

DISCUSSION OF THE KURDISH QUESTION IN
THE 1970s TURKISH LEFT: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS
OF THE 1970s LEFT PERIODICALS

A Master's Thesis

by

MİNE ÇETİN

Department of
Political Science and Public Administration

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
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MİNE ÇETİN

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LEFT: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE 1970s LEFT PERIODICALS

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To the ones who broke his/her/their bell jar



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THE 1970S LEFT PERIODICALS

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MİNE ÇETİN

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ABSTRACT

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Çetin, Mine

M.A. Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Meral Uğur Çınar

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This thesis aims to investigate the origins of identity politics by focusing on its lasting relationship between ideological politics. Concerning the literature of the left theories on the question of identity and the political context of the 1970s Turkey, which is identified by the factionalization of the ideological politics and the proliferation of the ethnic-identity based organizations, this study asks the following question: “How was the Kurdish question discussed among the 1970s Turkish Left?” To answer this question, the study conducted thematic analysis of the written texts that were generated through three periodicals of the 1970s left, namely *İlke*, *Ürün* and *Yürüyüş*. The analysis shows that the approach of the Turkish left to the Kurdish question affected the disengagement of the Kurdish-identity based organizations from the socialist left in Turkey.

Keywords: 1970s Turkish Left, Kurdish Question, Textual Analysis

ÖZET

1970'LER TÜRK SOLUNDA KÜRT SORUNUNUN TARTIŞILMASI: 1970'LERDEKİ SOL DERGİLERİN METİN ANALİZİ

Çetin, Mine
Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü
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Bu tez, kimlik siyaseti ve ideolojik siyaset arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanarak kimlik siyasetinin kökenlerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, sol literatürün kimlik meselesine ilişkin görüşlerinden ve ideolojik siyasetin fraksiyonelleşmesi ve etnik kimlik temelli örgütlerin çoğalmasıyla bilinen 1970'ler Türkiye'sinin siyasi bağlamından hareketle şu soruyu soruyor: "Kürt meselesi 1970'lerin Türk Solu içinde nasıl tartışıldı?" Bu soruyu yanıtlamak için çalışmada, 1970'lerin sol yayınlarından İlke, Ürün ve Yürüyüş dergilerindeki metinlerin tematik analizi yapılmıştır. Ortaya konan analiz Türk solunun Kürt meselesine yaklaşımının, Kürt kimliğine dayalı örgütlerin Türkiye'deki sosyalist soldan ayrılmasında etkili olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 1970'ler Türk Solu, Kürt Meselesi, Metin Analizi

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ÖZET	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. The Left and the Question of Identity.....	4
1.2. Methodological Framework.....	12
CHAPTER II: IDEOLOGICAL POLITICS AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN TURKEY	22
2.1. Late Ottoman Period and the Early Republican Era.....	22
2.2. The Post-Second World War Period.....	25
2.3. The Origins of the Factionalization in the Turkish Left.....	31
2.4. Emergence of the Kurdish Question in the Turkish Political History.....	34
2.5. Premises of the Separate Agenda on Kurdish Identity in the 1960s.....	37

2.6.	Discussions among the Socialist Left on the Revival of Kurdish Question in the 1960s.....	40
2.7.	The Political Picture of the 1970s.....	44
CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS OF THE PERIODICALS REGARDING THE KURDISH QUESTION.....		50
3.1.	İlke.....	50
3.2.	Ürün.....	56
3.3.	Yürüyüş.....	62
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION.....		68
REFERENCES.....		73

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Political ideologies are one of the most important dynamics that have shaped the social and political milieu in both the international realm and domestic realm of the states, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. When it comes to the question of identity, it has a historical relationship with political ideologies because the question of identity kept its place especially on the agenda of left ideologies, albeit in different forms and tones. Therefore, it is important to consider the historical relationship between the left ideologies and the identity question from an analytical perspective to understand the development of identity politics in the contemporary era.

As Ahmad (2014) presents international and regional political conditions are among the factors that shape Turkish politics since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Accordingly, the international political atmosphere in the second half of the twentieth century that involves the Cold War and the rise of ideological politics affected the political environment in Turkey (Ahmad, 2014, p. 128). Besides the international environment, Kemalist principles and their practices, which determine the roadmap of the state-building and nation-building processes, are one of

the building blocks of Turkish political culture (Ahmad, 1993). The center-periphery cleavage framework that Şerif Mardin (1973) uses while analyzing the sociopolitical relations in Turkey's modernization process and other academic studies that reinterpret and reformulate Mardin's framework over time (Heper & Sayarı, 2013; Keyman & Gümüşçü, 2014; Bakiner, 2018) emphasize the place of political ideologies and identities in Turkish politics. In addition to that, consequences of the role of military regimes starting with the military intervention in 1960 added different dimensions to the cleavage structures of the society of Turkey. Since the ideological political movements gained momentum in the 1960s and varied in 1970 in parallel to the international political climate, Keyman (2010) adds the pillar of "left-right cleavage" to the Mardin's political cleavage framework. Therefore, experiencing a bifurcated modernization, which includes changing internal and external dynamics that challenge the strong state tradition as Kasaba (2005) argues; makes Turkey a noteworthy case in terms of investigation of ideological politics and identity questions.

The meanings attributed to each of the consecutive decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in Turkey in the literature of political science are quite different. Landau (2016) portrays 1960 as the period when social and political mobilization revived in Turkey and for the first time, ideological politics left its mark on the public sphere by being radicalized. Gunter (1989) and Sayarı (2010) define the 1970s as a period of political chaos to the extent that this mobilization revived in the 1960s turned into a conflict with polarization. On the other hand, suppression and extinguishment of these movements by the military junta describe the 1980s (Akkaya, 2013). The most important common point of these three decades in the discussion of Turkish politics and political-social movements in contemporary

history was that each of the following decades had begun with the military coups of 27 May 1960, 12 March 1971, and 12 September 1980 respectively. Taking the impact on contemporary Turkish politics into consideration, the period of 1960 to 1980 provides a substantial ground for the studies in both political science and history.

The Kurdish question, which is one of the first examples that come to mind in terms of identity politics in Turkey and the Middle East, is among the topics that contemporary social sciences focus on. The Kurdish question has been discussed profoundly in the political realm of Turkey since the late 1980s. However, the beginning of the discussions about the history of the Kurdish question goes back to the Ottoman period. Moreover, voicing the agenda about the Kurdish issue corresponds to the 1960s and the formation of organizations that set a separate agenda for the Kurdish issue to the 1970s. In the period between 1960 and 1980, when political mobility based on ideological politics was intensely experienced, Kurdish identity was generally associated with leftist politics. After all, this relationship was ruptured by the proliferation of the organizations based on Kurdish identity in the factionalization environment of the 1970s (Gunes, 2009). Several scholars studied the disintegration of Kurdish identity from ideological politics by focusing mostly on state-building, nation-building, and multiculturalism. Although these studies have undeniable contributions, the limited number of studies on the approach of left-wing politics in Turkey to identity politics is outstanding. In the light of the picture drawn above, I attempt to answer the following research question in this thesis: “How was the Kurdish question discussed among the 1970s Turkish Left?” I seek to answer this question by using textual analysis of three periodicals,

which represents the different factions of the Turkish left, namely *İlke*, *Ürün*, and *Yürüyüş*.

1.1. The Left and the Question of Identity

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are the founders of classical Marxist thought. While Marx and Engels strongly opposed the right of minority groups, whom they described as peoples without history, to establish an independent state, they also did not favor the creation of state structures where they could protect their cultural identities; but it should be noted that neither Marx nor Engels presented these ideas from a racist point of view. The primary concern of these two is how ethnicity issues and national movements can serve the purpose of the great world revolution to come. Otherwise, it is not expected that Marx and Engels, who think that the concept of nation is a fictional phenomenon, a form of false consciousness, to approach certain nations and groups of people with racial prejudice (Petrus, 1971).

After the two founders of Marxism, the first names to be mentioned in their attitudes towards the national question are Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, the leaders of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and Mao Zedong, the leader of the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Unlike Marx and Engels, these names were not only known for their socialist theorist aspects, but also for being the founders and administrators of the first and largest socialist states in the world. For this reason, their perspectives and attitudes towards the subject will reveal the new parameters of mainstream socialism in this period. However, the fact that Lenin, Stalin, and Mao held the state apparatus that would enable them to put their ideas into practice brings with it the necessity of evaluating their theories about national movements and

minority identities together with their practical actions. Lenin and Stalin were more interested in the national question than Marx and Engels and devoted a significant part of their work to these issues. The main reason for this situation is the cyclical changes in the international system. In this period, capitalism has reached the stage of imperialism and international exploitation, that is, the ongoing transfer of resources from the periphery to the metropolis, has become the most important feeder of the capitalist order. Therefore, Lenin and Stalin understood the importance of national movements to end the capitalist order and spread the wave of revolution all over the world, and even therefore, they included the right of self-determination in their programs related to national movements (Kakışım, 2016).

In summary, it can be said that the policies of Lenin and Stalin regarding cultural identity issues were shaped mainly based on the concern of gaining or maintaining their power. When the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, they realized that they could no longer turn a blind eye to the demands of minority cultures, and they sought to make new arrangements for the language rights and national autonomy demands of minorities in the satellite states in Eastern Europe. They also supported nationalist movements in non-communist countries, Western countries, and Western-allied countries in the Third World in the hope of destabilizing these countries. However, these strategic moves regarding cultural identities were carried out without a theoretical framework emphasizing the importance of cultural identity, and no value was attached to belonging to a national minority other than its strategic role in the general struggle for socialism. There has been little discussion of which human needs are met and which are hindered by maintaining or losing cultural belonging. For Lenin, the phenomenon called national identity is a blank page that can only be filled with communist content, which Stalin later summarized as

“national in form, socialist in content”. Ultimately, however, these attempts failed both to advance socialism and to respect minority cultures (Kymlicka, 1995).

Mao would adopt the tactical use of the principle of self-determination on the way to the Chinese Revolution. The Chinese revolutionaries led by Mao had the notion that since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, the proletariat should dominate larger units of government, and therefore oppose separatist movements. However, to gain the support of different ethnic groups in China in their struggle, the revolutionaries included a principle of self-determination, including the right to secession for minorities, in their program. However, upon victory in the struggle, these promises will be shelved. After 1949, the regional autonomy envisaged by Stalin was defined as the only possible way for minority peoples to get rid of feudalism and come together for common revolutionary goals (Pye, 1975). In this framework, absolute opposition to separatist ideas will be adopted. In this sense, the approach of the People's Republic of China to the issue of national movements and cultural identities has not developed fundamentally different from the traditional socialist perspective on this issue. But it would probably not be wrong to say that China followed a more repressive and assimilationist policy in action than the Soviet Union (Brown, 1997, p. 12).

The minority policy followed by communist leader Ho Chi Minh and his team in Vietnam, one of the symbol countries of traditional socialism, also gives an idea in terms of the real attitudes of the socialist administrations towards the right of self-determination and other related concepts. The fact that the Vietnamese revolutionary movement started and continued in a colonial country, unlike the Soviet and Chinese examples, and touched on ethnic issues by taking this reality into account, makes this experience even more interesting. In short, the minority policy of

the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP), which has been subject to striking deviations and turns throughout its history, was quite tolerant in critical moments of the revolutionary movement and took its hardest form when the communists gained full power. Thus, Vietnamese experience presents another example of the use of the ethnicity problem within the framework of real-political concerns (Connor, 1984, pp. 101, 102).

Another and most distinctive one compared to the contemporaries is Austro-Marxism. This name is given to a Marxist school of thought that flourished in Vienna from the end of the 19th century to 1934, particularly in the prelude to World War I, and whose most famous members were Max Adler, Otto Bauer, Rudolf Hilferding, and Karl Renner. According to Bottomore and Goode (1984), one of the main factors that had a profound impact on this school was the need to come to terms with specific social problems in the multinational Habsburg Empire. Classical Marxist theorists and ideologists have criticized Austro-Marxists, who see the national question as a class struggle.

Another and the last example to focus on is Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia, which was one of the states formed after the First World War, has always been very complex in terms of ethnicity and religion, with its structure that includes South Slavic peoples such as Serbs, Montenegrins, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, and Macedonians, and non-Slavic national groups such as Albanians, Hungarians, and Turks. The approach to the problem of ethnic identity and the principle of self-determination in Yugoslavia did not develop separately from the examples of the Soviet, Chinese, and Vietnamese, and continued in a common line with them, except for certain nuances arising from the different conditions of the countries (Connor, 1984). In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that the nation and minority policy

of Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, in general, is based on the establishment of large state units and the warding off national demands of minority groups as much as possible with various maneuvers, although they may differ from time to time due to real political concerns.

To analyze the perspective of socialism on ethnic movements and minority cultural identities in its classical period, it is not enough to focus on the ideas of the leading ideologists and successful revolutionaries of Marxism. A more accurate understanding of the issue can only be possible by examining the approaches of independent Marxist intellectuals to the issue. In particular, the ideas of major Marxist writers who worked in different periods of the 20th century, the period when the struggle for socialism was most intense, should be carefully studied. At this point, the first name to be mentioned is Rosa Luxemburg, a post-Marxist, one of the leading and most influential intellectuals of Marxism, a thinker who was very interested in the national question. Luxemburg's analyzes of national identities are very similar to the approaches of Marx and Engels on this issue, since Luxemburg exactly shares the preferences of Marx and Engels, especially for large national units. Luxemburg's solution to the national question is simple; Small national groups must come together with the proletariat of the great nations in the struggle for revolution since in the socialist regimes that will be established with the end of capitalism, every national group will already have real freedom. That is until the socialist revolution is achieved, the correct course of action for the small nationalities is to align with the big nations (Luxemburg, 1976).

The national struggle was essentially a class struggle and belonged only to the bourgeoisie and the rise of capitalism. Since this period was over, national movements were also outdated, after which it was very difficult to establish new

nation-states. Moreover, in this new era, national movements were now openly reactionary. It was therefore wrong for the workers to support national movements that had lost their progressive character and were unlikely to succeed anyway. In this context, Rosa Luxemburg also denied the right to national self-determination and firmly opposed the adoption of this principle.

The New Left is one of the most significant leftist schools of thought in the post-World War II period. The New Left had arisen as a broad variety of left-wing political activity formations and intellectual aggregation during the 1960s and 1970s. The movement's origins can be traced back to the 1968 mass protests in Western Europe, particularly in France and North America, in response to student protests against the Vietnam War. The New Left's objective aspired to go beyond what could be regarded as the working-class movement's agenda of traditional Marxism. As a result, the New Left's goal is primarily defined by civil and political rights, as well as racial, ethnic, and gender identity (Carmines & Layman, 1997). In terms of the New Left's ideological positioning, there are two competing arguments in the literature. The first argument claims that the New Left emerged as a reaction against the classical Marxist ideological stance, which defines its program through economically determined social classes (Kaufman, 2016). The other set of arguments contends that the New Left still promotes the same program as classical Marxism by presenting itself as a continuation or renewal of the classical Marxist movement's intended outcomes (Farred, 2000).

As Stuart Hall (2010) argues, the New Left ideas first arose in Europe in response to the moral denunciation of Soviet communism following Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956 that indicated the amount of political oppression during Joseph Stalin's tenure, as well as the invasion of the Suez Canal by British and

French forces. Groups in France and the United Kingdom saw the New Left as a pursuit of a socialist third way that differed from both orthodox Marxism's program and the mainstream interpretation of social democracy. Some of the arguments for the revival of detached communists and young radicals who shaped the portrait of the New Left may be considered opposition to the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as opposition to global polarization. Likewise, especially after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the Third World's anti-colonial movement became more visible and integrated with the goals of left-wing politics around the world.

The intellectual and philosophical motivations underlying the New Left's objectives were so diverse that the New Left movement began as an activist initiative in many countries, and in others, the most prominent concern of the growing movement was the construction of theoretical patterns. For example, an open letter issued by sociologist Charles Wright Mills in 1960 brought the phrase New Left to the intellectual sphere and the arena of political engagement in the United States. Mills advocated a new leftist ideology in the letter, titled Letter to the New Left, that aspires to go beyond the focus of the conventional Marxist movement, which is defined by the class struggle. Furthermore, according to the letter, a shift away from the "Old Left" would allow for the rebirth of a new type of resistance mechanism in an international setting defined by a transfer in revolutionary power from the proletariat to intellectuals (Mills, 1960). The extent of the theoretical aspirations behind the New Left ideals includes Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism; forms of neo-Marxism; Marxist structuralism that consists of the ideas of Louis Althusser, Mao Zedong, and Leo Trotsky; and Frantz Fanon's third worldism, which is a specific form of socialism that purports to liberate developing countries.

Additionally, the New Left intellectuals have significantly contributed to the analysis of communication and culture. Cultural theorists Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams consider culture and media not just as a mirror in the living sphere that reflects social, political, and economic dynamics; but also as an essential actor that determines the acts that occur within those processes. The contribution and attributes of the New Left can be appreciated through periodicals and academically published journals like *The Reasoner*, *Universities and Left Review*, and *New Left Review*.

Although the handling of the Kurdish question as an identity politics issue is identified with the post-1990 period, the history of the Kurdish question goes back to the Ottoman period, as will be explained in the next chapter. In addition, studies on the historical relationship of Kurdish identity with movements based on political ideologies have made significant contributions to the literature of political science and history. Within the context of the development of left-wing politics in Turkey during the 1960s, the Kurdish question has become visible in the agenda of the left. The following two developments made the Kurdish question one of the prominent topics of the 1960s Turkish left due to the previous research (Bozarslan, 2003; Bruinessen, 2011; Gunes, 2013; Romano, 2006). The first one is the adoption of Marxist agenda that provides the ground for the realization of economic underdevelopment of mostly Kurdish-populated regions in Turkey. The second one is the existence of Kurdish political figures who took part in the foundation of the left organizations and the introduction of the left-wing agenda, especially in the Kurdish-populated regions. Hence, the main concentration of Kurds in the political sphere was left-wing politics until 1974.

Many scholars from different fields of social sciences have studied identity politics creating separate agendas with globalization, which characterizes the period

from the last years of the Cold War to the present. While an important part of these studies focuses on the radicalization of identities that are suppressed due to the policies followed in the formation of the nation-states (Kramer, 2001; Yeğen, 2007; Kirişçi, 2008), another important part focuses on the theories of multiculturalism and discusses the concept of identity gaining dimensions beyond the framework of the nation-state in the globalization process (Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2001; Benhabib, 2004). The existent studies have developed important perspectives to make sense of today's political picture, where the effectiveness of identity politics on the political scene has increased. However, the possible relationship between the forms of discussion of identity and the organization of separate agendas by identity politics has been a dimension that has not been sufficiently addressed in the literature. This thesis aims to contribute to the literature by examining the correlation between the identity debates of different factions of the left and the organization of identity politics around a separate agenda through the case of Turkey.

1.2. Methodological Framework

The research question of the thesis aims to contribute to the knowledge by having a closer gaze and developing a deeper insight on the rupture of identity politics from ideological politics (Hancké, 2009; Lange, 2012). For this purpose, I conducted a qualitative single-case study based on the thematic analysis of the textual material (Gerring, 2007; Kuckartz, 2014). As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, both the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary branches of the pro-Soviet left in Turkey defined the Kurdish question in the 1960s. Pro-Soviet factions in the Turkish left had a considerable legacy from the 1960s on the

discussion of the Kurdish question. When it comes to the 1970s, in which the factionalization among the left-wing and the political organizations based on the Kurdish identity proliferated, the pro-Soviet organizations engaged in the debates with the Kurdish identity-based organizations regarding the problematization of the Kurdish question and the suggested action plans. Therefore, I selected the pro-Soviet left in 1970s Turkey as the case for the research.

The debates in question between the left and the identity-based organizations were carried out through the periodicals based on the role of the publications as both a political actor and a medium at that time. In the 1970s, different groups of people came together and published several written materials to spread their ideas as has been done by political circles for centuries. What is distinctive in the 1970s left publications is the transformative role of the publications, which means that the different publications turned into different political organizations. Thus, the themes and tones of the periodicals identified the characteristics and the agenda of the formed political organizations. As a result, I decided to generate data from the existing primary sources (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012). To answer the research question, I used a purposive non-random sampling with a detective method from the population of pro-Soviet factions' publications. I chose three different periodicals which had been published after 1974 and had continued to be published until 1980, namely *İlke*, *Ürün*, and *Yürüyüş*. The first established legal party after the 1971 Memorandum, The Socialist Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi, TSİP), was founded around the *İlke*. Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), which has been one of the oldest left organizations in Turkey, re-organized in the 1970s around the *Ürün* periodical. The Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), which has been a prominent political actor of the 1960s in terms of both the salience of the

socialist left in the parliament and the acceptance of the Kurdish question, was re-established after 1974 around *Yürüyüş*. Although these three periodicals were the followers of the Soviet path, they adopted differentiated agendas in the Turkish context. Regarding the research question and the objective of the research, this thesis follows an inductive logic, which means I would propose a hypothesis based on the findings from the generated qualitative data (Hancké, 2009).

İlke as a monthly periodical that included argumentative articles, reviews, and documents, started to be published in January 1974 and continued its publishing activity until May 1980 with the edition of 77 issues. İlke explained its principles of publishing in the 13th issue as following:

“When it started publishing in January 1975, İlke, which was convenient to the arena of the fight for democracy of the time, was the periodical of the democratic front. İlke had the characteristics of being the first socialist periodical after March 12; but at the same time, it has remained open to the larger public, patriots, and progressivists under the conditions of standing on the course of the principles of socialism and contributing to the fight for democracy (İlke, January 1975, p. 51)”.

Along with the line of İlke, a party that was a candidate to develop the legacy of the 1960s’ TİP was the Socialist Workers Party of Turkey (TSİP), founded on June 23, 1974, by a former TİP member Ahmet Kaçmaz. Workers, scholars in the field of technology, and labor union officials made up the majority of the party’s founding members. The party program of TSİP, as an agenda of a socialist party, declared the necessity of the nationalization of foreign-owned property; including banks, industrial and agricultural firms, and mines; as well as the establishment of a state-controlled foreign trade monopoly. In that regard, the party also demanded Turkey’s withdrawal from NATO and severance of ties with the European Economic Community (Lipovsky, 1991).

TSİP aroused interest since it was the first socialist party to be established after the exit from the 12 March Regime and with its call for unity-roof. While the followers of Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, who initially complained about the disintegration of the socialists, had a certain weight in the party; however, especially under the pressure of the increasing appeal of the TKP, the TSİP administration moved away from the Kıvılcımlı line, and Kıvılcımlı's followers then turned away from TSİP. In the rush of organization and disintegration in the second half of the 1970s, the promise of a pluralistic framework was already invalidated. While preserving its existence, TSİP functioned as a transition to the 1970s' TİP and TKP, under the definition of “transition party” by some of its members (Bora, 2016, p. 623).

Ürün Sosyalist Dergi published 55 issues between July 1974 and January 1979. The owner of the periodical was Ural Ateşer, and the editors in chief were Nuri Samyeli (issues 1-6), Selçuk Uzun (issues 7-39), and Ahmet Taştan (issues 40-55) respectively. Ürün presented its principles of releasing in the first issue as following lines:

“Ürün has not been released with big claims. Our aim is limited to the tasks that working-class science assigns to mass media within the working-class movement. This issue is gaining more and more importance, especially in our country, in the struggle of the working class in our country. Ürün will scrupulously avoid ‘discussing the strategy of the working-class movement, its independent problems, in the mass media and with the broadest masses’ that was seen as a major mistake in the struggle of the working class by Ürün. ... Ürün will take its place in the democratic struggle against fascism, which has been applied in various forms for fifty years, against all working masses, especially the working class in Turkey” (Ürün, July 1974, p. 3).

Ürün was closed in January 1979 by the decision of the Istanbul Martial Law Command. After it was closed, it continued its publications irregularly under the signature of Önder Sağlam. In addition, various brochures and booklets were published by the periodical as Ürün Publications, and the TKP Program, which was

published in 1978, became the subject of a lawsuit. This case, in which the Editor-in-Chief Ahmet Taştan is the accused, together with the publications of the periodical that constantly violated the ban on the TKP, constituted an important dimension for the legalization of TKP with the abolishment of the Articles 141 and 142 of Turkish Penal Code by Ecevit government.

Yürüyüş was a weekly periodical whose 274 issues were published by the TİP circle between 1975-1980. Nihat Sargın, who was the secretary general of the 1970s' TİP, was the owner of the periodical. In different periods, Taner Tuncel, Zeki Kılıç, Umur Coşkun, Metin Çulhaoğlu, Mehmet Aközer, Osman Sakalsız, Neşet Kocabıykoğlu, İlhan Nevşehirli served in the administration. Yürüyüş proposed its principles of publication in the first issue as below:

“As a socialist news and commentary periodical, Yürüyüş will announce and comment on economic, social, and political events in the world and in our country from the point of view of the working class. Yürüyüş will try to show that these events are not independent and abstract from each other, as the means of mass communication held by the bourgeoisie would like us to believe, but that in reality, they are all interconnected, orderly, developing and changing wholes” (Yürüyüş, April 1975, p. 2)

To deal with the textual analysis of the historical-archival data, I adopted a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a method for studying qualitative data that comprises examining a data set for repeating patterns, understanding them, and reporting them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is a way for describing data, but it also involves interpretation in the selection of codes and the creation of themes. While some scholars have described the thematic analysis as belonging to ethnography (Aronson, 1995) or as being particularly suited to phenomenology (Joffe, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that it can stand alone as an analytic method and can serve as a foundation for other qualitative research methods. Braun and Clarke

(2006) refer to thematic analysis as an approach rather than a more rigidly established methodology because of its flexibility. Before moving into the particular processes of thematic analysis that is adopted in this thesis, it is essential to understand what the term “theme” signifies in this method of analysis. A theme is a “patterned response or meaning” generated from the data that informs the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). In contrast to a category, which describes and organizes the ‘manifest content’ of a data collection, a theme is a more abstract entity that requires a greater degree of data interpretation and integration (Nowell et al., 2017).

Several researchers have written guides and descriptions of how to conduct various types of thematic analysis (Aronson, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Joffe, 2012). I adopted the approach provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) in this thesis because it has become the most generally used way of thematic analysis in the qualitative literature (Clarke & Braun, 2017). It is also worth noting that Clarke and Braun’s thematic analysis is intended to be a recursive, not a linear, process, with successive steps prompting the researcher to circle back to prior steps in light of fresh data or newly emerging themes. I analyzed the periodicals by following the six steps of thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke.

In the initial phase in the thematic analysis process, I tried to familiarize myself with the complete data collection, which requires regular and active reading (Braun & Clarke, 2006); so, I read all issues of three periodicals between 1974 and 1980. I observed that the periodicals consist of different sections that could be defined as theoretical discussions, opinion pieces, global and domestic news, book reviews, and short biographies. Regarding the research question, I decided to focus on the theoretical discussions and the opinion pieces sections in the periodicals.

Here, I started to read the selected sections by asking the following questions after completing the first step's familiarization work:

1. Was the Kurdish question historically problematized in the selected sections of the periodicals, if yes, how?
2. How was the Kurdish question defined in the 1970s in the selected sections?
3. What was offered as a resolution for the Kurdish question in the selected sections?

The notes on the answers to the questions above are the start of the coding process in the second step. This stage of the analysis generates codes rather than themes. According to the definition of Boyatzis (1998, p. 63), a code is “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon”. A code should be well-defined and demarcated so that it does not overlap with other codes and fits logically into a wider coding framework that leads the coding process by outlining and specifying the codes to be applied. At that point, I formed three codes from the investigated section in the periodicals: the identity, the problematization, and the resolution. In order to form the code of “identity”, I searched for the following words and group of words which connote the Kurdish identity in the texts manually: *Kürt/Kürtler* (Kurd/Kurds), *Türkiye'nin Doğusunda ve/veya Güneydoğusunda yaşayan halk* (the people who live in Eastern and/or Southeastern Turkey), *Doğulu/Doğulular* (Easterner/Easterners). The following word groups served to the coding of “problematization” which connotes the approaches to the recognition of the Kurdish question in the selected sections: *Kürt sorunu* (Kurdish question), *Doğu sorunu* (Eastern question). For the formation of the code of “resolution”, the following concepts, which were discussed in the left literature and the different factions of the left in the world that implied the

identity, question in the 1970s: *ulusların kendi kaderini tayin hakkı* (right to national self-determination), *ulusal kurtuluş mücadeleleri* (national liberation movements). Additionally, the word *devrim* (the revolution) is another word, which I searched in the chosen texts to form the “resolution” code.

The third step entails the investigation of the coded and compiled data extracts for potential themes of particular importance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The procedure of establishing the themes is essentially an active and interpretive one. The researchers develop themes by analyzing, combining, and comparing how codes relate to each other (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The adopted inductive logic in this research, the themes were established directly from coded data, resulting in the themes that are closely related with the original data and representative of the full dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moving to the fourth step, which exemplifies the recursive nature of the entire thematic analysis, I reinvestigate the correlation of the codes that I formed before and I search for the commonalities in the periodicals’ approaches regarding the codes. Braun & Clarke, 2006 argue, re-reading and reworking codes help to improve the analytic approach, which is one of the objectives of this thesis.

Taking the research question of the thesis and the initial coding process into consideration, I observed some commonalities and patterns in the selected texts of three periodicals. These commonalities manifest themselves with the time-connoted expressions, emphasis on the economic backwardness of the Kurdish-populated regions, the use of the variations of the word “oppression”, engaging with the Leninist concept of self-determination and critical approach in the texts that were engaged the debates with the Kurdish identity-based organization’s publications. In

the light of the reinvestigation of the codes that I formed in the second stage, I established five themes as follows:

1. Historicization of the Kurdish Question
2. Economic Aspect of the Kurdish Question
3. Political, Social and Cultural Oppression on the Kurdish Identity
4. Kurdish Question as a National Question
5. Criticism of the Identity-based Politics

After naming the themes in the previous stage, I briefly defined the themes in the fifth step. I built the descriptive framework of the themes concerning the political and social contexts of the 1970s, which reveal the stories of designation of the specific wordings in the texts. Having a perspective that evaluates the Kurdish question from the Early Republic to the analyzed period expresses the first theme. Looking at the question from the perspective of class-based economic analysis defines the second theme in the periodicals that are analyzed as representatives of the classical Marxist understanding, which includes economic analysis at its core. The third theme is the analysis of the oppression mechanisms that the Kurdish people face historically, with a dimension beyond class differences. The fourth theme includes the views on the national question since the discussions on the Kurdish question within the left in the 1970s often revolved around the national question. The fifth and final theme is the critical attitude of the periodicals to the “colonial thesis”, which claims that the source of the political, economic, social, cultural oppression faced by the Kurds is national identity differences while understanding the Kurdish question by the organizations prioritizing Kurdish identity in the 1970s.

In the sixth and final step of the research, I concluded the design of this research with the findings. I developed an interpretive approach in the analysis stage by considering the importance of the themes regarding the research question, the interaction of a theme with the other themes, and the way of handling each theme in each periodical. The analysis would describe the data and provide insight into how the adopted methodology and the interpretation of the dataset prepared a fulfilling way for addressing the research question, using both narrative descriptions and representative data extracts from the textual material, as Kiger and Varpio (2020) propose. In the third chapter, I will present the analysis of the selected periodicals' engagement with the generated themes.

In this introductory chapter, I aimed to present the review of the related literature on the approaches of different left theories to the question of identity, as well as the theoretical framework concerning the approaches in the literature on the emergence of identity politics with a separate agenda. I also purported to illustrate the research design and the methodological framework of the thesis. Chapter II involves the historical development of leftist politics and the Kurdish question in Turkey. The context of the left politics and identity politics in Turkey regarding the period examined in the thesis will be proposed in the second chapter as well. Chapter III provides the thematic analysis of the texts from the primary sources regarding the discussions on the Kurdish question among the 1970s left. In the last place, Chapter IV will give the concluding remarks of the thesis and the suggestions for further research concerning the question of identity.

CHAPTER II: IDEOLOGICAL POLITICS AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN TURKEY

The roots of left-wing politics and the introduction of the word of socialism in Turkey go back to the late 19th century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, socialist ideas and practices were imported from the West into the Ottoman Empire. The idea of the establishment of a left-wing movement in the Ottoman Empire was acknowledged by the impact of Ottoman intellectuals, who had communication with the non-Muslim population in the Empire, and the Western intellectuals. Then the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 affected the growth of the socialist course of thought and the practice. Furthermore, minority groups, such as the remaining Jews, Bulgarians, and Greeks in the empire, were particularly drawn to the early small-scale left-wing endeavor (Harris, 1980).

2.1. Late Ottoman Period and the Early Republican Era

The labor movement in Ottoman Empire was initiated on an inconvenient basis, because the number of workers was few and those workers had not gained the class-consciousness yet, meaning that the working class of the Ottoman Empire was divided by nationalist desires (Yalimov, 2010). The very first unions, associations, and other organizations were established on the ethnic or religious bases. Although some of the ethnically and religiously heterogeneous unions and socialist organizations were found in time, those unions and organizations mostly remained local due to the different levels of industrialization within the empire and geographical restrictions (Yalimov, 2010).

During this period, nationalist feelings and opinions were very common. In such an environment, nationalism and chauvinism took root and started to spread among the workers. This spread prevented workers from adopting the principles of internationalism and establishing solidarity among themselves (Tunçay, 2009, pp. 376-380). As a result, a tendency for rapprochement has emerged among the workers of individual national minorities.

The developments in the late Ottoman period; such as the 1908 Revolution and Young Turks Era, the rise of nationalism around the world, dissolution of the Ottoman Empire right after the First World War, paved the way for the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in the light of Kemalist principles, which could be defined by the values and concepts such as civilization, enlightenment, secularization, and development in terms of moving away from the legacy of Ottoman Empire adaptation of Western values, ideas, and concepts. Those adaptations of Western values, ideas, and concepts for the sake of modernization and progress also paved the way for the adaptation of Marxist thought in the West. Hence, it has been proposed that the intellectual history of left-wing politics in Republican Turkey has been

affected by Marxist thought and practices (Karpas, 1966). The first significant attempt for the development of left-wing politics in the late Ottoman period could be considered as the formation of the Ottoman Socialist Party (Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası, OSF) in 1910. The other important development through the process of formation of left-wing politics could be the formation of the Socialist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist Fırkası, TSF) in 1919 just before the foundation of the Turkish Republic. By the end of the First World War, the Turkish left had branched into three other than OSF and TSF according to Durgun (2015, p. 14):

“Among these were the Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party (TWSP), which was established with the efforts of the Turkish intellectuals educated in Germany and Turkish workers working in Germany, and was led by Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Değmer; the Communist Party of Turkey (CPT), the foundations of which were laid down among the Turkish captives in Russia and which was founded by Mustafa Suphi; and the Anatolia-based Turkish Communist Party”.

With the official dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the leading Allied power British Empire enforced a disposition on the Ottoman Empire's territory that seized power a considerable amount of Ottoman territory, firmly limited national sovereignty and maintained the capitulation regime of the pre-First World War. This period witnessed the onset and rise of a resistance movement in Anatolia, which the newly-established Bolshevik state shared its immense support since both the resistance movement in Anatolia and the Bolshevik state were intimidated by Western imperial powers. The joint struggle they conducted against the imperialist Western powers has been a development that brought the Soviets and the Ankara Government closer to each other intellectually and politically (Nadi, 1955, p. 11).

The TKP, which was one of the oldest political parties in Turkey and among the oldest communist parties in the Middle East, was established with the congress held in Baku on September 10, 1920, by Mustafa Suphi (Gökay, 2019). Mustafa Suphi and his friends first contacted Mustafa Kemal to support the Turkish War of Independence in Anatolia. They set out to come to Ankara upon the invitation of Mustafa Kemal. A group of armed units of the TKP formed in Azerbaijan was also sent to support the War of Independence. In his letter to Mustafa Suphi, Mustafa Kemal wrote that he would welcome the communists' participation in the liberation war. Indeed, when they entered Kars with the Soviet representative, they were greeted with a ceremony (Tunçay, 2009, pp. 231-233). However, protests took place when TKP members went to Erzurum, Kars, and Trabzon and ended up with the murder of Mustafa Suphi and fourteen TKP members (Gökay, 1993). After the murder, the TKP cadres in Turkey did not take a direct stance against Kemalism; but they kept their distance. This murder also marked the beginning of the TKP's illegal struggle against political power. On September 12, 1922, the Ankara Government closed the TKP and banned the party in 1925 (Harris, 1967, p. 4). After this first attempt to organize during the War of Independence, every effort was immediately neutralized under the prohibitions of the republic's single-party government, police prosecution, and arrests, and the party was confined to a narrow circle of intellectuals. Former TKP executives, such as Doctor Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, Reşat Fuat Baraner, and Mihri Belli, who remained in the country, broke off their ties with the Foreign Office and went their separate ways (Harris, 1967, p. 10).

2.2. The Post-Second World War Period

The political and social advancements in the post–Second World War period directly affected the developments in left-wing politics. When the world was divided into two blocks in the post-Second World War era, the political agenda was determined by the ideological confrontation of liberalism and communism. Therefore, studying the snapshot of the political environment of the post-Second World War world is not detachable from the differentiated forms of the Marxist ideology and the political activism, which is based on ideological confrontation.

Turkey’s political picture in the post-Second World War period is also located in this snapshot. The new decade began with the military overthrow on May 27, 1960, and the consequent constitution, which was drafted by the Constitution Committee that is consisted of legal experts, academicians, politicians, and intellectuals, and entered into force after the referendum in 1961. The political environment of the 1960 coup and the 1961 Constitution provided the opportunity to reveal society’s demand for rights and freedom. Thus, the increase in political mobility began, in which almost every social segment, especially the working class and youth, took action for their demands on an unprecedented scale, and started to organize as differentiated political associations, unions, and cooperatives. (Ersan, 2014). Başkaya (2008) underlines that beyond the official Turkey of the military and conservative politicians, there was another Turkey formed as fragmented and radical. Even if Kemalism continued to constitute the only legal doctrine of the country, there were other rival ideologies and other social projects. These years would highlight a radical right and left, an Islamist movement, and a new Kurdish opposition (Akın, 2008, p. 86). This process lasted until the military coup of September 12, 1980

In this setting of the 1960s turned out three noteworthy political developments, meant to build up the socialist demands. The first one was Doğan

Avciođlu's Yön-Devrim Movement (Direction-Revolution), a standout amongst the most compelling developments between 1961 and 1971. The others were the National Democratic Revolution (MDD, Milli Demokratik Devrim), a gathering of the "eski tüfekler" (Belge, 2008, p. 20) and the Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP), working legitimately in the framework. In addition to that, the accelerating extra-parliamentary organizations and expanding youth movement were other influential pillars of the 1960s. The referenced developments were the central developments of the Turkish left, which affected the consequent advancements in the Turkish left.

A group of leftist Turkish academics launched Yön (Direction), which was a social and political daily periodical, in December 1961 and a well-known economist and journalist Dođan Avciođlu served as its chief editor. Academics, journalists, artists, government workers, professors, and doctors established a coalition of intellectuals to rally around the paper. Despite the diversity of intellectual and political viewpoints represented by this group, all of its members agreed on one thing: Turkey's social and economic backwardness could not be remedied by following the capitalist road. Yön's founders believed that only socialism could find the resolution to the country's issues. The Yön declaration was stuck to the following three principles (Lipovsky, 1992, pp. 85-121):

1. Rapid economic development could only be achieved through social justice;
2. Private enterprise could not assure rapid progress in the national economy by the voracious nature of private sector development and its eagerness for maximized profits;
3. The detrimental consequences of the foreign capital's power are due to Turkey's dependence on the West.

Those gathered around this periodical and its counterparts like *Devrim*, *Turkish Left*, and *Social Justice* mainly brought a left interpretation of Kemalism to the political scene; so, it could be argued that they had had a closer stance to the National Democratic Revolution (Milli Demokratik Devrim, MDD) movement. The main issue that this view focused on was the analysis of Turkey's backwardness. In this analysis, a major role was accorded to imperialism. The main reason for Turkey's backwardness was the exploitation of Turkey by the imperialist countries through its collaborators inside the country, and a political regime that would continue this exploitation was always kept strong. Therefore, the real war had to be waged against imperialism and its collaborators and agents in the country. After the closure of the magazine in 1968, the media circle of Yön was divided into two and some of them joined TİP, while others were organized around the newspaper Devrim, which they started to publish. (Aydın & Taşkın, 2016).

Independent of the TKP legacy, the socialist movement was reborn in the first half of the 1960s with the Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP). For the first time, socialists became a dynamic, influential, mass force in social and political life. Undoubtedly, in the background of this was the upheaval caused by the extraordinary development of In terms of the Turkish Penal Code, some particular articles outlawed the establishment of a communist party; the 1961 Constitution had paved the way for the establishment of a socialist party. Consequently, fifteen trade union leaders in Turkey came together to form a socialist party in 1961, namely the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) by drifting away from the main trade union federation, Türk-İş. At first hand, TİP attempted to follow ouvrierist ideology which could be defined as the glorification of physical labor; but then, it had been realized that this ideological stance did not get significant attention and support;

consequently, Mehmet Ali Aybar had been invited to be the chairman of the party for the expansion of party's agenda. Mehmet Ali Aybar was an acknowledged law professor who had been outraged in an early "witch-hunt" (Samim, 1981). After Aybar's nomination to the party chair, TİP had an influential role for the Turkish left by drawing a significant framework. Together with Mehmet Ali Aybar, the party gained socialist content with a new program and statute and became a center of attraction for socialist intellectuals of different views.

In the 1965 general elections, TİP received 276 thousand votes; with the contribution of the electoral system, 15 deputies entered the Parliament. This rate of votes and parliamentary success was not repeated in the 35-40-year period of the socialist movement extending to the 2000s. The widespread and crowded left organizations of the 1970s in no way could reach the voting rate of TİP in the 1965 elections¹. TİP's success was not just electoral success. Every segment that organized for their demands and tried to struggle contacted TİP or TİP contacted them. In addition, until 1969 the TİP was one of the important organizational centers where socialists met. (Landau, 2016). The fate of TİP changed with the dissensus within the party, the university occupations of the youth in 1968-69, whose actions turned into street clashes with the police, and the emergence of right-wing commandos. The party failed to establish a relationship with the youth radicalization of the action, in ongoing discussions; it became inoperable as a result of the factionalism within the party and the rupture of socialist groups (Ersan, 2014).

¹ According to the national remainder system introduced with the Law No. 656 of 14 July 1965, the proportional representation of the votes received by the parties in the provinces was ensured with the D'Hondt system, and it became possible for the parties to be represented in the parliament in proportion to the general votes they received throughout the country. Therefore, after the 1965 election, many political parties had the opportunity to be represented in the parliament. In this way, for the first time in Turkey's history, a socialist party, TİP, brought 15 deputies to the parliament. TİP was not able to catch this opportunity again in the following elections, and no other socialist party was able to enter the Parliament after that (Ayдын & Taşkın, 2016).

Since 1964, revolutionary and socialist organizations had started among the university youth. First, Idea Clubs (Fikir Kulüpleri) were established in various faculties. These clubs started to come to the fore as centers where left-leaning and revolutionary students came together, where ideological discussions were held and where academic and democratic demands were developed. On December 17, 1965, these groups, organized in various faculties, were united under the umbrella of the Federation of Ideas Clubs (Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu, FKF). TİP, which was effective in the management of FKF at the beginning, started to lose its effectiveness in the Federation towards 1969, and in the congress held at the beginning of 1969, TİP supporters were removed from the administration. The new administration was a team that embraced the militant struggle, focused on extra-parliamentary opposition, and believed in a leftist revolutionary perspective. This group advocated the MDD thesis, rather than a direct socialist revolution. After the congress held at the beginning of 1969, conflict began between the group led by Doğu Perinçek and the MDD group led by Mahir Çayan and Mihri Belli, and the congress was held again. In the congress held in October 1969, FKF changed its name to the Turkey Revolutionary Youth Federation (Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Dernekleri Federasyonu, TGDF). From that point on, the federation would be briefly referred to as Dev-Genç and would form one of the main veins of Turkey's revolutionary left. In a very short time, Dev-Genç had the opportunity to organize a wide range of youth in the big cities of Turkey, especially in Istanbul and Ankara, where universities are located. Although Dev-Genç is a mass youth organization, the armed groups that have carried out the revolutionary struggle since the late 1970s would later choose to organize within Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu (THKO) and Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi (THKP-C). The places where THKO and THKP, born out of Dev-

Genç, were most strongly organized were the Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences and Faculty of Law and Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara; and Istanbul University in Istanbul. Meanwhile, Deniz Gezmiş and his friends had founded the Revolutionary Student Union (Devrimci Öğrenci Birliği, DÖB) in Istanbul (Turan, 2019).

The Yön line also had an important weight in the youth movement. In the same period, *Türk Solu* and *Aydınlık* periodicals started their publication life and became the focus of political organization by gathering people close to the political ideas they represented. In this period, concepts and slogans such as “Second War of Independence” and “National Liberation”, which were circulated by magazines such as *Devrim*, *Türk Solu*, and *Aydınlık*, became the most important references of student youth. Maoist ideas, which gained popularity during the 1968 youth events that shook the Western world, came to the fore in Turkey as well, and therefore, those who defended the MDD thesis against the Socialist Revolution thesis found more supporters among the youth. This separation between the socialist revolution and National Democratic Revolution led to disintegration within TİP, which was the only legal socialist party of the period (Aydın & Taşkın, 2016).

2.3. The Origins of the Factionalization in the Turkish Left

The basis of the divisions in the socialist movement was laid after the 1965 elections, with the discussions about the nature and path of the revolution, the leadership of the working class, between the two formations on the left at that time, TİP (1961) and the magazine Yön. (Ersan, 2014).

The debate broke among the left after the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the most decisive debate in terms of its results and effects was within the TİP itself. Chairman Mehmet Ali Aybar made speeches in favor of the Dubcek regime, which the Soviet troops wanted to overthrow in Czechoslovakia, without consulting the party's authorized organs and without giving any information, using unique concepts such as "friendly socialism" and "libertarian socialism". These speeches were put on the agenda at the request of Behice Boran, Nihat Sargın, Minetullah Haydarođlu and Sadun Aren at the Central Executive Committee (Merkez Yürütme Kurulu, MYK) on the grounds that those speeches of Aybar "bound the party as well". This group wanted to decide that Aybar's speeches would not bind the party because he represented a "personal management tendency". However, Aybar and other members of the MYK strongly opposed this decision. In the Third Congress convened after this, Aybar and his friends achieved great success and purged Boran and his friends from the party administration, except Sadun Aren and Şaban Erik. However, the problem was not yet resolved. In the face of this result, nine parliamentarians from TİP called for an Extraordinary Congress. However, the winner of the extraordinary congress was still Aybar. On the other hand, 11 people from the opposition wing, including Sadun Aren, Behice Boran, Nihat Sargın, and Şaban Erik, managed to enter the General Board of Directors. When TİP's votes fell from 3% to 2.5% in the 1969 elections, Aybar was the target of great criticism. He was then forced to resign from the presidency.

After Aybar, Mehmet Ali Arslan and Şaban Erik became the presidents, respectively. In this way, TİP went to the IV. Major Congress. The congress, which was held between 29-31 October 1970, witnessed the initiative of the Emek periodical circle led by Behice Boran and Sadun Aren. Already before the congress,

there was a great divergence and 135 of the 341 delegates did not come to the party congress and participated in the “Revolutionary Convention” organized by the MDD members at that time. In the congress, where Kurdish delegates did not participate in the election, the Emek group made its weight felt and Behice Boran was elected as the chairperson and Şaban Erik and Sait Çiltaş as the general secretaries. Congress’s final declaration broke new ground by giving great weight to the Kurdish question. According to the final declaration that guides the party’s line (Emek, December 1970):

“Kurdish people live in Eastern Turkey;

Taking the Eastern Question as a simple regional development problem is an extension of the chauvinist-nationalist view and attitude of the ruling class power;

The party’s support of the Kurdish people’s struggle for constitutional citizenship is a normal and mandatory revolutionary duty;

Kurdish and Turkish socialists must work together in the party to unite the socialist revolutionary struggle into a single revolutionary wave;

The party looks at the Kurdish question in terms of the requirements of the socialist revolutionary struggle”.

Thus, both the Kurdish question was defined and it was shown that an open “socialist revolution together” struggle was preferred against the MDD thesis (Aydın & Taşkın, 2016, pp. 200-203).

On 11 June 1971, the Chief Public Prosecutor filed a closure case against TİP in the Constitutional Court due to the views on the “Kurdish question”. TİP was closed by the Court on 21 July 1971 on the grounds of “separatism”. Following the closure, on July 26, 1971, a lawsuit was filed against Chairman Behice Boran and some TİP executives at the Ankara No. 3 Martial Law Court because they had

“turned the party into a secret communist party”. Party leaders such as Behice Boran and Şaban Erik, Sait Çiltaş, Sadun Aren, Turgut Kazan, Oral Çalışlar, Hüseyin Ergün and Kemal Burkay were convicted. Boran was sentenced to 15 years from Article 141 of the Turkish Penal Code (Türk Ceza Kanunu, TCK).

The military coups and the reactions to these coups in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s prepared the ground both for the existence of the socialist TİP in the parliament and for the development of an anti-imperialist movement in general. Open cooperation between Turkish-Kurdish youth and activists, depending on the relatively liberal environment provided by the 1961 Constitution, started during the establishment of the TİP and consolidated within the extra-parliamentary left movements and political movements such as DDKO, leading to the revival of the Kurdish political movement in the 1970s (Ersanlı & Özdoğan, 2016, pp. 21-23).

2.4. Emergence of the Kurdish Question in the Turkish Political History

The borders separating Kurds from Turks in the Ottoman Empire were largely blurred during the Unionist Regime. However, the nationalist movements of non-Muslims of the Empire after the 1908 Revolution urged Unionists to develop an attitude towards the possible nationalist and separatist insurrections (Jwaideh, 2006, p. 26). The telegrams sent by Talat Pasha during the First World War show that the Unionists wanted the number of Kurdish immigrants and refugees not to exceed 5% of the population in their new settlements and that they especially wanted to prevent sheiks, imams, or administrators from contacting each other (McDowall, 2021, p. 63). McDowall (2021, pp. 59-64) proposes the argument that those measures of Unionist Regime were just preventive because most of the Kurdish notables, such as

chiefs of the former Hamidiyye cavalry, chiefs of the tribes and clergy, saw Islam as a firm bond between Kurds and the Turks. After the superiority over the Greek army in the National Liberation War of 1919-1923, the Ankara government attempted to redefine the borders separating the non-Turkish Muslims, especially the Kurds, from the Turks. The letters that Mustafa Kemal sent to these notables demonstrates that the newly establishing Kemalist regime rejected any separatist option.

The Republic witnessed a recentralization based on a monopolistic nationalism. This nationalism, beyond being a Muslim, made Turkishness the basis of the citizenship of the new regime. Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), the head of the Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları), expressed “the existence of two dominant languages hostile to the national culture in Eastern and Southern Anatolia”, referring to Arabs and Kurds without directly mentioning their names (Bozarslan, 2015).

Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüşdü (Aras) addressed his British colleague by stating:

“The Turkish government has concluded that the Kurds can never be assimilated and must be expelled [from Turkey]. Modern Turkey was built on atrocities and must be brutal. Turkey got rid of the Greeks and Armenians, and the next goal is to get rid of the Kurds. This is inevitable not only because of their unwavering mentality but also because the eastern parts of Anatolia are the most fertile places after the Mediterranean and the Black Sea coastlines and are the most necessary places for the settlement of the Turks [...]”. According to the British diplomat, Ankara “hoped that the vast majority of Kurds would go to Iran after their expulsion; there is no doubt that some of them will go to Russia, Iraq, and Syria. In any case, Turkey will never accept them again... (Bozarslan, 2015, p. 298)”

The aforementioned recentralization policy of Ankara radicalized the Kurds (Loizides, 2010). The Kurds considered the de facto abandonment of the Mosul province, the placement of soldiers on the inner border of the Kurdish region, and the abolition of the caliphate as a betrayal of the Kemalists’ own promises. Based on these developments, a dual Kurdish opposition emerged as (Romano, 2006) raises.

The first one is under the leadership of sheiks and leading traditional figures while rejecting Kemalism as a “heretic” regime, the other is under the administration of intellectuals who rejected the Turkish character of the regime (Watts, 2007). During the first fifteen years of the Republic, these two oppositional currents intersected and expanded. The result, which we will not examine in detail here, would be the outbreak of a series of rebellions; in particular, the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925, which took its name from a sheik from the Nakşibendi order, the Ağrı Rebellion of 1927-1930 and the Dersim Rebellion of 1937-1938.

With the end of military operations after 1939, a relative pacification in terms of Kurdish rebellions was witnessed according to Gunes (2013). This is partly due to the fact that fifteen years of almost uninterrupted uprisings have actually weakened the Kurdish rebels, and partly due to the decision of the İnönü regime to declare an agreement with the Kurds during the Second World War. From the introduction of the multi-party system in 1946, the overwhelming majority of the peasantry began to acquire a political significance; in Keyder’s words (1979, p. 18): “For the first time in Turkish politics, the peasantry has become an active force that needs to be won”. This led to drastic changes in policies within the ruling elite as well as in a range of areas from the economy to state-religion relations. Consequently, the excluded old classes, such as Kurdish tribal and religious leaders, have returned to the scene since they were an opportunity to provide a wide range of rural votes as Watts (2010, p. 29) argues. The transition to political pluralism in 1945-1946 enabled a large number of Kurdish notables to enter the parliament, including Abdülmelik Fırat, grandson of Sheikh Said, who was executed in 1925, and Mustafa Remzi Bucak. These people, whose maneuvering space was narrow, did not claim to be Kurds, but their integration nevertheless points to the detente in the context of the Kurdish question.

Nevertheless, addressing the existence of an autonomous Kurdish actor in this period from the 1930s to the 1960s, when Bozarslan (2003, p. 169; 2015, p. 850) was named as the “Years of Silence”, was not a robust argument.

However, from 1958 the Kurdish question resurfaces in Turkey. The return of Kurdish ruler Mustafa Barzani to Iraq in 1958 from the exile that started in 1946 revitalized the Kurdish field on the scale of the Middle East and led to the birth of a new Kurdish generation in Turkey (Bozarslan, 2008). The arrest of 49 Kurdish intellectuals in 1959, including a few traditional figures, but especially a large number of young people, could be regarded as the first event that brought the new Kurdish generation to the political scene. Along with that, Naci Kutlay, one of the Kurdish figures who faced trial in 49’lar Davası, maintained that the ideological basis of Kurdish question and distinctions in terms of left-wing and right-wing among Kurds first surfaced right after 49’lar Davası (Çamlıbel, 2015).

2.5. Premises of the Separate Agenda on Kurdish Identity in the 1960s

The first legal party to be identified with Kurdish politics, or more accurately, with a Kurdish-oriented policy, was the New Turkey Party (New Turkey Party, YTP), which was founded in 1961 mostly by former DP members. In fact, according to Aktürk (2012, p.145): “YTP ... was the only party in the history of Turkey identified with Kurdish voters until Kurdish nationalist parties emerged in the 1990s”. But at the same time, the scholars, including Aktürk, who wrote on the Kurdish nationalist movements emphasize that YTP was not a Kurdish nationalist party due to the arguments that YTP did not claim the ethnic representation of Kurds

or YTP did not add Kurdish demands to its political program (Aktürk, 2012, p. 146; Watts, 2010, p. 38; Gunes, 2013, p. 53).

In the environment of relative freedom prepared by the 1961 Constitution, the Kurdish national movement, which had intellectual and feudal lines as aforementioned, quickly shifted to a socialist ground. The 1962 uprising was started by the Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani, who returned to Northern Iraq from exile as a result of General Kasım's new pro-Moscow policy when Kasım did not keep his promise of autonomy. This uprising lasted from 1962 to 1970, and the Kurdish leadership in Northern Iraq both accelerated the movement in Turkey and kept the Turkish movement in its orbit through the Turkish Kurdistan Democrat Party (Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi, TKDP), which was illegally established in 1965 under the leadership of Faik Bucak. TKDP was essentially a separatist party that followed bourgeois-democratic principles and had no organic ties to the leftist movement that was developing in Turkey. However, since the establishment of TİP, even from the perspective of backwardness, seeing the Kurdish problem and including Kurdish elements in the party cadres brought the Kurdish movement and the left movement in Turkey closer together. In this framework, "Eastern Rallies (Doğu Mitingleri)", which would be explained in a more detailed way in the following section, was organized by TİP in the different parts of Eastern and Southeastern Turkey (Aydın & Taşkın, 2016).

Naomi Watts (2010) propounds that a new group of Kurdish actors has started to appear as a result of the following two conditions:

1. 1961 Constitution widened the area of freedoms; and

2. The oppression against Kurds, especially their intellectuals, started to be applied during the government that was overthrown by the coup and continued in the first half of the 1960s.

The left-wing circle that gained strength in the 1960s also became the initiator of a Kurdish opposition that gradually became autonomous (Bozarslan, 2015). Watts (2007, p. 58) called the new group “Kurdish counter-elite” which emerged mainly in the form of an intellectual grouping, who had experienced the demographic changes since the 1950s and obtained the opportunity of university education as young Kurds. However, Akkaya (2013) emphasized that this new group of actors had neither a stable and consistent structure nor strong mass support initially.

The primary focus of this new Kurdish actor was to create an intellectual environment or a public sphere of influence, which is based on Kurdishness, around a cluster of intellectuals. Although their life of publishing was mostly short, these efforts, which were started with various periodicals published in this process², were gradually reflected the influential media organs of the period (Bruinessen, 2011, p. 228). The axis of the discussions was the social, economic, and cultural problems of the East. Discussing the Kurdish Question as an “Eastern Issue”³ in this process; resulted in the emergence of “Easternist” thought, which referred to the support for economic improvement and social progress in the East, and entitlement of the new Kurdish (counter) elite as “Easternists” (Kendal, 1993, p. 64).

² İleri Yurt (1958), Dicle-Fırat (1962), Dicle Kaynağı (1962), Deng (1963), Roja Newê (1963), Dengê Taze (1966), Yeni Akış (1966)

³ In general, it is stated that the use of the terms “East” and “Easterners” instead of “Kurdistan” and “Kurds” stems from legal limitations (Gunes, 2012, Bruinessen, 2011, p. 228).

2.6. Discussions among the Socialist Left on the Revival of Kurdish Question in the 1960s

David Romano (2006) explains the revival of the Kurdish question in Turkey after the 1960 coup by focusing on the “structural conditions” and “political opportunity structures” by emphasizing the impact of the democratic milieu that the 1961 Constitution provided, economic development, and Kurdish migration to the urban areas, especially for education. According to Romano (2006), these forces came together to form a “non-traditional Kurdish nationalist elite” that led the development of the Kurdish movement in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s. Kurds were introduced to ideals of nationalism and socialism through education; thus, these circumstances juxtaposed Kurds and Turkey's left-wing movement because left-wing would provide Kurds a platform for the utterance of their critiques and demands (Gunes, 2013).

Yön was the first voice in the 1960s that articulated the Kurdish Question in the Turkish left by including articles focused on and analyzed the components of Kurdish Question such as Muzaffer Erdost's Şemdinli Röportajı (Şemdinli Interview) and Doğan Avcıoğlu's Kürt Meselesi (The Kurdish Question). The first component of the Kurdish question that was discussed in Yön was the economic aspect that underlined the underdevelopment of the Eastern region by proposing the argument that the governments of the 1950s policies amplified regional inequalities; so that the economic development of the Eastern region should have seen as one of the prior matters of Turkey (Lipovsky, 1992). Besides the economic underdevelopment and the continuity of feudalism in the Eastern region, Yön presented the second component of the Kurdish question that was defined by the ethnocultural aspect. Yön hosted some articles that touched upon the ethnocultural

element of Kurdish Question by discussing the role of mother tongue or the assimilative practices of the regime to obtain national unity, which was mostly written by young Kurdish intellectuals and figures in the left politics such as Sait Kırmızıtoprak. Furthermore, some other discussions in terms of ethnocultural dimension of the question could be found in Şemdinli Röportajı that was covered in several issues of Yön. The interview series was notably important in the sense that it classified the ethnic, historical, and social aspects of the Kurdish question (Yeğen, 2016). Here, Akkaya (2013) and Arslan (2020) asserted that the emphasis on military and bureaucracy within the agendas of Yön and MDD Movements made their approach to the Kurdish Question limited to the economic backwardness and the expression of the ethno-cultural aspect remained inadequate. Moreover, this approach of Yön and MDD had kept Kurds distant since the memory of the suppression of the Kurdish rebellions by military actions in the Early Republican period (Arslan, 2020).

Kurdish figures who were close to the socialist left started to organize within the body of the TİP beginning from the foundation phase of the party in the early 1960s. Hence, Kurds were represented in the parliament and senate after the 1965 elections. As well as the different groups within the body of party organization, such as unionists and intellectuals, Kurds emerged as a separate group called Easterners in TİP. The Kurdish Question was mentioned for the first time in TİP's discourse in the opening speech at the General Board Meeting held in Gaziantep by chairperson Aybar in 1963. This speech was broadcasted on the radio and the full text of the speech was published in the ninth issue of the weekly periodical of the TİP circle, *Sosyal Adalet*. Yet, the radio speech on the Kurdish issue in the November 1963 local elections would be the basis for the "Land and Agricultural Reform" part of the

future program (Ekinici, 2010, pp. 19-22). After that, the Kurdish Question remained on the agenda of the party as the “Eastern Question” in all the activities of the party in the prohibitive environment of that day (Ekinici, 2010, p. 8).

In the preparation of the draft program to be submitted to the I. Major Congress, the Kurdish question was handled under the heading of the Eastern Question under the following two parts (Ekinici, 2010, p. 16, 17):

1. A radical land and agriculture reform that will end the feudal order in the East and ensure the liberation of the Kurdish peasant masses, and
2. “Eastern Development” referred to putting an end to the divisive practices of the state targeting citizens in the East, and eliminating discrimination based on religion, language, race, class, and class.

Under the section of “Eastern Development”, it was written in the program of a political party for the first time that “People who speak Kurdish and Arabic and those from the Alevi sect are discriminated against because of their situation” (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, 1964). TİP promised to abolish this discrimination when the party had obtained parliamentary power and to fully implement Article 12 of the Constitution, which stipulates equality (Aydın & Taşkın, 2016, pp. 132,133). The approach to the Kurdish Question and agenda of TİP regarding the solution to the Kurdish Question, which was identified at the foundation stage of the party in the party program, was clarified during the IV. Major Congress held in 1970 (Ekinici, 2011, p. 32)

Kurdish intellectuals among the Easterners in TİP along the party line published the *Yeni Akış* periodical in 1966. The reviews in *Yeni Akış* examined the question of the nation from a socialist perspective; and after presenting the characteristics of the modern nation, the position of the Kurds in Turkey was

evaluated in these reviews. In addition to that, the columnists of *Yeni Akış* quoted nationalist articles in the Turkish press and wrote critics on those articles. After the release of four issues, the *Yeni Akış* periodical was closed and Mehmet Ali Aslan, Kemal Burkay, and Abbas İzol, who were the editors of *Yeni Akış*, were jailed for six months. *Yeni Akış Davası* was the second case that subjected Kurdish question after 49'lar Davası (Ekinci 2010; 2011).

As a result of the impact and initiative of Easterners, the “Eastern Rallies”, where the majority of the speakers were members of TİP, such as Behice Boran, Nihat Sargın, and Tarık Ziya Ekinci, were held as mentioned in the previous chapter. The first rally was held in Silvan on 12 August 1967. It was followed by the Diyarbakır, Siverek, Batman, Tunceli, Ağrı, Ankara and Suruç rallies held in the same year; and were maintained in 1969 in Hilvan, Varto, Siverek and Lice⁴. Meanwhile, Revolutionary Eastern Culture Centers (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, DDKO) were established in Ankara, Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Silvan, Ergani, Batman, Kozluk, Beşiri and Kulp in 1969; and some of TİP members took part in the establishment of DDKO. Hence, Aydın and Taşkın (2016) argue that there was a close connection between TİP and DDKO, meaning that DDKO was organized as a part of the socialist movement in Turkey regarding the Kurdish question and TİP saw Kurdish question as a matter of the fact that the socialist agenda should have found a solution. DDKO also had contacts with the Dev-Genç, which means that some of the DDKO members were also active in Dev-Genç until the disengagement of Kurdish socialists from Dev-Genç with the popularity of MDD thesis in Dev-Genç (Bican, 1970).

⁴ Azat Zana Gündoğan (2005) elaborated on the significance of Eastern Rallies in the process of identity formation and political mobilization of Kurds in Turkey in the following decade in his work on Eastern Rallies.

Among the armed-wing organizations of the left, which had the roots mostly in the youth movement regarding the different agendas on the Kurdish question, İbrahim Kaypakkaya completely separated from both the MDD and PDA movements. The distinction of Kaypakkaya stemmed from his challenging course of thought to the Kemalist principles and his struggle for minority and therefore Kurdish rights, which Lenin built in the center of the principle of “self-determination of nations” (Aydın & Taşkın, 2016). Jacob Landau saw Kaypakkaya’s approach to the Kurdish question as the “peak of leftist propaganda directed at the Kurds in Turkey” (Landau, 2016, pp. 43, 44). Also, it should be noted that besides İbrahim Kaypakkaya, Hikmet Kıvılcımlı as another influential figure in the Turkish socialist left has taken a very different stance on the Kurdish question than the general approach in the socialist left of the period. In the “Yol” series, which was written in the 1930s, but revealed in the 1980s, Kıvılcımlı addressed the “Eastern issue” as a nationality issue (Bozarıslan, 2008).

2.7. The Political Picture of the 1970s

On the date of March 12 of 1971, Turkish Armed Forces Chief of General Staff Memduh Tağmaç, Land Forces Commander Faruk Gürler, Naval Forces Commander Celal Eyiceođlu, and Air Force Commander Muhsin Batur gave a military memorandum that forces the Demirel government to resign by the implication of military intervention to the President Cevdet Sunay. The military intervention was announced with the following memorandum, which was read on TRT radios on 12 March at 13:00:

“The parliament and the government, with their ongoing attitudes, views, and actions, have plunged our country into anarchy, fratricidal quarrel, social and economic unrest, have publicly lost hope of reaching the level of modern civilization that Atatürk aimed for us, and failed to realize the reforms envisaged by its constitution, and the future of the Republic of Turkey has been placed in grave danger (1971 Memorandum Text)”.

After the Memorandum, the abolishment of the parliament, closure of the political parties, or the suspensions of the constitution by the junta were not experienced. Instead, the military officials expressed their desire for a technocratic government whose impartial Prime Minister would be from the members of the parliament to receive the vote of confidence conveniently. The agreed name was the CHP deputy of Kocaeli Nihat Erim; so, he resigned from CHP on 26 March. Thus, Erim became the independent prime minister who would establish the supra-party reform government. Erim proposes the program of this reform government to the parliament on 2 April by the following statement (Ahmad, 1977, p. 353):

“The 1961 Constitution, brought to Turkey by the 1960 Revolution, emerged as the framework of a balanced development that would enable Turkish society to reach the level of contemporary civilization. Our society, which has a dynamic structure within the order brought by the constitution, has entered a process of rapid social and political change. In order for this formation to turn into a solid development, basic structural and institutional solutions had to be brought and problems had to be tackled with bold steps. Structural and institutional changes that had to be made could not be attempted for various reasons and the events were left behind in solving the problems. This situation has led to the emergence of important tensions between the social structure and the state order. Relationships with certain rules could not be established between the state and various powers that developed in society, and an atmosphere of mutual distrust emerged. This environment has led to the turmoil of the last months and the political crisis that is required to be resolved with the 2nd article of the 12 March memorandum⁵. The path taken with this memorandum is the clearest evidence of the commitment of the Turkish Armed Forces, which is very sensitive to the problems of the homeland, to the democratic regime and the constitutional order. Putting an end to this mess and the habits it creates is an important issue that the

⁵ The establishment of a powerful and convincing government; which will be evaluated accordingly to its supra-party approach by our parliaments and will implement the constitutionally-envisaged reforms that would become the relieving remedies for the sadness and despair of the Turkish nation and its Armed Forces, which have emerged from their hearts, and will consider those reforms from a Atatürkist point of view; is seen clearly necessary

Government must resolve. But the main task is to address difficulties with an approach that focuses on root causes, not results. This is possible with the realization of mandatory reforms in line with the Constitution, without waiting. For these reasons, we appear before the Turkish public as the ‘Reform Government’ and offer a program suitable for this qualification”.

As Gökhan Atılğan (2020) touches upon, the period between the 1971 Memorandum and the general elections of 1973, in which four different governments were established, is defined as the “12 March Regime”. The implementations of the 12 March Regime had a significant impact on the following decade’s political picture and on the series of political events that would shape the route of the 12 September 1980 Coup. The proceedings of the 12 March Regime were drawn by the elimination of the “political extremisms of the far left and far-right” as Nihat Erim stated in his interview to *Milliyet* on May 2, 1971. As a result, neither the Kurdish socialists nor Turkish socialist movement could escape the political consequences of the March 1971 Memorandum, which banned all left-wing and Kurdish organizations, broadcasts, and publications; imprisoned the active members of the movements, and sentenced some prominent figures to severe penalties, including the capital punishment (Atılğan, 2020). After the general elections that ended the 12 March Regime held in October 1973, a coalition government was formed in January 1974 by the CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) led by Bülent Ecevit and the MSP (Milli Selamet Partisi) led by Necmettin Erbakan. At the end of a contentious negotiation process between the components of the coalition, the law of general amnesty that embodied all political prisoners of the 12 March Regime had been passed (Koca, 2020).

After the period of 12 March 1971 Memorandum, salience and room for maneuver of left-wing politics in the political arena had interrupted until the general amnesty of 1974 because of the closure of political parties, political organizations,

associations, and media organs; and the imprisonment of the actors who were active in left-wing politics as given above. The exit from the period of 1971 Memorandum started after the general elections of October 1973 where the political picture had been changed, and the declaration of the general amnesty in which all political prisoners were released in the summer of 1974. The released Turkish and Kurdish socialists found a lively political mass especially among the youth (Samim, 1981, p. 73; Bora, 2016, p.665).

One of the main characteristics of the period after 1974 was the transition in the course of the left politics is the role of periodicals. The periodicals have always been significant in terms of sharing and spreading news and the course of thought of different political organizations and developing the ideas with the help of written discussions among different factions. As it could be seen throughout the history of intellectual and ideological movements, it might be said that periodicals have been the representatives of different political movements and organizations. However, the role of periodicals in Turkey has started to get in a transformation after 1974, meaning that, besides the role of the medium that paves the way for thought-sharing and idea-developing, periodicals came up in the first hand with a certain system of thought, then they evolve certain political organizations (Hall, 2010). In the atmosphere of the accelerating political tension defined by the ideological confrontation towards the end of the 1970s, some of the political organizations and periodicals had been closed throughout the second half of the 1970s by court decisions⁶. On the other hand, some other organizations and publications continued their activities until the 1980 military coup that abrogated all political activities.

⁶Due to the claim that those periodicals and political organizations were acting against the law numbers 141, 142 and 146 of Turkish Penal Code.

The second important feature of the political picture of the 1970s was factionalization among the left. The increased expectations and mobilization of the left-wing generation of the 1960s who were released from prison with the 1974 Amnesty also accelerated factionalisation tendencies (Aytürk & Bora, 2020). The actors of the 1960s left-wing politics who faced trial and received sentences were acquitted by the 1974 general amnesty and maintained their ruptured political activities. Therefore, the divergent dispositions among the left-wing, which had already started during the 1960s with the divergence between TİP and Yön Movement, have been continued by different approaches on the strategies to achieve socialism in Turkey as discussed in the previous chapter, have accelerated after the general amnesty of 1974. In the light of the memoirs of the political figures of the 1960s and 1970s (Burkay, 2013), the experience of prison as a political prisoner during the 12 March Regime played a decisive role in the factionalisations in the 1970s left. Therefore, these actors took the opportunity to involve politics around different camps and factions adopted differentiated roadmaps and agendas.

The third feature, which was significant for the 1970s, was the proliferation of the organizations whose agendas focus on the Kurdish question were observed. Due to the contending approaches of the Turkish left and Kurdish organizations, the Kurdish movement emerged as a multi-actor from the beginning of 1975⁷.

After presenting both the arguments on the identity question from the Marxist literature, and the development of the question of identity in the context of the

⁷Gündoğan (2002) lists at least ten organizations by including TKDP (Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party), Kurdistan National Liberationists (KUK), PSK (Turkey Kurdistan Socialist Party), DDKD [Revolutionary Democratic Culture Association, also known as Kurdistan Workers' Party (KİP)], PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party, also known as "Apoists"), Rızgarî (Liberation), Ala Rızgarî (Flag of Liberation), Kawa, Dengê Kawa (Voice of Kawa), and Têkoşîn (Struggle). These organizations, whose number easily exceeds a dozen when a few smaller organizations are added, consist of seven main structures (TKDP, PSK, DDKD-KİP, PKK, Rızgarî, Kawa and Têkoşîn) when internal divisions are ignored.

Turkish left; Chapter III focuses on the in-depth thematic analysis through the textual material from the periodicals of the 1970s left with respect to the research question and the methodological framework, which is set in the first chapter.



CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS OF THE PERIODICALS REGARDING THE KURDISH QUESTION

In the light of the literature and the methodological framework that I put forward in Chapter I , this third chapter aims to propose the thematic analysis of the selected texts of *İlke*, *Ürün*, and *Yürüyüş* regarding the Kurdish question.

3.1. İlke

In the first investigated periodical, *İlke*, I observed the use of the “working-class people in the East” while referencing the Kurdish people. The clearest expression of the Kurdish question, which has been described many times in the published issues, on the agenda of the periodical, was as follows:

“The chauvinistic, assimilationist and national oppressive policy on the working-class people in the East should be condemned, and the national democratic rights should be defended unconditionally, the principle of the fraternity of people should not be compromised” (*İlke*, May 1977, p. 74)

The importance of this expression stems from the pinpointing of the themes that reveal the approach of the periodical to the Kurdish question. The terms “oppression”, “national democratic rights”, and “working-class people in the East” proclaim the bullet points of the agenda of İlke about the Kurdish question. In the light of classical Marxist understanding, İlke sets the Kurdish question as an issue that should be comprehended historically and scientifically:

“Again, the relations of production in the East and the historical, social, and cultural background of the working-class people in the East have not been adequately examined with research, which goes beyond general words and is based on concrete data within the integrity of the Middle East, except for a major concrete research today. Scientific work on this subject has been limited. It is among the duties of WORKING CLASS SOCIALISM to deal with this issue, which is very important for the struggle for independence, democracy, and socialism, together with other research and to reach scientific explanations (İlke, January 1975, p. 52)”.

As could be understood from the above quotation, the nature of the problem has been handled scientifically by underlying the need for research that will examine the concrete data in a regional context. In addition, developing this scientific perspective is associated with the working class and the socialist agenda, which paved the way for historical analysis of the question:

“The bourgeoisie has revealed its oppressive tendencies before and still does today, as it has always resorted to classical means. The leading tool of the bourgeoisie is the literature of ‘separatism’. The practices of 1925’s Takrir-i Sükun, which means the suppression of the national democratic movement in the East and the suppression of the workers, are tried to be enforced to the social democrats of today, who are the political heirs of that day. The memorandum given by six independent ministers to the government, as the last declaration of the reactionary demands of the monopolists, demands a broad attack from the social democracy against the Eastern workers, accordingly, it forces the working-class movement to be dealt with by more effective means. For this, they advocate the expansion of martial law, especially covering the whole of the Eastern provinces (April-May 1979, p. 4)”.

Considering the two quotations above, which represent the general approach of the periodical in terms of the recognition and the definition of the Kurdish question, it is possible to say that the emphasis on scientificization and historicization determine the first theme.

While scientificizing and historicizing the Kurdish question, İlke touches upon the distinction between the bourgeoisie and the working class and focuses on the economic analysis of the question with a classical Marxist understanding. It is also noteworthy that they are aware of what they call the ‘social’ aspect of the question; which arises from the differences in national identity, national culture, and ethnic identity, the in-depth examination of the problem conducted from a structural point:

“In addition, many countries have more than one nationality, national culture, or ethnic difference within the same border. This feature is one of the most important factors of the problem of social revolution in our age. Again, sectarian differences are stemming from the class characteristics and material conditions in the past, which today’s material conditions have not yet overcome. It is necessary to count together the differences arising from the fact that capitalism does not develop equally in every region within the borders of the same country, and that precapitalist relations are not resolved to the same extent in every region (İlke, January 1975, p. 145)”.

The structural approach of İlke to the Kurdish question demonstrates itself especially in the reviews of the election results. After the 1975 Elections, the economic relations in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey are defined as “pre-capitalist traditional dependency relations and feudal superstructures (İlke, October-November 1975, p. 4)”. İlke also proposes the idea that these economic relations were breaking due to the “rapid awareness process of the working-class people in the East” (October-November 1975, p. 4). Additionally, İlke claims that the National Front Government (Milliyetçi Cephe Hükümeti) was using oppressive mechanisms on the

Kurdish people because of the racist and chauvinistic character of the bourgeoisie (İlke, November 1976, p. 98). This structural understanding through the class-based analysis generates the second theme.

The debates that occupy the largest place in the inquiries of the İlke periodical on the Kurdish question are on the concept of oppression, which forms the third theme. In 1975, the definition of oppression on the Kurds was made as to the racist violence practices of the bourgeoisie on the working-class people in the East:

“Addition of the new versions of the unending oppression on the people of the East in recent days; the intensification of provocations, which are tried to concoct in this region by the most reactionary, chauvinist, most ‘skull-fascist’ sections of the ruling powers, together with the local-foreign, secret-open services; the almost punishment of the Eastern people who suffered the disaster after the earthquake that destroyed Lice, because of the racist considerations; further strengthened the democratic consciousness and struggle of the working class people and poor peasants of the East (İlke, December 1975, p. 8)”.

“The fascist gangs of the capitalists also did not hesitate to open fire on the people in the events held in the East, where they encountered the anti-fascist and anti-racist reaction of the working class people of the East (December 1975, pp. 13-14)”.

In 1976, the term “national oppression” entered the conceptual framework of oppression as it could be inferred from the following expression: “The National Front Government has intensified national oppression, assimilation policy, and racist chauvinistic practices against the democratic aspirations of the working people in the East (İlke, February 1976, p. 8)”. The broadening of the definition of oppression could be regarded as a turning point in the recognition of the Kurdish question:

“But the earthquake in the East and similar natural disasters has a second social feature in terms of results. As it is known, there is also national pressure on the people of Eastern Anatolia, as well as class pressures. The dominant chauvinism of the ruling classes, which has continued for decades, completely multiplies the anti-democratic, reactionary, and exploitative oppressions on the Eastern People. For this reason, natural disasters in

Eastern Anatolia cause much more damage to the workers of this region. Intense and violent pressures not only on class but also on ‘national democratic’ rights and freedoms are the result of not only the colonialist but also the racist-chauvinistic attitude of the Turkish monopoly bourgeoisie (reactionary central authority). However, it is not scientific to consider the backwardness of Eastern Anatolia as a ‘difference in regional development levels caused by the unequal development of capitalism within a single nation’; because the main problem arises from the national problem. It is necessary to look for the essence of the phenomenon they call it in the theoretical truth that social science calls the ‘national issue’. The reflection of the uneven development of Turkish capitalism on the regional level is not the cause but the result of this phenomenon. For this reason, it is scientifically necessary to see the reason why natural disasters, called natural disasters, cause greater losses in Eastern Anatolia, not mainly in the reflection of the uneven development law of capitalism on regional levels, but also in the national problem, which is the main cause of this phenomenon (İlke, December 1976, pp. 5-6)”.

From that point on, I noted that İlke recognized and defined the Kurdish question as a national question, which identifies the fourth theme. It can be seen in the following quotation, the formula for the resolution of the national question proposed is the Leninist principle of the right of nations to self-determination:

“The Socialist Workers Party of Turkey supports the anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, and progressive Kurdish movements in the Middle East and opposes the national oppressions on the Kurdish people in this region and defends the principle of self-determination (İlke, April-May 1976, p. 32)”.

In the 49th issue that was published in January 1978, the periodical elaborated on the Kurdish question through a comprehensive text, which is titled “The National Question in Turkey”. The text opens the discussion with the principles of the United Nations, the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and other related treaties, in which Turkey was one of the parties, regarding the national question. In the first place, the text historicized the Kurdish question by pointing out the emergence of the class struggle since the establishment of Republican Turkey. Then, the regional and the international contexts in terms of the Kurdish question were given by highlighting the economic

unity as the core of being a nation. The following analysis in the text consists of the marks on the condition of the economic backwardness and the picture of the classes in the East. The final part of the text focuses on the right to self-determination. Self-determination is conceptualized as an autonomous section under the single working-class organization, which requires the unification of the Kurdish and Turkish working classes in a united revolutionary front against the collaborating Kurdish and Turkish bourgeoisie (İlke, December 1977-January 1978, pp. 86-126). Here, the critique of the Kurdish organizations arises and these critiques develop the fifth theme.

As explained in the definition of the themes, the separate Kurdish organizations apprehended the Kurdish question as a colonial issue from the mid-1970s on. İlke criticized the colonial thesis of the Kurdish organizations due to nationalist tendencies. For instance, İlke entitled one of them, the *Rızgarî* periodical, as a nationalist movement:

“By the way, let’s talk about falsification and distortion in the 2nd issue of *Rızgarî* Periodical, which is the representative of a nationalist movement, by displaying demagogy. In the draft resolutions submitted to the TSİP First Party Congress, the term Turkish and close to Turkish was used for some national communities or minorities living in the USSR and Iran. Although this term was used for referencing Azeris, Uzbeks, Tajiks, etc.; the *Rızgarî* periodical made a Machiavellian distortion of claiming that the term ‘close to Turk’ meant Kurds. However, this term was removed from the congress resolution drafts by the executives, with the fear of causing misunderstanding one month before their claim (İlke, April 1977, p. 92)”.

Besides the Kurdish organizations, İlke strongly criticized numerous factions of the left because of the promotion of Kurdish nationalism as a catalyzer for the empowerment of the bourgeoisie:

“It is difficult to take an internationalist approach to the national question unless this subject, which may be a bit boring for the reader and which will include some repetitions, is not grasped. If the class basis of various

nationalist approaches to the national question (whether in the Western or Eastern part) in Turkey today is the petty bourgeoisie, the important ideological deficiency in not understanding the issue adequately is the approach of the masters of scientific socialism on the ‘nation and international problem’ with the basics we have summarized above. Thus, the views of working-class science and internationalism on the ‘national question’, which brought the principle of ‘the right of nations to self-determination’, are not properly understood and assimilated by some circles. In particular, some ‘left’-revisionist groups are in a race to promote ‘eastern petty-bourgeois or categorical national-bourgeois tail-wing’ views as Leninist in a way that helps some eastern nationalist groups, perhaps because of their unconscious or ‘prestige-collecting’ tendencies. Maoists, on the other hand, took the issue to nationalism altogether. On the other hand, the fact that the right-revisionist tendencies of some socialist party lines on this issue have been under the influence of the petty bourgeoisie in the West helps to strengthen nationalist views in the East and to raise some of their tail-wing ‘left’-revisionist clamors in the West (İlke, April 1977, p. 82)”.

3.2. Ürün

When it comes to the second analyzed periodical, Ürün, I detected the direct use of the word “Kurd” while referencing the Kurdish people, unlike the first investigated periodical İlke. Ürün defines Kurdish people as the “national minorities” and the concept of “national oppression” is used to describe the practices that the Kurds are subjected to. Similar to İlke, Ürün also has a historical understanding of the Kurdish question. The explicit expression of Ürün regarding the recognition and definition of Kurdish question is as follows:

“Terrorism and tyranny continue uninterruptedly against national minorities, especially the Kurdish people, in the country. The bourgeoisie and reactionary governments have always pursued a policy of dissolving this nation against national minorities, against the Kurdish people who create a large community in the country. The bourgeoisie followed the path of agreement with the Kurdish tribal chiefs and property owners. But those who want democratic rights, who want to get rid of feudal lordship; land slavery relations; and the hands of aghas and sheiks, who want to be an equal right citizen of the republican regime, to read, write, study in their mother tongue, publish newspapers in their mother tongue, open schools where the education is given in Kurdish, make radio broadcasts, national traditions... Governments and ruling circles responded to the people who resisted sticking

to their customs and traditions with bullets, exiles, and burning down Kurdish villages. The heir of the DP, the AP, and its government is following in the footsteps of Bayar, who fell into the blood of 70,000 Dersimers. The AP government has established special commando units in the Eastern provinces (Ürün, January 1978, pp. 34-35)”.

When we evaluate the above statement, the main items on the agenda regarding the Kurdish question are the historicization of the question, the situation of the economic relations in the Kurdish-populated regions, oppression on the social sphere of the Kurdish people, and the Kurdish question as an issue of “national minorities”. Ürün explains what is meant by the concept of national minorities in the following statement:

“There are also those who are stuck with the term ‘National Minorities Problem’. They say that this is to dilute the national problem in Turkey, to dissolve the Kurdish problem into an artificial minority problem. These concerns are unfounded. The term ‘national minorities’ is a formulation that has been used by the world communist movement since Lenin. It has a broad meaning that communists do not remain indifferent to the problems of all national minorities in that country, together with the nation or nations that are the center of the national question. It is correct to use this formula in Turkey, where there are various national and national minorities. Such an approach does not mean to deny that the Kurdish question is at the center of the national question in Turkey. Indeed, the national question in our country is mainly the Kurdish national question (Ürün, September 1977, p. 45)”.

Based on this definition, it is attainable that the Kurdish question is accepted as a national question. In the following statement, which is the continuation of the passage above, we can observe the approach they have developed for the solution of the national question:

“The national problem is not a coherent, self-sufficient, independent problem. It depends on the general question of revolution; it is part of the struggle for the democratization of the whole country and the abolition of all forms of oppression and exploitation. It is imperative to consider the national question in terms of the socio-economic structure of the country, the character of the revolutionary step on the agenda, and the class struggle in general. In our country, the solution to the Kurdish problem cannot be separated from the Turkish revolutionary process. With the establishment of an advanced democratic order and its opening to socialism, national oppression and

privilege will end. The national question will be resolved as part of the program of the Turkish working-class movement. Nobody should deduce from this statement that there will be no national movement until socialism is established, and the revolutionaries have nothing to do about it! On the contrary, if there is a mass national movement somewhere, it is a revolutionary duty to support the progressive, anti-imperialist aspect in it. This is not what is wrong. What is wrong is to put the national question as an amulet, in Lenin's words. And this is a method used by the bourgeoisie all over the world. The bourgeoisie tries to hide the fact of class struggle in the fight against national oppression and privilege, to reveal the 'common' between itself and the working class, and to show national goals. This is the main policy of the bourgeoisie. First, 'national question' (Ürün, September 1977, p. 46)".

Again, similar to the İlke, we see that the national question is explained by class struggle and socialist revolution within the framework of classical Marxist understanding. What is remarkable at this point is how Ürün defines the proletariat:

"Democratic movements that unite various political forces based on a certain partnership of interests and are directed against imperialism and its forms of domination are a practical form of joint action of the working class with other social strata. In such movements, the proletariat either takes part directly as a class (for example, the general democratic struggle, the anti-fascist struggle, the struggle against war), or takes part in such movements with some of its groups (for example, youth movements, women's movements), or provides support (Ürün, July 1976, pp. 28-29)".

Keeping the definition of the proletariat broad indicates that the Kurdish people are included in the proletariat and that the solution to the Kurdish question will be handled on a class basis. The statement of "the Turkish proletariat is the only social force that will bring a solution to the Kurdish national question as part of its program (July 1976, p. 48)" in the same issue indicates the class-based approach. Furthermore, the following quotations from different issues of Ürün underline the Kurdish question as a matter of class struggle and socialist revolution:

"The day when the conflict between classes within the nation ceases, the hostility of one nation to another will cease (Ürün, November 1976, p. 33)".

"What is the revolutionary principle of organizing workers of different nationalities within the borders of the same state? The answer to this question

is obvious: the Leninist principle; is the principle of one country, one class, one organization. This is natural because the basic division is class, not national (Ürün, September 1977, p. 53)”.

Here, as a sub-theme of the economic approach, “imperialism as a common enemy” is an issue that needs to be examined. Because the most important source of the unity of the proletariat is the class warfare against the common enemy, imperialism:

“Turkey is a dependent country under the economic, political and military control of imperialism, the collaborator monopoly bourgeoisie and landlords exploit the Kurdish and Turkish peoples, the Kurdish capitalists and feudals are integrated with the Turkish monopoly bourgeoisie. The common enemy of Kurdish and Turkish workers is the same. The step on the agenda is independence, the democratization of society, a move towards socialism; and common to both peoples (September 1977, p. 55)”.

It is also significant to note that the perpetrator of the oppressions on the Kurds is given as the common enemy imperialism and that the solution to the Kurdish question is unity against the common enemy:

“Reactionaries, fascists are afraid of the loud voice of Bizim Radyo. Because this radio defends the freedom rights of all national minorities living on the territory of the Republic of Turkey. It is fighting for the end of the racist and chauvinistic oppression of the collaborationist bourgeoisie, especially against the Kurdish people, for all minorities to have equal rights, for the Kurdish people to have their representatives in the assemblies, and to be able to speak and read in their language. Bizim Radyo defends the principle that this just war of the Kurdish people can be achieved by developing within the anti-imperialist, anti-fascist movement of the Turkish working class, and calls all Kurdish and Turkish people to unite against the common enemy (Ürün, May 1978, p. 15)”.

The fundamental principle adopted in the solution of the Kurdish question, just as in the İlke, is given as Lenin's right to self-determination of nations. While addressing the political and social aspects of the Kurdish question, the main emphasis is again on the class struggle and socialist revolution:

“The fundamental Leninist principle in the solution of the national question is the right of nations to freely determine their destiny. This right means that the nation can freely decide on matters related to its future, that others do not interfere in the life of the nation by force, that no one can destroy the main institutions of the nation, that no one can interfere with its traditions, that its mother tongue is spoken. This right includes the organization of the nation as it wishes. Revolutionaries must defend and propagate this Leninist principle (September 1977, pp. 46-47)”.

The aforementioned discussions on the national minorities, the national oppression, and the unity against the common enemy suggest the unification in the “National Democratic Front” in the solution of the Kurdish question. Ürün’s program on the resolution of the Kurdish question becomes apparent with the following statement:

“However, it should not be forgotten that the primary aim of the TKP is to establish socialism in Turkey. It is to put an end to all forms of exploitation and national oppression. The problem of minorities, especially the problem of self-determination of the Kurdish people’s destiny, will be resolved within this framework. As stated in our program, the determination of a people’s destiny may not necessarily appear in the form of separation, but also in the form of uniting in a democratic order (Ürün, October 1977, pp. 10-12)”.

Having engaged lengthy debates through the opinion pieces with the periodical *Özgürlük Yolu*, which is one of the Kurdish organizations of the period, over the colonial thesis, Ürün defines separate Kurdish organizations as nationalist and criticizes these organizations by defending the idea that nationalist deviations strengthen the hand of the common enemy, imperialism (September 1977, pp. 48-49):

“On the other hand, the involvement of classes in a Kurdish national movement that will develop separately from the whole of Turkey is different. Facts such as the relatively less developed capitalist relations in ‘Kurdistan’, the existence of feudal institutions and remnants even though they are rapidly filled with capitalist essence, and the numerical limitation of the proletariat are the factors that strengthen the hand of the bourgeoisie in a movement that will develop in ‘Kurdistan’ apart from the whole of Turkey. That is why it is the bourgeoisie, not the proletariat, which has an interest in the solution of the Kurdish question separately from the whole of Turkey. Thinking the problem

apart from the Turkish revolutionary process is nothing but joining the separatist thesis of the bourgeoisie. What is dangerous is that this understanding will also show its effects in some 'socialist' circles: If the working-class movement, especially the working-class movement of the dominant nation, has not reached this level of development and is not in a position to adopt and manage their mandatory revolutionary duties in the face of the national question, the socialists of the oppressed nation will carry out their national duties. They will not postpone doing it to indefinite dates. (We underlined it. C. Aladağ, Özgürlük Yolu, Issue 19)'. Mr. Aladağ's gaze is similar to that of the Polish socialists. Turkey considers the working-class movement as a 'Kurd', not as 'proletarian'!

In the continuation of the discussion, the regional unification of the Kurds was characterized as separatist due to its nationalist connotation and was harshly criticized. It is also prominent that Ürün's discourse on nationalism and separatism converges with the dominant state discourse (Ürün, September 1977, p. 50):

“The basis of the separatist thesis advocated by the Kurdish bourgeois-feudal lord duo, dressed in 'revolutionary' dresses of various sizes and 'legitimized'; It is to explain the privileged situation in Turkey with colonialism and colonial relations. As such, the first thing to do is to end this relationship, that is, to organize the liberation war of the colony. Moreover, it is a fact that the Kurds are not only in Turkey, but they also live in Iraq, Iran, and Syria and they are deprived of their national democratic rights; so the liberation war would be carried out on 'four fronts' (!) The Iraqi Kurdish movement is a living example of this reality. This is so, but there are other truths that every revolutionary must admit: First, we live in Turkey and are obliged to wage war within Turkey's borders. In Iraq, Syria, and Iran, we have class brothers and colleagues who carry out this revolutionary task. Secondly, it is the policy of the bourgeoisie to deepen and expand the national war. Thus, the separatist Kurdish bourgeois-feudal lord section wants to draw their attention only to the national question to prevent the union of Kurdish workers and laborers with the revolutionary forces in their own country. Such a war is in their class interests. Because the participation of forces in such a war will not be according to classes, but according to nationalities. This is the most convenient platform for the Kurdish ruling classes to break the working masses from their natural class alliances and follow them. Aside from its bourgeois character, such an understanding will only lead the Kurdish people to new adventures. Because the conditions of the class struggle in these four countries and the social and economic structures on which these conditions arise are different. In approaching the national question, however, the Leninist method requires an accurate assessment of the concrete historical and especially the economic situation. A solution or program that is viable in all four countries with different levels of economic development is, above all, impossible”.

3.3. Yürüyüş

To share the findings of the third periodical, I could say that similar to İlke, Yürüyüş referred to Kurdish-populated regions as the ‘East and Southeast’ and the Kurds as ‘the working-class people of the East’. Yürüyüş draws the framework for the recognition and definition of the Kurdish question through the text on the 1975 Lice earthquake:

“The fact that the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey is left behind even more compared to the other parts of the country has a significant share in the magnitude of the losses... However, it is not possible to explain the backwardness of the Eastern Anatolia region only with the self-operating mechanism of the economy. Again, a news item in this issue shows that the development of this region has been hindered by deliberate economic decisions and that our citizens living in the region are treated as second-class people. With the social policy implemented, the requirements of a humane life have become more and more sought after in this region... On top of all this, the racist and chauvinistic policy implemented by the ruling classes is added... The ruling classes, which try to prevent the spread of democratic rights and freedoms throughout the country and their use by the working-class people, are trying to prevent people from speaking out to realize their interests. They apply to material and moral oppression by holding them responsible for their religion and sect. This situation can only come to an end with the democratization of the country and an end to the monopoly bourgeois rule (Yürüyüş, Issue 23, p. 3)”.

According to this framework given in the quoted passage, Yürüyüş approaches the Kurdish question from both historical and economic perspectives by emphasizing the oppression of the democratic and social rights of the Kurdish people. The following quotation from the opinion piece, which was written by Tarık Ziya Ekinci, demonstrates the historicization of the Kurdish question more clearly:

“Since the establishment of the Republic, all political powers representing the bourgeoisie have implemented their separatist policies towards the East hypocritically. In the Constitution and laws on citizenship rights, all citizens living on the territory of Turkey are seen and shown as having equal rights. It has been determined that there is no legal discrimination based on race, language, religion, and sect. However, in practice, the basic principles stipulated by the laws were constantly pushed aside, inhuman, divisive, and discriminatory processes were carried on assuming they did not exist. The

divisive practices of the bourgeoisie are also based on racial and linguistic discrimination (Yürüyüş, Issue 181, pp. 8-9)”.

Similar to İlke and Ürün, Yürüyüş provides in-depth class-based analysis for the Kurdish question as a representative of the classical Marxist understanding:

“The relations among the ruling classes also play an important role in exploiting the backwardness of the East and Southeast. Because the conditions in Turkey today make it necessary for the bourgeoisie to cooperate with powers, which are backward than itself, to maintain its dominance. In the backward areas, these powers appear to be feudal landlords and large landowners. The awakening of the masses in these regions, where feudal remnants continue to exist, means that these groups lose their power. So this awakening must be prevented. Here again, racist and chauvinistic policies and accusations of separatism appear as the most used tools. Whatever the reasons, the result is always the same: The bourgeoisie uses these tools to cover up the weakness of its capitalism and itself, to maintain its dominance. Therefore, opposing these policies and oppressive practices also requires opposing capitalism and the bourgeoisie. For this reason, ending the backwardness of these regions and ensuring that our citizens in the region can fully enjoy their democratic rights and freedoms are a part of the struggle of the working class targeting socialism (Yürüyüş, Issue 49, p. 9)”.

Although Yürüyüş also offers a class-based analysis for the question and points to the socialist revolution as the solution like other investigated periodicals, Yürüyüş does not recognize the Kurdish question as a national question (Yürüyüş, Issue 168, pp. 8-9):

“We strive to put national movements on a class basis, not just on a historical basis and fight for this cause. That is why ‘categorically the unconditional demands for independence of nations’ is a serious mistake that must be prevented”.

As a result of this distinct perspective of Yürüyüş among the analyzed periodicals, the conceptualization of the “oppression” also stresses the economic aspect that stems from the class distinctions, whereas other periodicals emphasize the political and social oppressions to some extent. In the 52nd issue, Yürüyüş gives the remarks from TİP’s chairperson Behice Boran’s speech in the second meeting of the

regional delegates of the party. In terms of the groundwork of TİP and Yürüyüş about the Kurdish question, Boran delivers the following statements:

“If there is exploitation and distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed, it should not be forgotten that there is a social class that exploits and oppresses everywhere and at all times. If a government is in an oppressive attribute, that government will adopt this policy of exploitation and oppression not on behalf of and for the sake of a whole nation; but operates on behalf of and behalf of the exploiting ruling class. While the dominant exploiting classes exploit their working classes all over the world, on the one hand, they also exploit the working classes of other societies, other peoples, nationalities, and nations, if they can and find the opportunity. Violent movements and oppressive practices among civil servants, teachers, youth, and workers are carried on in Eastern, Southeastern, and Central Anatolian provinces with a practice that considers sectarian and racial discrimination. Eastern and Southeastern provinces have long been subject to a more oppressive administration compared to other provinces of Turkey. Nevertheless, these pressures, as I said, were applied even more to the Eastern and Southeastern provinces. Now it seems that it is desired to create a mass base for fascism by provoking sectarian divisions and applying racist and chauvinistic policies. Fascism is, however, an outright terror-based rule of the big monopoly bourgeoisie. However, no administration can survive without creating a mass base for itself. One of the methods of building a mass base of fascism is to create divisions between the working class and the masses of the people, to create an ‘enemy’ and to gain a mass base by gaining supporters around these incitements of hostility (Yürüyüş, Issue 52, p. 16)”.

What is more about the conceptualization of oppression in Yürüyüş is the use of “racist and chauvinist policies of the bourgeoisie” that could be inferred from the previously quoted passages. In addition to that, Yürüyüş criticizes both the ideology of the state and the leftist followers of the state ideology in terms of the debates on the Kurdish question (Issue 210, p. 3). Nonetheless, the most criticized understanding in the periodical is the colonial thesis of the Kurdish organizations of the period. In the first place, the colonization perspective was criticized by the periodical through the class struggle:

“The way some people handle the problem makes it easier for the bourgeoisie. They talk about the West’s exploitation of the East, forgetting that exploitation is a type of relationship between people and that geographical regions cannot exploit each other. They say that races are

physiologically separated from each other, whereas one race exploits the other, forgetting that exploitation is a class phenomenon, and therefore there is no question of physiology exploiting each other. They argue that the backwardness of the East and Southeast is due to racism and chauvinism, forgetting that the underlying phenomenon is the law of uneven development of capitalism and that racist-chauvinist policies are used as an effective weapon in the hands of the ruling classes to cover up the failure of capitalism and divide the working-class people. The events of recent years have demonstrated which segments of the society benefit from such interpretations and the conclusions drawn from them (Yürüyüş, Issue 49, p. 9)”.

Subsequently, the “local democratic organizations in the East”, which refers to the Kurdish organizations, are criticized because of being nationalist and dividing the socialist agenda. In the 151st issue, Nihat Siyahkan, who was the head of the Siverek section of TİP, raises the concerns of TİP on the proliferation of the Kurdish organizations through his expressions as follows:

“The first of the phenomena that we will focus on is the local democratic organizations in the East and their position. These organizations also want to ensure effectiveness in social developments through various publications. Although their number is large, it is possible to find the following two common features among these organizations and publications: First, due to their organization and structure, almost all of them are far from being settled, disciplined, mobilizing the mass they represent and are often open to provocation. In other words, these organizations do not have an organizational structure and understanding that will channel the democratic accumulation in the East to the right side of the struggle. The second important common feature is the political disfigurement in the bases of these organizations although very ‘revolutionary’ and ‘quick’ expressions are made by these organizations. However, their organizational bases are almost completely amorphous due to the insurmountable political blindness, and even an understanding of nationalism that is hostile to socialism is widely accepted in these ‘democratic’ organizations. Despite the dimensions of the democratic accumulation, despite its contradiction to the structure of the East, there are also the weaknesses of the organizations, which are among the reasons why the fascist party can be observed in the East. Despite the unsettled organizational structure, the amorphous character of their bases, and the presence of anti-socialist elements in the name of nationalism, these organizations can still claim to be organizations that ‘struggle for socialism’ (Issue 151, p. 11)”.

After all, Yürüyüş offers the achievement of the socialist order in Turkey, which would be led by the working class, to resolve the unique contradictions in the

East. The periodical rejects the colonial thesis through the following explanations of Behice Boran, which would be declared as TIP's approach to the Kurdish question in the Second Major Congress:

“The Eastern problem is not only an economic but also a political problem. A striking point in these discussions in recent years is that the question of whether the Eastern region is a colony has been raised and has been accepted by some circles. At first glance, it seems like a scientific problem whether the East is colonial or not. However, the purpose of those who throw the problem is not scientific research and determination; the purpose is political. Behind the claim that the East is a colony, there is the view that a solution to the East problem can and should be found on its own, separate from the problems of the whole of Turkey. The argument of colonialism is put forward as a justification and basis for this view. I will not enter into the colonial debate here; I will only suffice to state that we are certain that the East is not a colony... The Eastern problem will be resolved in all aspects within the framework of socialism and with such an organized united struggle for independence, democracy, and socialism (Yürüyüş, Issue 155, pp. 8-9)”

The first finding from the analysis of the selected periodicals is the recognition and definition of the Kurdish question. Although they used different concepts, it is clear that they dealt with the Kurdish identity and the Kurdish question historically and critically and sought solutions to the question. The common tone in all three periodicals is to look at the Kurdish question from an economic perspective and to provide a class-based analysis. It is not surprising to see the reflections of the class-based analysis that underlies orthodox Marxism in these periodicals, which are representatives of pro-Soviet socialism in Turkey. Again, due to the structuralist perspective of orthodox Marxism, the solution to the Kurdish question is seen in the revolution to be led by the working class and the socialist order that would follow it in all three periodicals. Another common aspect in the periodicals is that they go beyond the dominant state discourse of the time and include the oppression of the Kurds on their agenda. Additionally, all three periodicals have a shared

understanding in terms of the rejection of the “colonial thesis”, which has been propounded by the Kurdish identity-based organizations of the 1970s.

The most important point where the three periodicals differ from each other is the issue of recognizing the Kurdish question as a national question. İlke and Ürün identify the Kurdish issue as a national question and offer Lenin’s principle of self-determination for the resolution because the principle of self-determination accompanies the structural understanding of the revolution and socialist order in classical Marxism. Here, Yürüyüş has a distinct stance on the grounds that the periodical does not recognize the Kurdish question as a matter of national question; so that Yürüyüş conceptualize the term “oppression” on the economic base, whereas İlke and Ürün accept the political, social, and cultural features of the oppression. What is also outstanding is the deficiency of the voice of the Kurdish people in the periodicals. Because of the fact that TİP has a remarkable legacy in terms of the visibility of the Kurdish identity from the 1960s on, Yürüyüş includes the voices of Kurdish actors such as Tarık Ziya Ekinci as given above. On the other hand, İlke and Ürün seem to disregard the voice of the Kurdish actors, even though they frequently mention the presence of the Kurdish identity. At last, it is important to note that all the periodicals mostly prefer to engage in debates with the Kurdish organizations through the publications, rather than providing a space for the Kurdish actors to reflect their voice.

In the final chapter, I will summarize the findings of the research and propose the concluding remarks where I shall put the main argument of the thesis, and the possible dimensions for further research regarding the research question.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

Starting with the founding principles of the Republic of Turkey that was based on the mono-national discourse of Kemalist principles and the once again underlined with the substance of the 1971 Memorandum, bringing the Kurdish question as an ethno-cultural identity to the political agenda had been tried to be prevented. In this respect, Kurds in Turkey were not free from the consequences of the political turn that started with the 12 March Regime. Even before the 1971 Memorandum, the police raided Ankara and Istanbul DDKO centers in October 1970 and some members were arrested. After the Memorandum, all the work of the DDKO was stopped and a lawsuit was filed in the martial law court. The defenses made in the DDKO case constituted a turning point both for that period and for the Kurdish movement that would develop in the 1970s. The bulk of the collective defenses were devoted to defending the language and culture of the Kurdish people and their existence as a separate people against the military prosecutor's claims that ignores Kurdish as a language, but defines it as a heap of words collected from

Turkish and other languages. Both the general position of the defenses and the attitude taken at the trials such as collective defense and resistance to some practices enforced by the military court strengthened the DDKO's claim to be one of the sources of inspiration in the later processes of the Kurdish movement. More importantly, it could be argued that with its activities and especially its defense text, the DDKO has gained a critical position in the transition to defining the Kurdish problem as a "national problem" rather than a "regional underdevelopment". Meanwhile, the defense of TİP officials in the Constitutional Court, especially regarding the decision taken at the 4th Congress on the Kurdish question, would cause serious disappointment in Kurdish circles on the ground that TİP officials could not maintain the radicalness of the standpoint of the party on Kurdish question that was achieved in the 4th Congress. (Rızgarî, 1976, p. 21 in Akkaya).

The other important reason for the disengagement of the Kurdish movement from the socialist left was the Turkish socialists' approach to the Kurdish question in general, which can be summarized as an issue that the socialist revolution could resolve. As explained in Chapter II, the general approach of the 1960s socialist left to the Kurdish issue prioritizing the aspect of economic developments. The statements of Behice Boran, who was one of the representatives of another, Emek group within TİP, criticized the publication of *Yeni Akış* and the organization of Eastern Meetings by seeing them as bourgeois nationalism at the Central Committee meeting. Even in the 4th Congress, in which the critical decisions were taken regarding the Kurdish question, are among the factors that cause the Kurds to distance themselves from the left. It should be born in mind that the international and regional context, which could be defined by the experiences and actions of Kurdish figures who fled after the 1971 Memorandum, the consequences of the Algiers Treaty of 1975, and the 1979

Revolution in Iran, had an outstanding impact on the formation of the Kurdish movement in the 1970s.

Apart from the given factors above, the most distinctive debates between Kurdish organizations and the Turkish left, which emerged in the political arena through legal publications and illegal organizational structures since 1975, became public in mid-1977. These debates were reflected on the legal periodicals of the period, based on the thesis of the Kurdish organizations which focused on the acknowledgment of Kurds as a “colonized nation” and Kurdistan as a “colony”; and organizing independently from the Turkish socialist left for the adoption of the national liberation discourse. In particular, almost all of the Turkish left opposed the thesis that “Kurdistan is a colony” with the argument that “colonialism is a phenomenon that emerged at a certain historical stage of imperialism and Turkey cannot be an imperialist country at the same time since it is itself a (semi/new) colony”. (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013, p. 50)⁸.

The literature on the roots of identity politics underlines the effects of multiculturalism and the radicalization of identities due to oppression, especially due to the nation-building processes. However, taking the ideology-identity relationship into the consideration, the approaches to, and analyses of the left organizations in terms of the question of identity stayed barely focused. Hence, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature by investigating the left-wing organizations’ approaches to the national identity question. As it has outlined in the previous chapters, the 1970s Turkish left elaborated the Kurdish question within the limits of classical Marxist

⁸ The exception in this respect was the Kurtuluş periodical and movement from the THKP-C tradition. Kurtuluş determined “Kurdistan is a colony” thesis and included several articles on “national question” from the second issue to the last issue. Despite defending the colonial thesis, Kurtuluş, who envisaged unified action rather than a separate Kurdish movement, later took the name of Turkey and North-Kurdistan Liberation Organization (Türkiye ve Kuzey Kürdistan Kurtuluş Örgütü, TKKKÖ).

understanding, whose focus is the economic aspect and the class-based analysis. The gap opened between leftist politics and Kurdish identity through diversified organizations and publications, has evolved into a rupture in 1980. According to the analysis presented in this thesis, I propose the argument that the leftist politics' approach to the Kurdish question in the examined period is among the reasons why the Kurdish identity, which finds a place in left politics, creates an agenda based on identity politics.

Before I engaged with the Turkish case profoundly and familiarized myself with the data, I had been expecting that the 1970s Turkish left had limited space for the Kurdish question in their agenda. The possible effect of the political and legal sanctions after the 1971 Memorandum faced by the political actors who dealt with this Kurdish question in the 1960s on the political actors of the 1970s was the first of the important factors in this expectation. In the second place, the proliferation of the Kurdish identity-based organizations that were ruptured from the socialist left during the second half of the 1970s made me expect a limited approach within the socialist organizations of the 1970s. Another important factor was the widespread belief in the literature on Turkish politics that the separation of identity politics from the left in Turkey was the eradication policies of the post-1980 coup regime on left politics.

However, contrary to my expectations, the Turkish left of the 1970s gave importance to the examination of the Kurdish question in detail in their programs. I observed that all three periodicals examined the Kurdish question from two main perspectives. While the first of these branches focused on the economic aspect of the question in a historical frame, the second underlined the political, social, and cultural oppression aspect of the problem. The economic analysis of the question was made

through the structure of the existent economic system in Turkey, which was defined with class distinctions.

It was repeated in the periodicals whilst examining the oppressive aspect of the problem that the principles in the establishment phase of Turkey as a nation-state created social, cultural, and political pressure besides the economic pressure. But at the same time, it is also highlighted especially in Yürüyüş that the capitalist economy and the political actors, here they refer to the governments, which maintain this economic system use oppressive mechanisms for the continuation of the system. In addition to that, rejection of the recognition of the Kurdish question as a national question in Yürüyüş, and the tendency of the consolidation of all identities in the “working class” in İlke and Ürün accelerated the disengagement of the Kurdish actors from the socialist left. Last but not least, the agreement of all periodicals on the refusal of the colonial thesis; and the inadequacy of the salience of the Kurdish actors within the left organizations are the catalyzers for the creation of a separate agenda for Kurdish identity.

For the final words, I would like to recall that identity politics is not limited to ethnic identity. However, just as in ethnic identity politics, studies on gender identity and religious identity generally cover the early and contemporary periods. This thesis might serve to provide perspective for future research on how these identities are evaluated within ideological politics concerning the origins of the politics that is based on gender or religion. Also, the comparative case analysis including the case of Turkey regarding the separation of identity politics from ideological politics would be an appealing contribution to the literature.

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