron fist squashed the illegal political organizations and their fanatic militants. The narrative of discipline and treatment turned into narratives of torture and degradation. In this sense, the decimation of political actors after the coup remains an unaltered part of the master narrative.

---

[295] On 13 October 1980, four Islamists, Yılmaz Yalçıner, Mekki Yassıkaya, Hasan Güneşer and Ömer Yorulmaz hijacked a plane allegedly to escape abroad. See Emeti Saruhan, "İyi ki o uçağı kaçıramadık," Text, Yeni Şafak (Yeni Şafak, December 11, 2011), https://www.yenisafak.com/roportaj/iyi-ki-o-ucagi-kaciramadik-355983.
[296] Zana, *Vahşetin Günlüğü*, 90-91.
[297] Aslan, *Diyarbakır 5 No'lu Cehenneminde*, 250; Fırat Aydınkaya, *Ölüm Koridoru: Diyarbakır Cezaevinden Notlar Hamit Kankılıç İle Söyleşi* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2011), 106.
[298] Bilgin, *Güneş Her Gün Doğar*, 65.
[299] Solgun, *Demeyin Anama İçerdeyim*, 189.
[300] İnal, *Metris Kuşları*, 70.

2.5 The demise of the master narrative?

The junta claimed that the intervention put an end to the ideological strife between the right and the left and opened a clean slate of post-ideology in Turkish history. This aspect of the master narrative had been recognized by the political actors of the post-coup period. It was a period of pragmatist centrism led by Turgut Özal and the ANAP. Özal defined his party as representing *orta direk,* a reference to the average bulk of low-to-mid income classes. He further claimed that his party became a melting pot for four inclinations of the pre-coup period: social democracy, economic liberalism, nationalism, and Islamist conservatism.[301] All these four were representing milder versions of the ideologies of four prominent political parties of the 1970s: the CHP, the AP, the MHP, and the MSP. Notably, Özal was careful to prefer the term inclination (*eğilim*) instead of ideology. These were fitting claims within the master narrative of mending the ideological ruptures after the coup.

Despite the transfer of power that occurred in 1983, civilian politicians had to subscribe to the master narrative in order to find a place in the new era. For example, Özal made a speech at the opening ceremony of a conference about the coup on 15 September 1984. After claiming that foreign forces were always trying to tear Turkey apart, he said: "Today, in fact, 12 September intervention saved Turkey from the edge of a cliff. There is no other way of saying this."[302] Özal continued:

> As I expressed in many other speeches, the left-right divide has served many tragic ends. […] Yet, the purpose was to divide the country as left and right to ignite a fight between two sides. That's why we tried not to use these terms. Because in certain

[301] Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "The Motherland Party: The Challenge of Institutionalization in a Charismatic Leader Party," *Turkish Studies* 3, no. 1 (March 2002): 41–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/714005703, 45.
[302] Aydınlar Ocağı, *Ülkemizi 12 Eylül'e Getiren Sebepler ve Türkiye Üzerindeki Oyunlar: Tebliğler Tahliller ve Sonuç Bildirisi* (İstanbul, 1984), 23.

> periods, these terms had a meaning. It was used to divide certain camps and certain groups.[303]

His subscription to the junta's narrative that ideologies were dividing an indivisible nation was apparent in this speech. Another notable detail is that the aforementioned conference was organized by the Intellectuals' Hearth (*Aydınlar Ocağı*), an influential group of intellectuals that's best known for their formulation of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis.

In its essence, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis was a conservative ideology that emphasizes the harmony between the two ideological corpora and celebrates the Islamification of Turks as the unification of two entities destined to fit each other. The synthesis successfully morphed into a conservative interpretation of Kemalism favored by the junta and became the official ideology in the 1980s.[304]

That conservative interpretation was entitled Ataturkism. The centenary of Ataturk's birth, 1981, displayed the extent of the junta's Ataturkist revival project. Several conferences were organized to discuss and gratify Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's life and ideas. The General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces prepared a three-volume series of Ataturkism. Volume 1 was *Ataturk's views and instructions*, comprised of his speeches. Volume 2 was *Articles on Ataturk and Ataturksim,* comprised of numerous articles written by Turkish academics. Volume 3 was *Ataturkist Thought System.* According to Kenan Evren, these volumes were prepared to systematically educate future generations about national morality based on Ataturkism.[305]

It is difficult to mark the exact point when the influence of the junta faded away

---

[303] Ibid., 24.
[304] See Aydın and Taşkın, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 340-4.
[305] Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Atatürkçülük* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1983), 1.

completely. With the ratification of the new constitution in 1982, a provisional clause automatically elected the leader of the junta, Kenan Evren, as the president of Turkey. Although the military regime ceased to exist when the governing power was transferred to a civilian government with the 1983 general elections, the generals preserved a degree of legitimate influence. Evren held his chair until 1989 with the remaining generals of the junta by his side by transforming the MGK into the Council of the Presidency (*Cumhurbaşkanlığı Konseyi*). So, it is fair to argue that the junta personally oversaw civilian governments throughout most of the 1980s.

For Nurdan Gürbilek, the cultural scene of Turkey after the coup highlighted an opening of private life alongside a noticeable retreat from social and political life after the coup. She argued that the 1980s reflect the struggle of two cultures: one was the culture of repression and violence of the coup in the first half of the decade and the other was the culture of relative liberalization of the civilian government in the second half.[306] Gürbilek remembers a baffling moment that epitomizes the ethos of the era:

> A few years ago, a friend of mine posed a question: "In the 1980s, could it be argued that festivals served to repress the scream coming from prisons?" The question must be appeared to everyone as too tough, too straightforward, too ruthless. Nobody wanted to answer the question which turned into heart-searching. Whatever is said will be wrong. Then, the poser of the question answered it: "to argue that will be erroneous, but to not argue that will be erroneous too."[307]

For Ayşe Ayata, this dual cultural environment, one of liberalization and the other of repression, was the bedrock of rising identity politics in Turkey.[308] Accordingly, it

[306] Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak* (1992; repr., İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019), 10-11.
[307] Ibid., 16.
[308] Ayşe Ayata, "The Emergence of Identity Politics in Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 17 (1997): 59–73, 59.

created a gap between two groups of people. Those confined in prison continued perceiving the world through an ideological lens while the rest moved on to a new epoch with different political rhetoric and concerns. As a result, despite the former's screams being present in the 1980s, the latter's reception was tumultuous at best. Except for some journalistic works and human rights organization reports, many turned a blind eye to the plight of prisons.

As the power of the junta started to deteriorate, an opposing current gradually emerged to debunk the legitimacy and reverse the memory of the coup from being a saving moment to a catastrophe. However, the picture of the coup is increasingly being drawn with a somber tone. In that pallet of many grievances, the memory of prisons was one of the darkest colors. Besides investigative books, documentaries, movies, TV series, and novels, imprisoned members of the Ülkücü movement, the Turkish and the Kurdish left, and in fewer numbers, the Islamists shared what they witnessed in an ever-growing memory corpus.

According to the data set used in this dissertation, the number of books published increased in every decade. 18 books were published between 1986 and 1989. 20 books were published between 1990 and 1999. 31 books were published between 2000 and 2009. Between 2010 and 2019, 75 books were published, which demonstrates a considerable increase. In these books, memory narratives of the coup's prisons provided the ultimate proof of the coup's violent, merciless, tormenting, and unjust character. In other words, each practice and strategy deployed by the prison regime ranging from extreme ways of physical torture to rather mundane regulations of daily life in prisons were interpreted as facets of the coup's malevolence directed towards decimating political activists.

This anti-coup wave reached its peak in 2010 as the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP) aimed to rally the support of those groups for the constitutional referendum by extensively targeting the 1980 coup. Although the amendment included more profound changes in the judicial system, the 'yes vote' was advocated by the AKP with promises to end the military tutelage. On 12 September 2010, the thirtieth anniversary of the coup, Turkish citizens went to the ballot box to vote for or against a constitutional amendment. With a decisive %57.8 approval, the legal immunity of the junta members was lifted, alongside crucial changes made in the structure of the constitutional court and judiciary in general.[309]

Two years later, an indictment about the coup was accepted by the court, and the trial started. In 2014, the court decreed a life sentence for the living members of the junta, Kenan Evren and Tahsin Şahinkaya. In 2015, a group of scholars published the results of their research on the political memory of modern Turkey. They asked 1903 participants to write down three events that they know or remember between 1900-2013. Surpassing the then-recent Gezi Park protests, the researchers concluded that the 1980 military coup was the most popular answer.[310] The same research also

[309] In hindsight, it is clear that the 2010 Referendum was an important milestone in the AKP's gradual desecration of judicial independence which paved the way for its then-partner Gulenists to occupy critical positions within the state institutions. Except for a few show trials and hearings, museumification of Ulucanlar Prison the promise of coming to terms with the coup was seized by the AKP's populist discourse. In the following decade, Turkey has shifted further away from empowering its democratic institutions and culture under the AKP rule, let alone compensating for the grievances. The referendum also left behind the legacy of the (in)famous "will not suffice but yes" (*yetmez ama evet*) campaign of the leftist-turned-liberal intelligentsia as a subject of controversy that is frequently evoked even today. For studies on the AKP's memory politics, see Onur Bakiner, "Is Turkey Coming to Terms with Its Past? Politics of Memory and Majoritarian Conservatism," *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 5 (September 2013): 691–708, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.770732; Meral Ugur Cinar, "When Defense Becomes Offense: The Role of Threat Narratives in the Turkish Civil War of the 1970s," *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2014.891351.

[310] Kaya Akyıldız, Tuba Bircan, and Nilüfer Narlı, "12 Eylül: Hafızalaştırma ve Bellek Siyaseti," *Birikim Güncel*, Ekim 2020, https://birikimdergisi.com/guncel/10292/12-eylul-hafizalastirma-ve-bellek-siyaseti.

discovered that eighty percent of those who remembered the coup attached negative sentiments to it, such as grief, pain, anger, fear, and injustice. In 2019, disputatious political parties reached a rare unanimous agreement in parliament to erase Kenan Evren's name from places.[311] In contemporary Turkey, it is quite difficult to find an organized political group that favors the 1980 coup.

For an eclectic sum of political groups, the coup represents a formidable episode of brutal and traumatic practices deployed by the tyrannical state to shape society. For example, İhsan Dağı argued that at that time, the military attempted "to change the political attitude of people and to de-politicize the society" for removing ideological polarization.[312] As another example, Orhon claims that the coup created a prison society with high levels of isolation and atomization and citizens that are uniform, impotent, and passive. There, she mentions mechanisms of denunciation that transform human contact into a relationship between potential subjects and objects of criminal accusation.[313]

Yet, most of the time grievances and negative emotions attached to the coup are attached to the recurring problems in Turkey. For example, Ertuğrul Mavioğlu argued that the injustice of the 1980 coup era was not particular to a time period. In contrast, it persists and carries its reflexes and tyrannical character from the past to the present.[314] For another, at the end of his introduction to a recent book on the 1980 coup, Tanıl Bora argues that coming to terms with the coup is the key to coming to

[311] Menekşe Tokyay, "Tüm Partiler Anlaştı: Eski Cumhurbaşkanı Kenan Evren'in Ismi Her Yerden Silinecek," *Euronews*, November 25, 2019, https://tr.euronews.com/2019/11/25/tum-partiler-anlasti-eski-cumhurbaskani-kenan-evrenin-ismi-her-yerden-silinecek.
[312] Ihsan D. Dagi, "Democratic Transition in Turkey, 1980–83: The Impact of European Diplomacy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1996): 124–41, 125.
[313] See Orhon, *The Weight of the Past*.
[314] Mavioğlu, *Apoletli Adalet*, 243.

terms with other traumas of the country since it is a "composite and incessant trauma."[315] Somewhere else, Bora claimed that the coup wanted to "punish, prevent, prohibit, devour, deter any widespread social movement, and render it unimaginable." He provides examples of the changing meanings of two words in Turkish: *eylem* (act) and *örgüt* (organization).[316] For someone who was born after the coup, like me, translating these rather common words into English feels like a certain portion of illegality meant by those, who use these words, is lost in translation. These words were used in the post-coup period with a hidden adjective: act implied "a terrorist act," and organization implied "a terrorist organization."

Therefore, the coup represents an overarching ethos of military tutelage, state violence against minorities that hinders true democratization, and of conservative and docile design of society that even reshaped semantics. Signified by Jacobinism and anti-pluralism, this ethos was first emplaced in the core of the republic by its founding elite, then reproduced and abused by the military through their interventions in civilian politics. This perception accompanied by efforts to come to terms with the coup as well as other wrongdoings of the Turkish state merged with the demands of retribution and justice and turned into a paradigm based on the criticism of the country's Kemalist foundations.[317]

In this wave, the narrative of corrective prison was turned into one that recognizes it as a place of torture. This version was embedded into the anti-coup master narrative. Prisons were remembered as ultimate examples of the junta's recklessness and

---

[315] Tanıl Bora, "Sunuş," in *40 Yıl 12 Eylül*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 7–15.
[316] Tanıl Bora, "12 Eylül İhtilali," *Birikim Güncel*, Eylül 2020, https://birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/10265/12-eylul-ihtilali.
[317] See İlker Aytürk, "Post-Post Kemalism: Yeni Bir Paradigmayı Beklerken," *Birikim*, no. 319 (2015): 34–47.

tyranny and recognized political activists predominantly as fellow victims. This victimization strips the political differences, and quarrels, and produces a vague, classless, and monolithic victim identity. Although it is accurate to argue that these people were victimized by the coup, and they share similar class backgrounds except for a few, victimization also renders pre-coup political positions meaningless and their struggle fabricated.

So, despite this transformation in the master narrative, the anti-coup master narrative still confirms that the prisons were places of the decimation of political activists by removing their political identities just as the master narrative of the junta did. With this regard, I argue that by narrating the prison as a place of strengthening and discovery despite all these negative aspects, the counternarratives that will be discussed in the following chapters aimed to move beyond not only the conception of the post-coup incarceration as a period of correction but also the narratives of victimization and the identity that comes with it.

CHAPTER III

THE MILITANT COUNTERNARRATIVE

This chapter will analyze the militant counternarrative that narrates prison as a place of resilience and resistance. It refers to the story of militants persevering through manifold hardships without compromise. Despite the failure of all others, their perseverance accounts for their true commitment to revolutionary discipline. This storyline of militant counternarrative was not particular to any political movement or gender. Its themes predominantly appear in autobiographical accounts of male and female members of radical leftist organizations such as the Union of Revolutionary Communists of Turkey (*Türkiye İhtilalci Komünistler Birliği* – TİKB), the Dev-Sol (currently active under the name of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, *Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi* - DHKP-C), the TKP/ML, and the PKK.

The militant counternarrative appears in three types of books in terms of content. One focuses on detention and torturous interrogations. In these books, the authors aim at narrating their resistance when faced with torture. The main theme in these narratives is that despite all the inhumane efforts of the torturers, the militant did not

surrender. Mahmut Memduh Uyan's 1989 memoir *Ben Bir İnsanım* (I am a human being) can be provided as an example. Uyan was a leading member of Dev-Yol's guerilla force who retreated to the mountains after the coup.[318]

Another type focuses on resistance in prisons. In those books, authors aim at narrating their resistance in the face of the prison administration. The main theme in these narratives is that despite all the inhumane efforts of the prison administration and the failures of comrades, the militant prevails in his/her goal of transforming prison into a place of resistance either collectively or individually. For example, Sinan Kukul's 1989 memoir *Bir Direniş Odağı: Metris* (A locus of resistance: Metris) narrates a collective effort of the Dev-Sol militants,[319] whereas the TİKB member Nevin Berktaş's 2000 memoir *İnancın Sınandığı Zor Mekanlar: Hücreler* (Tough Places That Tests Your Faith: Cells) narrates how the author created "a front of resistance by herself" (*tek başına direniş cehpesi*).[320] In these narratives, resistance practices such as hunger strikes and death fasts appear frequently.

Moreover, some books focus on prisons with a special emphasis on escape. As will be discussed below, the militant counternarrative takes pride in breakouts and emphasizes them in the titles of their autobiographical accounts. Erhan İnal's 2005 book *Metris Kuşları* (The Birds of Metris), Sebahattin Selim Erhan's *Yine Kazacağız, Yine Kaçacağız* (We Will Dig Again, We Will Escape Again), and Erdoğan Şenci's 2011 memoir *Firar: 1982 Elazığ Cezaevi'nden,* (Escape: From

[318] Uyan, *Ben Bir İnsanım*.
[319] Sinan Kukul, *Bir Direniş Odağı: Metris* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 1998).
[320] Nevin Berktaş, *Dava Dosyası İnancın Sınandığı Zor Mekanlar: Hücreler* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2011).

Elazığ Prison in 1982) are examples of that emphasis.[321]

Similar to what Peter Zinoman argued about the prison narratives of Vietnamese revolutionaries being "revolutionary master-scripts,"[322] the militant counternarrative aims to provide an exemplary life and resistance for followers of radical organizations. For example, Muzaffer Ayata's two-volume interview *Diyarbakır Zindanları* is closer to being the PKK's propaganda book on how the organization was leading the resistance in prison rather than being an autobiographical account.[323]

The militant counternarrative is noticeable for its rigidity in terms of using revolutionary rhetoric and a dualistic narrative that oscillates between those who surrender and those who resist. However, there is an observable dilution of militant counternarrative in the latest publications. In autobiographies written by now-elderly militants, who examine their life with a critical eye, the rigidity of the revolutionary master-script softens. When mixed with personal feuds within organizations, these accounts question their recklessness in resistance.

In terms of format, the themes of militant counternarrative mostly appear in books that focus on detention centers and prisons. Autobiographies that cover the entire life stories are very rare. Mahmut Memduh Uyan's 2015 autobiography *Kardeşim Hepsi Hikaye* (My Sibling, These are All Stories) is an example. Perhaps the most interesting format adopted among these accounts is the multi-author memoir entitled *Direniş, Sürgün, ve Ölüm Günleri* (The Days of Resistance, Exile, and Death). The

---

[321] İnal, *Metris Kuşları*; Sebahattin Selim Erhan, *Yine Kazacağız Yine Kaçacağız* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010); Şenci, *Firar*.
[322] Peter Zinoman, "Reading Revolutionary Prison Memoirs," in *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*, ed. Hue-Tam Ho Tai, Asia--Local Studies/Global Themes 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 21–45, 22.
[323] Ayata, *Diyarbakır Zindanları*.

crucial difference between this multi-author memoir and collective autobiographies is that the latter is a collection of individual life stories with a clear indicator of who the narrator is at a given moment. The former, however, presents the past from the collective eye of its authors. At a given time, it is not possible to know who the author is. The format itself claims the accomplished unity of Tarık Uygun, Ersin Ergün Keleş, Osman Zeybek, and Harun Korkmaz in their resistance.

The main elements of this counternarrative could only make sense when considered together with the historical trajectory of the left in Turkey. In the following sections, I will first delve into discussing some of the characteristics of the left in the 1970s such as immaturity, internal conflicts, splits, and so on. These characteristics were emphasized in the leftist accounts analyzing the left and its eventual decline after the 1980 coup. These accounts are peculiar in terms of their ways of mixing historical analysis with autobiographical witnesses and thus can be considered self-criticism. These narratives were refused by the militant counternarrative which perceives the coup as an opportunity for proving revolutionary commitment through resilience and resistance rather than searching for theories to explain the defeat.

3.1 The leftist movement in the 1970s

In the 1960s, leftists were preoccupied with discussing two paths to revolution. The non-democratic path was taken by a group of people who subscribed to the idea of the National Democratic Revolution (*Milli Demokratik Devrim* – MDD). This group was gathered around certain intellectuals and journals and raised their enthusiasm for a top-down revolution via a socialist military coup d'état. The MDD was mostly influential among young officers and military students. However, the MDD-inspired junta's coup attempt failed on 9 March 1971. Three days later, on 12 March 1971,

commanders-in-chief intervened by a coup-by-memorandum. For the leftists, the latter coup was undoubtedly targeting the leftists even though it forced the right-wing Demirel government to resign.[324] The coup was eventually interpreted as an anti-communist intervention as it expelled leftist officers from the army.

On the other hand, the ones who took the democratic path valued the opportunities of the electoral system subserving fringe parties, and the relatively liberal atmosphere of the 1961 Constitution. This side was mainly comprised of the Workers' Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi* - TİP), the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu,* DİSK), and the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu,* DEV-GENÇ). Yet, high hopes of following the democratic path did not last long. Leftists were growingly disillusioned by the system that set institutional barriers, such as the changes in the electoral system after the success of TİP in 1965. With the inspiration taken from successful grassroots revolutions in other parts of the world, an alternative path to revolution was revealed. The followers of this path eventually became the preponderant group.

At the beginning of the 1970s, three leftist organizations, the People's Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halkın Kurtuluş Ordusu* – THKO), the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi,* THKP-C), and the TKP/ML planted the seeds of a bellicose, fragmented, yet popular socialist movement. In contrast with the pro-USSR, Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi* – TKP) and the Maoist, Proletarian Revolutionary Light (*Proleter*

[324] Ergun Aydınoğlu, *Türkiye Solu (1960-1980): "Bir Amneziğin Anıları"* (İstanbul: Versus, 2007), 242.

Devrimci Aydınlık – PDA, also known as the Turkey Worker Peasant Party, *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi* – TİKP), they followed a more local approach. Taking their cue from Latin America, the young leaders of these organizations aimed at mobilizing the youth for armed struggle while engaging in a series of sensational activism.

Nevertheless, the Turkish version of *foquismo* was cut short. Following the 1971 coup-by-memorandum, all three guerilla organizations were dispersed and three years of carceral intermezzo for leftist activism has begun. Three leaders of the THKO, Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan, and Yusuf Aslan were subjected to capital punishment. The leader of THKP-C, Mahir Çayan, and his aides died in armed assault after abducting NATO employees to prevent Gezmiş's execution. The leader of TKP/ML, İbrahim Kaypakkaya, was tortured to death in prison.[325] These organizations and leaders left behind a heritage that inspired the youth to join the successor organizations founded by those released from prison after the 1974 amnesty.

For the critics and autobiographers alike, characteristics of the post-1974 left in Turkey can be analyzed under four subsections. For them, the left was suffering from a collective immaturity, fetishization of violence, internal divisions as well as the apparent schism between the Kurdish and the Turkish left. It is important to note that these characteristics continued to be reflected in prison and part of the post-coup prison narratives explaining how the left was defeated.

3.1.1 "Collective immaturity"

Murat Belge claimed that the left in the 1970s was nothing but a vivid showcase of

[325] Vehbi Ersan, *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 20.

"their collective immaturity."[326] A portion of this immaturity could be a result of the fact that the far-leftist movement was mainly a youth movement. However, a certain portion of that immaturity was also a result of specific historical conditions, especially in terms of the inchoate revolution attempts of previous organizations and their deceased leaders. Their heritage consisted not only of thrilling and proud examples of bravery and the palpable duty of completing their unfinished revolution, but also of ad-hoc methods, a few theoretical drafts, and a showcase of the inevitability of violence and death in the struggle for achieving revolution.[327]

Especially, the deceased status of these leaders played an important role in turning these figures into legendary, thus uncriticizable martyrs. For example, Ömer Babacan narrates his state of mind in joining the leftist cause:

> Where on earth could the revolution be achieved without spilling blood, without mothers losing their children? Didn't Mahir, Deniz, İbrahim die for this cause? Yes, we were ready for everything. Our young hearts were beating for revolution.[328]

For many young leftists, political life begins with radicalization without much theoretical insight or practical knowledge of how to be revolutionary. Mehmet Hakkı Yazıcı recalls that the 1970s was a time when "younglings were fumbling to find their way."[329] A part of this lack of experience was compensated with the exemplary lives of deceased figures. For Kadri Gürsel, the left never coped with this inherited trauma of killed leaders. For him, what was even worse is that "some even loved their traumas."[330] In the second half of the 1970s, this heritage both grew and

---

[326] Ahmet Samim, "The Tragedy of the Turkish Left," *New Left Review* 126, no. 1 (1981): 60–85, 61.
[327] İlker Aytürk and Tanıl Bora, "Yetmişli Yıllarda Sağ-Sol Kutuplaşmasında Siyasî Düşünceler," in *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 307–28, 313.
[328] Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 63.
[329] Mehmet Hakkı Yazıcı, *Koca Bir Sevdaydı Yaşadığımız* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013), 227.
[330] Gürsel, *Ben De Sizin İçin Üzgünüm*, 286.

maimed the leftist movement. It successfully encapsulated the youth's ambitions for change in revolutionary heroism and sacrifice.

An alternative source of guidance was the lives of international legends. For example, Ufuk Bektaş Karakaya wrote about their devotion which restricted their ability to see their contradictions after the coup:

> We resisted at police [interrogations], we denied being an organization member, we denied even being a communist, we did not give out any information, in the trial process, we slowly accepted communism, and being an organization member, and we did it according to the requests of the organization leadership, we could not see this contradiction. Because we were assuming ourselves as Dimitrov,[331] we were matching his circumstances with ours.[332]

Similarly, for Halil Beytaş, they were idolizing "infallible heroes of revolutionary novels, demigods whose lives were identical to the revolutionary process."[333] For Selçuk Hazinedar, it was neither Marx nor "the alphabet of socialism" that changed him. What directed him to the path of revolution was reading Yaşar Kemal's *İnce Memed* in the 5th grade. From then on, the fictional character Memed became his idol.[334] So, in search of examples, fact and fiction are blended in adolescent minds.

In retrospection, collective immaturity was an important characteristic for explaining how the left was divided into several parts and surrendered without a fight. For example, Özer Aydın wrote:

> My interpretation, in my prison life as well as my life after prison, is that the 68 generation as well as the 78 generation could not see, or did not want to see that we were on the primary school stage of revolutionary struggle. There were such discussions

[331] Referring to Georgi Dimitrov Mihaylov, a Bulgarian communist leader. Dimitov's defence in the Leipzig trial against the Nazis was acclaimed by leftists.
[332] Ufuk Bektaş Karakaya, *Ölüm Bizim İçin Değil* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 266.
[333] Oral Çalışlar and Halil Beytaş, *Hapishanede Büyümek* (İstanbul: Aralık Yayınları, 1998), 38-39.
[334] Sezai Sarıoğlu, ed., *Nar Taneleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 102.

> as if we were on the university stage as if we were in a country that accomplished a democratic bourgeois revolution, as if we solved everything and the [state] power is for us to take. We were at each other's throats about how to construct socialism before accomplishing a popular democratic revolution.[335]

For Hilmi Köksal Alişanoğlu, the young revolutionaries of his time were not aware of the seriousness of what they were doing. He wrote:

> We wanted to overthrow the existing order through revolution. Without realizing our infancy, without knowing our limitations… We could not achieve our goal… We were defeated… Vanquished…[336]

Alişanoğlu found the explanation of defeat in the gap between being inexperienced and young, and the aspirations out of their depth. Before reaching theoretical, practical, and in most cases, biological maturity, the leftist youth found itself in the maelstrom of violent activism. The coup, on the other hand, reminded them of the truths they were blinded to see with a heavy price.

3.1.2 Fetishization of anti-fascist violence

In the second half of the 1970s, the armed anti-fascist struggle was the main point of departure for revolutionary action. For Tanıl Bora, anti-fascism formed the basis for popularization and self-legitimization of the left after 1974.[337] For Ertuğrul Kürkçü, the founding president of DEV-GENÇ, this basis was radically different from the previous generation. He claimed that former organizations were aggressively pursuing the seizure of power. On the other hand, the armed struggle after 1974

[335] Özer Aydın, *Umut'un Bitmeyen Umudu* (İstanbul: Yıldız Kitaplar, 2015), 127-8.
[336] Alişanoğlu, Netekim 12 Eylül'de Geldiler, 9.
[337] Tanıl Bora, "Türkiye Solunda Faşizme Bakışlar," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce - Sol*, vol. 8 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 847–72, 847.

consisted of a defensive mindset in the face of fascist attacks.[338] Indeed, a common trait of leftist idols was their relentless march on the path to revolution. In this march, they were targeting the state and its apparatus as the main obstacles. Whereas, in the reality of the post-1974 period, leftists were mainly facing their young counterparts on the far-right. For Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu, who was one of the leaders of Dev-Yol, the difference between the two periods was in the public reception, rather than the number and prevalence of these violent actions. For him, Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan became famous with a few armed robberies. A few years later, even the simple sympathizer took up arms and skirmished in neighborhoods, but nobody remembered them.[339]

There were only a couple of organizations, such as the PDA and the TKP, that avoided armed struggle. The rest successfully weaponized their members against fascism, even more so than their predecessors. In the leftist memory, engagement with violence was not omitted. For example, Nazım Sılacı, a Dev-Yol militant at the time, casually narrates the time when he threw a stick of dynamite at the local building of MHP.[340] Erhan İnal, a TKP/ML militant, recalls a skirmish against some Ülkücüs in which one of the opponents died.[341] Ali Türker Ertuncay, another TKP/ML militant, admits the killing of five Ülkücü workers while criticizing the organization's order. For him, the dogmatic left of the time reduced the revolutionary struggle to kill the members of the MHP.[342] He wrote:

---

[338] Ertuğrul Kürkçü, "Türkiye Sosyalist Hareketine Silahlı Mücadelenin Girişi," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce - Sol*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, 2nd ed., vol. 8 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 494–542, 508.
[339] Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu, *Geçmişi Aşabilmek* (İstanbul: Bireşim Yayınları, 2000), 32-33.
[340] Nazım Sılacı, *Asılı Kalan Hayatlar* (2007; repr., Ankara: Penta, 2011), 19.
[341] İnal, *Metris Kuşları*, 24.
[342] Ertuncay, *Görülememiştir*, 59.

> […] we were defeated because we acted stupidly before the coup. When the organizations could not admit this, their attitude was directed toward ignoring the truth. Nobody was ready for coming to terms with the past in an honest way. […] Before the coup, everybody was claiming that the country was in "a revolutionary situation." Still, instead of preparing for the revolution, chasing fascists in neighborhoods and schools looked more accurate for each of us.[343]

Ertuncay was underscoring the ambitious meanings of revolutionary action or being a revolutionary in general. For him, being a revolutionary was falsely taken as the struggle against fascism. In theory, the fascism in question included several abstract concepts. Yet, it was incarnated in the fight against Ülkücüs.

Coupled with factional rivalries, the increasing toll of violence has occasionally diverted the left from its original revolutionary direction and led to the dead-end of anti-fascism. That anti-fascism expanded in a way to perceive other leftist factions seen as revisionists, social-fascists, and Maoist grey wolves, tagging them as enemies of the revolution.

3.1.3 Factions and internal conflicts

In addition to the fetishization of violence, the divided state of the left is a major characteristic of the left in Turkey. According to a government report in 1983, there were 22 organizations on the radar of the state's anti-terrorist struggle.[344] Among these 22, there were disputes ranging from slight disagreements to fully-fledged vendettas. As Ali Taşyapan claimed, each organization viewed itself as the unique representative of the proletariat. The rest was labeled as the bourgeois versions that

[343] Ibid., 306.
[344] *Terör ve Terörle Mücadelede Durum Değerlendirmesi* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Yayınları, 1983), 169. Full list quoted in Ersan, *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu,* 427. For a detailed diversification of the Turkish Left, see "Family Tree of the Turkish Radical Left," accessed December 2, 2021, https://www.marxists.org/turkce/konu/turkiyekom/tr_left_part_hist_diag.pdf.

appeared on the proletariat front with a communist outlook.[345]

Some divisions between organizations were the results of different reflections on fundamental theoretical and international interpretations of socialism. There were organizations mainly following Maoist and pro-Soviet interpretations. Some followed Enver Hoxha's Albania after his split from Maoists. The rest consisted of the main bulk of organizations that followed a more independent, local path.

There was an unbridgeable gap between organizations divided on this basis. For example, Cafer Solgun claimed that the TKP members were not acting together with the rest of the revolutionaries in prisons before the coup.[346] Ali Türker Ertuncay mentioned how they beat the members of the Progressivist Youth Foundation (*İlerici Gençler Derneği* – İGD), a branch of the TKP, in Davutpaşa prison before the coup. He wrote:

> In time, the İGD members went nuts even more. They peed on us. They taunted our visitors. The visitors responded: "Go to Maltepe [Prison]!" At the time, fascists were held in Maltepe.[347]

Moreover, groups were divided on the basis of simple, if not utterly personal, quarrels within leadership circles. For example, Mahmut Esat Güven wrote:

> The proliferation and popularization of the left in Turkey can be explained as the multiplication of amoeba. So, the left has a structure that multiplies by division. The divisions in the Turkish left were never based on ideology. First, divisions occurred based on leadership plans, then ideological reasons for these divisions were made up.[348]

Even though these divisions were occurring for superficial reasons, it did not mean

---

[345] Taşyapan, *Eylül Ayazı,* 109.
[346] Solgun, *Demeyin Anama İçerdeyim*, 99.
[347] Ertuncay, *Görülememiştir,* 139.
[348] Halil Güven, *Zaman Zindan İçinde Anılar* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2009), 35.

that the feud was superficial as well. Ufuk Bektaş Karakaya who joined the TİKB narrates the division that occurred within the People's Liberation (*Halkın Kurtuluşu* – HK):

> At first, the separation was devoid of violence. But later, when the ones who stood with the organization denounced the ones who broke away as "enemies of the revolution," the violence had reached the degree of murdering multiple people. Old comrades draw arms at each other and denounced each other as enemies of the revolution.[349]

The leftist factions were violently rivaling each other even at times of heavy pressure from the state and the pro-state militants. Cafer Solgun mockingly admitted that when he arrived in İstanbul and joined the leftist cause, he was first beaten not by the police or the Ülkücüs, but by revolutionaries.[350] Similarly, Fatih Binbay wrote: "besides the prison, the worst beating I got as a leftist was again from leftists."[351]

For Haluk Yurtsever, as the street struggle reached a level of multiple killings from each side every day, fundamental spaces for leftist action (most importantly, of course, organizing workers) diminished significantly. The more the left increasingly instrumentalized violence, the more it alienated the ordinary masses from itself.[352] In attempts to expand their influence, each group turned its eyes to the members of other groups for conversion while condemning the ones who departed.[353] For Ergun Aydınoğlu, by 1980, the left had "missed the moment to form a political class movement for more than a decade."[354] For him, despite its preserved mass and potential, all that remained from the left were political sects that cannot transcend

---

[349] Karakaya, *Ölüm Bizim İçin Değil*, 55.
[350] Solgun, *Demeyin Anama İçerdeyim*, 39.
[351] Binbay, *Renklerden Kızılı Seçmek*, 39.
[352] Haluk Yurtsever, *Yükseliş ve Düşüş: Türkiye Solu 1960-1980* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2008), 318.
[353] Samim, "The Tragedy of the Turkish Left," 82.
[354] Ergun Aydınoğlu, *Türkiye Solu (1960-1980)*, 402.

their partiality.

3.1.4 The Kurdish split

Another division occurred within the left after the separation of the Kurdish movement. From its emergence in the 1960s to the 1970s, the Kurdish movement was essentially a leftist movement.[355] This movement shared several characteristics with the Turkish left. As for their Turkish counterparts, the 1970s was an important period in the rise of Kurdish organizations. During this period, Kurdish leftist organizations were gradually diversified from the Turkish left by claiming that Kurdistan is a colony, and the movement requires autonomous organizations.[356]

Again, similar to the Turkish left, the 1970s was signified by a variety of organizations with differing views on nationalism and the use of violence. The Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (*Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi* – TKDP) was established as the Turkey branch of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq. Although there was a pro-Kurdish faction within the TİP, the turning point in the popularization of the Kurdish movement was the establishment of the Revolutionary Eastern Culture Hearths (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* – DDKO). The establishment of several other organizations followed the DDKO, such as the Kurdistan Socialist Party (*Partiya Sosyalîst a Kurdistan*, PSK), Kurdistan National Liberators (*Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları* – KUK), Flag (*Rızgari*), Liberation Flag

[355] Hamit Bozarslan, "Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce - Sol*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), 1169–1207, 1169; Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, "Kürt Hareketi'nin Örgütlenme Süreci Olarak 1970'ler," in *İsyandan İnşaya Kürdistan Özgürlük Hareketi*, ed. Joost Jongerden, Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, and Bahar Şimşek (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2015), 21–74, 22.
[356] Akkaya, "Kürt Hareketi'nin Örgütlenme Süreci Olarak 1970'ler," 41.

(*Ala Rızgari*), Kawa,[357] the Voice of Kawa (Dengê Kawa), Struggle (*Têkoşîn*).

Among these groups, one was called the PKK, which stood out in terms of radicalism, hierarchical structure, longevity, and impact on Turkish politics. For İbrahim Küreken, none other than the PKK had a strong leadership among Kurdish leftist organizations.[358] It was also called Apoists with reference to their leader Abdullah Öcalan. The organization sought to establish an organization with military-like discipline.[359]

The final similarity between the Turkish and the Kurdish left was the prominence of internal conflicts. Again, the PKK was the most violent group in the Kurdish left. To dictate its dominance over rival organizations, the PKK engaged in an armed struggle against both the Turkish and the Kurdish left.[360] For example, Ertuğrul Binbay remembers the assassination of Mehmet Çakmak, a local leader of TKP in Diyarbakır by the PKK.[361] Similarly, İbrahim Küreken noted the assassination of Ferit Uzun, the leader of Denge Kawa.[362] Consequently, the PKK members were targeted in this feud. Güneş gives the examples of killings by Halkın Kurtuluşu and Têkoşin.[363] On this Kerim Ağırakçe wrote:

> Before the coup, these people took many lives. After those were killed for their organized acts, they either distribute pamphlets or orally made the propaganda by saying "An obstacle before the revolution was removed," "a counter-revolutionary was

[357] Referring to Kaveh the Blacksmith, a mythical figure appears in *Shahnameh*, and believed to be the ancestor of Kurds.
[358] Küreken, *Parçası, Tanığı, Mahkumu*, 113.
[359] Ibid., 87.
[360] Aydın and Taşkın, *1960'lardan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 316.
[361] Binbay, *Renklerden Kızılı Seçmek*, 23.
[362] Küreken, *Parçası, Tanığı, Mahkumu*, 135.
[363] Cengiz Güneş, *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2020), 150.

executed," or "we gave to the enemy of the public the punishment he/she deserved" etc.[364]

The other target of the PKK was the local-feudal clans taking the side of the Turkish state authorities such as Bucaks of Hilvan, and Ramans of Batman.[365] Tanıl Bora noted that in this struggle, the PKK also made alliances with other tribes which emphasizes the pragmatist essence of the organization.[366] After the coup, many members of the Kurdish movement, including the members of the PKK were incarcerated. However, Öcalan managed to retreat to Syria and spent years of the military regime to recover and raise recruits for his cause. When the PKK reappeared in Turkey on the evening of 15 August 1984, its target was neither rival organizations nor the tribes, but the state and the military itself.

The rise of the PKK and its success in becoming the sole representative of the armed Kurdish resurgence fostered a certain understanding of the coup and the post-coup incarceration as necessary setbacks for the Kurdish movement to rise stronger. In academic literature, atrocities of the Diyarbakır Prison No.5 were conceived as the main driving force behind the radicalization of Kurdish youth and the popularization of PKK.[367] Unlike the disappearance of the Turkish left as a formidable political force, the Kurdish movement gained more prominence after the coup. This difference plays a critical role in the employment of militant counternarrative among the members of the PKK.

---

[364] Ağırakçe, Mardin *Diyarbakır Zindanlar*ında, 74.
[365] Aydın and Taşkın, *1960'lardan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 317.
[366] Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 853.
[367] For a critical account on this argument, see Bahar Şahin Fırat and Mesut Fırat, "Kürt Hareketi'ni Diyarbakır Cezaevi'ne 'Hapsetmek': İktidar, Özne ve Siyaset Üzerine Eleştirel Bir Deneme," *Toplum ve Kuram*, no. 5 (2011): 93–106.

3.2 Narratives of defeat

Throughout the 1970s, numerous leftist organizations made their presence felt in Turkey. Despite preserving a certain tone of nostalgia, the aforementioned defects of the movement mostly replaced the memories of those glorious days. Haluk Yurtsever's argument that the left "was already defeated before the 12 September 1980 coup"[368] is an epitome of the widespread tendency of ascribing inevitability to the left's demise. For many, the left was in such dire circumstances in the 1970s, that all the coup had done was to confirm its failure.

Many leftist accounts were frustrated by the hostility between different groups persisting even in prison. Şakir Bilgin complained that "instead of gradually unifying with each other in prison, they detached further away."[369] Similarly, Erhan İnal wrote:

> It was a weird situation; despite all these negative circumstances, the revolutionary captives were not dining together, and did not speak to each other.[370]

The coup should have brought them together against a common enemy aiming to annihilate them. Şansal Dikmen mentioned that the prisoners were unified in their shared fate, and everything was going fine. All of a sudden, the Kurtuluş and the Dev-Yol started to quarrel with each other.[371] For him, the source of these quarrels was the daily squabbles rather than the ideological differences. Even a leisure activity such as a knowledge contest could bring old hostilities to the surface. Dikmen wrote:

---

[368] Yurtsever, Haluk. *Yükseliş ve Düşüş: Türkiye Solu 1960-1980.* İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2008, 318.
[369] Bilgin, *Güneş Her Gün Doğar*, 68.
[370] İnal, *Metris Kuşları*, 69.
[371] Akkoç, *Fırtınalı Denizin Kıyısında*, 207.

> After this incident, on the 1st of May 1981, every group resigned to a corner of the ward and commemorated the day individually. In the dungeon of fascism, for a common value such as the 1st of May, it was not possible to come together. You think the rest…[372]

Even though Dikmen claimed that the frictions were not the result of ideological differences, some reported that the pro-Soviet groups did not coexist with the sinophiles in a ward. If they were compelled to stay together, they would have minimum contact.[373] Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu, one of the Dev-Yol leaders, wrote about how these frictions between organizations led to the left's demise:

> At some point, the TKP distributed pamphlets in Kızılay about us getting caught by saying "the fall of a giant."[374] […] One of the policemen showed it to me, possibly to demoralize me. It was weird for me. It seems like some leftist groups cherished another leftist group that they view as an opponent, getting annihilated by a fascist junta. Then, people contemplate why the left is getting defeated.[375]

An ironic way of stating a similar frustration was narrated by İrfan Babaoğlu. He remembers his friend Yusuf from the KUK telling the other prisoners after the administration forced them to eat excrement:

> Actually, we ate this excrement outside. They set us against each other. They made enemies out of us, and then by throwing everyone at the prison, they will make us eat excrement just like this.[376]

For people narrating why the left was defeated and why they could not resist the junta, the continuity of problems from the pre-coup to the post-coup periods offered a plausible explanation.

---

[372] Ibid., 208.
[373] Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)*, 129.
[374] Pun on the word *Dev* which means giant in Turkish.
[375] Bostancıoğlu, *Bitmeyen Yolculuk*, 251.
[376] Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 126.

Nevertheless, even if the left appears as marching towards its demise in hindsight, the immediate aftermath of the coup was narrated as an absolute turning point for those realizing their defeat. The transition between the belief of the leftists in their organizations during the 1970s and the later cynicism is clear in these narratives. For example, Fatih Binbay wrote:

> 12 September was a shock. There was almost no resistance. Things occurring in the opposite direction of what we expected. Strikes were ended, demonstrations were ended, skirmishes were ended. The hope ended.[377]

For Binbay, the sudden disappearance of leftist activism was coupled with the collapse of his organization, the TKP. "To me, the party was everywhere, but it could not be found. I seem to have fabricated legends in my mind."[378] On the same track, Cafer Solgun remembered the moment that he received the news about his organization while he was in prison. He wrote:

> Towards the end of that ominous September, one friend entered the ward with a newspaper in hand. He said "the Dev-Sol collapsed as well" in a cynical manner. […] I was crushed. We had an infinite trust for the top [cadres]. Of course, a similar thing was valid for other organizations. We could all get captured, or die, but nothing could happen to [the leading circle]. So, it seems it could. That childish trust was demolished that day; I was feeling weaker against the junta.[379]

Militants were devoted, but their knowledge about the strength of their organization was very limited. Fikri Günay wrote about his organization, the Urgentists (*Acilciler*, also known as, the People's Revolutionary Pioneers, *Halkın Devrimci Öncüleri* - HDÖ), "you could not ask any question to the person responsible for you because of the principles of conducting an illegal struggle."[380] Once the organizations faced the

---

[377] Binbay, *Renklerden Kızılı Seçmek*, 39-40.
[378] Ibid., 40.
[379] Solgun, *Demeyin Anama İçerdeyim*, 116-7.
[380] Günay, *Mamak (1980-1982)*, 59.

coup, their rigor was also revealed to be far less than supposed. As Günay complained, these organizations, which were blustering each other before the coup, quickly vanished after the coup.[381]

For some, the leftist organizations were expecting a military coup. Still, they could not give a proper response to it. For example, İbrahim Çelik from the Dev-Yol wrote these in his autobiography:

> Even though we were expecting a fascist junta, we were mesmerized. Especially, our friends in the martial law areas before the coup were telling us that the conditions of open fascism will be a little more rigorous. However, we were not diligent enough in terms of preparing for those conditions and creating the necessary structures.[382]

The organizations were somehow surviving despite the efforts of the police before the coup. Yet, the post-coup period was radically different. As Sezai Sarıoğlu narrated:

> 12 September was a great encounter with the state in every prison for those socialists, revolutionists who wanted another life. We knew the state in theory and through the oral transmissions, we learned the state in practice piece by piece in police stations and prisons. But with the 12 September, our usual conceptualizations were disrupted. I think we run into serious problems with our theoretical, political, and practical knowledge of the state that we knew and the state that we encountered on the morning of 12 September. This was a rupture that we could not admit to ourselves most of the time.[383]

The coup was not a surprise for many, but the rapid dissolution of the organizations was. The gravity of the post-coup submission did not match the pre-coup pride.

Since organizations hid their networks, it was not possible to know their exact strength. Members believed in the power of their organizations even though they

---

[381] Ibid., 171.
[382] İbrahim Çelik, *Tek Yola Sığmayan Devrim* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016), 134.
[383] Mavioğlu, *Asılmayıp Beslenenler*, 229.

were hidden behind a veil of secrecy. The leaders were imagined as the masterminds that would accomplish the revolution. For many, all of these images and beliefs were crushed by the coup. Networks were uncovered and leaders, militants, and sympathizers were arrested. Those, who could escape, fled to foreign countries. Those, who could not escape, were subjected to torture and years of imprisonment. Many became confessors and helped the police to capture his/her comrades. In numerous narratives, interpretations of how the left was defeated after the coup come together with a certain kind of distance between the narrator and the narrated past. The swift surrender of once underground organizations was narrated as a bygone episode of their political struggle.

3.3 Narratives of militant dualism

The militant counternarrative does not reject defeat after the coup. By differentiating itself from the rest that surrendered, the militant embraces defeat by perceiving it as an extension of the revolutionary cause. Gürsel Kuş, a TİKB militant, summarized their stance in Nazım Hikmet's famous words, "being taken as a captive does not matter, what matters is not surrendering."[384] In this sense, the coup and the subsequent period of dispersion and repression in prisons were a litmus test that differentiates a true revolutionary from a false one.

Hence, the militant counternarrative is based on a profound duality between those who surrendered and those who resisted at every cost. In this duality, there was no third option. For example, Şamil Kazbek wrote these words for the militants at the risk of torturous interrogation and incarceration:

[384] Osman Yaşar Yoldaşcan, *Adressiz Sorgular* (1989; repr., İstanbul: Şubat Basım, 2014), 372.

> We should know that torture is one of the sharpest and most important fields of revolutionary struggle. In this field, there is no room for a skiver, for a middle ground, for shortcuts. That's why torture is one of the toughest and sharpest fields of revolutionary struggle. It is our encounter with our class enemies. There is no middle ground. Either we resist or we surrender. Either we accept the fight or we will submit. Either we win or the torturer wins.[385]

As the methods of subjugation took perverse paths, the militant reaction purified from its details. After narrating the tortures they experienced, Mehdi Zana noted:

> Now we arrived at a true parting of ways. On one side, there were disgust, submission, and betrayal; on the other, honor, love, loyalty, hope, and struggle.[386]

While the rest contemplates the reasons for defeat, the militant counternarrative emphasizes the power to resist from its simple denial of subjection.

For many, the 1980 military coup is a symbol of devastation. For the militant counternarrative, it is quite the contrary: the coup proved the will and resilience of true revolutionaries and showed the feebleness of those who could not represent the people's revolutionary struggle anyway. For example, Mustafa Karasu, another member of the PKK, found blessing in the post-coup atrocities. He wrote:

> Our people got to acknowledge their true representatives in the practices of Diyarbakır Prison, they saw who would protect them in the direst circumstances. Nobody would want what happened in Diyarbakır. But, in this sense, our people got a major benefit.[387]

For Sinan Kukul, the coup sidelined "the opportunist left" while the true leftists persevered through it. He wrote:

---

[385] *İşkencehaneler ve Cezaevlerinde Direnmek Yaşamaktır* (İstanbul: Nam Yayıncılık, 1993), 13.
[386] Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır*, 312.
[387] Ibid., 36.

> The process that started with the psychology of defeat first brought a break from politics, then an organizational elimination, and finally an ideological perversion that knocked them out of the struggle.[388]

In these examples, the duality between surrender and resistance finds ground in the post-coup experience of the left. The answer to the question of which organization the people must rally behind was now more vivid than ever. Those who resisted at all costs were to prevail. Those compromised for survival were doomed to be defeated.

3.3.1 Compromise leading to defeat

For the militant counternarrative, the only way of resistance was a stubborn denial of every disciplinary practice deployed by the prison administration. In this predisposed straight line, every compromise is a diversion and it would have graver consequences than the troubles of resistance. For example, the PKK member Yılmaz Sezgin wrote:

> We will either exist with the reality of an honorable resistance, or we will not live at all. The party taught us that. We learned it in the bloody Diyarbakır savagery, in the years gone by. If you submit your heart, your soul, it is very difficult to rise again.[389]

If one took a step back, the administration would confront one at one's new line, and would not stop until one surrendered totally. Again, Mustafa Karasu said:

> What is the price of surrender? It would be seen that it is very heavy. Later, there should be lots of blood and lives to be sacrificed to alleviate its damage and negative effects. For this, people regardless of being imprisoned or free should dare to make every sacrifice and bear troubles. There is no other demolishing, crushing, devastating, wearing status as surrender.[390]

The shame of surrendering always outweighed the difficulties faced in resistance.

---

[388] Kukul, *Bir Direniş Odağı*, 18.
[389] Sezgin, *Sinop'ta İdam Geceleri*, 70.
[390] Ayata, *Diyarbakır Zindanları* 1, 39.

The comfort of a simple compromise may lead to defeat and destruction of one's revolutionary identity. For this counternarrative, numerous organizations made this mistake and were annihilated.

The glaring evidence of how compromise leads to submission was the situation in the Mamak Military Prison. The leftists even made up a name out of this situation to warn others: "mamakification." For Sinan Kukul, it referred to "a complete surrender,"[391] and its propagation to other prisons must be prevented. For many, a particular organization was responsible for this shameful situation. The leadership circle of the most popular organization, the Dev-Yol, was brought to Mamak alongside numerous militants. For some, if these leaders acted differently, the fate of Mamak would not have been this miserable.

What happened to the Dev-Yol in Mamak after the coup was the antithesis of the militant counternarrative.[392] The organization was the most popular among others. Its militants were expecting a legendary resistance in prisons and courtrooms. However, the leadership decided to defend the idea that the Dev-Yol was an anti-fascist magazine, not an illegal organization. For example, Ömer Babacan, a Dev-Yol militant, wrote:

> We were to claim that we were fighting against fascism, and we weren't an organization. The falseness of this attitude that is still discussed today is clear as day. I wish we could make more political defenses instead of this.[393]

The "political defense" (*siyasi savunma*) in Babacan's words refers to a specific

[391] Kukul, *Bir Direniş Odağı*, 37.
[392] For another criticism of the Dev-Yol, see *Kendiliğinden Bir Hareket: Devrimci Yol* (İstanbul: Mücadele Yayınları, 1990).
[393] Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 117.

leftist practice. Instead of defending oneself in court, the militant defends the organization's arguments and rejects the justice of the court. Far from it, the Dev-Yol leaders chose to defend themselves by rejecting their organizational structure. In this sense, Melih Pekdemir's defense is interesting. He uttered these words in his court defense in 1982:

> We do not deny what we did. We resisted fascism. We aimed at annulling fascism. But we failed. We tried to organize against fascism. But we failed. […] If history will judge us, it should judge us not for organizing against fascism, but for failing to organize against it.[394]

Pekdemir was in the leadership circle of Dev-Yol and was accused of forming an illegal organization. Nevertheless, Pekdemir insisted that their fault was failing to organize. He played with words in admitting that they fought against fascism, but they were not members of an organization because the left could not organize against fascism.

So, the Dev-Yol and their submissive state in Mamak became the leading example of the left's defeat after the coup and it haunted the leadership of the organization in the following years. Pekdemir entitled the introduction of his memoir "the victory symphony of those deemed defeated."[395] For another example, Oğuzhan Mütfüoğlu argued:

> Policies followed by the Devrimci Yol were widely criticized. I am thinking that we are facing some injustice in this manner. For me, our policy against the coup of retreating a little and developing resistance step by step was right. But there were mistakes in implementation.[396]

---

[394] Kahraman, *Sanık Ayağa Kalk!*, 110-1.
[395] Melih Pekdemir, *Devrimcilik Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2014), 5.
[396] Bostancıoğlu, *Bitmeyen Yolculuk*, 237.

The Dev-Yol, as well as several other organizations, perceived their post-coup incarceration as a phase that should be eluded with minimum damage. Şakir Bilgin summarized this mindset as "no need to get beaten by the bat that you could not break."[397] For Sinan Kukul, most organizations were after "doing their time and getting out."[398] Also, Hamit Kankılıç noted that Özgürlük Yolu, DDKD, Kawa, and Rızgari claimed that if they resisted in the Diyarbakır Prison No.5, there would be a massacre.[399]

The militant counternarrative's response to this mindset can also be found in Nevin Berktaş of the TİKB. She wrote:

> When the collective resistance was broken by the fascist practices after the coup, it was not possible to rise again, and group resistance did not change this situation. The most important factor, without doubt, was the defeat of the revolutionary movement without a fight. This situation resulted in confessions in most interrogations and surrender in prisons. Because, by saying that the struggle outside was crushed, in these circumstances resisting in prison was impossible, they will resist only after the struggle rises again, some political organizations theorized submission.[400]

For Berktaş, all these arguments about the strategies in circumstances, where resistance was impossible, were theories of submission. Retreating, even a little, is inconceivable for the militant counternarrative. Similarly, Muzaffer Ayata of the PKK shared his discontent:

> There cannot be an explanation for Dev-Yol's denial of resistance in Mamak, even by having a majority, and other groups not developing splendid resistances, furthermore, not dying if they had to.[401]

---

[397] Bilgin, *Güneş Her Gün Doğar*, 132.
[398] Kukul, *Bir Direniş Odağı*, 14.
[399] Aydınkaya, *Ölüm Koridoru*, 55-56.
[400] Berktaş, *Dava Dosyası,* 15.
[401] Ayata, *Diyarbakır Zindanları* 1, 129.

For another example, Halil Güven from the HDÖ narrated their attempts to ignite the fire of resistance:

> Especially if the leadership of Dev-Yol could decide to join us in resistance, the fate of the prison would have changed in a moment. Because two-thirds of the total prisoners in Mamak, if not more, were there because of the Dev-Yol case, and in the light of our observations, the leadership had great influence over the movement.[402]

Even for their best efforts, the other wards did not join the resistance. Güven shared his frustration:

> In no way I could understand how cadres of a revolutionary movement who gathered hundreds of thousands of people in squares, who lost thousands [of people] in skirmishes accept this tyranny.[403]

According to Güven, these people took arms against the fascists, hence risked their lives. Now, the situation was not different, fascism was there to fight ever so clearly, but they were not showing the same resistance.

An important portion of the organizations was thinking about surviving the prison phase with the least possible damage and continuing fighting after they get out whereas the true militant of the true revolutionary organization would have resisted in every situation, without question. In short, the militant fights fire with fire to keep the resistance alive.

3.3.2 Pride and pleasure of resisting

The coup eliminated most organizations, silenced their voice, and forced their members to surrender. In the atmosphere of defeat, the militant counternarrative narrates their pride and pleasure of resisting. For example, Ömer Babacan wrote:

---

[402] Güven, *Zaman Zindan İçinde*, 292.
[403] Ibid., 327.

> My interrogation in İzmir has come to an end. In this period, I did not give anything to the police. I gave them neither any information nor any person. In the end, I was very happy. Physically, I was exhausted, but I did not speak. As the phrase goes, I was nothing but skin and bones. However, ultimately, I fulfilled my "revolutionary duty." I did not speak, I resisted. It was a source of pride for me.[404]

Even though Babacan had to endure pain, he was rewarded by his conscience. On the same track, Sakine Cansız wrote:

> It was out of the question that we would give up. Resistance gives you self-confidence and initiative. You forget your worries and savor the unbelievable pleasure of prevailing on even one point. You must work on every single person. Everyone's behavior – their attitudes, convictions, and fears, their courage, confidence, and mistrust, their anger, everything – depends on your own behavior. To attend to the foundation and at the same time fend off the enemy's attacks means you really must give all.[405]

In these passages, the militant's bodily sacrifice and altruism were rewarded by spiritual comfort. At the same time, it is an ascetic duty of the militant to preserve his/her commitment to the cause even in the face of physical and mental troubles.

Moreover, the success in resisting elevated some organizations above others. In prisons, the ones who resisted looked down on the ones who surrendered. Ali Ekber Gürgöz narrated that he arrived at his ward without confessing anything in the interrogation phase. He was the only one with such accomplishment among eight others who arrived in the ward with him. They were crushed and submissive. Gürgöz's fame arrived at the ward before him. He wrote:

> Some [inmates] wanted to shake my hand, some wanted to hug me and kiss me. All of them congratulated me for my resistance and my faith in the cause. Then they gave me

[404] Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 43.
[405] Sakine Cansız, *Sara: My Whole Life Was a Struggle*, trans. Janet Biehl (Devon: Pluto Press, 2019), 113-4.

> money and cigarettes and they left. I was flattered, and naturally, I felt like a lion behind iron bars.[406]

Among the defeated ones, the militant's undefeated status elevated him/her above others. In this sense, the militant counternarrative has a condescending attitude to the rest.

Moreover, one of the most vivid cases of this post-coup prudence can be found in the superior self-views of the TİKB militants. Allegedly, the TİKB militants did not give any information to the police during torturous interrogations. For them, their "collective attitude" in resisting was a first in the post-coup period. They published a book of collected testimonies in 1989 entitled *Adressiz Sorgular*. For them, the book was "a materialized form of their insubordination."[407] For Ufuk Bektaş Karakaya, a TİKB member, they were very comfortable in prison because they showed resistance during interrogations. Compared to other organizations that were dissolved after the coup, they were "charismatic," and they looked down on others. As Karakaya stated: "we resisted, but those people were losers."[408] He proudly narrated that the members of these dissolved organizations started to feel admiration for the TİKB. Karakaya claimed that "when this admiration, respect, and trust became widespread and evident, some organizations warned their sympathizers and cadres." For him, some organizations even prohibited their members to contact the TİKB members.[409]

Nevertheless, the TİKB was not the only example of displaying militant pride. For Sinan Kukul, his organization, the Dev-Sol, was "writing an epic of resistance."[410]

---

[406] Gürgöz, *Diyarbakır Gecesi*, 78.
[407] Yoldaşcan, *Adressiz Sorgular*, 23.
[408] Karakaya, *Ölüm Bizim İçin Değil*, 269.
[409] Ibid., 270.
[410] Ibid., 15.

Similarly, Muzaffer Ayata proudly narrated the PKK's rigid stance in Diyarbakır Prison No.5:

> We said that even with the confusion after the coup, submission is out of the question. But there is this: When restrictions, marches with fascist and racist content, and military practices come up, is it possible to retreat and accept them for a while? Is something like that possible? Can it be employed as a tactic? For us, there was not even a discussion. From the start, we firmly rejected everything.[411]

For Ayata, the prison population is divided into two. On one side, there is the PKK, alone in the frontier of resistance. On the other side, the rest of the organizations "experienced submission from the start to the finish line."[412]

This counternarrative discerns the defeat of others as a motivating factor for the militants in the atmosphere of submission. Ufuk Bektaş Karakaya wrote:

> We were feeling pain and grief in facing this shameful picture that revolutionaries found themselves in. Still, this picture was also feeding and growing our feelings of grudge and hatred. It strengthened our will and thought of resisting.[413]

The submission of revolutionaries was disgusting, nevertheless, it fed the militant resistance. Raising above others, the militant realizes its strength.

Narratives of militant dualism, namely the one between those who resist and those who surrender, run through every individual example of the militant counternarrative. It warns everybody that the post-coup prisons were stages of a lethal struggle and there is no room for compromise. Those, who were bold enough to face up to the physical pain, were rewarded by their conscience and carried this pride for the rest of their lives. In this sense, the coup was an offering that only left

---

[411] Ayata, *Diyarbakır Zindanları* 1, 93
[412] Ibid., 132.
[413] Karakaya, *Ölüm Bizim İçin Değil*, 398.

the true revolutionaries behind who continued resisting in prisons and after.

3.4 Resistance as an aspect of the militant discipline

Narrating resistance is not a rare subject in the carceral memory of the 1980 coup. Adopting various ad hoc forms, prisoners responded to the practices of the prison administration with resistance. In its essence, resistance means a simple denial of the prison administration's power. However, for the militant counternarrative, resistance was perceived as an aspect of the militant discipline. It means the success in resisting is determined by the organization's decrees. If a practice was ordered to the militants, the militant stays on the path of resistance even if that order requests compromise. In other words, those who triumph always followed the path of resistance in a disciplined fashion.

The confrontation of two disciplinary sources, one of the military's, and one of the militant's, sometimes resulted in peculiar narratives. This confrontation occurred in almost every resistance practice adopted by the prisoners. For example, for Nuri Duruk, even getting beaten by the soldiers had a disciplinary aspect. He narrated:

> Beatings became something that was endured with discipline. If it is your turn to get beaten, it is your turn. You can't show slackness, your stance should be upright. This was a discipline as well. Everybody was getting their share of the beatings.[414]

This attitude could also be interpreted as part of the submission. However, for Duruk, since the militant could not escape the pain and had to stand bravely, he/she also conforms to some of the practices forced upon them. So, the decisive factor in distinguishing resistance from submission was the presence of an alternative disciplinary mechanism and the will to stay true to it.

[414] Arzu Demir, *Medreseden 5 Nolu'ya Nuri Yoldaş* (İstanbul: Akademi, 2012), 26.

3.4.1 Hunger strike

Prisoners adopted various forms of resistance, depending on the requests of the prison administration. Yet, some forms required an extraordinary commitment.[415] One of the widespread forms of these resistance practices was the hunger strike. Basically, the prisoners rejected the food provided by the prison administration. Instead, they only eat a couple of cubes of sugar and drink water.[416] To protest inhumane practices and living conditions forced upon them, prisoners went on hunger strikes for numerous periods after the coup with a list of demands. Even the Ülkücü prisoners used hunger strikes to protest the practices of the prison administration.[417] Another motivation for the hunger strike was to show solidarity with the ongoing hunger strikes in other prisons.[418] The longevity of a hunger strike is decided beforehand. And if the administration did not fulfill the demands, the sole criterion of success becomes whether the strike reaches that point determined by the organization. The true militant, of course, is the one that perseveres through hunger for the decided time.

For example, in his memoir, Halil Güven narrates his experience on hunger strike in Mamak Military Prison. He claimed that the only way of breaking the repression is to resist. If you resist, the repression is useless. Yet, the prison was in a state of submission. He wrote:

---

[415] For analysis of these forms see Nicholas Michelsen, *Politics and Suicide: The Philosophy of Political Self-Destruction* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
[416] Odabaşı, *Bir Kürdün Eylül Defterleri*, 89.
[417] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 116; Yaşar Yıldırım, *Balkondan Seyretmek* (Ankara: Kayı Yayıncılık, 1994), 151.
[418] Bilgin, *Güneş Her Gün Doğar*, 97; Taşyapan, *Eylül Ayazı*, 82.

> Why were we so helpless? The way they were using violence and force as means of power, the way they were making us do what they want, was hurting my dignity. I felt like I was vanishing.[419]

Güven was shocked by the submission of other prisoners. Even so, he started resisting alone which started to inspire others. Then, with a friend, the two started a hunger strike. However, other organizations persuaded them to stop, and start again with larger participation. The author agreed, and the 1981 hunger strike in Mamak began. As the strike went on, the beatings diminished. The conditions were better, yet it was very difficult to sustain such discipline for a long time. The resistance started to lose participants, and it came to a point that Güven was left alone in the resistance.

In most prisons, prisoners were underfed with undesirable food. But, when they decided to reject eating the food provided, the administrations started distributing better food. So, the treatment radically changed as an alternative discipline replaces the one imposed by the prison administration. Those who lacked that discipline were beguiled by the promises and gifts of the prison administration and gave up.

3.4.2 Death fast

There was another similar type of resistance that inclined to take a suicidal path. It was called "the death fast." It is basically "a hunger strike without time limitation." Yet, in this type, the prisoner did not eat anything and drank water only. According to the militant counternarrative, as suicide gains a political meaning, the prisoner's life conjoined with resistance. The militant counternarrative reflects this attitude with the slogan "to resist is to live" (*direnmek yaşamaktır, berxwedan jiyan e*). Only, with

[419] Güven, *Zaman Zindan İçinde*, 206.

the bodily death, the militant and his/her resistance become "immortal." It is the ultimate way of reversing the decimating policies of the 1980 coup. Nuri Duruk wrote:

> The state's policies in prisons were based on annihilation. We all noticed that. Death was in the minds of every one of us. In this vein, we were thinking about how can we turn our deaths into something useful in those days. This policy of the state made us think about "death," but this did not mean that we surrendered. On the contrary, it grew our spirit of resistance.[420]

The junta was killing militants by executions, and the police and the military were killing militants by torture. Death fasts reversed this picture and showcased the relentlessness, insubordination, and determination of the militant. On this, Muzaffer Ayata said:

> There are general principles that the revolutionaries had to stay loyal to. If they force treason, impersonality somewhere, to reject experiencing this degeneracy, to prevent others to experience it, you will die if needs be.[421]

If the ultimate goal of the death fast is dying, Ayata and his fellows from the PKK decided to accelerate the process. He continued:

> Our attitude of not drinking water in the death fast and propone our deaths was solidified. In the first five days, we did not drink a single drop of the water!... However, we saw that it is not possible. The thirst is so strong that our lungs were on fire!... As a result, we talked again and said "let's relax the rules a little" and decided to take half a teacup of water each day.[422]

In contrast with the militant principles, taking water appears as a compromise. However, since the decision was made according to the militant discipline, it did not

[420] Demir, *Medreseden 5 Nolu'ya*, 34.
[421] Ayata, *Diyarbakır Zindanları* 1, 128.
[422] Ibid., 105.

stain the purity of the resistance and the narrative remained somewhat coherent.

The only way of stopping the death fast is by the decree of the organization. Expecting the trickeries of the prison administration and the possible physiological defects of prolonged hunger, the prisoners chose a dedicated person to convey the message of the organization. For example, Selim Açan narrated:

> Before starting the death fast, we decided that the fast will continue until the representative of ours [the TİKB], Kenan Güngör says so. We would not pay attention to what others say, including our lawyers.[423]

The discipline, once again, reigned supreme in resistance. Each illegitimate disruption to the continuity of the fast meant treason. Açan continued:

> Even then, Bektaş [Karakaya] did not reject the serum given to him after the death of Fatih [Öktülmüş], when he was taken to the ward of those accepting medical treatment, he did not unplug the serum and throw it away.[424]

Towards the final phases of the death fast, prisoners often lost their senses and consciousness. The prison administration tried to nurse those comatose. Even then, the militant's duty was to reject treatment as soon as he/she regained consciousness. If not, they would be labeled as traitors. Açan continued to narrate the final days of their death fast. Four of his comrades, Abdullah Meral, Haydar Başbağ, Fatih Öktülmüş, Hasan Telci died. Açan was also comatose and serum was transfused to him when he was unconscious. When he woke, Sinan Kukul approached him and said "we succeeded, we have won, the death fast is over. You laid down to die, now you must resist to live." Yet, the rumors kept going that Açan accepted the serum

[423] Selim Açan, *Sürüyor O Kavga* (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2019), 133.
[424] Ibid.

while he was conscious so that he must be considered a traitor to the resistance. Açan wrote:

> "The death fast was over, now we were discussing who was the better revolutionary and to whom the triumph belonged."[425]

The aforementioned death fast started on 11 April 1984 to protest prisoner uniforms. It lasted for 74 days, and four people died during the fast. It was an immense demonstration of resilience and discipline. Moreover, this success was eclipsed by the unforgiving militant dualism. As I have shown, this dualism persists in the most intense stories of resistance and surrounds them with controversy.

3.4.3 Suicide

For a final example of controversial resistance, I will discuss suicide practices and their points of accord and discord with the militant counternarrative. If framed within the militant discipline, the militant's suicide conveys an unignorable message of resistance that may wake others up from their submissive slumber. However, if framed outside of the militant discipline, it is the worst of all surrenders, it is the ultimate proof of surrendering.

As an example of the latter, Ali Demir was forced to eat a dead rat during interrogation and he narrated his suicidal reaction:

> They dismembered the rat and forcedly put a piece of it into my mouth. To prevent it from happening again, I told them to "send me to my ward, I will write my confession in however you like." When I arrived at the ward, I cut my throat with a razor. With thirty-tree stitches, I had to prove my humanity.[426]

---

[425] Ibid., 354.
[426] Polat, *Diyarbakır Gerçeği*, 61. Same story with different names appears in Zana, *Vahşetin Günlüğü,* 90.

Yılmaz Sezgin was empathetic to those attempting suicide in Diyarbakır Prison. He wrote that in such circumstances, death appeared as salvation. "For this, those who chose death by suicide could not be easily condemned."[427] Alas, these kinds of suicide attempts were frequent in the most atrocious period of Diyarbakır Prison No.5. Hasan Hayri Aslan remembered that many people were trying to kill themselves by "hitting their heads to the heat radiators, the iron bars."[428] Again Mehdi Zana noted:

> As the repression got more intense, suicidal inclinations, self-woundings with razors and hitting walls, madness, faking madness, tattling, perversions, and selfishness increased [among prisoners].[429]

In the atmosphere of intense torture and degradation, suicide appears as a viable exit, even for those who religiously recognize its punishment in the afterlife. For example, Ülkücü Zihni Açba claimed that he attempted suicide three times. Another prominent Ülkücü leader, Yılma Durak wrote about his suicide attempt in between interrogation sessions:

> The location where I faced death was the Command Headquarters at Harbiye. It was the place where they interrogate spies. I experienced torture each of the 38 days I stayed there. The hanging was awful, they shook me from my sex organ and my tongue. They even attempted to rape me. When I managed to pull the blindfold down, they ran like cowards. I asked my friends there to request pills and save them for me. To escape from all this, I swallowed 8 to 10 pills at once. I did not die, but I did not feel anything for whatever they did to me that day, my body was numb.[430]

From the dualistic perspective of the militant counternarrative, all these examples are under the category of submission.

---

[427] Sezgin, *Sayım Düzenine Geeeç!*, 103.
[428] Aslan, *Diyarbakır 5 No'lu Cehenneminde*, 83.
[429] Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır*, 324.
[430] Erhan Öztunç, ed., *Ülkücüler 12 Eylül'ü Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Babıali Kitaplığı, 2008), 217.

Moreover, the suicide of İrfan Çelik illuminates this categorization. Çelik was one of the leaders of the TKP/ML and he hanged himself in Davutpaşa Prison two days after the coup. From a different angle, he was the first "martyr" of the coup, and thus deserves a special place. However, his suicide was interpreted as surrender. For example, his wife, Mukaddes Erdoğdu Çelik remembered the time when the word of İrfan's suicide arrived in the ward. On the first anniversary of his death, the prisoners except Çelik's group said that "the revolutionary who committed suicide is not worth the commemoration."[431] Ali Türker Ertuncay was frustrated that İrfan Çelik was held equal to the ones hanged by the junta. He noted:

> The people from the Revolutionary People's Union [*Devrimci Halkın Birliği* -DHB] are praising Ali [Aktaş]'s revolutionary resistance together with İrfan Çelik. It is too bad. İrfan is a person who surrendered to his fears and committed suicide. They could not accept this fact, and still claim that he was hung [by the administration].[432]

It was indeed a difficult task to defend a revolutionary leader who killed himself/herself. On this Cafer Solgun narrated the reaction of the TKP/ML members when the nature of Çelik's death was revealed:

> İrfan Çelik was one of the pioneers of his organization. He did not give up in interrogation. His suicide could be understood by looking at the psychological circumstances of those days. His friends could not believe his suicide for a long time, they did not want to believe it. […] But this was the truth.[433]

İrfan Çelik could not leave a revolutionary message behind, and his death was immediately labeled as proof of his surrender.

On the contrary, the suicide of the PKK leader Mazlum Doğan in Diyarbakır Prison

---

[431] Mukaddes Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler* (İstanbul: Ceylan, 2005), 176.
[432] Ertuncay, *Görülememiştir,* 261.
[433] Solgun, *Demeyin Anama İçerdeyim*, 110.

was interpreted as an act of revolutionary will. On 21 March 1982, Doğan hung himself in his cell. For example, İrfan Babaoğlu interpreted Doğan's suicide as a noble act to motivate others to resist. He wrote that Doğan's act "was strengthening the organized, determined, and conscientious structure of the captives."[434] For Hamit Kankılıç, Doğan's act was "a product of a great will and a great intelligence."[435]

Hasan Hayri Aslan's narrative demonstrates the thin line between a noble and a cowardly suicide. He narrated that when the others received news of his death, they first thought that the prison administration killed Doğan. He said:

> We should first consider that possibility. But if he took his own life, he must have done it on 21 March, the day of resistance for Kurds and other people of the Middle East, to protest against the tyranny and to guide us.[436]

Arslan imbued the suicide of Doğan with revolutionary meaning. For him, what happened in Diyarbakır Prison after his death proves the revolutionary essence of his act. Arslan continued:

> Whatever motivation he had and what affected his suicide, as a consequence, Mazlum Doğan's event had a historical function in the prison resistance, especially for the PKK, and a strong fire of resistance was ignited. Now, everybody was like an arrow drawn in a bow, ready to be released and penetrate the heart of fascism.[437]

Aslan was praising Doğan for his selfless act. But in the same book, he wrote these for the ones attempting to kill themselves in the hope of escaping the pain:

> If we are going to die, let us do it like revolutionaries! Are we going to fulfill their will to kill us with our own hands? However we call it, whatever noble cause we find behind it, this is called "suicide" in the end. Suicide is the act of those weak people who are

[434] Babaoğlu, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a*, 121.
[435] Aydınkaya, *Ölüm Koridoru,* 112.
[436] Arslan, *Diyarbakır Zindanları* 1, 175.
[437] Ibid., 182.

> depressed, cowardly, those who lost their hope of revolution, their dream of the future, their trust in people and mankind.[438]

As Aslan's narrative demonstrates, the interpretation of suicide depends on the organization's status after the coup. The suicide of İrfan Çelik found its meaning in the larger narrative of the Turkish left's defeat whereas the suicide of Mazlum Doğan found its meaning in the larger narrative of the PKK's rise in the Diyarbakır Prison No.5. If I am to employ a Durkheimian typology, the difference between considering suicide in a narrative as "fatalistic" or "altruistic"[439] depends on the role of suicide in the overall narrative.

The way these acts of resistance including hunger strikes and death fasts became part of the militant counternarrative either as legends of resistance or stories of defeat was on the basis of militant discipline. The PKK embedded these practices into its discipline which later appeared in the form of self-immolation. The suicides of those burning themselves became an essential part of the organization's narrative considering prison as a place of the Kurdish nation's rebirth.

3.4.4 Escape

Finally, the militant counternarrative also mentions escape as the most desirable form of resistance. The one that escaped from prison not only reinforced the struggle outside but he/she humiliated the totality of the system that aimed to captivate and annihilate. Of course, every prisoner may desire to break out from prison, but for the militant, it was also a duty. For example, Selim Açan wrote:

---

[438] Ibid., 64.

[439] See Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005).

> Escape is the dream of everyone that did not surrender his/her personality, regardless of being a political or a common prisoner. For the political prisoners, it is a responsibility, or more accurately, it is a reflex that should be kept alive. As I said to the judges in one of the cases of digging tunnel, "it is nugatory for you to ask us the reason for our attempt to escape. As a revolutionary political prisoner, escape is both my right and my duty. If someone will judge me on this subject, it should be about "why we did not try to escape when all conditions were ripe" rather than "why we tried to escape." In that case, naturally, you will not be the one to judge us…[440]

If the conditions were ripe, the true militant should always be thinking and planning for escape. In those times, escape plans were in progress even in the infamous prisons of the 1980 coup.

There were simple methods of escape that required minimum organizational effort. One of those was called "the fake release." When a prisoner was to be released from prison, the prisoners replaced him/her with someone with a heavier penalty. If the method would be successful, the prisoners told the situation to the prison administration after a time.[441] Furthermore, Selim Açan narrated a method called "the double." It was very similar to the fake release: if the visits to the prison were poorly monitored, a person got in as a visitor, and during the visit, they changed places with the prisoner who got a life sentence. The prisoner got out, the visitor went to the ward. If the administration could not notice what was happening, the prisoners waited for a certain time and then informed the administration about the incident. With this trick, the one with the life sentence escaped, and his/her double received a few months of punishment at most.[442]

However, the most common and the most difficult method of escape was by digging

---

[440] Açan, *Sürüyor O Kavga*, 186.
[441] Ertuncay, *Görülememiştir*, 137.
[442] Açan, *Sürüyor O Kavga*, 168, 176.

a tunnel. It was a matter of discipline and creativity as much as labor. The prisoners should be able to design its architecture, illuminate it, and blow air into it. There is also the problem of carrying and disposing of the debris coming out of the tunnel. For example, Sebahattin Selim Erhan narrated the tunnel they dug in Erzincan Military Prison in 1987:

> After we got past twenty meters, carrying the debris bags appeared as a serious problem. Unfortunately, the longer the distance, the more tiring and time-consuming it became. We arrived at such a point that the progress in the tunnel was determined by the pace of carrying rather than digging.[443]

Yet, nothing could stop the militant. Erhan then tells that they made a wheelbarrow with whatever material they could. They even covered the floor of the tunnel with blankets to move more smoothly.[444]Also, Erhan İnal narrates their creativity and determination in digging a tunnel at Metris:

> We were working ten hours a day. But to speed up the process, we need to work more. There must be twenty-four hours of work every day. We could not dig even halfway through. Again, a friend came to our help. He said: "if we can make two puppets for two workers in the tunnel, we make [the prison administration] count them. In this way, we can work twenty-four hours instead of ten. It was a plausible suggestion. We started to make puppets from bread. The puppet should have hair, brows, and a mustache… We made two puppets at the size of a person. We cut the hair of a friend that will not escape and knitted them onto the puppets. Their skin color was arranged. When looked at from afar, it was very difficult to tell them apart. We even gave them the names: "Hope" and "Free."[445]

In both narratives, the creativity of prisoners could only be a factor in circumstances when the prison administration did not monitor the wards appropriately. In Erhan's case, the prisoners ordered their visitors to bring whatever was needed for the tunnel

[443] Erhan, *Yine Kazacağız*, 69.
[444] Ibid., 77.
[445] İnal, *Metris Kuşları*, 101.

without the administration noticing. In İnal's case, the administration was taking roll calls from the door, rather than forcing prisoners to stand up and form a line. Therefore, in times of heavy repression and discipline, escape was almost impossible. Prisoners were stuck in their wards and cells and could barely communicate with each other as well as with the outside. However, prisoners attempted to escape many times when they were left alone, even from the most infamous prisons of the coup.[446]

Escaping by tunnel required organized labor of many as well as concealment of the tools, laborers, and the tunnel itself for a considerable time. The escape plans should be kept secret considering someone may inform the administration or others may wish to join the escape squad. So, the scale of the work usually forced various organizations to cooperate. For each organization, there was a quota to be usually filled with militants sentenced to the death penalty. Considering that after a successful escape, the prison administration will increase its repression of remaining prisoners, one organization or prisoner should not escape before the others. If there would be a breakout, it should be undertaken in coordination. For example, Erdoğan Şenci of the TKP/ML narrated the plans of escaping from Elazığ Prison in 1982. When he was planning their escape, Celalettin Can and Ali Akgün from the Dev-Sol approached him and inquired about his thoughts on escape. Şenci shared his plans of digging a tunnel and the joint project of the two organizations had started. However, during digging, Şenci noticed another tunnel in progress. It was sloppily dug by the Tekoşin militants. Şenci was furious, knowing that if this tunnel gets caught, their

[446] For a detailed account on the story and methods of the escape attempt in Diyarbakır Prison No.5 see Hanefi Avcı, *Haliçte Yaşayan Simonlar: Dün Devlet Bugün Cemaat* (Ankara: Angora, 2010), 131-9.

tunnel will be in trouble as well. To prevent this, Şenci had to offer places to Tekoşin in their escape squad.[447] Somewhere else, Selim Açan narrated a similar story. He was about to break out with the help of a double, but when the militants of the Dev-Sol learned about his plans, they approached him and told him about their tunnel work which they were working on for months. They offered him three "official slots" for Açan's organization in return for his promise of not attempting to escape before they do. Again, a similar situation was narrated in Ömer Babacan's memoirs. Babacan narrates that the representatives of his organization, the Dev-Yol, were executing their escape plan when he arrived at the prison. Babacan was included in the plan which aims to break out those with heavy sentences and allow them to join the fight outside. While the talks about the plan continued, several people of the TKP/ML escaped. The prison conditions were radically tightened, the warden of the prison was changed, and their escape became impossible.[448]

Overall, escape was preconditioned by several factors. The prison administration should allow prisoners to move in between wards, visitors should be allowed in, the wards should not be frequently ambushed by the administration, and prisoners should be able to smuggle the necessary tools in and keep them concealed in their stash. Considering all these efforts, escape by tunnel was a very meticulous affair yet with a very high reward. Determining which escape method to be executed, how many will escape and whom they may be, with whom the plans of escape will be shared, and with whom to cooperate were issues of utmost importance. For the militant counternarrative, similar to the other forms of resistance, escape was a matter of organizational discipline.

---

[447] Şenci, *Firar*, 190-6.
[448] Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 125.

3.5 The relentless militant identity

In the period between 1974 and 1980, the left grew into a very popular and influential movement countrywide that mobilized male and female Turkish and Kurdish activists. However, the coup achieved a decisive victory by eradicating leftist organizations and imprisoning thousands of leftists including leaders. Accordingly, for the left, this period of popularity was stained by the defeat that ended it. In the leftist carceral memory, remembering the golden age of the left was almost always accompanied by a search to explain how the left was defeated after the coup. For Tanıl Bora, the cynicism that dominated the left since the 1980 coup refers to a state of mind that has become "an expert to identify, but incompetent to deal with the evil."[449] Answers found in this search were usually in accord with the new paths taken by different factions.

In the memory of the 1980 coup, the militant counternarrative constructs a relentless militant identity. The main trait of this counternarrative is its perception of the 1980 coup as resurrection after defeat, rather than dissolution. The factions that continued their armed struggle valued the post-coup prison experience for differentiating the true revolutionary from the false one, and for strengthening the militant who continued struggling for the revolution without compromise. The lives of these relentless militants became revolutionary master-scripts for those who follow their path. Accordingly, this identity is valued by the currently active radical political organizations.

For a couple of reasons, however, this counternarrative fails to transform itself into an inclusive leftist identity even for the members of these limited number of

[449] Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 724.

organizations. The most important one is the unbending structure of militant dualism. Apart from the organizational discipline, there is no point where narrators can bend the plotline and appropriate it to give meaning to their life stories. Those who still preserve their belief in revolution, as well as a leftist identity, were pushed away for their lack of commitment or weakness in resistance. This problem may not be visible in the immediate aftermath of the coup, but after decades, this counternarrative also became a widespread source of grievances. As people evaluated their life with a critical eye, many defects, inconsistencies, and tyrannical aspects of the militant discipline come to the surface.

For example, Ömer Babacan narrated the story of one of his fellow prisoners, Bahri. Bahri could not resist the interrogations and his confessions resulted in the imprisonment of others. For this, Bahri was feeling immense guilt, and this guilt gradually drove him mad. He was constantly trying to serve others in the ward, he wanted to wash their clothes and dishes. For Babacan, even with a little help, Bahri could get his act together, but nobody wanted to approach him. For Babacan, what Bahri did was unforgivable, but he was still one of them.[450] Babacan continued writing the story of Bahri:

> After his decree was approved, he was sent to a civilian prison and stayed there until his release. We do not know what kinds of treatment he got there but after his release, he committed suicide. Yes, the prisons may witness the bravery of many friends, but it also destroyed many for their wrongdoings.[451]

The radicalism in the militant counternarrative created a backlash in less radical accounts. In this sense, the militant counternarrative also created its counternarrative

[450] Babacan, *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*, 186.
[451] Ibid., 187.

which emphasized the importance of positionality in considering master and counternarratives. Even though a comprehensive analysis is beyond the limitations of this dissertation, I consider these criticisms a very valuable topic for future research.

CHAPTER IV

THE GENDERED COUNTERNARRATIVE

This chapter will analyze the gendered counternarrative that is predominantly adopted in the autobiographical accounts of leftist women prisoners. This counternarrative is a product of women's frustration with the master narrative of the 1980 coup, particularly experienced through the left's defeat. The gendered counternarrative contains a retrospective criticism of masculine domination in leftist organizations and limits of solidarity solely based on factionalism in prison. By emphasizing the submissive state of men who were themselves dominant in organizations, not only do women open up a possibility for constructing an autonomous identity and a larger basis for solidarity but also, they reinterpret the master narrative from being the one about the defeat of the left altogether to the defeat of the leftist men in particular. In these narratives, men were portrayed with their failures to resist whereas women were relentlessly and obstinately challenging the prison administration. Especially, contrasting the narratives of torture and repression, the gendered counternarrative depicts prison as a site of learning, entertainment, and care. As part of this narration, women mocked the ranked officers while praising those private soldiers who were reluctant to beat women, or helped

them in any way they can. The following phase is to narrate the formation of women's solidarity and leadership through resistance. As a final component, this counternarrative is completed with the examples of those who failed along the way by betraying this collective resistance either following the orders of men or the promises of the prison administration.

The format and titles of the books in which these accounts were published are informative about their content and aim. The first two women's narratives were published as early as 1986. One by Zeynep Oral who interviewed Reha İsvan, *Bir Ses* (A Voice) and the other by Neyyire Özkan, *Cezaevi Cezaevi: 1980-1986 Türkiye Cezaevlerinden Kesitler* (Prison Prison: Fragments from Turkish Prisons 1980-1986). Rather than the addition of women's voices to the memory field, Oral's title emphasizes the book's distinguished quality of being one of the first autobiographical works, in a way, breaking the silence about the 1980 coup's prisons. On the other hand, Özkan's book included several other women's narratives including hers. Its format of interviewing multiple (anonymous) women prisoners set an example for later collective autobiographies. Three years later, İsvan published her prison memoirs under the title *Ne Söylesen Bir Eksik* (However Much You Say, It is Incomplete). Then, more than a decade later, in 2000, Fazilet Çulha published her autobiography entitled *Şimdi Sırası Değil* (Now is Not the Time), referring to her criticism of the left for evading the question of women. In 2005, Mukaddes Erdoğdu Çelik published a book entitled *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler: Üç Dönem Üç Kuşak Kadınlar* (Iron Bars, Common Dreams: Three Periods, Three Generations of Women). The book format was similar to Özkan's, but this time the book seemingly encouraged others to share their memories of the coup's prisons. In addition to Pamuk Yıldız's 2007 prison memoir *O Hep Aklımda*: *Bir Mamak Cezaevi Tanıklığı*

(Always on My Mind: A Testimony of Mamak Prison), four collective memoirs followed Erdoğdu Çelik's work in the following years: *Unutamamak: 12 Eylül Kadınları* (Could Not Forget: Women of the 12 September), *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar: Kadınlar Mamak Cezaevini Anlatıyor* (Cactuses Can Live without Water: Women Narrate the Mamak Prison), *Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül: Kadınlar Anılarını Paylaşıyor* (The 12 September with Witnesses: Women Sharing Their Memoirs), *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler: Devrimci Yolcu Kadınlar Anlatıyor* (Moths to a Flame: Women of the Revolutionary Path are Narrating). When followed chronologically, the transformation of the titles is clearly in the direction of emphasizing women's perspective in carceral memory.

To better understand the elements of this counternarrative, once again, it is important to acknowledge the historical state of leftist organizations that these women were part of. Another, and perhaps more important reason to think this narrative together with the historical trajectory of the Turkish left is that this narrative aims to reverse the Turkish Left's defeat with revolutionary women's victory. I already discussed the historical conditions of the left in Turkey in the previous chapter. To avoid repetition and to enrich the discussion, this chapter will give particular attention to the women's perspective on the Turkish left. Also, I must note that instead of "the left" which was used in the previous chapter, I am deliberately using the term "the Turkish left," simply because the gendered counternarrative is particular to the women of the Turkish left and is not employed in the narratives of the members of the Kurdish left.

4.1 Women's critique of left and patriarchy

The gendered counternarrative is based on women's post-coup critique of the leftist

organizations and their ways of disciplining gender. This discipline was established before the coup but continued to regulate the role and appearance of women in prisons. Thus, women narrate instances of both the pre-coup and the post-coup periods to manifest their frustrations. These frustrations were about attempts of regulating the appearance of women, hostilities between organizations that hinders women's solidarity, and the hierarchical superiority of men in terms of decision making. To reverse these constraints, women also narrated that these men who attempt to dominate women through various means were in a vanquished state in prisons.

4.1.1 Leftist organizations and disciplining gender

According to the leftist women, there was a contradiction between being a member of an illegal revolutionary organization and being subjected to traditional gender norms. For example, Ayşe Gülay Özdemir wrote:

> In the organizations of our time, it is not wrong to say that philosophy-wise there were feudal elements. I think there was no structural equality given to women.[452]

By feudal, she refers to the traditional application of gender norms that imposes a predestined role for women. However, this did not mean that those imposed norms were unconscious of what they were doing. She mentions deliberate efforts to discipline gender relations according to these norms. Özdemir continued:

> I think that compared with the more radical, liberal, and revolutionary attitude of the 68 generation, the 78 generation was carrying more traditional, conservative, and feudal attributes. I think actions such as intervening in the lives of the revolutionary youth in universities, perceiving it as a precondition of revolutionary organization, and trying to

[452] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 160.

> regulate social life by publishing ethical pamphlets about how men and women will behave, prove my point.[453]

For Özdemir, attempts of controlling gender relations were in striking contrast with the attitudes of the previous generation of revolutionaries. The attempts to manage gender relations contradict the revolutionary and liberating character of the movement.

In the bellicose atmosphere of the late 1970s, organizations constricted their members with tight disciplinary regulations. These regulations permeated every sphere of life, including women's appearance as well as gender relations. Some reflected upon the internalization of these regulations with a regretful tone. İkbal Kaynar remembered:

> We were not wearing any make-up because of the prohibitions of those years. Those who wear make-up were condemned or excluded. In fact, when some of the girls were seen plucking their eyebrows, they were mocked continuously.[454]

Wearing make-up was coded as being a bourgeois wannabe and subjected to disciplinary measures. Similarly, Asiye Belovacıklı remembers:

> We were not dressing "like women," we were not wearing skirts or so. When the girls from TKP İGD[455] wear skirts with flower patterns, we made fun of them.[456]

These narratives demonstrate revolutionary activism was translated into regulating women's appearance. The "flower power" of non-violent youth resistance of 1968 was disregarded for a more militant outlook.

---

[453] Ibid., 164.
[454] *Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül*, 186.
[455] İlerici Gençlik Derneği (İGD - the Foundation of Progressive Youth) was the youth branch of Turkish Communist Party.
[456] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 434.

Women's appearance continued to be a conflicting issue in prison. Sevda Kuran narrated that at the time only married couples were allowed to see each other if they were held in the same prison, or only one of them was imprisoned. Thus, the prison administration incentivized marriages in prison. However, prisoners were also aware of the fact that these marriages were to be instrumentalized in by the prison administration to sugarcoat prison life. When Kuran wanted to get married, her partner asked to postpone it to prevent being part of that sugarcoating.[457] This example shows that some prisoners prioritized political messages and revolutionary outlook over romantic affairs such as seeing beloved ones. Gendered counternarrative aims to counter this emotionless engagement with revolution. For another example, Ayten Şahin narrated a blunt encounter with other fellow inmates. Şahin's sister was recently married and she wanted to visit Şahin wearing her bridal, the others protested: "Your sister's arrival by wearing a bridal, and your joy shows your affectation for the bourgeoisie."[458] She was shocked by this negative reception. These internalized codes about how a revolutionary woman should appear, contradict the joyfulness and solidarity that women embellished their life with in prison. Melis Düvenci wrote about those women preparing for visits to prison: "We made fun of them. They primped while being embarrassed."[459]. On the same track, when Süheyla Kaya was transferred to Çanakkale prison, she was shocked to see the appearance of political prisoners:

[457] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 370.
[458] Ibid., 142.
[459] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 173.

> The styles were changed drastically. [The women prisoner] goes to meet with her boyfriend as if she stepping up to the podium [like fashion models]. […] I do not advocate women becoming manly, but people there were effeminate to the extreme.[460]

The codes regulating the appearance of women were internalized by the revolutionaries. In these narratives, women externalize these commitments and put them in a critical light.

Women's criticism extended to the organizational regulations of gender relations. Some organizations forbid, or unwelcomed marriages even between two members of the same organization.[461] Some allowed it, only if the marriage will reinforce the couple's involvement in revolutionary work. Some used it just to rent a house for the organization. For example, Kumru Başer narrated what followed up her marriage with another leftist activist Yusuf:

> […] not a single man lived his political career according to his wife, but women, despite being a part of the movement themselves, were always positioned according to their husbands. Now, I am mostly a décor. A necessary woman décor to rent a house. Five-six male friends were coming to our house. For them, the actual person was Yusuf. I was cooking meals. Yusuf was ahead of others in terms of gender equality. One time he protested [the organization], "we did not bring this friend [Başer] from a village, will she have an assignment?"[462]

Başer implied that the organization allowed their marriage to be able to rent a house for secret meetings. Being a member of that organization, she expressed her discontent for being sidelined because of her gender.

According to the women's critique, the leftist organizations were trying to restrict women and discipline gender relations and display. Being restricted as such was

---

[460] Ibid., 317.
[461] Çulha, *Şimdi Sırası Değil*, 25.
[462] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 410.

contradictory considering that these people were bold enough to deny the whole system. In the following passage, Nurdan Deliorman narrated this predicament that both men and women faced in their revolutionary struggle:

> Considering the conditions of that time, the relations between men and women were not welcome. The less attachment you had to the system, the better revolutionary you will be. In a relationship, to be a couple, supporting each other's revolutionary struggle was more important than feelings. You needed to get the approval of the organization to begin an emotional relationship. Of course, some of our friends had secret relationships. I could never forget the scolding I got because I helped them keep their secrets. […] We had a tight organizational discipline. Traveling hometown was due to approval, an emotional relationship was due to approval… What a contradiction it was. The wayward spirits like us voluntarily abided by this steel discipline for our faith in the revolution and the future of the struggle.[463]

In this sense, servitude and loyalty to the revolutionary cause overrode other social relationships, especially romantic ones. Moreover, Deliorman was criticizing the organizational discipline that not only contradicted the emotional vivacity of the youth, but also their rebellious character. The young revolutionaries had to keep their romantic affairs secret and had to seek approval for simple things. In short, the patriarchal constraints over a young person were maintained under organizational discipline.

4.1.2 The brief period of women's autonomy

The coup disrupted the lives of political actors and the gendered counternarrative values this disruption with its emancipatory opportunities. An example of that kind of an opportunity was presented to the leftist women after the coup. For example, Fazilet Çulha wrote:

[463] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 208-9.

> Before the 12 September [the coup] and in its immediate aftermath, we did not have the chance to discuss as women. In a period when the political organizations were dispersed, we were left to our own devices and especially the problem was starting now. The relationships started to be questioned: marriages, couplings, the roles of women, and the roles of men.[464]

When almost all organizational hierarchies were in disarray, the military gathered women together at Selimiye Prison and separated them from their men comrades. In this period, the women experienced autonomy and more democratic practices of decision-making. Mukaddes Erdoğdu Çelik emphasized the importance of this experience:

> Even though some were receiving messages from outside or from the male detainee executives, women at Selimiye were able to "conduct autonomous politics" for almost a year. While the representatives of political organizations that never came together outside during the years of [left's] rise, were living together, they started to discuss principles of organizing as much as politics and theory. Our ability to advance our exchange of experience was made possible in those conditions.[465]

However, as Erdoğdu Çelik mentioned, this opportunity for autonomy faded, leaving its memory of an alternative, and more inclusive way of inter-factional relations. When the construction of Metris Prison was completed, the military transferred most of the detainees there. Ayhan Sağcan wrote about this transition:

> In producing common policies, women had the advantage of being together. Men were dispersed around different prisons, so at the start, they were lagging behind. When women resisted when the administration wanted to take a detainee to [police] station [for re-interrogation], men did not have that [kind of resistance]. Women argued with their men comrades to make their organizations join the resistive policies. […] Then, in Metris, men inevitably turned into the leaders of politics. Women did not have the opportunity to influence men. It was not very important what women's compartments of organizations were thinking. Women, when given the opportunity to enter thought

[464] Çulha, *Şimdi Sırası Değil*, 103.
[465] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar*, 128.

> platforms, can well enough become active producers of policies. Selimiye and Metris had proven that.[466]

In April 1981, the military started to transfer prisoners to Metris Military Prison. The council of Sultanahmet prison, which was comprised of male representatives of leftist organizations, decided to start an immediate hunger strike if they were to encounter torture while entering Metris. Erdoğdu Çelik narrated the arrival of this news:

> [The prison council] ordered women to act accordingly. The period was coming to a close for those women who were autonomously making decisions up until that day.[467]

Erdoğdu Çelik did not hide her frustration in women yielding this autonomy quickly. She wrote:

> As will be in many later activities, since the prison council was at men's wards, we women were on the side of implementation [rather than decision-making] for the most part. Our sovereignty of creating autonomous policies at Selimiye was over! It was a reality that women did not have any complaints about this loss in those days. It was an expression of the backwardness of high-ranked women [of organizations].[468]

The masculine domination of the pre-coup period was briefly interrupted with the coup, but it returned in prison even when the prison administration spatially separated men and women. The memory of this autonomous period was an important building block of women's alternative way of narrating the prison experience. Also, women surrendering their autonomy to men so easily did not appear problematic in those days.

---

[466] Ibid., 239.
[467] Ibid., 151.
[468] Ibid., 175.

4.1.3 Masculine domination as an obstacle before resistance

Women narrated that some followed the orders of men as part of an internalized hierarchy. Yet, the gender dimension of this hierarchical relationship was challenged as an obstacle before women's resistance. For example, Menekşe Işıldak Şatlı narrated that when women decided to start a hunger strike, the Dev-Yol members did not join them since the men's side (*erkek tarafı*) decided not to join.[469] The same attitude was narrated by Banu Asena Tosun. She also used the term men's side to denote the decision makers.[470] Sometimes the leadership circles decided to resist. Still, women were filling in with the role of followers. Erdoğdu Çelik reported that when the men of Dev-Sol declared a hunger strike, the women followed them.[471] This unequal relationship between men and women detainees also had a monetary dimension. Nermin Er mentioned that men's commune sent money to women's commune.[472]

Women's accounts did not only narrate masculine domination through organizational means. Sometimes, men influenced women through quite traditional concessions. For example, Mukaddes Erdoğdu Çelik narrated that one fellow inmate's husband decided to recant from his ideology and join the ward of the independents (*bağımsızlar koğuşu*). Çelik's woman friend felt like she had to follow her husband. Erdoğdu Çelik wrote:

> She wanted to stay with us. But she could not object to her husband and left us. This was an example of the women's issue. A woman who came as far as to prison in her

[469] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 270.
[470] Ibid., 20-21.
[471] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 177.
[472] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 302.

> political movement, could not even say "my conditions are appropriate" [to resist] and take a stand against her husband.[473]

Similar complaints appeared in Süheyla Kaya's account. She was furious with the women who were subscribing to men's opinions without question. Kaya wrote:

> One of our friends was defending an argument. Then, the exact opposite of that argument came from his boyfriend through "knock knock" communication. This time, she started to defend that feverishly. On top of that, she was complacent as if nothing happened.[474]

Innovative ways of communication between wards may be interpreted as a resistance practice against the prison administration and its attempts to seclude the prisoners. However, in the case of women, the ability to deliver messages from men's wards to women's sustained the hierarchical relationship between the two genders. Although the physical structure of prisons separated men from women, the communication possibilities were narrated in women's accounts as a delimiting factor of women's autonomy.

In terms of rhetoric, men and women were equal comrades in the revolutionary struggle. However, the leading circles of organizations consisted of men. When the prison regime separated prisoners in terms of their biological sex, the hierarchical relationship between the two genders became more clear to the eyes of women. In their prison narratives, women shared their frustrations by saying that masculine domination and patriarchy penetrated the prison walls. The gendered counternarrative aims to twist the situation by showing that the men themselves were defeated. In other words, the ones that dominate women were already dominated.

---

[473] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 207.
[474] Ibid., 175.

Emphasizing the defeat of men by narrating their subservient state was the ultimate opportunity to create the contrastingly triumphant basis for gendered counternarrative. In instances where women's accounts mentioned men's devastated state, especially side by side with resistant women. For example, Banu Asena Tosun wrote on initiating a hunger strike men and women together, and men's sudden failure:

> After a couple of days, we heard that almost every man could not stand against the torture and withdrew from the hunger strike. We were quite angry at them. At least they could have resisted a few days![475]

Tosun was furious that the men gave up the resistance so quickly. The women, on the other hand, were determined to resist.

The defeat of men was narrated not only with failure to resist but they were also reported to be serving the prison administration to stop the hunger strike. Günseli Kaya narrated that while she was in an isolation cell, men came there and told her that the hunger strike is over, and if they want to continue, they can continue on their own.[476] Canan Öztürkçü Can narrated her version of the hunger strike a bit differently. She remembered that the prison administration sent three male prisoner representatives to persuade women to withdraw from the hunger strike. She claimed that the administration forced the men to deliver the message by saying: "it's meaningless to continue."[477] Can's narration of this event emphasized that men collaborated with the tyrannical prison administration.

Also, men were portrayed as prisoners in a state of total submission. For example,

---

[475] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 25.
[476] Ibid., 301.
[477] Ibid., 258.

Dilvin Altınakar Semizer narrated that she and a few other women were called to stand before the attorney general. While leaving Mamak, she narrated that she saw men comrades singing anthems with shaved heads. She wrote:

> As we were trying to tell them something by making signs with our eyebrows and by winking, they did not look at us, they stood motionless with their heads bent forward. Our bewilderment was turned into a feeling of great sorrow and heartache.[478]

She was disillusioned to see people acting like robots. But more so, this story epitomizes how men was beyond the reach of women, and they could not wake them up, in a way, lead them to resist. Semizer continued: "[…] seeing them this desperate, this meek, I wanted to blubber."[479]

The submissive state of imprisoned men was utilized by women for underlining the aspects of masculine domination as obstacles before the resistance of women. The women, being resistant themselves, were dragged behind by the men and the internalization of patriarchy. In contrast, the women's brief period of autonomy accounts for their ability to resist and form a more inclusive way of decision-making.

4.1.4 Factionalism as an obstacle before solidarity

As I discussed in the previous chapter, one of the most important characteristics of the left in the 1970s was its fractured state. There were numerous independent organizations. Even though all of them were pursuing a socialist revolution, a considerable portion of them could not get along with each other. The grudges of the pre-coup period persisted in the post-coup prisons.

In the retrospections of women, factional divisions were narrated as a limiting factor

[478] Ibid., 115.
[479] Ibid., 121.

for constituting solidarity. In contrast with the leftist male prisoners who were forced to cohabitate with the right-wingers wherever possible, the female prisoners were all leftist revolutionaries. This, however, did not mean achieving solidarity in the ward was an easy task. Similar to men, women carried the factional feuds to prison. For example, Meral Bekar and Banu Asena Tosun wrote that their faction was not talking to the members of the TKP.[480] Similarly, Süheyla Kaya remembers that they were not talking to the members of the TKP. The members of organizations that descended from the THKP-C were forming a buffer zone between them and the TKP. However, those forming the buffer did not want to be in touch with the Maoist PDA.[481] On a similar track, Zeynep Turan notes that when they first entered the ward, the representative of that ward welcomed them by saying "there is no problem unless you are a member of the [Maoist] *Aydınlık*."[482]

After entering the ward, the leftist prisoner joins a commune that predominantly organizes her life. A prison commune was an organization based on common property, division of labor, and internal discipline. It collected all the money its members receive from outside. My collected money was spent by the commune administrators according to the total expenditures of the commune. In terms of clothes, everything, except underwear, was common property. In addition to multiple administrators,[483] some were responsible for the food and beverages, cleaning the ward, washing clothes and dishes, and setting the table.[484]

This communal life, which was designed on the basis of solidarity, was not

---

[480] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 26-27, 49.
[481] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 116.
[482] Ibid., 121.
[483] Ibid., 248.
[484] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 335-6.

independent of factional limitations. Most of the time, factions that could get along with each other formed joint communes. Yet, when that was not possible, the ward got divided according to the number of communes. The existence of multiple communes instead of one was the source of many problems. For example, Yurdusev Özsökmenler narrated that every ward she visited had a singular commune. Yet, when she experienced another ward with multiple communes, she noted that "There, I have seen people hiding things from their comrades for the first time. It was very hurtful."[485] When Etkin Kanar narrated the division of labor in the commune, she used the term "guards for the dishes," as if it is evident that preserving the dishware from thieves was a problem. Furthermore, the coexistence of multiple communes means separate food supplies. Fatma Pala Akalp narrated that a member of her commune took the biscuits of another commune. Akalp wrote about her frustration:

> By general decree of the ward, we stupidly declared that friend a thief and isolated her from the rest. We did the greatest evil that can be done to a human being. Now, I am still sorrowful for this incident and I could never ever forget it.[486]

In the ward where several organizations cohabitate, the organizational discipline was sharpened not to show any softness to the other. Akalp's narration of "the biscuit incident" is an example of how factional differences and organizational discipline resulted in the exclusion of a woman comrade because of an insignificant act.

Overall, factionalism among the left was narrated as a schismatic element deeply experienced through the struggles of organizing life with multiple and uncompromising communes. Instead, women narrated how a collective gender identity granted the solidarity and resistance that the revolutionary women were

---

[485] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 209.
[486] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 200.

after.

4.2 The joyful prison

The master narrative of the 1980 coup presented prisons as places of decimation with practices of correction. Later, the prisons of the coup were narrated as horrid examples of torture and degradation. In contrast, the gendered counternarrative considers prisons as places where women celebrated ways of improving themselves and their joyful coexistence. Accordingly, the themes in women's narratives include their practices to educate each other on various topics and organize entertaining activities. These narratives were embellished with instances that emphasized women's humor, cunning, wit, and care for others.

4.2.1 Education, Entertainment, and Humor

Education and entertainment went hand in hand in the gendered counternarrative to emphasize the beneficial aspects of the post-coup prisons. Considering the difficulty of acquiring textbooks, these educational activities were limited to certain areas. For example, Sukün Öztoklu remembered that they were studying English, French, and German from the books that managed to enter the ward.[487] Language textbooks must have been easier to get past censorship. Of course, there are no schools without teachers. However, the rather mundane act of instructing in a school turns into an act that promotes solidarity in a prison ward. Erdoğdu Çelik mentioned that they had "the hour of silence" regulation that they implemented to encourage reading and study.[488]

[487] Ibid., 40.
[488] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 233.

Dilvin Altınakar Semizer takes the resemblance between prison and school a step further and shapes it into a story that complements the failed utopia of the revolutionary left. She was teaching English to her comrades and she wrote that her students were saying "we felt like as if the revolution happened and we were studying in revolutionary schools."[489] This idea of continuing education in prison is also related to the rupture that occurred in the education of young leftists, either by the revolutionary enthusiasm or by the coup. Considering the number of teenager detainees, prison supplements the school that they would normally be in. For example, when the military detained her, Rezzan Koca was in high school and, naturally, failed her classes. In this sense, it is telling that she calls the Mamak Prison "the University of Mamak."[490]

If a game was available, prisoners taught each other how to play. For example, Fatma Pala Akalp wrote that she learned English as well as how to play chess or how to do physical exercises at Mamak.[491] For example, Gönül Sevindir recalls how they taught each other how to speak foreign languages as well as how to play chess. Their days were passing by "books, newspapers, songs, and knitting."[492] Knitting was a pastime activity in women's prison life. Melis Düvenci wrote in a humorous tone:

> Like they say for prison "I lied down and lied down some more, and then I got out," for me, it was like, "I knitted and knitted some more, and then I got out." I knitted so much that I changed the catchphrase.[493]

All these narratives of teaching and learning were also practices that emphasize the

[489] Ibid., 135.
[490] Ibid., 148.
[491] Ibid., 209.
[492] Ibid., 176.
[493] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 222.

women's caring for each other, as well as fruitful ways of passing time and preserving their mental and physical health.

Another way of undermining somber memories of prison is narrating it with entertainment and humor. The appearance of happy people with festive activities in these narratives annuls the weight of defeat and decimation of political actors in prison. For example, Cemile Çakır remembers the women singing songs when she arrived at the ward. She wrote "I was thirsty for friendship, for sharing. I am happy that I got what I wanted."[494] Similar to educational activities, entertainment strengthened the bonds of solidarity among women. Çakır's account almost reaches a point to praise her incarceration, which is the ultimate trait of these carceral counternarratives. For another example, despite the grim atmosphere of military prisons, Meral Bekar remembers convivial entertainments organized by the inmates. She wrote that they even organized theater and folk-dancing groups.[495] Hilal Ünlü mentioned the theatrical plays they adapted from novels as part of entertaining organizations in the ward.[496] Of course, the plays were rehearsed and then performed. Ferihan Duygu narrated that they were assigning one sentinel at the door, and performed plays inside.[497] She wrote, "we were having a lot of fun at Mamak."[498] These accounts recurrently countered the dominant narration of the prison as "the hell of Mamak."

Finally, Pamuk Yıldız narrated that they were trying to organize a comedy play. Yet, the administration assaulted the ward because they were laughing too much, and they

[494] Ibid., 226.
[495] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 91.
[496] Ibid., 274.
[497] *Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül*, 85.
[498] Ibid., 90.

could not complete the preparations.[499] Women being able to laugh implies that they were resistant to all these torturous practices directed at subordinating them as Latife Türkyılmaz argued:

> The most effective way of staying strong is laughing. You need to laugh. When that laughing began, our energy heightened, the color of our faces restored. Also, we were telling each other how we got beaten and laughed all over again.[500]

From a different angle, all these entertainments were a coping mechanism for military discipline and the physical violence the women experienced. Günseli Kaya wrote that they were suppressing the physical pain by laughing.[501] Against all those efforts to terrorize them, Kaya narrated that they were caricaturing what has happened and entertaining themselves.[502] In women's accounts, even the stories of beatings were told with humor. Melis Düvenci wrote, for another example:

> The soldiers ambushed the ward and beat us for reasons I do not recall now. When they left, we evaluated the damage done. One of the arms of the blouse I was wearing was missing, it was detached! I remember such funny memories of beatings. As a matter of fact, there is no bad prison memory on my mind at all.[503]

On the same track, Cemile Çakır remembers that they were dancing (*halay*) even after the administration ravaged their ward.[504] Pamuk Yıldız narrated that they named their efforts to evade the incoming truncheon hits, "the truncheon dance" (*cop dansı*).[505] This narrative strategy of giving a funny name to something undesirable shows a combination of efforts to undermine their subjection to violence in prison

---

[499] Pamuk Yıldız, *O Hep Aklımda: Bir Mamak Cezaevi Tanıklığı* (2007; repr., Ankara: Ayizi Kitap, 2012), 289.
[500] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 69.
[501] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 303.
[502] Ibid., 307.
[503] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 172.
[504] Ibid., 265.
[505] Yıldız, *O Hep Aklımda*, 182.

and efforts to cope with the difficulty of narrating it through humorous namings.

4.2.3 Cunning and Wit

Humorous namings continue to appear in women's accounts which, on one hand, reverse the rather gloomy narratives of incarceration, and on the other, they underline women's cunning and wit that supports the construction of gendered identity. For example, giving nicknames is also a witty way of surviving and then narrating the otherwise terrible prison experience. Women narrate how they nicknamed officers as *jilet* (razor blade)[506] or *pörtlek* (protruded), a sergeant is nicknamed *kaynana* (mother-in-law),[507] or a doctor is nicknamed *dr.santim* (doctor centimeter).[508]

Women's cunning and wit were also emphasized by the creative ways of communicating in carceral circumstances. On top of the aforementioned "knock knock" communication, Dilvin Altınakar Semizer mentions their way of communicating with each other through signs. She calls this "mute's language," yet later she clarifies that it has no resemblance with the actual sign language and it was something created in prison ad hoc.[509] For another example, Fatma Kaya Akalp narrated how they were using bedsheets to send messages to the wards on lower floors,[510] which underlines women's creativity in finding ways to communicate.

These were instances of secret communication. Yet, the administration also had techniques of surveillance at their disposal to garner information from the inmates. One was the infamous survey designed by academics Songar and İtil. When women

---

[506] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 175; Yıldız, O Hep Aklımda, 166.
[507] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 317.
[508] Yıldız, *O Hep Aklımda*, 274.
[509] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 126, 128.
[510] Ibid., 215.

were asked to fill the questionnaire, Meral Bekar claimed that they deliberately chose different answers to blur their validity.[511] Other techniques were discrete, such as using listening devices. On that, Sema Yiğit Kanat proudly narrated that when women discovered the device implanted in the ward, they went near it and talked nonsense. Kanat noted that they gave the device a nickname: feliçita.[512] She wrote: "They could not drive us crazy, but I am sure that we were making them crazy at that time."[513] These narrative elements supply the gendered counternarrative that alters the master narrative of decimation in prison.

4.2.4 Care

In women's narratives, the theme of caring for the other included fellow inmates, their children, and even the private soldiers. For example, Günseli Kaya narrated that at roll calls, the person at the end of the line had to say "the end, my commander." Since the political prisoners refused to call soldiers "my commander," the one at the end remained silent and was subjected to beating every time. Kaya remembered that there was a constant rotation at the end of the line in each roll call to share the beating.[514] The same story appears in Ayfer Kantaş's account. Kantaş wrote:

> It was like as if there was a contest of getting beaten. We could not bear the suffering of our friends. What a torture it was, we were exhausted. We could not use our hands, every part of us was bruised.[515]

Kaya and Kantaş's stories underline women's selflessness in enduring physical pain

---

[511] Ibid., 69.
[512] Feliçita means happiness, felicity, but in this case, it probably refers to the 1982 international hit song of Al Bano and Romina Power which was very popular in Turkey. *Feliçita Mehmet | TRT Arşiv*, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1A5m4vc9X4.
[513] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 397.
[514] Ibid., 302.
[515] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 35.

in the name of solidarity and care for the other.

The practices of resistance were also physically challenging, especially the hunger strikes. These practices were overseen by a strict leftist disciplinary mechanism. An important element in women's narratives is their attempts to bend this mechanism as much as they can towards a more caring and forgiving direction. For example, Cemile Çakır wrote about her negotiation between friendship and discipline:

> Gülşad gave up her death fast. We received an order "not to help her." I told her I will disregard this order but I cannot assist her to the toilet by openly defying my comrades.[516]

This negotiation allowed women to be forgiving, even for the ones who did not resist. Süheyla Kaya wrote:

> The decision to hunger strike was bounding everybody. But this was causing wrong results. For example, there were those sick or too weak for a hunger strike. We were making sure that they were getting their deserts in secret, we were turning a blind eye to them. We had to; was it better to send them to the independent wards? Why would anybody be a counter-revolutionary just because she can not endure hunger? Detachments [from leftism] were rare in women's wards. That was because of our constructive approach.[517]

Similarly, Ümit Efe wrote:

> There was a will, faith, self-sacrifice, and sharing. We loved each other and believed in each other. We were all revolutionary siblings, we were all captives, and we would all resist! We did not condemn those who showed weakness in resisting.[518]

Narratives of care appear in women's accounts frequently in terms of biological or metaphorical expressions of kinship. "Erdal was our little brother, and we could not protect him" wrote Fatma Pala Akalp,[519] or Ümit Efe mentioned Reha İsvan as "our

---

[516] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 285.
[517] Ibid., 292.
[518] Ibid., 294.
[519] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 217.

mother."[520] It is important to realize once again that the majority of the prisoners were at a very young age. İsvan, on the other hand, was much older than the rest and assumed the role of a protective and guiding elder.

Furthermore, children of the detained mothers could visit the prison, and stay with their mothers if they have not passed a certain age. So, on top of metaphorical motherhood, there were instances in which biological motherhood was narrated as a source of joy exclusive to the women's ward. For example, Alime Mitap remembers her reunion with her son, Ertan in the ward on Children's Day (23 April) as she wrote "those moments I could not forget."[521] For another example, Mukaddes Erdoğdu Çelik wrote:

> In the end, being the captives who were isolated from the rest of the society, if you had a kid or a baby in the ward, while your responsibilities would increase, the risk you take in fascist assaults would increase, but also your daily share of happiness would increase.[522]

The ward of a military prison, especially after the coup, was not a friendly place for a baby, or child. Wards were frequently assaulted, and the scenery of beatings and insults was not a rarity. Still, the existence of a child in the ward was narrated as a factor that collectively instigated the protective and motherly emotions. The departure of a child was an equal source of sadness. Ayfer Kantaş narrated collective mourning after a mother and her child separated. She narrated:

> One of our friends gave birth when we were at İki Yıllık. When I arrived, she was in the ninth month of pregnancy. After 15-20 days, our İnanç baby has born at Gülhane Hospital. When the mother and the baby came to the ward, all of us were so happy. The Ninth Ward had cheered up. We had a baby now. After a few days, the baby has been

[520] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 281.
[521] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 23.
[522] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 232.

> sent outside to the family. The mother, however, stayed with us until she was released. This situation caused pain in me and the women there.[523]

Again, these narratives emphasize the collectivity and solidarity of women that empowered each other in the face of manifold techniques directed at worsening their life conditions.

Finally, remembering good soldiers is a notable theme in women's narratives. It certainly reflects a thoughtful differentiation of plain soldiers who had to obey commanding officers. Narrative-wise, it is a way of undermining the narrative of the military as a monolithic adversary. In this sense, women noted soldiers who were reluctant and regretful in using force upon them. Gülşat Aygen remembers the soldier asking for forgiveness while beating her with a bat.[524] Or Zeliha Şalcı mentioned that one of the soldiers came crying, and said that he does not want to do this. Şalcı claimed that women were worried that something will happen to that soldier.[525] Similarly, Sema Şengül remembers the soldier who refused to beat them.[526] Şengül continued narrating that one day, the sergeant nicknamed "mother-in-law" came and told them "They described you to us differently. [They told us that] these are communists, they do not care for motherhood or sisterhood. However, you are good people."[527] Sometimes these soldiers' reluctance was narrated by their attempts to convince women to abide by the rules without them forcing them. Soldiers were providing them goods, especially cigarettes which were difficult to obtain. Selmane Ertekin noted at the end of her story of receiving cigarettes from

[523] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 33.
[524] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 183.
[525] Ibid., 317.
[526] Ibid., 160.
[527] Ibid., 317.

soldiers: "I remember these soldiers with love and respect."[528] Günseli Kaya goes as further as to find similarities between their captivity and soldiers' compulsory duty. She calls them:

> Those puny soldiers who were sleepless for hours, whose bodies were untouched by hot water, who were crushed under the tyrant officers of the Hell of Mamak.[529]

Overall, the gendered counternarrative induces positivity to the otherwise horrid representations of prisons by employing various themes of education, entertainment, humor, and care. These themes also serve the purpose of undermining the negative effects of incarceration on women. The women, on the other hand, emphasize their resilience and indomitable character through narratives of resistance.

4.3 Triumphant and indomitable women

The most important element of gendered counternarrative is collective resistance. Through various resistance practices, leftist women brought the prison administration to its heels. With the narration of these practices, leftist women reversed the dominant carceral narratives and emphasized their triumphant and indomitable character. To stress their indomitable character, women employ several narrative strategies.

The chief among them is narrating the instances when women were exceptionally successful in their resistive practices. This exceptionality granted women triumphant status vis-à-vis the defeated men. For example, Meral Bekar narrated the course of a ten-day hunger strike. She wrote about how men gave up the hunger strike after three days, but women were determined to continue to the tenth day. In Ayşe Gülay

[528] Ibid., 162.
[529] Ibid., 307.

Özdemir's narrative, the women's triumph in rejecting the prisoner uniforms is again emphasized by the failure of men's wards in this resistance.[530] Similarly, Günseli Kaya prided upon women's insistence on continuing the hunger strike even though the men yielded.[531] In narrating the end of that hunger strike, Aygün Zerger noted:

> We, being "the women of Mamak," resisted the repression and torture and honorably completed the hunger strike. This was the spirit of 'women of Mamak' which brought us today after thirty years.[532]

Zerger's words encapsulate how stories of exceptional success in resistance are connected to the proud identity of revolutionary women in these narratives. For another example, Gülbeyaz Hamurcu wrote:

> Despite coming from different groups and organizations, and different causes, even though there was no bond between us, we tried to stand up and continue our honorable struggle together. We tried to continue the class struggle in prisons and we did it together. We achieved a success rare in history.[533]

The honorable struggle is narrated as the building block of the spirit of women prisoners. Hamurcu was also indicating the historical importance of their resistance, which nurtures these individual narratives into a collective counternarrative that goes against a master narrative dominating historiography. In a similar manner, Ümit Efe narrated:

> We did not walk in a line, we did not conform to the orders of roll calls, we did not utter pre-meal grace, and in conditions where even tea is used for domination, we refused to drink it despite we loved it very much. We resisted while all prisons of Turkey surrendered.[534]

---

[530] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 174.
[531] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 302.
[532] Ibid., 189.
[533] Ibid., 87.
[534] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 294.

Common to all these accounts, the indomitable character of women was principally proven by their resistance, but further emphasized by how all others were yielded to the military.

4.3.1 The enfeebled prison administration

Moreover, in their narratives, women wrote about how the prison administration failed and grew powerless in the face of their resistance. For example, Muhteşem Ertal Özsoy wrote about the failure of prison administration: "They could not turn the eyes of women into dead fish eyes."[535] Similarly, Naciye Kaya defines the aim of the junta as turning the revolutionaries into "living deads without self-esteem and self-respect." However, she wrote, they were confronted by "women who showed a resistance that made the torturers regret it."[536]

Women resisted the prison administration through various resistance forms and proven their untameable character. For example, Günseli Kaya uses the term "incorrigible women" (*iflah olmaz kadınlar*) to define the women on hunger strike.[537] For another, Suna Özüdoğru Koç narrated the resistance against prisoner uniforms with these words:

> They [the prison administration] were feeling desperate against our resistance, they could only ravage our wards without knowing what else to do. They knew these girls do whatever they say.[538]

Koç claimed that the prison administration accepted women's waywardness even though they continued attacking their wards in desperation. Similarly, for Nesrin

[535] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 226.
[536] Ibid., 331.
[537] Ibid., 289-9.
[538] Ibid., 348.

Özkan, the administration became more repressive as they failed to force women to call them "my commander" or make them yell at roll calls.[539]

In the leftist women's accounts, they depicted themselves not only as relentless in their resistance, but also pioneered and sometimes led men into resistance. For example, Yurdusev Özsökmenler claimed that women participated in every instance of organized resistance in Metris Prison, and they even instigated those.[540] According to Gülten Kaya, the first resistance in Metris was started in women's wards.[541] Again, Pamuk Yıldız claimed that women's refusal of participating to roll call to protest torture was the first act of resistance as such in the history of Mamak.[542] On the same track, Gülperi Kaya thinks that when women started to resist, the administration moved them to another part of the prison, away from men's wards to prevent resistance's spreading.[543]

Women also narrated their femininity as an advantage in resisting the masculine military order. For example, Selma Karamert Güven wrote that they refused to call officers "my commander" since there was no woman in the army at that time.[544] Zeynep Turan narrated how their resistance to the mandate to wear prisoner uniforms was more effective than men. When men refused to wear the uniform, the administration took away their clothes, leaving them with their underwear. The administration was hoping that they will be ashamed of their appearance, especially in court hearings. However, when word of the mandate expanding to female

[539] Ibid., 243.
[540] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 291.
[541] Ibid., 165.
[542] Yıldız, *O Hep Aklımda*, 166.
[543] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 94.
[544] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 150.

prisoners reached the women's ward, Turan claimed that they firmly rejected it. She wrote:

> What would happen then? We joked about going to court hearings with nothing but bras and panties. Those men [at the administration] could not dare it.[545]

The women's wayward nature, bravery, and cunning enfeebled the repressive prison administration.

To further emphasize these traits, the women narrated how the prison administration was frustrated with them. Selma Karamert Güven narrated that Raci Tetik, the warden of Mamak, beat her, by saying "for the first time in my life I am beating a detainee, because of her waywardness."[546] Again Nesrin Özkan underlined women's indomitable character by reporting that Tetik said "I prefer one hundred male detainees instead of a woman detainee like you."[547] Argün Zerger was forced to spend three days in a cage at Mamak Prison and was constantly beaten by the soldiers because of her stubbornness. She wrote:

> …this was punishment without decree, a policy to dismay us, to make us surrender. But we persevered and succeeded.[548]

The insistence and endurance of women against domination were presented as simple but strong evidence of their victory.

4.3.2 Prison as a place of strengthening

In the gendered counternarrative, prisons turned from being places where the

---

[545] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 259.
[546] Çeşmecioğlu, *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*, 151-2.
[547] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 244.
[548] Ibid., 187.

political actors were decimated into places of strengthening. All of the negative aspects of incarceration further emphasized the women's strength that overcame them. For example, Rezzan Koca wrote: "Those tortures and repression that came after one another made us stronger."[549] Also, Hilal Ünlü employed a similar narrative:

> "We passed grueling exams. We all took either great or small wounds, that is for sure… But in total, we were not defeated. We smiled in the end. That is for sure even more."[550]

It must be noted that women frequently referred to a collective identity, rather than an individual one. For example, Ümit Efe wrote:

> We, the women's ward, did not know how to resist but there was a terrific emotional bond between us. […] We were experiencing a great collective spirit… the resistance of a handful of women was haunting the punishers.[551]

This identity was formed through solidarity and resistance. The women bound together in their ordeal in prison. The more they were subjected to torture, the more they became unified under a collective identity. Günseli Kaya narrates the construction of this collective identity:

> Step by step, slowly and gradually increased, waived knot by knot, and grew the revolt of women! Nothing was easy. We had experienced a great defeat with the 12 September [the coup], each one of us was wounded by spirit and body. The truncheon falling on every part of our body, including our hands, arms, feet, legs, and shoulders was bonding us to each other, while we applied ointment to each other's bodies, we repaired our souls, and our rage combined and grew. […] the women brought to Mamak were becoming a unitary body and merged at the line of struggle.[552]

Kaya's narrative touches upon several themes of the gendered counternarrative. The

---

[549] Ibid., 148.
[550] Ibid., 282.
[551] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 165.
[552] *Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*, 299.

indomitable women were unified in resistance, strengthened each other through care, marched towards their triumph, and successfully formed a collective identity.

Precisely, this identity was a gift of arduous resistance and those who did not resist were not included in its collective umbrella. Contrasting those who failed was the final theme of the gendered counternarrative. For example, Zeliha Şakcı wrote:

> Actually, Mamak battered, broke, and even erased some of us, but reshaped and turned a great portion of us into steel.[553]

For the gendered counternarrative, only those who paid the price of resisting reaped its empowering benefits. For another example, Gülbeyaz Hamurcu reflects on the administration opening of a "cute girls ward" (*cici kızlar koğuşu*):

> "[The prison] was like a school. The ones who were successful… and the ones that failed."[554]

The cute girls' ward was the exact opposite of the indomitable women's ward. For the residents of the latter, it was heartbreaking to see that others have chosen that path.[555] As Meral Gündoğan put it, "the cute girls' ward contradicted women's collective spirit of resistance."[556] So, even though the gendered counternarrative constructs a particularly collective identity for women, the narratives note that it did not include those dissuaded from resistance.

4.4 The revolutionary women's identity

The gendered counternarrative presented a story of collective identity construction.

---

[553] Ibid., 318.
[554] Ibid., 89.
[555] Ibid., 109.
[556] Ibid., 295.

The women narrated their frustrations with the leftist organizations and their patriarchal properties. While in prison, the women created an alternative way of life. In contrast with the men's defeat, the women advocated their triumph. They undermined the prison administration and discovered their gender in a collective spirit of resistance.

The identity construction of the gendered counternarrative, however, should not be mistaken for replacing one political identity with other. In other words, the accounts employ this counternarrative did not replace their leftist identity with women's identity. So women's identity was superimposed on the leftist identity. Altogether, they create what these accounts call the identity of "revolutionary women." For example, Meral Bekar wrote:

> At prison we were wounded some more, worn out some more. But in this struggle, we were revived, rejuvenated just as much, we improved ourselves and each other… in fraternity… While we reconstituted our life together, and with determinacy, we reconstituted ourselves too with revolutionary responsibility… I suspect, there was an advantage of being revolutionary, of being revolutionary women in doing all this.[557]

For Bekar, being a revolutionary woman was the precondition of their success. The narratives of gender discovery were blended together with narratives of improving one's commitment to the revolutionary cause. For example, Ayhan Sağcan wrote:

> I can say that we have learned how to be revolutionary in prison. Because it was like a laboratory, observed every moment. We saw sharing with selfishness side by side, we got to know protecting each other and solidarity to the highest degree there. […] the 12 September [the coup] was a turning point, a point of divergence in prisons; it was a school where ideologies, policies, and people grow.[558]

[557] Ibid., 79.
[558] Erdoğdu Çelik, *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*, 239.

Also, Nimet Öztürk similarly depicted prisons:

> Prison allowed me to improve myself politically. I read, analyzed, thought, and discussed. The experience of torture taught me a lot. The 12 September was full of lessons alongside pain. It contributed a lot to us. I was a revolutionary before prison, but I was not fond of reading books. I got accustomed to this in prison.[559]

Finally, Kıymet Yıldırım wrote:

> Being a revolutionary was in fashion before the 12 September… We ended up in this wind and came here, but later we embraced this wind. Even at times, it was not blowing, we remained the same, we struggled to make it blow again.[560]

In these narratives, it was clear that the women preserved their leftist identity. Although they criticized the left's gender blindness and inequality. This critique is limited to organizations. Leftism as an ideology was never, at least openly, questioned.

For Nilüfer Göle, Turkish politics shifted from one based on political ideologies to one based on policies in in the post-coup era. In this shift, the ideological movements gradually vanished.[561] From the 1980s, a popular women's movement emerged in Turkey as part of rising identity politics. Women embracing feminism organized under foundations and protested patriarchy and the political and social bodies that perpetuate it. In contrast with the Kemalist feminism of the early republic, these women were opposing the state.[562] They were tolerant to other groups with similar grievances, such as Islamists.[563]

---

[559] Ibid., 289.
[560] Ibid., 228.
[561] Nilüfer Göle, "Toward an Autonomization of Politics and Civil Society in Turkey," in *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, ed. Metin Heper and Evin, Ahmet (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 213–22, 213.
[562] Yeşim Arat, "Toward a Democratic Society: The Women's Movement in Turkey in the 1980s," *Women's Studies International Forum* 17, no. 2 (1994): 241–48, 245.
[563] Şirin Tekeli, "Europe, European Feminism, and Women in Turkey," *Women's Studies International Forum* 15, no. 1 (n.d.): 139–43, 141.

Concerning the claims and criticisms of the leftist women, the gendered counternarrative can be considered as part of this movement. However, the preservation of leftism in the gendered counternarrative positioned the revolutionary women's identity at the periphery of rising identity politics. They were still committed to the revolution in an environment where these commitments were seen old fashioned. That is one of the reasons why the leftist women's narratives and their identity claims are hitherto disregarded by numerous scholars who study women in Turkey.

CHAPTER V

THE RELIGIOUS REBIRTH COUNTERNARRATIVE

In this chapter, I will analyze the religious rebirth counternarrative that predominantly appeared in the autobiographical accounts of the Ülkücü prisoners. This counternarrative is based on an understanding of imprisonment as an ascetic opportunity for spiritual heightening and, sometimes, rebirth. The origins of this counternarrative date far back to the story of Biblical Joseph told in the Book of Genesis. Joseph was iniquitously put in dungeon by one of the Pharaoh's guards, Potiphar. There, God's grace descended upon him, and he continued to spread the word of God in prison. The story reappeared in the Qur'an. It was adopted by several generations of the Nur Movement with the name *Medrese-i Yusufiye* (the madrasah of Joseph), starting with its founder and idol Said Nursi who spent most of his life exiled in an isolated village in Isparta.[564] For example, Ahmet Özbay, an imam of the Nur Movement was captured with banned books in 1982. Later, he narrated his prison experience by referencing the lives of Joseph and Nursi since he continued to teach Islam. He even entitled his memoir *Mekteb-i Yusufiye'de Çileli Hayatım.*[565] In

[564] See for example, Bahadıroğlu, *Zindanda Şahlanış,* and for a recent edition, Nursi, *Medrese-i Yusufiye Risalesi.*
[565] Ahmet Özbay, *Mekteb-i Yusufiye'de Çileli Hayatım* (İstanbul: Fazilet Kitabevi, 2006).

general, an understanding of prison as a fitting place of religious asceticism appears in the life-writing of incarcerated Islamists. For example, Hüsnü Aktaş argued that "prison is not important for me. Thanks to the great God, I am feeling the taste of seclusion and solitude."[566] However, Ülkücü prisoners' adoption of the religious rebirth counternarrative took a specific form to respond to a number of crises experienced by the movement in the post-coup period. In examining the themes of this counternarrative, this chapter mainly follows the life-writings of Ülkücü prisoners.

Thematic pieces of the religious rebirth counternarrative are scattered across the publications of Ülkücü authors starting from 1989. Some of these writings were published while the authors were still in prison, thus reflecting the intensity of the prison atmosphere more vividly. Even though the religious rebirth counternarrative never disappeared completely throughout the years, it is also important to note that in these publications the religious rebirth counternarrative was more ambitiously embedded in the prison narratives of the Ülkücüs. Until the year 2000, seven books on the prison experience were published. Between 2000 and 2009, seven more were published. Between 2010 and 2020, a remarkable twenty books were published. So, the publication frequency of the last decade outweighs the total sum of the previous decades. Ülkücü authors frequently published books about their prison experience of the 1980 coup after 2010.

In these books, Ülkücüs employed various formats. Rıdvan Akabe's *Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye* is a compilation of writings of multiple authors published

[566] Hüsnü Aktaş, *Medeni Vahşet Davası: Cezâevi Notları 1984-1985* (Ankara: Ölçü Yayınları, 1987), 111.

elsewhere. Muhammed Bahadır's *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler* is comprised of numerous Ülkücüs' responses to a questionnaire, thus having a thematic dimension. Yaşar Yıldırım's book *Balkondan Seyretmek* is a compilation of his writings in various Ülkücü newspapers after the coup. Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu's *12 Eylül Günleri* constituted by his previous interviews edited by Melih Perçin and published post-mortem. Some wrote their books exclusively about their prison experience, such as Haluk Kırcı's *Donmuş Zaman Manzaraları*. Some wrote multiple volumes of prison memoirs, such as Fahrettin Masum Budak's *Akan Kanlar Bizimdi* and *Giden Canlar Bizimdi,* and Oğuzhan Cengiz's *Yanıkkale* and *Kapıaltı.* Some wrote another's memoirs through interviewing but still employed the first-person narration, such as Zihni Açba's *Mamak Zulüm Kalesi* claimed to be the memoir of Selçuk Kutlu. Some narrated the prison experience as part of their autobiographies, such as Taha Akyol's *Hayat Yolunda,* and Yaşar Okuyan's *O Yıllar.* Some mixed their memoirs into biographies they wrote, such as Mustafa Çobanoğlu's *Unutmak İhanettir: Yusufiyeli Cengiz Akyıldız.*

Incarceration holds an important place in the Ülkücü memory. It was an absolute turning point in the lives of many militants of the movement. Considering the post-coup splits, it can be argued that the coup created long-lasting effects on the movement. Similar to the road map of previous chapters, I will present the historical conditions of the movement before the coup and then turn to the prison narratives of the post-coup period.

5.1 The Ülkücü movement in the 1970s

The 1970s was a period of growth and turmoil for the Ülkücü movement. Ülkücüs were the only pro-state street force among various Turkish and Kurdish leftist

organizations and Islamist Akıncıs. While incarceration amplified existing problems, it also created particular identity crises for the Ülkücüs. An overwhelming majority of the authors cited below joined the movement in this period, thus carrying its characteristics and contradictions into prisons. Therefore, to examine the constitution and adoption of the religious rebirth counternarrative, it is important to understand these characteristics and contradictions at the outset.

5.1.1 The leader, the party, and the Ülkücü youth

The Ülkücü movement comprised of a legal political party, a large number of political organizations succeeding one another (creating almost an Ülkücü civil society), occupation-based organizations, newspapers, and magazines.[567] Contrary to this variety, the movement was unified under an unquestionable and authoritative leadership of Alparslan Türkeş. Türkeş was born into a Turkish Cypriot family. He was detained in 1944 as part of the Racism-Turanism trials. He later became an influential colonel in the 27 May 1960 coup d'état which was undertaken by the low-rank officers. When another junta took control with an internal coup, fourteen officers known as *On Dörtler* including Türkeş were appointed to foreign countries, thus effectively exiled. After returning, Türkeş joined the Republican Peasant Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi* – CMKP) together with several brothers in

[567] The post-coup indictment of the movement enlisted these national-level Ülkücü organizations as: Ülkü Ocakları Derneği (ÜOD), Ülkücü Gençlik Derneği (ÜGD), Ülkü Yolu Derneği (ÜYD), Ülkücü Kamu Görevlileri Güçbirliği Derneği, Ülkücü İşçiler Birliği Derneği, Ülkücü Öğretmenler Birliği Derneği, Büyük Ülkü Derneği, Ülkücü Teknik Elemanlar Derneği, Ülkücü Esnaf Ve Sanatkarlar Derneği, Ülkücü Maliyeciler Ve İktisatçılar Derneği, Ülkücü Köylüler Derneği, Ülkücü Hanımlar Derneği, Ülkücü Gazeteciler Derneği, Ülkücü Sinema Ve Sanat Kültür Derneği, Ak Ülkü Derneği, Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları (MİSK), Ülkücü Hukukçular Derneği, Ülkücü Siyasalcılar Birliği, Ülkücü Ressamlar Ve Heykeltıraşlar Derneği, Tıbbiyeliler Birliği, İktisatçılar Dayanışma Ve Araştırma Birliği, Televizyon Ve Radyo Teşkilatı Personeli Birliği Derneği, Sanat Ve Teknisyen Okulları Mezunları Derneği, Ülkücü Polisler Birliği (POL-BİR), Üniversite Ve Yüksek Okul Asistanları Derneği, Sınırlı Sorumlu İşçi, Memur, Esnaf, Serbest Meslek, Köylü, İşveren Tüketim Ve Yardımlaşma Kooperatifi.

arms. In 1967, Türkeş became the chairman of the party and started to be called *başbuğ* (supreme leader). For some, Türkeş turned the party into military barracks where people call each other by their ranks.[568] This militarist ethos would preserve itself in the orderly and disciplined self-image of the Ülkücü movement throughout the 1970s.

In the 1969 congress, the party was renamed as the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP). In two general elections held in the 1970s, the MHP gained three and sixteen seats in the parliament, respectively. Exceeding the usual power of this small group of representatives, the party was a partner in two right-wing coalitions in return for several ministries. In these coalition periods, the party was able to fill the state offices. In the second nationalist front government, the MHP obtained five ministries which they allegedly filled with their supporters.[569] More importantly, by being a coalition partner, the movement gained the necessary confidence of being part of the state that they so ambitiously and devotedly protected.

In terms of the characteristics of the human resources of the party and the grassroots, the Ülkücü movement was far from being perfectly harmonious. The two corners of the party's administrative pyramid consisted of ex-military bureaucrats loyal to Türkeş and intellectually and ideologically informed cadres, and Türkeş on top of all.[570] This group of people was quite different from the rest of the party members in terms of ideological knowledge and moral values.

---

[568] Hayati Bice, *Ülkücü Hareket Üzerine Notlar* (Ankara: Önder Yayıncılık, 2017), 32.
[569] Aydın and Taşkın, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, 284.
[570] Tanıl Bora and Kemal Can, *Devlet Ocak Dergah: 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareket* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), 69.

The party represented a gateway to politics in provincial Anatolia. Those interested in politics first joined the MHP, and as they got older, they continued their political career in the center-right Justice Party. However, the recruitment basis of the movement was radically different in metropolitan areas. Bora and Can define this basis as people having a conservative reflex but also having increasingly corroded value systems due to urban cultural transformations. Their proletarianization brought resentment towards inequalities and poverty. Although these traits were also shared by those who joined the leftist organizations, the Ülkücü recruits inherited the anti-communism of their elderly without question.[571]

The main destination of the young and energetic Ülkücüs was the youth foundations of the movement. These foundations functioned as the unofficial youth branch of the party which was at the vanguard of the violent struggle against communism. The members of these foundations were engaging in violent activism. So, claims on the connection between these foundations and the legal-political party were repeatedly rejected.[572] This disassociation seems a viable tactic to keep the party, at least judicially irresponsible for the acts of Ülkücüs. Nevertheless, the cooptation of the party and the foundations were officially enunciated by the junta after the coup. The litigation of the movement was entitled "the case of MHP and Ülkücü Foundations" (*MHP ve Ülkücü Kuruluşlar Davası*) and Türkeş was the primary suspect among 587 defendants.

5.1.2 Anti-communist struggle

In contrast with the partitioned state of their leftist enemies on street, Ülkücüs were

[571] Ibid., 66-7.
[572] Jacob M. Landau, "The Nationalist Action Party in Turkey," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17, no. 4 (October 1982): 587–606, 595.

united.[573] What unified the movement was its "unquestioned loyalty towards Türkeş"[574] as well as stark anti-communism. The basis for the movement's organized street struggle against leftist groups dates back to the commando camps founded in the 1960s. In Türkeş's own words, these camps were serving a very important purpose. He once said:

> In neighborhoods they call commando camps, our youth branches were engaging in all kinds of cultural and sports activities. Meanwhile, they are learning judo. The communists could not rule the streets, thinking this country is without a keeper. We have patriotic, nationalist children who will speak the same language as them. That's why we are raising our youth bellicose.[575]

For Sadi Somuncuoğlu, the head of CMKP's youth branch, these camps were nothing more than holiday villages.[576] For others, these camps were established as part of Turkey's unconventional warfare against communism. The terms "Ülkücü commando" and "grey-wolves" (*bozkurtlar*) were the names used to denote the movement's energetic youth.

After the period of relative tranquility in the streets between the 1971 coup-by-memorandum and the 1974 amnesty, the Ülkücü organizations increased their capacity in universities and urban areas. When the leftist organizations were quickly reestablished after the amnesty, the two sides of the street struggle that continued until the 1980 coup was determined. Throughout these years, the movement recruited students with a conservative upbringing coming to metropolitan areas. Although

---

[573] İlker Aytürk, "Yetmişli Yıllarda Ülkücü Hareket ve Komünizmle Paramiliter Mücadele," in *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 441–60," 453.
[574] Ibid., 454.
[575] Hakan Akpınar, *Kurtların Kardeşliği: CKMP'den MHP'ye (1965-2005)* (İstanbul: Birharf Yayınları, 2005), 53.
[576] Ibid., 62.

anti-communism was a common trait on the Turkish right,[577] it is fair to say that the Ülkücü movement monopolized the violent struggle against communism in the second half of the 1970s. As the number of violent incidents rose, the party's control capacities over its organizational periphery were considerably diminished.[578] With a self-acclaimed aide of the state role, the members of the movement were engaging in all kinds of armed activities against the leftist organizations.

This uncontrolled engagement with violence created two interrelated problems. First, it alarmed the military to consider the right-wing terror as a serious threat, if not equal to the left-wing terror. This resulted in a series of shocking experiences for the Ülkücü movement after the coup which will be discussed below. Second, those who searched for spiritual motivation in the insecure conditions of existence during the years of intense street fighting drifted further away from the party's central strategy to embrace but control the dosage of Islam in its outlook. Below, I will briefly discuss the gradual Islamification of the Ülkücü movement which reached another level in the post-coup prisons.

5.1.3 The growing interest in Islam

Befitting to his military background, Türkeş's image resembled a moderate secularist politician until the end of the 1960s. The eventful congress in 1969 was a turning point in terms of the place of Islam within the Ülkücü movement. In that congress, Türkeş successfully dismissed the racist faction which granted him an unrivaled authority within the party. As the movement increasingly depended upon a grassroots with conservative characteristics, Türkeş started to consider Islam as a founding

[577] See for example, Ertuğrul Meşe, *Komünizmle Mücadele Dernekleri: Türk Sağında Antikomünizmin İnşası* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016).
[578] Aytürk, "Yetmişli Yıllarda Ülkücü Hareket," 455.

stone of the Turkish identity. However, he was always cautious not to lose his followers to the Islamists.[579]

In the 1970s, the MHP's leadership followed two strategies. On one hand, the MHP would attract conservative voters by embracing a pro-Islamic outlook in a controlled manner. Its Islamist rival on the far-right, the MSP, constantly taunted the MHP for its ethnic nationalism (*kavmiyetçilik*) that divides the Muslims. These factors incentivized the MHP to embrace Islam. Accordingly, Türkeş went on pilgrimage in 1976. Before the 1977 elections, he transferred the prominent intellectual of the Turkish Islamist right, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, to the party. The party's stagnant three percent vote had almost doubled in the ballot box whereas the MSP lost almost the same percentage of votes. Therefore, it could be argued that this strategy of embracing an Islamic outlook was finally successful in 1977.

On the other hand, Türkeş and the ruling cadres of the party attempted to balance rising Islamism with nationalism. In terms of rhetorical attempts, Türkeş's mottos such as "our body is Turk, our soul is Islam" and "Turk as Mount Tengri and Muslim as Mount Hira"[580] were uttered to emphasize equality and harmony between these two identity sources. Among the right-wing thinkers, this "harmony thesis" was a conventional way of solving any friction between the two fundamental identity sources. [581] For example, Seyyit Ahmet Arvasi, an ideologue of the Ülkücü movement, goes as far as to deny the Intellectual's Hearth's "the Turkish-Islamic

[579] Tanıl Bora, "Alparslan Türkeş," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce - Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 686–95, 693-4.
[580] Mount Tengri refers to a shamanist myth of Turks in Central-Asia while Mount Hira refers to the cave where Prophet Muhammed received first revelations.
[581] İlker Aytürk, "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944–69," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 693–719, 694.

Synthesis" by arguing that synthesis is only possible between two antagonistic entities. Instead, he named his formula "the Turkish-Islamic Ideal" (*Türk-İslam Ülküsü*).[582] Furthermore, the leadership attempted to increase its control over the movement. In 1976, Türkeş constituted a group of Ülkücü big-brothers called pedagogues (*eğitimciler*) and dispatched them across the country to harness the growing local bodies and ensure that they remained loyal to the party lines.[583]

Even so, the militant youth of the movement was increasingly exposed to Islamism towards the end of the 1970s. One of the indicators of the Ülkücüs voyage toward Islam was the rising interest in the religious order at Menzil Village in Adıyaman province. According to Yağmur Tunalı, one bus followed another in their path to Menzil, filled with ardent Ülkücüs searching for Sufi Ahmet Yesevi's spirit.[584] The administrative circle of the MHP also joined these visits as part of their search for block votes from the leaders of religious communities.[585] However, this relationship was more intimate than pragmatic for some Ülkücü leaders. For example, Sheikh Seyyid Fevzeddin narrated Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu's arrival at Menzil:

> The strong connection between Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu and Menzil started after 1974. During those years, he was the president of the Idealist Hearths. He came to Menzil with Namık Kemal Zeybek and Ahmet Er. […] Since the youth met Muhammed Raşid Erol Hazretleri, they experienced a U-turn. With the spiritual food he [Yazıcıoğlu] received from his hodja, he guided the youth and make sure they did not feel empty spiritually.[586]

This search for spiritual motivation was a key motivation among the young militant

---

[582] See Ömer Aslan, "A Turkish Muslim Between Islamism and Turkish Nationalism: Seyyid Ahmet Arvasi [1932–88]," *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 519–35.
[583] Aytürk, "Yetmişli Yıllarda Ülkücü Hareket," 456.
[584] Bice, *Ülkücü Hareket*, 42.
[585] Bora and Can, *Devlet, Ocak, Dergah*, 286.
[586] Abdülkadir Selvi and Erhan Seven, *Alperen: İşkence Koğuşlarından Siyaset Meydanına* (İstanbul: Nesil, 2010), 88-89.

base. The religious rhetoric of martyrdom was emphasized in parallel to the increase in the death toll during the armed conflict with the left.[587] Although defending the country and the state carried the spirit of patriotism, the promise of martyrdom and salvation was granted by their belief in Islam. In rallies, the crowds chanted Islamist slogans such as "even if our blood spills, Islam will be victorious."

As another example, the weekly magazine *Nizam-ı Alem* started to be published in 1978, and it quickly became very popular. Although it was funded by the party's headquarters, the magazine increasingly employed Islamist rhetoric.[588] Burhan Kavuncu, who was an important figure in some Ülkücüs' rejection of nationalist ideologies in prison, narrates how the magazine was terminated by Türkeş:

> In 1979, we were publishing the magazine *Nizam-ı Alem.* It was predominantly an Ülkücü magazine, but it used an Islamic perspective and rhetoric. The staff of the MHP dating before the 1970s were disturbed by the Islamist tendencies of the Ülkücü youth. They decided to close down *Nizam-ı Alem.* Türkeş called the board of the journal and Kemal Zeybek (at the time, he was responsible for Ülkücü youth organizations). Türkeş roared: "What kind of Ülkücü you are? There is no mention of the Nine Lights in your newspapers, magazines." Then he shouted at Zeybek "Kemal, are these Ülkücüs? They are writing with the tongue of Selametists [the MSP], and communists." Then he turned to me and asked "count the Nine Lights." I counted them in an attention stance. It was not possible not to count them. Funny thing. If we asked our Başbuğ, I doubt that he could count them![589]

[587] Meral Ugur Cinar, "When Defense Becomes Offense: The Role of Threat Narratives in the Turkish Civil War of the 1970s," *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 1–11, 4.
[588] Akpınar, *Kurtların Kardeşliği*, 125.
[589] Emeti Saruhan, "12 Eylülcülerin İslam Düşmanı Olduklarını Yakından Biliyorum," *Yeni Şafak*, May 13, 2013, https://www.yenisafak.com/roportaj/12-eylulculerin-islam-dusmani-olduklarini-yakindan-biliyorum-382925.

The magazine was only able to publish four issues before closing down.[590] Yet, its short life span signaled the strength of the Islamic-leaning undercurrent within the movement.

The state of Ülkücüs in pre-coup prisons also accounts for the increasing role of Islam within the movement. Despite the party's attempts to control its youth, a different sub-culture was in the making at the prisons. For the incarcerated members of the movement, the pro-state rhetoric became utterly unreasonable since they were getting punished by the state. Instead, Islam became more important than before. Different from their brothers outside, the Ülkücü prisoners were practicing an Islamic life. Notably, the pre-coup prisoners named prisons as madrasahs of stone (*taş medrese*) in various articles published in the Ülkücü magazines. In an article titled "Taş Medrese," the definition of prisons was already promising the core elements of the religious rebirth counternarrative:

> Actually, prisons of the system could not be qualified as DUNGEONS for people, for Ülkücüs. Thanks to patience embroidered in the souls there, we are of the conviction that curbing of worldly desires will be performed most successfully. Prisons are not dungeons to us, they are madrasahs.[591]

However, at the time these statements were published, there was still an organizational discipline that bound the Ülkücüs.[592] On that note, the usage of Madrasah of Stone rather than Medrese-i Yusufiye gives an indication. Perhaps the Ülkücüs did not use Medrese-i Yusufiye in the pre-coup period because it is employed by the followers of the Nur movement, which had a stormy relationship

[590] Akpınar, *Kurtların Kardeşliği*, 126.
[591] Hakkı Öznur, ed., *Ülkücü Hareket*, 3rd ed., vol. 5 (Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, n.d.), 518.
[592] For a detailed education program of the Ülkücü prisoners at the Ulucanlar Prison before the coup, see Selahattin Arpacı, *Taşmedrese Sohbetleri* (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2019).

with Türkeş.[593]

After the coup, however, the organizational discipline of the movement lost its integrity. In the shock of being subjected to torturous incarceration, Ülkücüs were left to their own devices. In turn, they formulated a religious rebirth counternarrative that valued prisons as places of learning and living Islam, places of submission to God. With this counternarrative, they not only reimagined their past through an Islamic lens but also found a future goal of establishing a Turkish-Islamic order.

5.2 Narrating the shock of incarceration

The 1980 coup was a shocking experience for the Ülkücü movement. Thinking that the military would defeat the left, the Ülkücüs initially celebrated the coup as a belated restoration of the state power. However, the junta was determined to punish all political movements for their actions, regardless of their motivations to protect the state. Accordingly, a major theme in Ülkücü narratives about the coup was the betrayal of the state to its greatest and most ambitious ally. The Ülkücüs repeatedly claimed that the coup held its allies equal with its enemies after the coup. Also, the coup broke the movement's organizational discipline and left young militants adrift in the stormy sea of post-coup cruelty, and uncertainty.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, the party administrators thought of emphasizing their similarities and allegiance to the military regime as a survival strategy. When Türkeş was held captive in Kirazlıdere Dil İstihbarat Okulu with other parliamentarians, he ordered Nevzat Kösoğlu to write a letter to Kenan Evren.

[593] Before the 1969 elections, a pamphlet was distributed about Türkeş as a politician hostile to the Nur Movement. Later, Türkeş was accused of relocating the grave of Nursi to an unknown location. See Akpınar, *Kurtların Kardeşliği*, 74-9.

According to Kösoğlu, the gist of the letter was telling the junta that "the Ülkücüs represent the resilience of this nation. Do not break that. Tomorrow, you will need it again."[594] Similarly, the politicians of the party organized their defenses around the idea that they were fighting on behalf of the state, they share the core principles and grievances of the military, and welcomed or even desired the arrival of the military regime. For example, in his defense, Türkeş argued in the courtroom of Mamak that Ülkücüs and the MHP were the only righteous group that did whatever they should do for the sake of the country, the nation, and the state. After presenting his frustration, he told the judges:

> The initial manifestations of the diagnosis behind the operation [the coup], and later manifestations that completed them and granted the operation legitimacy and allowed the nation to approve it, were indeed our diagnosis. The public had already listened to it from our mouths repeatedly. This similarity (except for the differences in wording) was so evident that even some of our citizens wondered if the [coup's] announcement was prepared by one of us.[595]

Türkeş's strategy of emphasizing similarities in hopes of saving the movement from the wrath of the junta was summarized in Agah Oktay Güner's famous sentence, uttered in the same courtroom: "we are the only political group that its ideas are in power but they themselves are in prison."[596]

These arguments may seem viable for the parliamentarians who were detained in relatively better conditions. For the militant base, however, the shock of incarceration was far more unsettling. Every similarity between the military regime and the movement was quickly turned into a source of grievance among the Ülkücü

---

[594] Osman Çakır, *Hatıralar Yahut Bir Vatan Kurtarma Hikayesi: Nevzat Kösoğlu İle Söyleşiler* (Ankara: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2008), 298.
[595] Alparslan Türkeş, *12 Eylül Adaleti (!): Savunma* (İstanbul: Hamle Yayınevi, 1994), 9.
[596] Agah Oktay Güner, Sadi Somuncuoğlu, and Ahmet Er, *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi ve Ülkücü Kuruluşlar Davası Sorgu* (Ankara: Mayaş Yayıncılık, 1982), 21.

prisoners who were held in atrocious military prisons.

5.2.1 Mistreatment in the hands of a beloved state

In their prison narratives, the Ülkücüs were outspoken about their mistreatment at the hands of the once beloved state. They were mainly confused and angry about being tortured, especially by the Turkish army. For example, Selçuk Kutlu complained:

> The state, the state struck us! Why? We were [praising] the army, they struck us with the army! Why? We were [praising] the nation, the state struck us in the name of the nation! Why?[597]

Kutlu's words reflect the shock of receiving unjust treatment from an unexpectedly familiar source. The same shock is narrated by several others. For another example, Oğuzhan Cengiz wrote:

> It is as if we are soldiers of an enemy country. As if we invaded their soil and they captured us, treating us like captives. The touching part of this, we were there for the state, but the ones who tormented us with unthinkable torture [techniques] were "the men of that state."[598]

The Ülkücüs considered their pro-state activism as something to be proud of as if they were officially serving the duty of protecting the country. Cengiz still takes Ülkücüs for soldiers mistaken as enemies. Similarly, Yusuf Ziya Arpacık argued:

> We were judged for serving this country with our hearts and blood, for stopping the invasion of Soviet Russia.[599]

According to Ülkücüs, they genuinely believed that they were part of the country's defense against communist expansionism. Arpacık's words could well belong to a

---

[597] Zihni Açba, *Mamak Zulüm Kalesi* (İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2016), 109.
[598] Cengiz, *Kapıaltı*, 27.
[599] Arpacık, *Başeğmediler,* 149.

former soldier mistreated by the army he/she served. On that issue, Faik İçmeli reflected:

> The Ülkücüs who believed they were struggling for the state, were losing their loyalty with every passing day. Because the state, which they were ready to give even their lives for, was torturing its "enemy'" with unthinkable methods."[600]

The state was deemed worthy of sacrificing one's life yet the Ülkücüs started to understand that they were mistaken about their expected rewards of their service. İçmeli continued: "You had been struggling for years, you got incarcerated in a military prison and that soldier is your soldier, but he torments you."[601] İçmeli's sympathy was mixed with a feeling of disillusionment in an entity that he was possessive of. The soldier was someone he would normally hold in high esteem, but now, it was difficult and confusing to categorize the torture they experience. Similarly, Mehmet Öztepe lamented:

> Here it is the Hell of Mamak… A place where human beings don't have the value of an animal!.. A terrible life. Sad but true suffering… Look at [our] treatment by my people of Anatolia, those who I look after thinking of them as poor people of my own homeland, the *Mehmetçik* [soldiers of Turkish army] I had defended with diligence, deemed me worthy! No!... no… No human who calls itself human can torment like this.[602]

Öztepe's memoir was full of disappointment. The army was once embraced with sympathy but it now considered them even as humans no longer. He was more intimate and straightforward in his writing style. He wrote these words on the emotional crisis of the movement: "You took yourself as a state official. You loved this nation so much, so you are guilty. This was our crime. That's why we will be

---

[600] Faik İçmeli, *Kırık Kurşun* (İstanbul: Yakın Plan Yayınları, 2015), 109.
[601] Ibid., 114.
[602] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 20.

judged."[603] The Ülkücüs took themselves as state officials. They thought of themselves as soldiers in Turkey's fight against communism and an ally of the state which was fundamentally anti-communist.

Furthermore, the embeddedness of pro-state, pro-military sentiments and values in Ülkücü movements' core ideological pillars deepened their trauma in prison. In the face of the military discipline and attached nationalist practices forced on the prisoners, the Ülkücüs' confusion deepened. Again, in his memoir, Mehmet Öztepe mentioned the weirdness of being forced to sing the national anthem: "For years, you struggle for this, and then you come here and sing the national anthem while standing at attention in front of neither fish nor fowl private soldier."[604] In his narrative, Öztepe implies that the Ülkücüs who spent years in the fight had to be held in higher regard than those private soldiers. Yet, they were treated as subordinates as if these soldiers were testing their loyalty to the country by making them sing the anthem. On the same track, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu commented on the tormenting aspects of this practice:

> Forcing people to sing the National Anthem who sing it with pride, with all their hearts, using the National Anthem as an easy and wicked instrument for their methods was bad. I am willingly singing the National Anthem, the one standing before me, attempts to force me to sing, with a piece of gum in his mouth, strolling… Yes, forcing the singing of the National Anthem was ugly. They couldn't make us do anything, but this anthem is my anthem, it's my nation's… So, a great contradiction had been experienced. This was the greatest of all tortures.[605]

The treatment of Ülkücüs in a way to question their loyalty to the nation was narrated as a deeply wounding experience. The Ülkücüs conceived those soldiers,

---

[603] Ibid., 67.
[604] Ibid., 58.
[605] Yazıcıoğlu, *12 Eyül Günleri*, 13.

who question their loyalty, as unworthy. As Yaşar Yıldırım pointed out, the Ülkücüs "slept as patriots, and raised from the bed as traitors."[606] For the prison regime, all prisoners were traitors regardless of them being a leftist or Ülkücü. This attitude created further grievances for the Ülkücüs.

5.2.2 Cohabitation with the enemy

The existence of a strong leftist movement was the raison d'etre of the Ülkücü movement. The military regime not only shocked Ülkücüs with its hostile approach but also destroyed the leftist organizations which were the Ülkücüs' archenemies. Further aggravating the disappointment of the Ülkücüs, the regime treated them as if they were equal to the leftists.

Through the mixing-for-peace treatment, the Ülkücüs and the leftists spent years in prison, sharing the already congested wards. This provided a basis for Ülkücüs to compare their predicament with the leftists. For example, Rıza Müftüoğlu wrote about their cohabitation and equal mistreatment:

> Actually, the weirdest thing at Mamak was leftists and Ülkücüs sleeping together. Being detained together. One side got together with those who want to destroy the regime, the other got together with those who tried to resist it. In sum, according to the philosophy of the 1980 coup, there was no difference between those who want to destroy the state and the regime and those who resisted these actions.[607]

For Müftüoğlu, the two sides of the mixing-for-peace treatment were fundamentally different and their equal treatment creates an unjust situation. This interpretation is not rare among Ülkücü narratives. The Ülkücüs frequently compared their situation with the cohabitant leftists to explain their disillusionment. For another example,

---

[606] Yıldırım, *Balkondan Seyretmek*, 132.
[607] Müftüoğlu, *Copların Askerleri*, 18.

Selahattin Şenliler wrote:

> We are struggling for this country. We are saying long live the state, long live the nation, we curse the separatists and the ones who want to transform our country into a communist regime. Because we are saying this, they sentence us to heavier punishments. What kind of a deal is this, we are trying very hard to understand it. Communists are treated like biological children, and we are treated like adopted children.[608]

According to Şenliler, the Ülkücüs were punished for their unquestioned love for the country and this created an unsolvable puzzle. As an insult to their injury, the communists were treated better than the self-missioned protectors of the nation. He continued:

> Why are we, the Ülkücüs, whose only crime is to love their nation and country, treated equally, or even worse than those who want to divide the nation, destroy the state? This devastates us. And also, there are the manners of the soldiers![609]

The soldiers were constantly calling the prison population as traitors. But, according to the Ülkücüs, this means more to them than the communists who had no problem being a traitor and a public enemy.

The Ülkücüs believed that they suffered more than the leftists in prison because they were tortured with things that they embraced. To underscore this belief, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu narrated his conversation with the cohabitant leftist in his cell:

> I told to a revolutionist friend: "If I was in your shoes, I would be very relaxed. For example, if I fall captive in Russia, and if they force me to sing the International Communist Anthem, I wouldn't sing. If they torture me, I would have endured it,

[608] Selahattin Şenliler, *Mamak Cezaevi Günlüğü* (Ankara: Yüzdeiki Yayınları, 2019), 38.
[609] Ibid., 100.

> resisted it. I would languish if I had to. Nobody could make me sing it. But here, I cannot digest [what's happening]."[610]

For Yazıcıoğlu, the leftists did not lose the integrity of their stance. They had to be confident in their resistance to the practices of the prison administration. On the other hand, the Ülkücüs were fighting on the side of the state against the communists. Yet, after the coup, they ended up in the same place with their enemies and lost their purpose. Their allegiance to the state became a burden. For example, Oğuzhan Cengiz explains their shameful state in the eyes of the leftists:

> We are calling the soldiers that we ought to command as commanders, when the communists see us handcuffed from the back, they mock us saying "the crocodile eating its offspring." This situation is heavier than the bullets we took.[611]

The Ülkücüs narrated that they were in such a miserable situation that their enemies were making fun of them. Very similar to Cengiz's narration, Rıza Müftüoğlu wrote:

> In Mamak, I have always thought the leftists gazed at me with meaning. I was sensing them saying "at least we are here because we fought against these people. But you were used like fools."[612]

Müftüoğlu points out that their mistreatment after the coup rendered them to the status of mere minions in the eyes of the leftists. In this sense, he thought that the Ülkücüs had the right to revolt, even more than the communists. He narrated:

> A few days ago, the leftists started a death fast. This protest form was used by the leftist from time to time. Actually, those who should death fast were the Ülkücüs. The right to say "I have labored for you but you crushed me, I better be dead" belonged to the Ülkücüs.[613]

---

[610] Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu, *12 Eylül Günleri*, ed. Melih Perçin (Ankara: Yüzdeiki Yayınları, 2018), 101.
[611] Cengiz, *Kapıaltı*, 45.
[612] Müftüoğlu, *Copların Askerleri*, 18.
[613] Ibid., 73.

A notable point in this narrative is that even in resisting, Müftüoğlu preserves a certain passive stance against the state rather than actively fighting against it. What he imagines as resistance was close to the romantic suicide of a heartbroken lover. Müftüoğlu being a senior leader of Ülkücüs preserved his allegiance to the party. However, the torturous conditions in prisons after the coup created a power vacuum that many compensated with Islam.

5.2.3 The loss of organizational integrity

The coup was a major blow to the integrity of political organizations, and the Ülkücü movement was not an exception. The leader of the movement, Alparslan Türkeş, was imprisoned for five and a half years, longer than any other party leader. This may seem like a consolation for other imprisoned members of the movement in terms of being together with their leader and sustaining the usual hierarchy. However, Türkeş was first sent to Uzunada, then brought to Kirazlıdere. Due to his health problems, the junta allowed his transfer to a hospital.[614] Türkeş was never in direct contact with the militant base of the Ülkücü Movement, except during the court hearings in Mamak.

The first meeting at the court left its trace in the Ülkücü Memory. The way the meeting was narrated is telling about the unsettling effects of the lack of organizational integrity. On 19 August 1981, the case started in the courtroom inside the Mamak Barracks. Those who organized the program made a crucial mistake. They first gathered every Ülkücü defendant in the room and kept them waiting. The

[614] There, he was welcomed by Major Dr. Semih Kaptanoğlu, who was a fond devotee of Türkeş. According to Kaptanoğlu, Türkeş could have escaped from the hospital with their help. Even though everything was arranged, Türkeş refused saying that he did not run away from anything. Ülkü, *12 Eylül'de Türkeş*, 76-78.

Ülkücüs were lined up behind an empty chair reserved for their leader. Once Türkeş entered the courtroom, the defendants rose, and all of a sudden, they started to sing the National Anthem.

The Ülkücüs narrated that moment with intense emotions. Mehmet Öztepe wrote:

> I sang the national anthem countless times outside. But I don't recall singing it with such enthusiasm before.[615]

The psychological discharge is coupled with a feeling of solidarity. Striking a similar chord, Yaşar Yıldırım wrote:

> When Alparslan Türkeş and the members of the MHP's executive board entered, the detainees were all set. And at that moment, the National Anthem started being sung, personally, I have never sung the National Anthem with such sincerity, I believe other detainees shared the same emotion. The National Anthem was on the mouths, the tears were dropping from the eyes.[616]

Türkeş's arrival had turned into the cathartic response of the incarcerated Ülkücüs to the state and a showcase of solidarity and loyalty to their leader. Once again, the movement was united behind its leader, and facing the injustice of the coup. Rıza Mütüoğlu wrote:

> There was a meaning in Mamak. A reaction. A revolt. A warning. A love for independence. This was the only action the Ülkücüs did in Mamak as one body… Against the state, but with a means of state, with the Independence March.[617]

Once again, the Ülkücüs chose a way of showing their discontent with their mistreatment by employing the same practice that the prison administration used to discipline prisoners. According to Müftüoğlu, this action of the Ülkücüs' had such an

---

[615] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 74.
[616] Yıldırım, *Balkondan Seyretmek*, 130-1.
[617] Müftüoğlu, *Copların Askerleri* 75.

impact that the administration forbade the singing of the national anthem in Mamak for ten days.[618] The demonstration continued with every single defendant turning and saluting Türkeş before beginning his speech.[619]

The organization of such an action was indeed quite difficult in carceral circumstances. Since it was a huge moral boost for the movement, many claimed that they organized it. For Yaşar Okuyan, it was he who planned the occasion.[620] For Arpacık and Öznur, it was Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu.[621] For Öztepe, he discussed it with Yılma Durak, but it was a collective idea already in the minds of the people in their ward.[622]

However, the trials did not continue in the same high spirits as on the first day. The military did not repeat its mistake and in the subsequent meetings, Türkeş was first to arrive in the courtroom and waited for others. Also, the pleas of the politicians were not received well by the militant base. As a result, the movement's young members started seeking out ways of dealing with their trauma and found them in Islam.

5.3 Narrating prison as *Medrese-i Yusufiye*

The main basis of narrating prison as a madrasah is related to Ülkücüs discovering Islamic principles and how to read the Holy Book Qur'an. They had the excuse of being preoccupied with defending the country before. But now, there was no excuse not to learn the religion that they believed in. This newfound interest in piety was related to the Ülkücüs questioning their place in the world, their ideology, and

---

[618] Ibid.
[619] Ibid.
[620] Yaşar Okuyan, *O Yıllar: 12 Eylül'den Anılar, Mektuplar, Belgeler* (İstanbul: Doğan Yayıncılık, 2010), 132
[621] Arpacık, *Başeğmediler*, 186; Selvi and Seven, *Alperen*, 72.
[622] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 74.

motivations. For example, Haluk Kırcı narrated his struggle for learning Islam in poor conditions:

> The young man who happened to be in a narrow place and hard time increasingly started to be interested in the religion, and its interior structure day by day. He was trying to read and understand every work on religion. He accumulated translations of the Qur'an distributed by one of the newspapers, started to understand the meanings of verses that he read in Arabic, and began to contemplate.[623]

For another example, Erhan İşler narrated the hunger for learning Islam in prison:

> I gave myself some time to question and think after being thrown in prison. Of course, I noticed many deficiencies. Just like a hungry person eating what he/she finds, we started reading whatever we found. Then we realized we could not continue like that and continued in a systematic manner. First, we tried to read about what we needed in our theological and practical life, then read about the prerequisites of Islamic organization and the essence of Islam. We tried to get informed about the existing and struggling Islamic movements around the world.[624]

Similar to İşler, Mehmet Öztepe mentions a questioning period that was resolved in the discovery of Islam. He wrote:

> Today, it was time to conduct a self-criticism of tomorrow's righteous struggle. They regain their selves as they were beaten with the tyrant's truncheons and slaps. As if they were slapped by God, although their real ideals were banned for the dynamism of their youth, they keep in mind. It had become imperative to turn this hell into the garden of heaven, and to learn the constitution of spreading the word of God, the sublime Qur'an as soon as possible.[625]

Öztepe narrated learning Islam as a way of reversing hell into heaven, which is the essence of the religious rebirth counternarrative. He continued to narrate that they happened to bring a section of the Qur'an together with instructions to read it to the

---

[623] Haluk Kırcı, *Donmuş Zaman Manzaraları* (1999; repr., İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2012), 133.
[624] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 149.
[625] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 30.

ward. For him, it was a heaven-sent blessing. Everybody was enthusiastic to learn the alphabet of the Qur'an. He wrote:

> This was how the first step of turning the Hell of Mamak into the Madrasah of Joseph was taken. Of course, this fragment of the Qur'an could not be sufficient for 25 detainee friends. Nobody was idle for ten minutes, those who grab a pen and paper started writing the letters, reading, committing to memory, and learning the word of the God Almighty. The pain of getting beaten with truncheons was forgotten away as we read the Qur'an.[626]

In Öztepe's narrative learning, the Qur'an was a step in finding meaning as well as a defense mechanism to endure physical pain. However, the Ülkücüs thirst for Islamic knowledge was unquenchable. The Islamic teaching was a part of Ülkücü indoctrination, but this time there was no authority to control militants. Öztepe continued:

> We learned how to read Qur'an at the Madrasah of Joseph, we needed to continue our future in this direction. We needed to descend to the gist of our cause. We are looking to improve ourselves religion-wise. The (prison) administrators allowed some religious books to pass through. So, we were ordering books with Islamic topics from our families. Ilmihals, books on Islamic law, Islamic history, Ottoman history, etc. We were sharing Qur'an with friends as fragments, and finished reading (a fragment of) Qur'an once a week. We were doing this in every ward. On Thursdays, we were doing 'hatim' prayer.[627]

The administration allowing religious books was an important anecdote that contradicts the ascetic narratives of learning Islam in prison. For example, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu claimed that performing namaz with a community (*cemaatle namaz*), and reading the Qur'an out loud were forbidden, and teaching Islam was not easy.[628] These kinds of inconsistencies were natural with regard to the changing carceral

[626] Ibid, 68.
[627] Ibid., 101.
[628] Yazıcıoğlu, *12 Eylül Günleri*, 33.

conditions. According to Cengiz Akyıldız, they were allowed to pray, learn the Qur'an, read Yasin (the thirty-sixth sura of Qur'an), and read the Qur'an collectively.[629]

5.3.1 Rewards of the religious life

The collective thirst to learn religion turned into a life organized around religious practices. As being confined to a space with a community, the imprisoned Ülkücüs narrated their condition as living a truly religious life. For Yaşar Yıldırım, for example,

> Despite the modern tyranny overseen by psychologists, Mamak had turned into a Yusufiye by its members. There, an impeccable, complete, perfect [religious] community life is lived.[630]

He continued: "A [religious] community of saints that will spite the enemies and bring joy to friends, appears at Mamak and all prisons."[631] Elsewhere, he gave details on the daily life of that "community of saints." He wrote:

> We eat what we have, we sing folk songs, and Eid ends within one-two hour, but the suffering of longing, the ordeal, the poverty of not finding more than seven cigarettes… the poverty of medicine… the poverty of money will not end. Let it not end, in the face of all this, there was a perfect order of life. Everyone was in the struggle to be a servant of God. It was like this yesterday, and it goes on like this today.[632]

Again, Mehmet Öztepe interpreted the value of being imprisoned:

> The only hope of a human enclosed in four walls becomes his Great God… Here, our narrow windows are closed to the outside but open for God. Let's live our faith here,

---

[629] Mustafa Çobanoğlu, *Unutmak İhanettir: Yusufiyeli Cengiz Akyıldız* (İstanbul: Fener Yayınları, 2014), 84.
[630] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 91.
[631] Ibid., 92.
[632] Rıdvan Akabe, ed., *Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye* (İstanbul: Buhara Yayıncılık, 1991), 164.

> let's live our faith the same way as we get out, to say we spent time in the Madrasah of Joseph.[633]

He claimed that he was "experiencing such a submission to God for the first time here, together with other detainees."[634]

For the religious rebirth counternarrative, the Ülkücüs who carried the faith in them finally found a place to live their religion. This life, they claimed, was so perfect that they had to continue living accordingly after their imprisonment. Moreover, Oğuzhan Cengiz treated his self-education in Islam as a cure to the problems he was experiencing in prison. He wrote:

> I continue to learn how to read the Qur'an. A great relief emerges inside me… As I keep learning how to read the Qur'an, the desire to understand its meaning increases inside me… I will buy a translation/explanation book for myself… As you embrace faith, patience increases…[635] (Cengiz, 2001, p.144)

Similarly, Osman Başer emphasized prison being a transformative place with a pompous style:

> At the same time, we can call this place where the flowers of ideal sharpen, double dipped in water to make steel, enlightening as the sun, the soldiers [of Islam] took refuge in God with patience and sincerity.[636]

The Ülkücüs believed that they were facing a terrible injustice. Rather than revolting against that, they chose to retreat to their beliefs. In this retreat, submission to God was narrated as a way of finding salvation and surviving in prison. For example, Osman Başer valued the benefits of faith in facing injustice:

---

[633] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 230.
[634] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 71.
[635] Cengiz, *Yanık Kale*, 144.
[636] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 241.

> As always, we took refuge in God, we asked for its help. We did not get crushed or shrink against the *Tağut*. We lost nine younglings to the gallows, left thousands to study in dungeons.[637]

For another example, Haluk Kırcı wrote:

> The only factor that ensured my endurance in the face of a lot of incidents that happened to me and will be told later, was the strength of my faith, my spiritual side."[638]

As mentioned earlier, the Ülkücüs considered their situation in prison far worse than other groups. Despite all of the ideological contradictions and mistreatment, the Ülkücüs emphasized their faithfulness as a unique advantage. For Ömer Girgeç, for example, "people who heightened their spiritual state to the peak will never be affected by what is done in (torture)."[639] Later, in the same book, Osman Başer rang a similar chord by writing that "what ensured us to survive there were our beliefs, we saw the power of the will of God once again."[640] Somewhere else, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu compared his state of mind with the cohabitant leftists in a more detailed manner. He narrated:

> Our beliefs protected us more than the others. For example, I was telling the cohabitant president of Dev-Genç: now that your work is harder. When you got out of prison, you will be past fifty, what will be your status, are you gonna marry, will you have children, you think all about these. Because he stood awake till morning many times. I am waking up, laying my prayer rug. When I stood for namaz, I travel to another realm, I do not live here [anymore]. I had such an advantage to cure myself. This gives an opportunity for curing the spirit. Consequently, I kept my physical and mental health instead of this heavy trauma.[641]

---

[637] Öztepe, *12 Eylül Adaleti ve C-5*, 71.
[638] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 119.
[639] Ibid., 192.
[640] Ibid., 240.
[641] Yazıcıoğlu, *12 Eylül Günleri*, 105.

This idea of reaching beyond through meditation-like prayer was a way of narrating an aspect of escaping from prison spiritually rather than bodily. As Mahmut Gül simply put it: "Our bodies were captivated, but our minds were free."[642] Also, after narrating his constant dreams of escaping, Yusuf Ziya Arpacık wrote that he finally gave up. Instead of those dreams, he claimed,

> I gloriously settle myself in the very center of freedom in dungeons. Thus, emotions and thoughts like an incident happening, a plane crashing down on top of the prison, or an earthquake left their places for submission to the will of great God. And I tightly grabbed serenity from its neck.[643]

This involuted literary style of Ülkücüs sometimes renders their stories difficult to understand but it should be considered as an aspect of romanticism that emphasizes experiencing sublime faith. For another example, Recep Küçükizsiz narrated how he was punished for his piety yet found a path to transcend his corporeal existence in the isolation cell:

> Because of the prayer cap, I forgot on my head during the roll call, the surface of the earth was considered too much for me. I am in cells underground where no light can penetrate inside. Even so, the invocations on my tongue sorties towards the ideas in my brain, I walk out of there. The only friend is God and the way of contact is namaz.[644]

Being thrown into an isolation cell was interpreted as a way of isolating the mind from worldly desires and experiencing a true connection with God. On the same track, İsmail Karaalioğlu recalled that when they were put into cells, they were clinging to their prayers more firmly, and trying to fulfill their worships. He wrote: "what we did there had a very different taste and pleasure."[645]

---

[642] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 144.
[643] Arpacık, *Başeğmediler*, 206-7.
[644] Küçükizsiz, *Ülkücülerin Çilesi*, 141.
[645] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 175.

Considering prison as a place to discover Ülkücüs' faith in Islam not only ensured their survival but also offered them an indispensable opportunity to experience a true connection with God. This aspect fed the idea of seeing imprisonment not as punishment, but as a grace of God.

5.3.2 Incarceration as grace of God

After complaining about their unjust treatment at the hands of the military, the Ülkücü prisoners narrated their discovery of Islam in prison and constructed an ascetic-Islamic identity on the basis of this counternarrative. In reversing the trauma of incarceration into a journey of finding true faith, the Ülkücüs made explicit that they see what happened to them as rewarding. For example, Yaşar Yıldırım wrote:

> The Ülkücüs struggled for the just [*hak*] and they were punished. Some served their sentences, the rest are still serving time. For us, these punishments were the punishments in this world. In the presence of God, I believe they are spiritual rewards.[646]

For Yıldırım, the Ülkücüs were turning the bodily punishments into rewards beyond corporeality. Also Zihni Açba wrote:

> the prison was a madrasah where I completed my lacks, increased my knowledge within the given circumstances, and a place of test where I questioned my desires.[647]

Striking the same chord, Mahmut Gül wrote "I believe that all of these occurrences are an opportunity given by God Almighty to understand our cause better and raise ourselves."[648] Orhan Gündoğdu claimed:

---

[646] Yıldırım, *Balkondan Seyretmek*, 53.
[647] Kürşat, *12 Eylül Zindanlarında*, 33.
[648] Ibid., 143.

> we found the formula of happiness in the magnificent beauties hidden beyond the door left ajar with the unworldly keys of our faith.[649]

The religious rebirth counternarrative overrode the destructive effects of imprisonment in such a way that many mentioned their thankfulness for being in the prison. For example, Ahmet Aytaç wrote: "I started to like the dungeon. The realization of getting close to God mostly in here emerged and advanced for me."[650] The prison was detached from the rest of society and its sinful features. Mehmet Öztepe wrote, "The dungeons of Mamak became the Madrasah of Joseph, now we are thankful to be in prison. At least, we got rid of the sinful sea of independence."[651] And he concluded, "I am living the best of prayers, the best of submission to God, the best of resigning myself to my fate. I am thankful for today.[652]

Overall, the religious rebirth counternarrative perceived prison as a place of discovering Islam, living an appropriate life according to its teachings, and feeling a true connection with God. For these traits, the Ülkücüs were thankful for their incarceration which was otherwise narrated as a shocking and torturing experience.

5.4 Reimagining the past through an Islamic lens

The religious rebirth counternarrative also allowed the Ülkücüs to reimagine their past and imbue it with meaning and coherence. For Akyıldız and Bora, despite its decisive significance, the 1970s was mostly left in the dark in the Ülkücü memory. Mostly the political violence was treated as a scenario that deliberately prepared the

---

[649] Akabe, *Cezaevi, Taşmedrese, Yusufiye*, 21.
[650] Ahmet Aytaç, *12 Eylül'den Geriye Kalan Mahpushane Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Fener Yayınları, 2016), 42.
[651] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 69.
[652] Ibid., 201.

country for the coup.[653] This observation is valid for the majority of centrist political actors, including Ülkücü politicians dispersed to several parties in the post-coup era. For the militant base, however, their involvement with political violence had a deliberate purpose, and that purpose was defending Islam.

5.4.1 Finding a divine meaning in past struggles

One of the main topics of reimagining the past through an Islamic lens was the Ülkücüs struggle against communists. This righteous struggle was tainted and rendered meaningless after the military started punishing the Ülkücü movement. To achieve narrative coherence, the Ülkücüs reinterpreted their stakes in this struggle as defending Islam against atheist interlopers. For Mehmet Öztepe, "the Ülkücüs defended Islam with martyr blood."[654] The communists, on the other hand, were "shooting bullets at Ülkücüs, nationalists, innocent people who wanted to live according to their religion."[655] For Osman Başer, the Ülkücüs were "those who were risking their lives for Islam, nation and homeland before 12 September."[656] When Haluk Kırcı reflected on his part in violence, he followed a simple path of whitewashing:

> "Because he hated how the opposite groups that he was struggling against looked and understood religion, he was comfortable and he believed he was fighting in the name of religion."[657]

When the Ülkücüs embraced the Islamic worldview, the cohabitant leftists in prisons appeared to them with their irreligious daily life. For example, when Zihni Açba

---

[653] Kaya Akyıldız and Tanıl Bora, "Siyasal Hafıza ve Ülkücülerin Hatırasında 70'ler," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 217 (2013): 209–28.
[654] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 131.
[655] Ibid., 137.
[656] Öztepe, *12 Eylül Adaleti ve C-5*, 71.
[657] Kırcı, *Donmuş Zaman Manzaraları*, 131.

narrated his encounter with the leftist, he claimed that he "once again believed in the righteousness of the struggle of faith."[658] "For Erhan İşler, their cohabitation proved that "the just and the unjust [*hak ve batıl*] could not coexist."[659]

The Ülkücüs were fighting against the communists. Then, the coup arrived to punish the Ülkücüs. To find meaning in their rather incomprehensible punishment, the Ülkücüs thought that they were the real threat to the system because they subscribed to the Islamic cause. For example, for Erhan İşler,

> The secular order is convinced that the Ülkücü movement is an Islamic potential that should be blocked, that should be exterminated.[660]

In this sense, there was no contradiction in the imprisonment of Ülkücüs. Again, Zihni Açba found meaning in their encounter with injustice with these words:

> A different understanding of justice could not be expected from the unjust system that the 1980 coup ensured continuation. For this reason, since both decreeing on the falsity of an unjust system and complaining of being subjected to the injustice of one of the institutions of the same unjust system is meaningless, it is meaningless for us Ülkücüs to complain about the justice of the 1980 coup.[661]

For Zihni Açba, since the Ülkücüs were detrimental to the system, the owners of the state took measures to stop them. From this angle, there is nothing to be astonished at. He continued

> What is important for us is not the measures taken, but what we can do. It was ordered [by God] that "Even if they do not want, the God will complete its nimbus." What a joy it is if we can be a means for that.[662]

---

[658] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 31.
[659] Akabe, *Cezaevi, Taşmedrese, Yusufiye*, 7
[660] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 150.
[661] Ibid., 34.
[662] Ibid., 35.

In Orhan Gündoğdu's account, punishment and torture had no impact, except ones directed towards their belief. He claimed he would never forget the tortures directed to ridicule their spirituality.[663] For him, the Ülkücüs can endure everything but the compromises that will be asked of their faith since this is the commanded duty of all Muslims."[664] Also, according to Rıdvan Akabe, the coup was the moment that they knew the real captivity was not in prison, but "to live under the repression and tyranny of a political organization which rejects the sovereignty of God."[665] The sacred image of the Turkish state was replaced by an infidel state. The post-coup imprisonment helped the Ülkücüs to understand the putrescence of the system.

The coup is treated as a turning point for Ülkücüs as they realized what they were fighting for and fighting against. On this, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu wrote:

> Actually, essential value judgments of these people were shaped according to Islam. They are part of a movement that adopts Islam's principles to their life order. The younglings who were living a complete and full Islamic life even before the prison here had found the opportunity to live Islam in a more intense way. Besides, there were those who despite having the desire to do so before the prison, could not live an Islamic life in the struggling atmosphere before the 1980 coup. When they were put into prison, these people had found the opportunity to learn what the essence of his cause is, what are the musts of living without compromising, without pretending. They realized their cause was Islam. Therefore, all of these fellows formed a [religious] community life within the joy of entering the true course.[666]

According to Yazıcıoğlu's storyline, the Ülkücüs were always fighting for the Islamic cause and the necessary faith was always there. The prison was a turning point only in terms of realization. Also, Mehmet Öztepe created a similar storyline:

---

[663] Akabe, *Cezaevi, Taşmedrese, Yusufiye*, 18.
[664] Ibid., 22.
[665] Ibid., 39.
[666] Yazıcıoğlu, *12 Eylül Günleri*, 32-3.

> I have lived the madrasah life here. We transformed this hell into heaven. As the tyrant hit its hammer on my head, I found myself. I caught the submission to God. What a beautiful world that is far from sin, far from filth. If you ask for suffering, there are all kinds of here. The lonely Dervishes are here. Of course, those who brought us here imagined something else. But, they were mistaken. Because; they thought they will make the Turkish-Islamic Ülkücüs into Ataturkists with cruelty. Many Ülkücüs realized the mind of the cause they believed in. Who is a soldier? What is Ataturkism? They understood it better. They became more loyal to their struggle.[667]

These narratives emphasize the Islamist characteristics of the movement which became increasingly prominent before the coup. For example, Erhan İşler creates an allegory between the constitution of the Ülkücü movement and an imaginary meeting. He wrote:

> In this meeting, thousands of people coming from all sides of Turkey revolted against the current organization, the official ideology, and everything non-Islamic. There were two slogans that came from not only these people's mouths but as a necessity of their faith: "Muslims are united like a fist against blasphemy!" "Even if we shed blood, the victory will be Islam's!" For the official ideology and its security forces, the Muslims were departing sectarianism, uniting their spirits and communities to move in one direction in solidarity, getting rid of their fragmented state, shining their unity and togetherness, people wanting to desire martyrdom for Islam, and Islamic-state was not a case to digest.[668]

Elsewhere he summarized why the Ülkücü movement was punished. He claimed that

> the target was to destroy a community that will move the Muslim Turk to its desired place by protecting the nation's national and sacred values."[669]

Of course, the Ülkücü movement was never mobilized for an Islamic revolution, in contrast to what is implied in many of these accounts. Still, instead of questioning their involvement to the violent struggle which lost its meaning after incarceration,

---

[667] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 91.
[668] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 151.
[669] Akabe, *Cezaevi, Taşmedrese, Yusufiye*, 7.

the Ülkücü militants found a way of explaining their past in terms of serving an Islamic cause.

When the Ülkücüs employed Islamic rhetoric, they felt the necessity to diversify themselves from other Islamists. Mehmet Öztepe's narration about Islamist Hüsnü Aktaş is an example. For Öztepe, Hüsnü Aktaş did not like the Islamic life of the Turkish-Islamic Ülkücüs and chose to stay with leftist infidels (mürted).[670] What Öztepe implied was that these so-called Islamists were taking the side of the atheists instead of the true fighters of Islam. It can well be argued that this hostility was reciprocal. In his memoirs, Hüsnü Aktaş claimed that he wanted to stay with the Ülkücüs since they were performing namaz. But, the Ülkücüs did not want him. He was invited to stay with the leftists and he agreed.[671]

Also, Edip Yüksel, who was a leading member of Akıncı organization in Fatih, Istanbul, was unforgiving about Ülkücüs. His younger brother, Metin was killed by Ülkücüs. In his autobiography, Yüksel called the Ülkücüs "pawns," members of "a fascist youth organization with the blood of many young people on their hands."[672] In contrast, Ülkücü Oğuzhan Cengiz complained about the passivism of Islamists:

> Where were you when the Muslim-Turkish children were falling to graves? Or are you one of those who did not realize jihad is a religious duty? You only know of talking, it is difficult to find you when something to be done.[673]

A very similar narrative appeared in Fahrettin Masum Budak's memoir. He claimed that "As we were clashing with the communists with Allah at our mouths, they

---

[670] Öztepe, *Mamak Hatıralarım*, 127.
[671] Aktaş, *Medeni Vahşet Davası*, 158.
[672] Edip Yüksel, *Norşin'den Arizona'ya Sıradan Bir Adamın Sıradışı Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2017), 353.
[673] Cengiz, *Kapıaltı,* 219.

(Islamist Akıncıs) were looking for holes to hide in."[674] The pro-state alignment of the movement was clothed by themes such as paying a price for their devotion, the ordeal of being a true defender of Islam.

5.4.2 The goal of the Ülkücü cause

With this way of imagining their past, the Ülkücüs not only imbued meaning to their past but also found a new purpose for their political activism coherently. Some narrated their religious education in prison as a preparatory stage for this purpose. For example, İlhami Erdoğan stated:

> "Our cause is to spread the word of God and to give the world its order. We ended up in prison while we were struggling for this. Therefore, we needed to raise ourselves by reading works in this direction."[675]

On the same track with Erdoğan, Fahrettin Masum Budak wrote:

> As you know, here is a madrasah of stone. I believe that, when we graduated from this madrasah, we will scatter all across Turkey and we will put our signs on great works for our nation.[676]

For others, As Samet Karakuş put it, for the Ülkücüs, "the past struggle for God's consent continues."[677] He warns his fellows to expect more injustice but ensures them that they will prevail. He wrote:

> Our divine struggle which we stamped with golden letters onto the history of an era is against all ideologies and all powers. They will do all the evil they can [to the

[674] Budak, *Giden Canlar Bizimdi*, 246.
[675] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 255.
[676] Budak, *Giden Canlar Bizimdi*, 95.
[677] Bahadır, *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*, 189.

> movement] to prevent the absolute goal, which grows stronger against the mindsets which became a slave to this material world.[678]

Rather than protecting the state and the nation, the Ülkücüs framed their goal as actively pursuing the establishment of an Islamic order. For example, Rıdvan Akabe claimed:

> Even if they do not want it, the Ülkücü movement will confidently march toward its goals, with God's permission, it will ensure the dominance of God's order to realms.[679]

He defines the Ülkücü youth as "the army of faith who were ready to sacrifice their heads on the road of God."[680] Finally, Selçuk Kutlu's narrative summarizes the Ülkücüs' attempts to reimagine their past and find new goals for the future. Kutlu wrote:

> The struggle before the revolution [the coup] was a small part. It was one of the ever-existing struggles between "the just and the unjust" and it was inevitable. However, the aim of the struggle they applied for was to make the Muslim-Turk, who was tried to be buried in the darkness of history for three hundred years, a soldier of the case of the Giving Order to the World [*Nizam-ı Alem*] which's historical mission was to carry it to a peak to make it write histories. Will the revolutionary administration's capture of some phony anarchists end this struggle, as if they were the only barrier in the path of this cause![681]

According to this narrative, all the nuisances rooted in the pre-coup attachment of Ülkücüs to the state, in their struggle against the communists, and their unjust incarceration was solved by rebranding the Ülkücüs as fighters of Islam.

---

[678] Ibid., 192.
[679] Akabe, *Cezaevi, Taşmedrese, Yusufiye*, 7.
[680] Ibid.
[681] Açba, *Mamak Zulüm Kalesi*, 106.

5.5 The ascetic prisoner identity

The divergent path that imprisoned militants took in providing meaning for their lives appeared inconsistent with the path of party headquarters. After his release in 1985, Alparslan Türkeş was among the list of politicians banned from political activities. Even then, Türkeş was the shadow leader of the newly formed Nationalist Task Party (*Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi* – MÇP) as a continuation of the MHP. With the constitutional amendment that lifted the ban on certain figures, Türkeş returned to politics as the leader of the MÇP. Except for those who stood within Türkeş's party, several Ülkücü politicians of the 1970s joined other parties after their release from prison.

All of these politicians conformed to the post-ideological, centrist rhetoric of the post-coup atmosphere.[682] The punishment of the Ülkücü movement was instrumentalized by the politicians to warn the followers of the movement not to engage in violent activities on behalf of the state. For example, Yaşar Yıldırım warned the energetic Ülkücüs who were concerned with the rise of Kurdish separatism:

> My young friends who were enthusiastic about going to the south-east to fight against the PKK, reclaim your heritage first. Ensure the comfort of our friends in prison. Try to solve the grievances of the families of our martyrs. This state has the gendarmerie, the police. The price of being a responsible citizen is imprisonment. Don't you ever think? Where are your friends who were fighting against the PKK and other terrorist organizations?.. Let the ones responsible do their job.[683]

[682] For the radical/centrist axis in the memory of the coup, see Şensönmez, "Politics of Remembering the Enemy."
[683] Yıldırım, *Balkondan Seyretmek*, 138.

Yıldırım's concerns about the movement's re-involvement with violence also echoed in the speeches of Türkeş. He wrote these in 1995:

> Today, the Turkish nationalists are standing upright, they are still the same idealist defenders of the cause of the existence of the state, the indivisible integrity of the nation and the country. Yet, they are expecting the duty on this issue from the state. Because, yesterday, they lived the pain of being mistreated by the state only because the Ülkücü community responded to the hostility directed at them.[684]

Both Türkeş's and Yıldırım's warnings were relevant in the attempts to fit the Ülkücü Movement into the post-ideological, centrist atmosphere. However, they were not sufficient to keep the militant base who were increasingly Islamised their world views in prison.

This shift towards Islam caused two splits in the movement. The first split occurred in prison in 1984 when a group, led by Burhan Kavuncu, denounced their nationalist traits and declared a turn to Islam. They accused the leader and party of siding with the blasphemous state (*tağut*). For example, Mehmet Sünbül wrote:

> The Ülkücüs who took action to protect the Turkish state were put into the same bag as the extreme left and subjected to torture in police centers and prisons, sent to gallows, [these] caused contradictions and disappointments among Ülkücüs. Upon this, a part of Ülkücüs questioned concepts such as the state, motherland, nation, flag, and their meaning in Islamic terms were, in consequence, realized that they were deceived and made sentinels at the front outposts of the system. With the realization of this reality, [they] broke away from the Ülkücü settlement and started to join the Islamic movement.[685]

Those who followed Kavuncu wrote and distributed a declaration [*tebliğ*] in Mamak to call others to join their Islamic cause. For the first time, some militants openly accused Türkeş of fooling and abusing them. This declaration further shocked others

---

[684] Alparslan Türkeş, *Basılan Kervanımız* (İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları, 1995), 15.
[685] Mehmet Sünbül, *Milliyetçi Miyiz Müslüman Mıyız?* (1992; repr., İstanbul: Yedirenk, 2019), 65-6.

whose loyalty was already on shaky ground. However, Kavuncu could not persuade many to follow his denunciation as many remained loyal to Türkeş even though they had their grievances. One of his ambitious followers, Mehmet Sünbül, joined the Shia militant group Hezbollah. He assassinated the Turkish-Jewish businessman, Nesim Malki. Allegedly, Sünbül became a confessor and his corpse was found in the houses of the Hezbollah.[686]

A second split occurred after the Ülkücüs were released from prison. A group seceded from the movement under the leadership of Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu. At first, Yazıcıoğlu accepted the invitation of his former leader to come back home as part of Türkeş's aim to reconsolidate the movement. But later he found Türkeş's "dose of Islam" insufficient and formed the BBP as a more Islamic-leaning nationalist party in 1991.[687] During his imprisonment, Yazıcıoğlu became the *de facto* leader of Ülkücüs in the Mamak Military Prison. After his release in 1988, Yazıcıoğlu continued to look after the imprisoned members of the movement which increased his popularity among the veteran militants of the movement. It would not be inaccurate to argue that many favored Yazıcıoğlu as he became an alternative to the radicalism of Kavuncu and the centrism of Türkeş.

Since the coup, the far-right made its presence felt in Turkish politics. On the one hand, Islamism was reasserted in Turkey as part of the rising identity politics.[688] On the other, the rise of the PKK triggered nationalist reflexes.[689] However, the

---

[686] "Sünbül 'hortladı,'" Milliyet, October 20, 2000, https://www.milliyet.com.tr/the-others/sunbul-hortladi-5336016.
[687] See Özgür Bayraktar, *Ülkücü Harekette Bölünme: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi ve Büyük Birlik Partisi* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2017).
[688] Feroz Ahmad, "Islamic Reassertion in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (April 1988): 750–69.
[689] M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Politics of Fear: The Rise of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 56, no. 2 (2002): 200–221.

relationship between the Islamist and nationalist parties in the Turkish far-right was quite volatile. In 1991, Erbakan and Türkeş made an electoral alliance and successfully entered the parliament. In the next election, Erbakan's Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi,* RP) garnered the most votes. Still, the coalition government led by Prime Minister Erbakan could only stay in power for a year. It was overthrown by a military memorandum in 1997. A few months later, Alparslan Türkeş passed away, and Devlet Bahçeli became the new leader of the Ülkücü Movement. For some, Bahçeli returned to the strategy of aligning the MHP in a way to represent the state's security concerns.[690] In 2001, a group led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül separated from Erbakan's Nationalist Outlook Movement and formed the AKP. The AKP became the governing party after the 2002 elections. Also, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu died in 2009. After both he and Türkeş passed away, the feud between the two was softened by those who remained behind.[691] Meanwhile, Bahçeli's MHP managed to be one of the three parties to enter parliament in the 2007 elections. For almost a decade, Bahçeli had been opposing Erdoğan and the AKP's policies. Yet, since the 2016 failed coup attempt, the AKP and the MHP are in a de facto coalition. Despite Bahçeli's complaints, Yazıcıoğlu's BBP became the third member of that coalition.

In this volatile atmosphere of political allegiances and shifting attitudes toward political Islam, the veterans of the 1970s street battles embraced an ascetic prisoner identity. The initial enthusiasm for fighting for Islam had gradually faded away. Most of the people who instrumentalized this counternarrative softened their

[690] Ibid.
[691] For example, Yazıcıoğlu's lawyer claimed that Yazıcıoğlu never said anything bad about Türkeş once in his life. Selvi and Seven, *Alperen,* 107.

grievances and whitewashed their involvement in violent acts with ascetic victimization. What happened before the coup as well as the wrongdoings of the MHP leadership after the coup all became part of that so-called "Ülkücü's ordeal." The group calls itself *"yusufiyeliler"* with reference to their time spent in the Medrese-i Yusufiye. Today, they are respected as the big brothers of the movement, those who paid the price of being an Ülkücü but it is rare to encounter one in active duty in a political party.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This dissertation studied the counternarratives in the carceral memory of the 1980 military coup in Turkey with a dataset comprised of autobiographical accounts of erstwhile prisoners. These counternarratives are counterposed to two versions of the master narrative. The master narrative of the junta gained a dominant status during the military regime. This master narrative was preoccupied with anarchy and terror, reactionism, separatism, self-interested politicians, and malfunctioning democracy. According to the generals, the state had fallen weak in the wrong hands, the society had fallen ill with perverse ideologies. In the end, the situation forced the generals to intervene to save the country. After the coup, the junta initiated a series of institutional reforms and deployed various techniques in prison to prevent the return of anarchy and terror. Prisons were turned into hospitals where the ideological malady was cured.

The junta viewed the conservative reinterpretation of Kemalism, which was rebranded as Ataturkism, as the panacea to every problem. The insertion of an amalgam of Ataturkism and the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as the official ideology resulted in an anti-coup backlash. Several political groups attached to their

grievances together and formed an anti-coup master narrative. In this master narrative, the narratives of post-coup prisons with Ataturkist education, military discipline, cruelty, and torture replaced the junta's narrative of reeducation and correction. However, the perception of prisons as places of decimating political actors remained within the master narrative, this time through victimization. With extensive stories of torture and repression, numerous accounts emphasized how the coup atrociously decimated political activists and turned them into victims.

In contrast with the master narrative of the 1980 coup, three counternarratives, namely the militant counternarrative, the gendered counternarrative, and the religious rebirth counternarrative, considered prisons as places of strengthening, discovery, and rebirth. However, these counternarratives do not reject the master narrative entirely. Instead, they expose the embedded plotlines of the masternarrative and selectively appropriate the instrumental parts of the master narrative in the counternarratives. More specifically, considering prisons as places of strengthening, discovery, and rebirth does not mean that the autobiographical accounts turn a blind eye to the torture and repression that they experienced. On the contrary, these counternarratives acknowledge the existing frames but twist them in a way to transcend narratives of correction as well as victimization. In each counternarrative, there is a principal place of the appropriated version of the master narrative.

The militant counternarrative is a response to the narrative of the post-coup defeat of the left. As part of the master narrative of the 1980 coup, the narrative of defeat is about how the leftist organizations were marching towards their inevitable dissolution. This narrative perceives the left in the 1970s with its defects, such as immaturity, violence, and infighting. When the coup arrived, the already weary left

surrendered in an appallingly short time. Under months of torturous interrogation and years of imprisonment, the left could not recover.

The militant counternarrative, on the other hand, values interrogation and incarceration as opportunities to prove to be a revolutionary organization. The failed and dissolved organizations were proven to be false revolutionaries. Employing a thoroughly dualistic approach, the militant counternarrative oscillates between those who resist at every cost, and those who fail to resist and lose their personalities. In this narrative, the sole criterion that distinguishes resistance from surrender is militants' loyalty to the organizational discipline. Each practice could be interpreted as resistance or surrender, including individual or collective performances in hunger strikes, death fasts, and suicides. Also, the militant counternarrative includes extensive stories of successful or failed escape attempts. By escape, militants do not mean to flee from the torturous prisons. By escape, they mean to join the fighting outside as a way of insulting the prison administration.

The militant counternarrative establishes a relentless militant identity that pairs exemplary lives with exemplary resistance stories. This counternarrative and its identity claim echoes within active illegal political organizations of both Turkish and Kurdish far-left, such as the TKP/ML, the DHKP-C, and of course, the PKK. Still, the militant counternarrative with its strict dualism between resistance and surrender fails to provide a framework for people who preserve their leftist identity but faltered in interrogation and incarceration. These people shared their grievances for the organizations and the unforgiving, punishing organizational discipline. In this sense, it can be argued that the counternarrative created its own counternarrative.

The gendered counternarrative stems from the same source as the militant

counternarrative: the defeat of the left. However, the gendered counternarrative carefully reinterprets the defeat as the defeat of the men of the Turkish left. In their collective autobiographies, women criticized leftist organizations in terms of their patriarchal structures and regulating gender relations. Women's post-coup incarceration was a turning point in realizing these problems and was eventually valued as a period of gender discovery.

Since the prison regime spatially separated women from men, women tasted autonomy and more inclusive ways of organizing. This autonomy, however, rapidly vanished as men continued to dominate women from their wards through various communication techniques and internalized patriarchy. To counter this, the gendered counternarrative depicts men in their submissive state. In contrast with men, women turned their wards into schools and theaters where they improve themselves and entertain each other. In this alternative narrative, the joyful emotions were blended together with women's solidarity and care for each other.

In contrast with men, women continued to resist and became a nuisance to the prison administration. Based on stories of collective resistance, the gendered counternarrative constructs a revolutionary women's identity. This identity does not denounce leftism, but conflates leftism with womanhood and emphasized a continuing commitment to the leftist cause. This identity, however, did not join with the rising women's movement in Turkey. The intrinsic leftism in the revolutionary women's identity was deemed as old-fashioned for the rest of the movement. In this sense, the gendered counternarrative and the attached identity claims are positioned on the periphery of a larger movement.

Finally, the religious rebirth counternarrative was employed by the incarcerated

militants of the Ülkücü Movement. Despite its basic premise of perceiving prison as a place of discovering Islam and experiencing sublime submission to God being a general theme among Islamists, the religious rebirth counternarrative served a particular purpose in responding to the Ülkücüs particular identity crisis. The Ülkücüs were the unofficial youth branch of the MHP and the only pro-state street force in the violent street fighting of the 1970s. Despite the party leadership's attempts to balance it with nationalism, the dose of Islamic rhetoric had been increasing parallel to the militant's search for spiritual motivation. After the coup, the disciplinary mechanisms mostly malfunctioned, and the militants were left to their own devices to find meaning in their torturous incarceration in the hands of the Turkish state.

The religious rebirth counternarrative perceives the post-coup prisons as religious schools where the Ülkücüs discovered the principles of Islam and lived a perfectly harmonious community life. The shocking experience of being tortured by the very state that they fought to protect, and the uncanny atmosphere of being forced to cohabitate with their leftist enemies were all supplemented with the Ülkücüs commitment to Islam. Despite all these negative effects, in their ordeal, the Ülkücüs find pleasure in submitting themselves to God. For these experiences, they claimed to be thankful for their fate.

In the religious rebirth counternarrative, the Ülkücüs reinterpreted their past by looking through an Islamic lens. In this reinterpretation, they realized that they were punished because they were fighting for Islam against the communists, which were essentially atheist forces. They realized in prison that they have moral superiority over them. Unlike those who call themselves Islamists, the Ülkücüs were the true

fighters of God in the divine struggle of the just and the unjust.

The religious rebirth counternarrative constructs an ascetic prisoner identity in the post-coup atmosphere of shifting alliances and allegiances. This religious reinterpretation drifted the incarcerated Ülkücüs further away from the centrist policies of the party leadership. Two groups split from the movement, but neither they nor the MHP claimed to represent this identity. Even though the Islamic identity was on the rise in Turkey for decades, the incarcerated Ülkücüs mostly stood out in politics and act as elder brothers of the movement. Their mistreatment by the state as well as their resentment towards the MHP were viewed as aspects of the so-called ordeal of the Ülkücüs.

From a comparative perspective, these three counternarratives share a similar identity concern and search for meaning in the painful experience of incarceration. In terms of achieving coherence for their narrative identities, they employed different strategies. First of all, the gendered counternarrative considers post-coup incarceration as a turning point. The authors of life stories emphasize it in order to contrast their pre-coup and post-coup gender consciousness and underline prison as a place of resistance, solidarity, and gender discovery. Secondly, the religious rebirth counternarrative too perceives the post-coup incarceration as a turning point but narrators do not emphasize it as a moment of change. Rather, that experience was valued as a period that made the subjects of the narrative realize who they are, even though this "who" was constructed through narrating the memory of the prison experience. In other words, the Ülkücüs realized that they were fighting for Islam all along. Thirdly, the militant counternarrative rejects this turning point to emphasize the continued resilience of true revolutionaries. For the militants, both periods were

periods of struggle and there is no excuse not to follow a disciplined way of resistance in either of them.

In each counternarrative, there is a certain way of exposing the embedded master narrative and a certain way of appropriating it: in the left, the master narrative's themes of correction and victimization were translated into narratives about the defeat of the leftist organizations. The militant counternarrative represented the master narrative in the dissolved and timid organizations to glorify the resilient militant's resistance. In the accounts of women members of the Turkish left, the master narrative was represented as the defeat of men to glorify the resilient women and their solidarity. For the Ülkücüs, the master narrative's themes of correction and victimization were translated into narratives of disillusionment. Narratives of torture and repression are always told in a frustrated tone. These narratives were represented in a way to glorify the religious rebirth of Ülkücüs in prison.

The theoretical framework of master and counternarratives provides the necessary flexibility to study autobiographical accounts. Rather than searching for rigid storylines, the theory suggests that individuals instrumentally borrow parts of existing narrative frames, alter them as they wish, and apply them to their life stories to achieve a meaningful, coherent, and communicable narrative. The commonality between different life stories in instrumentalizing counternarratives is evidence of how certain ways of narrating are conventionalized in collective memory as they attach to an identity claim.

This also means that a counternarrative, which is a product of challenging a conventional way of narrating by definition, may result in conventionalization. So, from a perspective limited to a certain group, that conventionalized way of narrating

may indicate the existence of a particular master narrative. For example, if we consider the narratives of the active PKK members, the PKK's narrative of considering the Diyarbakır Prison No.5 as a place of the Kurdish nation's rebirth, indeed indicates the existence of a master narrative. This narrative is significant as a counternarrative only if we take the dominant way of narrating the 1980 coup into consideration.

Also, the theoretical framework of master and counternarratives is not without limitations. The hierarchical positionality of the two narrative types is perfectly delineated to help us understand and explain the politics of memory at a particular level. As the level of analysis increases, these terms start to lose their theoretical precision. For example, the militant counternarrative counters the master narrative of the 1980 coup. And, others counter the militant counternarrative with a story of how the radical organizations of the far-left tormented their members in prison. In understanding a tripartite narrative relationship, the framework of master and counternarratives requests an additional layer of terminology to define counter-counternarratives.

In this dissertation, I tried to represent the narratives of political groups by preserving a critical standpoint. By doing so, the tone of the dissertation, especially in chapters where I analyze the counternarratives, may appear optimistic. This is, of course, not to undermine the grim aspects of the post-coup prisons, or to insult those who had experienced those atrocities. This is because the counternarratives strategically reframe the post-coup prisons in order to emphasize their strength and the weakness of the prison administration.

The issue of true representation should always be questioned in studies based on

published autobiographies. In the data set I used, I was limited to those who write about their personal past, who had something to say to others, or who had problems with the dominant ways of narrating the past and wanted to intervene. Accordingly, many perspectives were lacking in the memory of the coup. Among the silent, personnel of prison administrations, confessors, informants, and people who recanted from their ideologies are among the silent voices probably because theirs are not proud memories.

Furthermore, the study of narratives also exposes the place of the researcher within the narrative networks. To employ the analytical distinction of Margaret Somers,[692] this dissertation is based on ontological narratives which fundamentally challenge the existing response to the question of "who we are." In each chapter, I focused on themes and plotlines, and how each counternarrative was attached to particular identity claims in the post-coup era. Even with minimal abstraction, my themes and plotlines were parts of what Somers called conceptual narrativity which is not beyond narrativity and the same questions of selective appropriation for meaning and coherence apply to the researchers.

With this dissertation, I attempted to shed light on a part of the rich and convoluted memory corpus of the 1980 military coup in Turkey. This body consists of multiple, and often rival, memory groups, and numerous autobiographical narratives that also evolve over time. So, even my particular focus on carceral memory of the coup does not cover every aspect of it. This memory corpus is far from being complete as people continue to share their witnesses.

[692] See Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity."

Besides, from the perspective of coming to terms with the past, the 1980 coup is considered an incomplete and even tainted project which fell victim to the AKP's political instrumentalizations which further the rhetoric of victimization. I preserve my doubts over the fetishization of remembering and its search for "genuine" projects of coming to terms with the past. Still, there is no point denying that numerous social groups are rightfully waiting for their grievances to be genuinely recognized and addressed. Considering the three counternarratives examined in this dissertation, it is important to realize that they share a certain perspective of prisons as they share a certain discontent in the way prisons were represented in general. Even though each counternarrative is tailored to respond to a particular identity problem in the post-coup era, the attempt to move beyond victimization is their common motive. This trait promises a multidirectional memory and a way of coming to terms with the past, this time by respecting the struggles and identities of the political actors.

REFERENCES

"6 Yıl Önceydi." TRT, 1986. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHhQ8CgnswM&.

12 Eylül 1980 Darbesi Nasıl Yapıldı? | Kenan Evren Anlatıyor | 32. Gün Arşivi, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWsz5Q6OvA4.

1981 Yılında Türkiye: Askeri Darbe Sonrası Siyasal ve Sosyal Yaşam, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlSTJkB8L1Q.

Açan, Selim. *Sürüyor O Kavga*. İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2019.

Açba, Zihni. *Mamak Zulüm Kalesi*. İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2016.

Ağırakçe, Kerim. *Mardin Diyarbakır Zindanlarında Özgürlük Çığlıkları*. Diyarbakır: Kültür Kitabevi, 2014.

Ahmad, Feroz. "Islamic Reassertion in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (April 1988): 750–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436598808420080.

———. "Military Intervention and the Crisis in Turkey." *MERIP Reports*, no. 93 (January 1981): 5–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/3011659.

Akabe, Rıdvan, ed. *Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*. İstanbul: Buhara Yayıncılık, 1991.

Akan, Tarık. *Anne Kafamda Bit Var*. İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2002.

Akkaya, Ahmet Hamdi. "Kürt Hareketi'nin Örgütlenme Süreci Olarak 1970'ler." In *İsyandan İnşaya Kürdistan Özgürlük Hareketi*, edited by Joost Jongerden, Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, and Bahar Şimşek, 21–74. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2015.

Akkoç, Derviş Aydın. *Fırtınalı Denizin Kıyısında: Şansal Dikmen Kitabı*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2014.

Akkoyunlu, Adil. *Bir İslamcının 12 Eylül Anıları*. 2010. Reprint, İstanbul: Çıra Yayınları, 2018.

Akman, Haşim. *Otuz Yıldır 12 Eylül: Yaşayanlar Anlatıyor*. İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010.

Akpınar, Hakan. *Kurtların Kardeşliği: CKMP'den MHP'ye (1965-2005)*. İstanbul: Birharf Yayınları, 2005.

Aktaş, Hüsnü. *Medeni Vahşet Davası: Cezâevi Notları 1984-1985*. Ankara: Ölçü Yayınları, 1987.

Akyıldız, Kaya, Tuba Bircan, and Nilüfer Narlı. "12 Eylül: Hafızalaştırma ve Bellek Siyaseti." *Birikim Güncel*, Ekim 2020.

https://birikimdergisi.com/guncel/10292/12-eylul-hafizalastirma-ve-bellek-siyaseti.

Akyıldız, Kaya, and Tanıl Bora. "Siyasal Hafıza ve Ülkücülerin Hatırasında 70'ler." *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 217 (2013): 209–28.

Alford, C. Fred. "What Would It Matter If Everything Foucault Said about Prison Were Wrong? 'Discipline and Punish' after Twenty Years." *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 125–46.

Alişanoğlu, Hilmi Köksal. *Netekim 12 Eylül'de Geldiler Bir İdamlığın Trajikomik Anıları*. İstanbul: Aykırı Yayınları, 2005.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Revised Edition. New York: Verso, 2006.

Andrews, Molly. "Counter-Narratives and the Power to Oppose." In *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense*, edited by Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews, 1–7. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004.

Arat, Yeşim. "Toward a Democratic Society: The Women's Movement in Turkey in the 1980s." *Women's Studies International Forum* 17, no. 2 (1994): 241–48.

Arpacı, Selahattin. *Taşmedrese Sohbetleri*. Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2019.

Arpacık, Yusuf Ziya. *Başeğmediler*. İstanbul: İlteriş Yayınları, 2004.

Aslan, Hasan Hayri. *Diyarbakır 5 No'lu Cehenneminde Ölümden De Öte*. İstanbul: Patika Kitap Yayınları, 2015.

Aslan, Ömer. "A Turkish Muslim Between Islamism and Turkish Nationalism: Seyyid Ahmet Arvasi [1932–88]." *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 519–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2014.956425.

Aslan, Şükrü. *1 Mayıs Mahallesi: 1980 Öncesi Toplumsal Mücadeleler ve Kent*. 2004. Reprint, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013.

Avcı, Hanefi. *Haliçte Yaşayan Simonlar: Dün Devlet Bugün Cemaat*. Ankara: Angora, 2010.

Ayata, Ayşe. "The Emergence of Identity Politics in Turkey." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 17 (1997): 59–73. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0896634600002752.

Ayata, Muzaffer. *Diyarbakır Zindanları*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Diyarbakır: Aram Yayınları, 2011.

Aydın, İsa. *12 Eylül 1980 3 İdam 1 Müebbet Taylan Çoklar*. Tarsus, n.d.

Aydın, Özer. *Umut'un Bitmeyen Umudu*. İstanbul: Yıldız Kitaplar, 2015.

Aydın, Suavi, and Yüksel Taşkın. *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017.

Aydınkaya, Fırat. *Ölüm Koridoru: Diyarbakır Cezaevinden Notlar Hamit Kankılıç İle Söyleşi*. İstanbul: Avesta, 2011.

Aydınlar Ocağı. *Ülkemizi 12 Eylül'e Getiren Sebepler ve Türkiye Üzerindeki Oyunlar: Tebliğler Tahliller ve Sonuç Bildirisi*. İstanbul, 1984.

Aydınoğlu, Ergun. *Türkiye Solu (1960-1980): "Bir Amneziğin Anıları."* İstanbul: Versus, 2007.

Ayık, Lütfi. *Anılar*. Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2019.

Ayma, Deniz. "78 Kuşağının Hapishane Deneyimleri ve Yaşam Stratejileri (1980-1984)." Master's thesis, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2019.

Aytaç, Ahmet. *12 Eylül'den Geriye Kalan Mahpushane Hatıraları*. İstanbul: Fener Yayınları, 2016.

Aytürk, İlker. "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944–69." *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 693–719. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2014.911177.

———. "Post-Post Kemalism: Yeni Bir Paradigmayı Beklerken." *Birikim*, no. 319 (2015): 34–47.

———. "Yetmişli Yıllarda Ülkücü Hareket ve Komünizmle Paramiliter Mücadele." In *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, edited by Mete Kaan Kaynar, 441–60. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

Aytürk, İlker, and Tanıl Bora. "Yetmişli Yıllarda Sağ-Sol Kutuplaşmasında Siyasî Düşünceler." In *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, edited by Mete Kaan Kaynar, 307–28. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

Babacan, Ömer. *Yıldızla Yaşayanlar: 75-86 Yaşanmış Anılar*. İstanbul: Su Yayınları, 2015.

Babaoğlu, İrfan. *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a 5 No'lu Cezaevi*. İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 2010.

Bahadır, Muhammed, ed. *12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*. İstanbul: Cihad Yayınları, 1990.

Bahadıroğlu, Yavuz. *Zindanda Şahlanış*. İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1992.

Bakiner, Onur. “Is Turkey Coming to Terms with Its Past? Politics of Memory and Majoritarian Conservatism.” *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 5 (September 2013): 691–708. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.770732.

Bamberg, Michael. “Considering Counter Narratives.” In *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense*, edited by Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews, 351–71. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004.

Bargu, Banu. *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Barthes, Rolant. “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives.” In *Image Music Text*, edited by Stephen Heath, 79–124. London: Fontana Press, 1977.

Başbuğ’un Mahkeme Salonuna Girişi, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mg3j5vgciJ4.

Bayraktar, Özgür. *Ülkücü Harekette Bölünme: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi ve Büyük Birlik Partisi*. Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2017.

Berktaş, Nevin. *Dava Dosyası İnancın Sınandığı Zor Mekanlar: Hücreler*. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2011.

Bice, Hayati. *Ülkücü Hareket Üzerine Notlar*. Ankara: Önder Yayıncılık, 2017.

Bilgin, Şakir. *Güneş Her Gün Doğar*. İstanbul: Yön Yayınları, 1988.

Binbay, Fatih. *Renklerden Kızılı Seçmek*. İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2007.

Birand, Mehmet Ali. *12 Eylül Saat: 04:00*. Karacan Yayınları, 1984.

Bölügiray, Nevzat. *Sokaktaki Asker - Bir Sıkıyönetim Komutanının 12 Eylül Anıları*. İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 2001.

Bora, Tanıl. “12 Eylül İhtilali.” *Birikim Güncel*, Eylül 2020. https://birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/10265/12-eylul-ihtilali.

———. “Alparslan Türkeş.” In *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce - Milliyetçilik*, edited by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, 686–95. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008.

———. *Cereyanlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017.

———. “Sunuş.” In *40 Yıl 12 Eylül*, edited by Tanıl Bora, 7–15. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

———. “Türkiye Solunda Faşizme Bakışlar.” In *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce - Sol*, 8:847–72. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008.

Bora, Tanıl, and Kemal Can. *Devlet Ocak Dergah: 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareket*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991.

Bostancıoğlu, Adnan. *Bitmeyen Yolculuk - Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu Kitabı*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2011.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Terry Eagleton. "Doxa and Common Life: An Interview." In *Mapping Ideology*, 265–78. New York: Verso, 2012.

Boyarin, Jonathan. "Space, Time and the Politics of Memory." In *Remapping Memory*, edited by Jonathan Boyarin, 1–37. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, 2001.

Bozarslan, Hamit. "Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi." In *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce - Sol*, edited by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, 1169–1207. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007.

Bruner, Jerome. "Life as Narrative." *Social Research* 54, no. 1 (1987): 11–32.

———. "The Autobiographical Process." *Current Sociology* 43, no. 2 (1995): 161–77.

Budak, Fahrettin Masum. *Giden Canlar Bizimdi*. İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2013.

Burke, Peter. *Varieties of Cultural History*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Bursa-Millet, Zeynep. "Treating the 'Youth Peril': Ayhan Songar, Psychiatrist at the Service of Turkey's Military Regime (1980–1983)." *Le Mouvement Social* 267, no. 2 (2019): 47–61.

Çakır, Osman. *Hatıralar Yahut Bir Vatan Kurtarma Hikayesi: Nevzat Kösoğlu İle Söyleşiler*. Ankara: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2008.

Çakır, Ruşen. *Ayet ve Slogan: Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar*. 11th ed. 1990. Reprint, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2014.

Çalışkan, Sadık. "12 Eylül Darbesi'nde Televizyon Yayınlarında Propaganda Faaliyetleri Üzerine İnceleme." *Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10, no. 1 (June 25, 2020): 85–116.

Çalışlar, Oral. *12 Mart'tan, 12 Eylül'e Mamak*. İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1989.

Çalışlar, Oral, and Halil Beytaş. *Hapishanede Büyümek*. İstanbul: Aralık Yayınları, 1998.

Cansız, Sakine. *Sara: My Whole Life Was A Struggle*. Translated by Janet Biehl. Devon: Pluto Press, 2019.

Çelik, İbrahim. *Tek Yola Sığmayan Devrim*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016.

Cemal, Hasan. *Tank Sesiyle Uyanmak: 12 Eylül Günlüğü*. Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986.

Cengiz, Oğuzhan. *Kapıaltı*. İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2004.

———. *Yanık Kale*. İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2005.

Çeşmecioğlu, Kader, ed. *Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler: Devrimci Yolcu Kadınlar Anlatıyor*. İstanbul: Kalkedon, 2015.

Ceza ve Tevkifevleri Genel Müdürlüğü. "Türkiye Ceza İnfaz Kurumları Kronolojisi (1850-2005)." Accessed May 23, 2022. https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/turkiye-ceza-infaz-kurumlari-kronolojisi-1850-2005.

Chamberlayne, Prue, Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf. "Introduction: The Biographical Turn." In *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science*, edited by Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf, 1–30. London ; New York: Routledge, 2000.

Çiyayi, Metin. *Verilmiş Sözümdür: "Hücredeki Ateş."* İstanbul: Arya Yayıncılık, 2002.

Çoban, Mehmet. *İki Buçuk Sayfa*. n.p: Artuklu Yayınları, 2020.

Çobanoğlu, Mustafa. *Unutmak İhanettir: Yusufiyeli Cengiz Akyıldız*. İstanbul: Fener Yayınları, 2014.

Çölaşan, Emin. "Milliyet, Mamak Cezaevi'nde." *Milliyet*, December 6, 1980.

Couser, G. Thomas. *Memoir: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Dagi, Ihsan D. "Democratic Transition in Turkey, 1980–83: The Impact of European Diplomacy." *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1996): 124–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209608701107.

Delgado, Richard. "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative." In *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 71–80. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.

Demir, Arzu. *Medreseden 5 Nolu'ya Nuri Yoldaş*. İstanbul: Akademi, 2012.

Demirel, Tanel. “The Turkish Military’s Decision to Intervene: 12 September 1980.” *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 2 (2003): 253–80.

Dönmez, Şahin. *Bir Terör Örgütünün Iç Yüzü*. Ankara: Anadolu Basın Birliği, 1986.

D’Orsi, Lorenzo. “Touching History and Making Community. The Memory of the 1980 Turkish Military Coup in the 12 September Museum of Shame.” *History and Anthropology* 30, no. 5 (October 20, 2019): 644–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2019.1650272.

Duman, Doğan, and Serkan Yorgancılar. *Türkçülükten İslâmcılığa Milli Türk Talebe Birliği*. 2nd ed. Ankara: Maarif Mektepleri, 2018.

Durkheim, Emile. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. London ; New York: Routledge, 2005.

Egerton, George. *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*. London: Frank Cass, 1994.

———. “Politics and Autobiography: Political Memoir as Polygenre.” *Biography* 15, no. 3 (1992): 221–42.

Enjelvin, Géraldine, and Nada Korac-Kakabadse. “France and the Memories of ‘Others.’” *History and Memory* 24, no. 1 (2012): 152–77.

Erdoğan, İsmet. *Tek Başına*. İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2014.

Erdoğdu Çelik, Mukaddes. *Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*. İstanbul: Ceylan, 2005.

Erhan, Sebahattin Selim. *Yine Kazacağız Yine Kaçacağız*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010.

Ersan, Vehbi. *1970’lerde Türkiye Solu*. 3rd ed. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014.

Ertuncay, Ali Türker. *Görülememiştir: Bir TKP/ML Sanığının Günlükleri*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016.

Evren, Kenan. *Kenan Evren’in Anıları 1*. İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1991.

———. *Kenan Evren’in Anıları 2*. İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1991.

“Family Tree of the Turkish Radical Left.” Accessed December 2, 2021. https://www.marxists.org/turkce/konu/turkiyekom/tr_left_part_hist_diag.pdf.

Feliçita Mehmet | TRT Arşiv, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1A5m4vc9X4.

Fine, Michelle, and Anita Harris. *Under the Covers: Theorising the Politics of Counter Stories*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2001.

Finer, Samuel E. *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*. 1962. Reprint, New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 2002.

Fırat, Bahar Şahin, and Mesut Fırat. "Kürt Hareketi'ni Diyarbakır Cezaevi'ne 'Hapsetmek': İktidar, Özne ve Siyaset Üzerine Eleştirel Bir Deneme." *Toplum ve Kuram*, no. 5 (2011): 93–106.

Fırat, Derya. "Sites of Memory of the 1980 Military Coup in Turkey." In *Excavating Memory: Sites of Remembering and Forgetting*, edited by Maria Theresia Starzmann, John R. Roby, and Paul A. Shackel, 42–63. Cultural Heritage Studies. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

———. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. Edited by Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, and François Ewald. Translated by David Macey. 1st ed. New York: Picador, 2003.

Genelkurmay Başkanlığı. *Atatürkçülük*. Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1983.

Gevher, Durdu. *Mamak Ardından Tavşan Yaşamı*. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2015.

Göğercin Toker, Hülya. "İletişimsel Bellekten Toplumsal Belleğe Yazılı Tanıklıklar: 12 Eylül Ile Yüzleşmek." PhD diss., Ankara Üniversitesi, 2017.

Göle, Nilüfer. "Toward an Autonomization of Politics and Civil Society in Turkey." In *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, edited by Metin Heper and Evin, Ahmet, 213–22. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

Gülmüş, Aziz. *Cehennem Kahkahaları: 12 Eylül Diyarbakır Cezaevi Anıları*. İstanbul: Peri, 2011.

Günay, Fikri. *Mamak (1980-1982)*. İstanbul: Kibele Yayınları, 2014.

Güner, Agah Oktay, Sadi Somuncuoğlu, and Ahmet Er. *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi ve Ülkücü Kuruluşlar Davası Sorgu*. Ankara: Mayaş Yayıncılık, 1982.

Güneş, Cengiz. *Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi: Direnişin Söylemi*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2020.

Güngör, Ayhan. *12 Eylül Düşten Kabusa*. İstanbul: Hivda İletişim, 2013.

Gürbilek, Nurdan. *Vitrinde Yaşamak*. 1992. Reprint, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019.

Gürgöz, Ali Ekber. *Diyarbakır Gecesi - Türkiye'de Kürt Olmak*. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2011.

Gürsel, Kadri. *Ben De Sizin İçin Üzgünüm*. İstanbul: Destek, 2018.

Güven, Halil. *Zaman Zindan İçinde Anılar*. İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2009.

Güzel, Vedat. *Devlet İşkence Buyurdu - Diyarbarkır'da Eylül Karanlığı*. İstanbul: Pele Sor Yayınları, 1994.

Hakyemez, Serra. "Margins of the Archive: Torture, Heroism, and the Ordinary in Prison No. 5, Turkey." *Anthropological Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (2017): 107–38. https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2017.0004.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Edited by Lewis A. Coser. The Heritage of Sociology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Hall, Stuart. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Culture, Media, Language*, edited by Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis. London ; New York: Routledge, 2005.

Hopkins, Stephen. *The Politics of Memoir and The Northern Ireland Conflict*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013.

Ibikoglu, Arda. "Disciplinary Evolution of Turkish Prisons, 1980s-1990s." *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society* 51 (2015): 67–94.

İçmeli, Faik. *Kırık Kurşun*. İstanbul: Yakın Plan Yayınları, 2015.

Ilıcak, Nazlı. *12 Eylül Kazanında Bir Gazeteci*. İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012.

İnal, Erhan. *Metris Kuşları*. İstanbul: Mephisto, 2005.

İşkence Dosyası 12 Eylül 1980 - 12 Eylül 1995. 2nd ed. Ankara: Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, 1996.

İşkencehaneler ve Cezaevlerinde Direnmek Yaşamaktır. İstanbul: Nam Yayıncılık, 1993.

Kahraman, Ahmet. *Sanık Ayağa Kalk!* İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1987.

Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar: Kadınlar Mamak Cezaevini Anlatıyor. Ankara: Dipnot, 2011.

Kalaycıoğlu, Ersin. "The Motherland Party: The Challenge of Institutionalization in a Charismatic Leader Party." *Turkish Studies* 3, no. 1 (March 2002): 41–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/714005703.

Karacan, Elifcan. *Remembering the 1980 Turkish Military Coup d'Etat: Memory, Violence and Trauma*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016.

Karakaya, Ufuk Bektaş. *Ölüm Bizim İçin Değil*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011.

Kearney, Richard. "Remembering the Past: The Question of Narrative Memory." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 24, no. 2–3 (April 1998): 49–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/019145379802400205.

Kendiliğinden Bir Hareket: Devrimci Yol. İstanbul: Mücadele Yayınları, 1990.

Kesici Karakaş, Rahime. *5 Noluda Kadın Olmak*. İstanbul: Nas Ajans Yayınları, 2017.

Kırcı, Haluk. *Donmuş Zaman Manzaraları*. 1999. Reprint, İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2012.

Kısacık, Raşit. *Diyarbakır Cezaevi*. İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2011.

Kışanak, Gülten. "Gerçekten 40 Yıl Oldu Mu?" In *40 Yıl 12 Eylül*, edited by Tanıl Bora, 121–44. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

Kızılkoyun, Fevzi. "'Bir sağdan bir soldan astık' açıklaması." Accessed May 28, 2022. https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bir-sagdan-bir-soldan-astik-aciklamasi-21978372.

Köse, Ali. *Tarihçesi ve Yaşayanların Anlatımıyla İşkence*. İstanbul: Anadolu Yayıncılık, 2001.

Küçükizsiz, Recep. *Ülkücülerin Çilesi*. İstanbul: Orkun Yayıncılık, 2018.

Kukul, Sinan. *Bir Direniş Odağı: Metris*. İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 1998.

Küreken, İbrahim. *Parçası, Mahkumu, Tanığı, Sürgünü Oldum*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016.

Kürkçü, Ertuğrul. "Türkiye Sosyalist Hareketine Silahlı Mücadelenin Girişi." In *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce - Sol*, edited by Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, 2nd ed., 8:494–542. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008.

Kürşat, Mehmet. *12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*. İstanbul: Hoşgörü Yayınları, 2012.

Kutlu, Haşim. *12 Eylül'ün Cezaevleri*. İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1989.

Landau, Jacob M. "The Nationalist Action Party in Turkey." *Journal of Contemporary History* 17, no. 4 (October 1982): 587–606. https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948201700402.

Lowenthal, David. *The Past Is a Foreign Country - Revisited*. Revised and Updated edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Lundholt, Marianne Wolff, Cindie Aaen Maagaard, and Anke Piekut. "Counternarratives." In *The International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication*, by Robert L Heath and Winni Johansen, 1–11, 1st ed. Wiley, 2018. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781119010722.iesc0201.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Marasco, Gabriele. *Political Autobiographies and Memoirs in Antiquity : A Brill Companion*. Brill's Companions in Classical Studies. Leiden: Brill, 2011. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xww&AN=390468&site=eds-live.

Mavioğlu, Ertuğrul. *Apoletli Adalet: Bir 12 Eylül Hesaplaşması 2*. İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2006.

———. *Asılmayıp Beslenenler: Bir 12 Eylül Hesaplaşması - 1*. 2004. Reprint, İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2006.

Memişoğlu, Recep. *Kivamini Tutturamaduk*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2018.

Meral, Yunus. *Bir Mahkumiyetin Anatomisi*. Ankara: Taş Medrese Yayınları, 1989.

Meşe, Ertuğrul. *Komünizmle Mücadele Dernekleri: Türk Sağında Antikomünizmin İnşası*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016.

Hürriyet. "'MHP Fanatiği' Suçlaması," August 8, 1998. https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/mhp-fanatigi-suclamasi-39032682.

Michelsen, Nicholas. *Politics and Suicide: The Philosophy of Political Self-Destruction*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Mishler, Elliot G. "Historians of the Self: Restorying Lives, Revising Identities." *Research in Human Development* 1, no. 1–2 (March 2004): 101–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2004.9683331.

Misztal, Barbara A. "Narrative's Reliance on Memory: The Case for an Interdisciplinary Exchange Between Memory and Narrative Studies." *Life Writing* 7, no. 1 (April 2010): 85–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/14484520903342973.

Morris, Norval, and David Rothman J. "Introduction." In *The Oxford History of The Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, edited by Norval Morris and David Rothman J. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Müftüoğlu, Oğuzhan. *Geçmişi Aşabilmek*. İstanbul: Bireşim Yayınları, 2000.

Müftüoğlu, Rıza. *Copların Askerleri*. Ankara: Ocak Yayınları, 2000.

Nashif, Esmail. *Palestinian Political Prisoners: Identity and Community*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.” *Representations*, no. 26 (April 1989): 7–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520.

Nursi, Bediüzzaman Said. *Mederese-i Yusufiye Risalesi*. İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 2018.

Odabaşı, Yılmaz. *Bir Kürdün Eylül Defterleri*. n.p.: Broy Yayınları, 1991.

Okuyan, Yaşar. *O Yıllar: 12 Eylül’den Anılar, Mektuplar, Belgeler*. İstanbul: Doğan Yayıncılık, 2010.

Olick, Jeffrey K., and Joyce Robbins. “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (August 1998): 105–40. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.105.

Olick, Jeffrey K., Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy. “Introduction.” In *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, 3–62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Öndül, Hüsnü. “Geçmişle Yüzleşme: 12 Eylül Travmasını Aşmak.” *İnsan Hakları Derneği*. Accessed June 11, 2021. https://www.ihd.org.tr/gecmisle-yuzlesme-12-eylul-travmasini-asmak/.

Orhon, Göze. *The Weight of the Past: Memory and Turkey’s 12 September Coup*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Oza, Sinan. *En Uzun Eylül*. İstanbul: Amaç Yayıncılık, 1989.

Özbay, Ahmet. *Mekteb-i Yusufiye’de Çileli Hayatım*. İstanbul: Fazilet Kitabevi, 2006.

Özgürel, Avni. “12 Eylül’ün Hatırlattığı Tablolar.” *Radikal*, September 13, 2009. http://www.radikal.com.tr/yorum/12-eylulun-hatirlattigi-tablolar-954243/.

Özlütaş, Hüseyin. *Felç*. İstanbul: Evrensel Basım, 1992.

Öznur, Hakkı, ed. *Ülkücü Hareket*. 3rd ed. Vol. 5. Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, n.d.

Öztepe, Mehmet. *12 Eylül Adaleti ve C-5*. Ankara: Özen Matbaacılık, 1989.

———. *12 Eylül’den Sonra Mamak Hatıralarım*. Ankara: Yusufiye Yayınları, 1991.

Öztunç, Erhan, ed. *Ülkücüler 12 Eylül’ü Anlatıyor*. İstanbul: Babıali Kitaplığı, 2008.

Özyürek, Esra. “Public Memory as Political Battleground.” In *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, edited by Esra Özyürek, 1st ed., 114–37. Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2007.

Parla, Taha. *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Rejimi (1980-1989)*. 1986. Reprint, İstanbul: Deniz Yayınları, 2009.

Pekdemir, Melih. *Devrimcilik Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2014.

Pekesen, Berna. "The Left in Turkey: Emergence, Persecutions and Left-Wing Memory Work." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Anti-Communist Persecutions*, edited by Christian Gerlach and Clemens Six, 477–98. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Pereira, Anthony W. "Political Justice under Authoritarian Regimes in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile." *Human Rights Review* 4, no. 2 (June 2003): 27–47. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-003-1024-7.

Polat, Edip. *Diyarbakır Gerçeği*. Ankara: İnsan Hakları Yayınları, 1988.

Polletta, Francesca, Pang Ching Bobby Chen, Beth Gharrity Gardner Gardner, and Alice Motes. "The Sociology of Storytelling." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2011): 109–30.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Narrative Identity." *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (1991): 73–81.

Riessman, Kohler. *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Sage, 2008.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Saç, Selman. "Akıncılar." In *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, edited by Mete Kaan Kaynar, 501–14. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

Milliyet. "Sağmalcılar'dan Ülkücü 13 Tutuklu ve Mahkum Kaçtı," March 11, 1978.

Samim, Ahmet. "The Tragedy of the Turkish Left." *New Left Review* 126, no. 1 (1981): 60–85.

Sarıoğlu, Güzin. "Bir lâkâp ve bir hayat: Akrep Nalan." *serbestiyet.com* (blog), July 1, 2021. https://serbestiyet.com/featured/bir-lakap-ve-bir-hayat-akrep-nalan-64330/.

Sarıoğlu, Sezai, ed. *Nar Taneleri*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001.

Saruhan, Emeti. "12 Eylülcülerin İslam Düşmanı Olduklarını Yakından Biliyorum." *Yeni Şafak*, May 13, 2013. https://www.yenisafak.com/roportaj/12-eylulculerin-islam-dusmani-olduklarini-yakindan-biliyorum-382925.

———. “İyi ki o uçağı kaçıramadık.” Text. Yeni Şafak. Yeni Şafak, December 11, 2011. https://www.yenisafak.com/roportaj/iyi-ki-o-ucagi-kaciramadik-355983.

Schudson, Michael. “Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory.” In *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, edited by Daniel L. Schacter, Joseph T. Coyle, and Harvard Center for the Study of Mind, Brain, and Behavior, 346–64. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995.

———. “Preservation of the Past in Mental Life.” *Quarterly Newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition* 9 (1987): 5–11.

———. “The Past Against the Present versus the Present Against the Past.” In *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, 287–90. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Selvi, Abdülkadir, and Erhan Seven. *Alperen: İşkence Koğuşlarından Siyaset Meydanına*. İstanbul: Nesil, 2010.

Şenci, Erdoğan. *Firar: 1982 Elazığ Cezaevinden*. İstanbul: Yıldız Kitaplar, 2011.

Şenliler, Selahattin. *Mamak Cezaevi Günlüğü*. Ankara: Yüzdeiki Yayınları, 2019.

Şensönmez, Gökhan. “Politics of Remembering the Enemy: Prisoner Narratives of the 1980 Military Coup.” *Turkish Studies* forthcoming (May 8, 2022). https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2022.2073225.

Sezgin, Yılmaz. *Sayım Düzenine Geeeç!* İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 2006.

———. *Sinop’ta İdam Geceleri*. İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 2002.

Simine, Silke Arnold-de. *Meditating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Sılacı, Nazım. *Asılı Kalan Hayatlar*. 2007. Reprint, Ankara: Penta, 2011.

Sınır, Nuri. *İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*. İstanbul: Nas Ajans Yayınları, 2016.

Smorti, Andrea. “Autobiographical Memory and Autobiographical Narrative: What Is the Relationship?” *Narrative Inquiry* 21, no. 2 (December 31, 2011): 303–10. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.21.2.08smo

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Solgun, Cafer. *Demeyin Anama, İçerideyim*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017.

Somers, Margaret R. “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach.” *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994): 605–49.

Songar, Ayhan. “Türkiye’de Terör Olaylarının Arkasında Yatan Gerçekler Sosyo-Psikolojik Araştırma ve Değerlendirme.” In *Ülkemizi 12 Eylül’e Getiren Sebepler ve Türkiye Üzerindeki Oyunlar*, 309–28. İstanbul: Aydınlar Ocağı, 1984.

Squire, Larry R. “Mechanisms of Memory.” *Science* 232, no. 4758 (Haziran 1986): 1612–19. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.3086978.

Milliyet. “Sünbül ‘hortladı,’” October 20, 2000. https://www.milliyet.com.tr/the-others/sunbul-hortladi-5336016.

Sünbül, Mehmet. *Milliyetçi Miyiz Müslüman Mıyız?* 1992. Reprint, İstanbul: Yedirenk, 2019.

Talbot, Jean, Roger Bibace, Barbara Bokhour, and Michael Bamberg. “Affirmation and Resistance of Dominant Discourses: The Rhetorical Construction of Pregnancy.” *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 6, no. 3 (1996): 225–51.

Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül: Kadınlar Anılarını Paylaşıyor. İzmir: Kadın Yazarlar Derneği, 2010.

Tanılkan, Atilla. *Gayrettepe Selimiye Metris*. İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2010.

Taşyapan, Ali. *Eylül Ayazı - Anı 4*. İstanbul: El Yayınları, 2009.

CNN TÜRK. “Tek tip kıyafet uygulaması nasıl olacak? Hangi ülkelerde uygulanıyor?” Accessed July 28, 2022. https://www.cnnturk.com/ajanda/tek-tip-kiyafet-uygulamasi-nasil-olacak-hangi-ulkelerde-uygulaniyor.

Tekeli, Şirin. “Europe, European Feminism, and Women in Turkey.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 15, no. 1 (n.d.): 139–43.

Terör ve Terörle Mücadelede Durum Değerlendirmesi. Ankara: Başbakanlık Yayınları, 1983.

The General Secretariat of the National Security Council. *12 September in Turkey: Before and After*. Ankara: Ongun Kardeşler, 1982.

Tokyay, Menekşe. “Tüm Partiler Anlaştı: Eski Cumhurbaşkanı Kenan Evren’in Ismi Her Yerden Silinecek.” *Euronews*, November 25, 2019. https://tr.euronews.com/2019/11/25/tum-partiler-anlasti-eski-cumhurbaskani-kenan-evrenin-ismi-her-yerden-silinecek.

Traverso, Enzo. *Geçmişi Kullanma Klavuzu: Tarih, Bellek, Politika*. Translated by Işık Ergüden. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

Türkeş, Alparslan. *12 Eylül Adaleti (!): Savunma*. İstanbul: Hamle Yayınevi, 1994.

Türkeş, Alparslan. *Basılan Kervanımız*. İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları, 1995.

Turkey Testimony on Torture. London: Amnesty International Publications, 1985.

Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi. "Ülkemizde Demokrasiye Müdehale Eden Tüm Darbe ve Muhtıralar Ile Demokrasiyi İşlevsiz Kılan Diğer Bütün Girişim ve Süreçlerin Tüm Boyutları Ile Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Önlemlerin Belirlenmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu," 2012. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/arastirma_komisyonlari/darbe_muhtira/index.htm.

Üçlü, Mehmet Sait. *Sarı Hüzün: Diyarbakır Zindan Öyküleri*. İstanbul: Aryen Yayınları, 2016.

Ugur Cinar, Meral. "When Defense Becomes Offense: The Role of Threat Narratives in the Turkish Civil War of the 1970s." *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2014.891351.

Ülkü, İrfan. *Doktoru Selim Kaptanoğlu Anlatıyor: 12 Eylül'de Türkeş*. İstanbul: Bilge Karınca, 2017.

Ülkücülere Mamak Askeri Cezaevinde Kemalist Işkence, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5H6B4N5NjA.

Uruş, Alper, ed. *12 Sanık 12 Tanık*. İstanbul: Detay Yayınları, 2007.

Üskül, M. Zafer. *Bildirileriyle 12 Eylül 1980 Dönemi Sıkıyönetimi*. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2018.

Uyan, Mahmut Memduh. *Ben Bir İnsanım*. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1989.

———. *Kardeşim Hepsi Hikaye*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2015.

Wertsch, James V. "Narratives as Cultural Tools in Sociocultural Analysis: Official History in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia." *Ethos* 28, no. 4 (2000): 511–33.

Westrheim, Karine. "Prison as Site for Political Education: Educational Experiences from Prison Narrated by Members and Sympathisers of the PKK." *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 6, no. 1 (2008).

Wilson, Anne, and Michael Ross. "The Identity Function of Autobiographical Memory: Time Is on Our Side." *Memory* 11, no. 2 (January 2003): 137–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/741938210.

Yagoda, Ben. *Memoir: A History*. New York: Riverheard Books, 2009.

Yavuz, M. Hakan. "The Politics of Fear: The Rise of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in Turkey." *Middle East Journal* 56, no. 2 (2002): 200–221.

Yazıcı, Mehmet Hakkı. *Koca Bir Sevdaydı Yaşadığımız*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013.

Yazıcıoğlu, Muhsin. *12 Eylül Günleri*. Edited by Melih Perçin. Ankara: Yüzdeiki Yayınları, 2018.

Yıldırım, Yaşar. *Balkondan Seyretmek*. Ankara: Kayı Yayıncılık, 1994.

Yıldırım, Yavuz. "Fatsa Deneyimi ve 'Yeni Siyaset' Arayışı." In *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, edited by Mete Kaan Kaynar, 187–98. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

Yıldız, Pamuk. *O Hep Aklımda: Bir Mamak Cezaevi Tanıklığı*. 2007. Reprint, Ankara: Ayizi Kitap, 2012.

Yılmaz, Ali. *Kara Arşiv: 12 Eylül Cezaevleri*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2013.

Yılmaz, Nurettin. *Yakın Tarihin Tanığıyım*. 2nd ed. Diyarbakır: Veng Yayınları, 2008.

Yoldaşcan, Osman Yaşar. *Adressiz Sorgular*. 1989. Reprint, İstanbul: Şubat Basım, 2014.

"Yönetmeliğe Takıldı: 'Tek Tip' Kıyafet Uygulaması Beklemede" *Diken*, January 30, 2018. https://www.diken.com.tr/yonetmelige-takildi-tek-tip-kiyafet-uygulamasi-beklemede/

Yüksel, Edip. *Norşin'den Arizona'ya Sıradan Bir Adamın Sıradışı Öyküsü*. İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2017.

Yurtsever, Haluk. *Yükseliş ve Düşüş: Türkiye Solu 1960-1980*. İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2008.

Zana, Mehdi. *Bekle Diyarbakır*. İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1991.

———. *Vahşetin Günlüğü*. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1993.

Zeydanlıoğlu, Welat. "Torture and Turkification in the Diyarbakır Military Prison." In *Rights, Citizenship & Torture: Perspectives on Evil, Law and the State*, edited by Welat Zeydanlıoğlu and John T. Parry, 73–92. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2009.

Zinoman, Peter. "Reading Revolutionary Prison Memoirs." In *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*, edited by Hue-Tam Ho Tai, 21–45. Asia--Local Studies/Global Themes 3. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

APPENDIX

	Name	Book	Ideology	Gender
1.	Ahmet Özbay	*Mekteb-i Yusufiye'de Çileli Hayatım*	The Islamist Movement	Male
2. 1	Halis Özdemir	*Mamak Zindanlarında Bir Akıncı*	The Islamist Movement	Male
3.	Adil Akkoyunlu	*Türkiye Tarihinde Bir Sonbahar*	The Islamist Movement	Male
4.	Ahmet Oğuz	*12 Eylül'den Mamak Hücrelerine*	The Islamist Movement	Male
5.	Emine Şenlikoğlu	*Burası Da Cezaevi*	The Islamist Movement	Female
6.	Mehmet Çoban	*İki Buçuk Sayfa*	The Islamist Movement	Male
7.	Recai Kutan	*Kirazlıdere Tutukevi Penceresinden 12 Eylül*	The Islamist Movement	Male
8.	Hüsnü Aktaş	*Medeni Vahşet Davası Cezaevi Notları 1984-1985*	The Islamist Movement	Male
9.	Edip Yüksel	*Norşin'den Arizona'ya*	The Islamist Movement	Male
10.	Sakine Cansız	*Sara: Prison Memoir of a Kurdish Revolutionary*	The Kurdish Left	Female
11.	Abdurrahim Simavi	*Zindanda Çocuk*	The Kurdish Left	Male

12.	İbrahim Küreken	*"Parçası, Tanığı, Mahkumu, Sürgünü Oldum"*	The Kurdish Left	Male
13.	Ayhan Güngör	*12 Eylül Düşten Kabusa*	The Kurdish Left	Male
14.	Gülten Kışanak	*40 Yıl 12 Eylül*	The Kurdish Left	Female
15.	Nedim Baran	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Kurdish Left	Male
16.	İrfan Babaoğlu	*Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a 5 No'lu Cezaevi*	The Kurdish Left	Male
17.	Mehdi Zana	*Bekle Diyarbakır*	The Kurdish Left	Male
18.	Yılmaz Odabaşı	*Bir Kürdün Eylül Defterleri 1975-85*	The Kurdish Left	Male
19.	Aziz Gülmüş	*Cehennem Kahkahaları*	The Kurdish Left	Male
20.	Ali Ekber Gürgöz	*Diyarbakır Gecesi Türkiye'de Kürt Olmak*	The Kurdish Left	Male
21.	Edip Polat	*Diyarbakır Gerçeği*	The Kurdish Left	Male
22.	Şebap Kandemir	*Diyarbakır Gerçeği*	The Kurdish Left	Male

23.	Şükrü Göktay	*Diyarbakır Gerçeği*	The Kurdish Left	Male
24.	Mustafa Karasu	*Diyarbakır Zindanları*	The Kurdish Left	Male
25.	Muzaffer Ayata	*Diyarbakır Zindanları*	The Kurdish Left	Male
26.	Nuri Sınır	*İşkence Karanlığına Doğru*	The Kurdish Left	Male
27.	Ahmet Acar	*İşkence ve Ölümün Adresi Diyarbakır Cezaevi*	The Kurdish Left	Male
28.	Nurettin Yılmaz	*İşkence ve Ölümün Adresi Diyarbakır Cezaevi*	The Kurdish Left	Male
29.	Selim Dindar	*İşkence ve Ölümün Adresi Diyarbakır Cezaevi*	The Kurdish Left	Male
30.	Kerim Ağırakçe	*Mardin-Diyarbakır Zindanlarında Özgürlük Çığlıkları*	The Kurdish Left	Male
31.	Mehdi Zana	*Prison no.5: Eleven Years in Turkish Jails*	The Kurdish Left	Male
32.	M. Sait Üçlü	*Sarı Hüzün Diyarbakır Zindan Öyküleri*	The Kurdish Left	Male

33.	Yılmaz Sezgin	*Sayım Düzenine Geeeç!*	The Kurdish Left	Male
34.	Yılmaz Sezgin	*Sinop'ta İdam Geceleri*	The Kurdish Left	Male
35.	Yavuz Budak	*Turkey Testimony on Torture*	The Kurdish Left	Male
36.	Mehdi Zana	*Vahşetin Günlüğü Diyarbakır Zindanları*	The Kurdish Left	Male
37.	Metin Çiyayi	*Verilmiş Sözümdür "Hücredeki Ateş"*	The Kurdish Left	Male
38.	Nurettin Yılmaz	*Yakın Tarihin Tanığıyım*	The Kurdish Left	Male
39.	Hamit Kankılıç	*Ölüm Koridoru: Diyarbakır Cezaevi'nden Notlar*	The Kurdish Left	Male
40.	Doğan Görsev	*12 Eylül Anıları*	The Turkish Left	Male
41.	Oral Çalışlar	*12 Mart'tan 12 Eylül'e Mamak*	The Turkish Left	Male
42.	Celalettin Can	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Turkish Left	Male
43.	Gökalp Eren	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Turkish Left	Male
44.	Tayfun Mater	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Turkish Left	Male

45.	Veysel Uçum	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Turkish Left	Male
46.	Fethiye Çetin	*40 Yıl 12 Eylül*	The Turkish Left	Female
47.	Süleyman Toklu	*92.Gün*	The Turkish Left	Male
48.	Mahmut Esat Güven	*Adalar Adalılar*	The Turkish Left	Male
49.	Lütfi Ayık	*Anılar*	The Turkish Left	Male
50.	Tarık Akan	*Anne Kafamda Bit Var*	The Turkish Left	Male
51.	Aydın Çubukçu	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
52.	Bülent Forta	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
53.	Celalettin Can	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
54.	Erdal Turgut	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
55.	Fikret Aşçıoğlu	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
56.	Gülder Demir	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Female

57.	İbrahim Aydın	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
58.	Meral Bekar	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Female
59.	Mustafa Kamil Uzuner	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
60.	Muzaffer İlhan Erdost	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
61.	Pertev Aksakal	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
62.	Selçuk Hazinedar	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
63.	Zeynel Polat	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Male
64.	Ümit Efe	*Asılmayıp Beslenenler*	The Turkish Left	Female
65.	Alime Mitap	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
66.	Asu Demir	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
67.	Ayfer Arısoy Kantaş	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
68.	Ayşe Gülay Özdemir	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female

69.	Ayşegül Önemli Kılıç	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
70.	Emine Akın Fırat	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
71.	Fecire Kocaman	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
72.	Ferihan Duygu	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
73.	Kumru Başer	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
74.	Latife Metli Türkyılmaz	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
75.	Nermin Er	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
76.	Nurdan Deliorman	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
77.	Selma Karamert Güven	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
78.	Sevinç Eraltay	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
79.	Şafak Aydın	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
80.	Mahmut Memduh Uyan	*Ben Bir İnsanım*	The Turkish Left	Male

81.	Kadri Gürsel	*Ben De Sizin İçin Üzgünüm*	The Turkish Left	Male
82.	Sinan Kukul	*Bir Direniş Odağı: Metris*	The Turkish Left	Male
83.	Reha İsvan	*Bir Ses*	The Turkish Left	Female
84.	Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu	*Bitmeyen Yolculuk*	The Turkish Left	Male
85.	Tahir Canan	*Büyük Tutsaklık*	The Turkish Left	Male
86.	Hüseyin Şakacı	*Darbe Şakacıları Sevmez*	The Turkish Left	Male
87.	Nevin Berktaş	*Dava Dosyası İnancın Sınandığı Zor Mekanlar: Hücreler*	The Turkish Left	Female
88.	Cafer Solgun	*Demeyin Anama İçerideyim*	The Turkish Left	Male
89.	Ayhan Sağcan	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
90.	Cemile Çakır	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
91.	Esmahan Ekinci	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
92.	Fatma Mefkure Budak	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female

93.	Filiz Karakuş	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
94.	Gönül	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
95.	Gülten Kaya	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
96.	Hayrünisa Yazıcı	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
97.	Hazar Aslantürk	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
98.	Kıymet Yıldırım	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
99.	Kıymet Yıldırımer	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
100.	Leyla Abay	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
101.	Melis Düvenci	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
102.	Meral Mualla	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
103.	Mukaddes Erdoğdu Çelik	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female
104.	Mürvet Çakırerk	*Demir Parmaklıklar Ortak Düşler*	The Turkish Left	Female

105.	Nimet Öztürk	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
106.	Nursel Gökbaş	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
107.	Sakine Altun	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
108.	Sema Vural	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
109.	Sevim Ölçmez	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
110.	Seza Mis	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
111.	Seza Mis Horuz	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
112.	Süheyla Kaya	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
113.	Şükran İrençin	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
114.	Ümit Efe	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
115.	Yurdusev Özsökmenler	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	
116.	Zeynep Turan	*Demir Parmaklıklar*	The Turkish	Female
		Ortak Düşler	Left	

117.	Göksel Yucak	*Ateşe Uçan Pervaneler*	The Turkish Left	Female
118.	Hasan Hayri Aslan	*Diyarbakır 5 No'lu Cehenneminde Ölümden De Öte*	The Turkish Left	Male
119.	Ali Demir	*Diyarbakır Gerçeği*	The Turkish Left	Male
120.	Mehmet Özgül	*Diyarbakır Gerçeği*	The Turkish Left	Male
121.	Sinan Oza	*En Uzun Eylül*	The Turkish Left	Male
122.	Ali Taşyapan	*Eylül Ayazı*	The Turkish Left	Male
123.	Hüseyin Özlütaş	*Felç*	The Turkish Left	Male
124.	Şansal Dikmen	*Fırtınalı Denizin Kıyısında*	The Turkish Left	Male
125.	Erdoğan Şenci	*Firar 1982 Elazığ Cezaevinden*	The Turkish Left	Male
126.	Atilla Tanılkan	*Gayrettepe Selimiye Metris Anılar*	The Turkish Left	Male
127.	Ali Türker Ertuncay	*Görülememiştir*	The Turkish Left	Male
128.	Şakir Bilgin	*Güneş Her Gün Doğar*	The Turkish Left	Male

129.	Halil Beytaş	*Hapishanede Büyümek*	The Turkish Left	Male
130.	Kutsie Bozoklar	*Hep Aynı İnatla*	The Turkish Left	Female
131.	Erdal Atabek	*İnsan Sıcağı*	The Turkish Left	Male
132.	Aygün Zerger	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
133.	Ayla Kürkçü	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
134.	Ayten Şahin	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
135.	Banu Asena Torun	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
136.	Canan Öztürkçü Can	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
137.	Dilvin Altınakar Semizer	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
138.	Etkin Kanar	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
139.	Fatma Pala Akalp	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
140.	Fatma Subaşı	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female

141.	Füsun Aydın	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
142.	Gönül Sevindir	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
143.	Gülbeyaz Hamurcu	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
144.	Güler Koç	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
145.	Gülperi Kaya	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
146.	Gülşat Aygen	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
147.	Gülşen Bektaş	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
148.	Günseli Kaya	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
149.	Hilal Ünlü	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
150.	Menekşe Işıldak Şatlı	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
151.	Meral Gündoğan	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
152.	Muhteşem Ertal Özsoy	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female

153.	Mübeccel	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
154.	Naciye Kaya	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
155.	Nesrin Özkan	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
156.	Pervin	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
157.	Rezzan Koca	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
158.	Seher Erol	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
159.	Selma Şengül	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
160.	Selmane Ertekin	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
161.	Sema Yiğit Kanat	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
162.	Sevda Kuran	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
163.	Suna Özüdoğru Koç	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
164.	Sükun Öztoklu	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female

165.	Zeliha Şalcı	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
166.	Meral Bekar	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
167.	Seza Mis Horuz	*Kaktüsler Susuz Da Yaşar*	The Turkish Left	Female
168.	Mahmut Memduh Uyan	*Kardeşim Hepsi Hikaye!*	The Turkish Left	Male
169.	Kemal Anadol	*Kartal Maltepe'den Sağmalcılar'a İnsan Manzaraları*	The Turkish Left	Male
170.	Recep Memişoğlu	*Kivamini Tutturamaduk*	The Turkish Left	Male
171.	Mehmet Hakkı Yazıcı	*Koca Bir Sevdaydı Yaşadığımız*	The Turkish Left	Male
172.	Hasan Ürel	*Mahkum Olduk Netekim*	The Turkish Left	Male
173.	Fikri Günay	*Mamak (1980-1982)*	The Turkish Left	Male
174.	Durdu Gevher	*Mamak Ardından Tavşan Yaşamı*	The Turkish Left	Male
175.	Pamuk Yıldız	*Mamak Kitabı*	The Turkish Left	Female
176.	Sema Yiğit Kanat	*Mamak Kitabı*	The Turkish Left	Female

177.	Nuri Duruk	*Medrese'den 5 Nolu'ya Nuri Yoldaş*	The Turkish Left	Male
178.	Erhan İnal	*Metris Kuşları*	The Turkish Left	Male
179.	Ahmet Fevzi Erdal	*Nar Taneleri*	The Turkish Left	Male
180.	Oğuz Artan	*Nar Taneleri*	The Turkish Left	Male
181.	Selçuk Hazinedar	*Nar Taneleri*	The Turkish Left	Male
182.	Hilmi Köksal Alişanoğlu	*Netekim 12 Eylül'de Geldiler*	The Turkish Left	Male
183.	Pamuk Yıldız	*O Hep Aklımda*	The Turkish Left	Female
184.	Ufuk Bektaş Karakaya	*Ölüm Bizim İçin Değil*	The Turkish Left	Male
185.	Fatih Binbay	*Renklerden Kızılı Seçmek*	The Turkish Left	Male
186.	Ayşe Pekdemir	*Sanık Ayağa Kalk!*	The Turkish Left	Female
187.	Melih Pekdemir	*Sanık Ayağa Kalk!*	The Turkish Left	Male
188.	Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu	*Sanık Ayağa Kalk!*	The Turkish Left	Male

189.	Selim Açan	*Sürüyor O Kavga*	The Turkish Left	Male
190.	Fazilet Çulha	*Şimdi Sırası Değil*	The Turkish Left	Female
191.	Alime Mitap	*Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül*	The Turkish Left	Female
192.	İkbal Kaynar	*Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül*	The Turkish Left	Female
193.	Kızbes Seyhan Aydın	*Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül*	The Turkish Left	Female
194.	Meral Bekar	*Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül*	The Turkish Left	Female
195.	Sevda Kuran Akdaş	*Tanıklıklarla 12 Eylül*	The Turkish Left	Female
196.	Mehmet Doğan	*Tarihçesi ve Yaşayanların Anlatımıyla İşkence - 1*	The Turkish Left	Male
197.	Osman Osmanağaoğlu	*Tarihçesi ve Yaşayanların Anlatımıyla İşkence - 2*	The Turkish Left	Male
198.	Hayriye Gündüz	*Tarihçesi ve Yaşayanların Anlatımıyla İşkence - 3*	The Turkish Left	Female
199.	İsmet Erdoğan	*Tek Başına*	The Turkish Left	Male

200.	İbrahim Çelik	*Tek Yola Sığmayan Devrim*	The Turkish Left	Male
201.	Enver Karagöz	*Turkey Testimony on Torture*	The Turkish Left	Male
202.	Işılay Karagöz	*Turkey Testimony on Torture*	The Turkish Left	Female
203.	Süleyman Coşkun	*Tutukluymuşuk*	The Turkish Left	Male
204.	Mehmet Çakır	*Umutlarımız Hep Bizimleydi*	The Turkish Left	Male
205.	Özer Aydın	*Umut'un Bitmeyen Umudu*	The Turkish Left	Male
206.	Alime Mitap	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
207.	Arife Ada	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
208.	Ayfer Arısoy Kantaş	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
209.	Ayşe Bakkalcı	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
210.	Ayşe Mertoğlu	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
211.	Ayten Saçık	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female

212.	Bingüzel Kaya	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
213.	Deniz Özlem Bilgili	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
214.	Eda Dinçel	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
215.	Fatma Kartal	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
216.	Fecire Kocaman	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
217.	Feride Zengin	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
218.	Ferihan Duygu	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
219.	Fevziye Arzıtaş	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
220.	Feyza Kar	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
221.	Gülcan Eyyüboğlu	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
222.	Gülsen Saçık Çiftçi	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
223.	Hatice Ateş Kılınç	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female

224.	İlknur Kenez	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
225.	Latife Metli Türkyılmaz	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
226.	Leyla Balkız	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
227.	Leyla İpek	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
228.	Müzeyyen Kaya Taşdemiroğlu	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
229.	Necla Kanbur	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
230.	Nermin Er	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
231.	Nevruz Kuducu Ertürk	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
232.	Nihal Ulusoy	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
233.	Nuran İyidoğan	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
234.	Nuray Erden	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
235.	Nurten Gazibeyoğlu	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female

236.	Pamuk Yıldız	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
237.	Perihan Aksakal	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
238.	Pervin Çakıcı	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
239.	Sabahat Jale Artun	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
240.	Sakine Tatar	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
241.	Selma Karamert Güven	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
242.	Sema Dinçel	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
243.	Şehnaz Demirbağ	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
244.	Türkan Kılıç	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
245.	Ülküser Bozali	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
246.	Yeter Güneş	*Unutamamak*	The Turkish Left	Female
247.	Yaşar Ayaşlı	*Yeraltında Beş Yıl*	The Turkish Left	Male

248.	Ömer Babacan	*Yıldızla Yaşayanlar*	The Turkish Left	Male
249.	Sebahattin Selim Erhan	*Yine Kazacağız, Yine Kaçacağız!*	The Turkish Left	Male
250.	Halil Güven	*Zaman Zindan İçinde Anılar*	The Turkish Left	Male
251.	Baki Altun	*Zamanı Durdurabilmek*	The Turkish Left	Male
252.	Şamil Kazbek	*İşkencehaneler ve Cezaevlerinde Direnmek Yaşamaktır*	The Turkish Left	Male
253.	Hüseyin Özlütaş	*Onca İşkenceden Sonra*	The Turkish Left	Male
254.	Nazım Sılacı	*Asılı Kalan Hayatlar*	The Turkish Left	Male
255.	Doğan Tılıç	*Memelektin Halleri*	The Turkish Left	Male
256.	Taylan Çoklar	*12 Eylül 1980 3 İdam 1 Müebbet Taylan Çoklar*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
257.	Mehmet Öztepe	*12 Eylül Adaleti ve C-5*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
258.	Osman Başer	*12 Eylül Adaleti ve C-5*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
259.	Refik Cevdet Yayla	*12 Eylül Adaleti ve C-5*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male

260.	Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu	*12 Eylül Günleri*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
261.	Ali Bademci	*12 Eylül İşkencesinde Ülkücü Bir Gazetecinin Dramı*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
262.	Ahmet Tunçel	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
263.	Burhan Ulucan	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
264.	Ercüment Gedikli	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
265.	Erhan İşler	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
266.	Haluk Kırcı	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
267.	Hüseyin Yurdakul	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
268.	İlhami Erdoğan	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
269.	İsmail Karaalioğlu	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
270.	Mahmut Gül	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
271.	Mehmet Öztepe	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male

272.	Mustafa Kaplan	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
273.	Osman Başer	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
274.	Ömer Girgeç	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
275.	Rahmi Ezik	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
276.	Ramazan Çepni	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
277.	Sabahattin Civelek	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
278.	Samet Karakuş	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
279.	Süleyman Kalaycı	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
280.	Şerafettin Çelik	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
281.	Zihni Açba	*12 Eylül ve Ülkücüler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
282.	Abdussamet Karakuş	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
283.	Ahmet Ercüment Gedikli	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male

284.	Ahmet Tunçel	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
285.	Burhan Ulucan	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
286.	Erhan İşler	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
287.	Haluk Kırcı	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
288.	Hüseyin Yurdakul	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
289.	İlhami Erdoğan	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
290.	İsmail Karaalioğlu	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
291.	Mahmut Gül	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
292.	Osman Başer	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
293.	Ömer Girgeç	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
294.	Rahmi Ezik	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
295.	Ramazan Çepni	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male

296.	Sabahattin Civelek	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
297.	Süleyman Kalaycı	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
298.	Şerafettin Çelik	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
299.	Zihni Açba	*12 Eylül Zindanlarında Ülkücü Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
300.	Ahmet Aytaç	*12 Eylül'den Geriye Kalan Mahpushane Hatırları*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
301.	Mehmet Öztepe	*12 Eylül'den Sonra Mamak Hatıralarım*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
302.	Kadir Mahir Damatlar	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
303.	Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
304.	Namık Kemal Zeybek	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
305.	Yaşar Okuyan	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
306.	Yılma Durak	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
307.	Yusuf Ziya Arpacık	*12 Sanık 12 Tanık*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male

308.	Fahrettin Masum Budak	*Akan Kanlar Bizimdi*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
309.	Yaşar Yıldırım	*Balkondan Seyretmek*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
310.	Yusuf Ziya Arpacık	*Başeğmediler*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
311.	Ahmet Ulu	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
312.	Emir Kuşdemir	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
313.	Erdinç Çelik	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
314.	Erhan İşler	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
315.	Hasan İlter	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
316.	Mahir Damatlar	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
317.	Mehmet Kesim	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
318.	Orhan Gündoğdu	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
319.	R. Cevdet Yayla	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male

320.	Rıdvan Akabe	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
321.	Servet Rahimoğlu	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
322.	Süleyman Kalaycı	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
323.	Yaşar Yıldırım	*Cezaevi Taşmedrese Yusufiye*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
324.	Rıza Müftüoğlu	*Copların Askerleri*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
325.	Haluk Kırcı	*Donmuş Zaman Manzaraları*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
326.	Yaşar Toksoy	*Dördüncü Cemre*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
327.	Fahrettin Masum Budak	*Giden Canlar Bizimdi*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
328.	Taha Akyol	*Hayat Yolunda*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
329.	Recep Küçükizsiz	*Kalemimden Kan Damlattım*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
330.	Oğuzhan Cengiz	*Kapıaltı - Cezaevi Günlüğü*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
331.	Faik İçmeli	*Kırık Kurşun*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male

332.	Selahattin Şenliler	*Mamak Cezaevi Günlüğü*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
333.	Seyit Ahmet Arvasi	*Mamak Günleri*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
334.	Mehmet Öztepe	*Mamak Zindanlarında İnsan Olmak*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
335.	Selçuk Kutlu	*Mamak Zulüm Kalesi*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
336.	Mehmet Sünbül	*Milliyetçi miyiz? Müslüman mıyız?*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
337.	Yaşar Okuyan	*O Yıllar*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
338.	Taha Akyol	*Otuz Yıldır 12 Eylül*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
339.	Yaşar Yıldırım	*Otuz Yıldır 12 Eylül*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
340.	Recep Küçükizsiz	*Ülkücülerin Çilesi*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
341.	Tuncay Livilik	*Ülkücünün İmtihanı*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
342.	Oğuzhan Cengiz	*Yanıkkale*	The Ülkücü Movement	Male
343.	Sema Oğur	*Turkey Testimony on Torture*	Unspecified	Female

344.	Şahabeddin Buz	*Turkey Testimony on Torture*	Unspecified	Male