

THE KURDISH POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN THE 1960s:
THE CASE OF “THE EASTERN MEETINGS”

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AZAT ZANA GÜNDOĞAN

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Sencer Ayata
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Prof. Dr. Feride ACAR
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Assist. Prof. Kürşad Ertuğrul
Co-Supervisor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Mesut Yeğen	(METU, SOC)	_____
Assist. Prof. Kürşad Ertuğrul	(METU, ADM)	_____
Assist. Prof. Fahriye Üstüner	(METU, ADM)	_____
Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör	(METU, SOC)	_____
Assist. Prof. Nesim Şeker	(METU, HIS)	_____

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Name, Last name: Azat Zana GÜNDOĞAN

Signature :

ABSTRACT

THE KURDISH POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN THE 1960s: THE CASE OF “THE EASTERN MEETINGS”

Gündođan, Azat Zana

M.S., Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor : Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeđen

Co-Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Kürşad Ertuđrul

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This thesis examines the Kurdish political mobilization in the 1960s through focusing on the case of the Eastern Meetings. These meetings were organized by the Easterners group of the Turkish Workers Party in the various provinces in the autumn 1967 in the East and Southeast Anatolia with the aim of voicing the demands, claims and the grievances of these regions and the Kurdish population. Using the theoretical framework and the analytical tools presented by the social movements and collective action theory, this thesis examines the *identity formation* and *mobilization processes* of the Eastern Meetings and situates them within the socio-political context of the 1960s. Through this analysis, the thesis aims to draw a dynamic and relational picture of a particular moment in the history of Kurdish political activism.

Keywords: Eastern Meetings, Kurdish political mobilization, social movements, collective action

ÖZ

1960'LARDA KÜRT SİYASAL MOBİLİZASYONU: "DOĞU MİTINGLERİ" ÖRNEĞİ

Gündoğan, Azat Zana

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Tez Yöneticisi : Doç.Dr. Mesut Yeğen

Ortak Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd.Doç. Kürşad Ertuğrul

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Bu tez Doğu Mitingleri örneği üzerine yoğunlaşmak suretiyle 1960'lı yıllarda Kürtlerin politik mobilizasyonunu inceliyor. Bu mitingler 1967 sonbaharında Türkiye İşçi Partisi'nin Doğulular grubu tarafından Doğu ve Güneydoğu bölgesinin çeşitli illerinde, bu bölgelerin ve Kürt nüfusun taleplerini, isteklerini ve sorunlarını dile getirmek amacıyla organize edildi. Bu tez toplumsal hareketler ve kolektif eylem kuramının sunduğu teorik çerçeve ve analitik gereçleri kullanarak, Doğu Mitingleri'nin *kimlik oluşumu* ve *mobilizasyon süreçlerini* inceler ve bu mitingleri 1960'ların sosyo-politik bağlamın içinde konumlandırır. Bu inceleme ile bu tez Kürtlerin siyasi aktivizm tarihindeki özel bir anın dinamik ve ilişkisel bir portresini çizmeyi amaçlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Doğu Mitingleri, Kürt politik mobilizasyonu, toplumsal hareketler, kolektif eylem.

To My Parents

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INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 1967, by weekly sessions, thousands of people crowded the areas in the districts and provinces of the eastern and southeastern Turkey. They were not rioting; they were not striking or fighting. It was a collective action for protesting in the form of a mass meeting. These meetings, called as the Eastern Meetings (*Doğu Mitingleri*) were organized in those places where the majority of the population was Kurdish: Silvan (August 1967), Diyarbakır (3 September), Siverek (24 September), Batman (8 October), Tunceli (15 October), Ağrı (22 October) and the last meeting was held in Ankara (5 November) and they constituted a striking instance of the collective political actions of the 1960s.

The 1960s, in broader terms, provide a researcher fertile areas of analysis concerning collective political action in Turkey. The roots of the full-fledged, organized political activism of the 1970s can be found especially in the 1960s when the political activity gained a considerable social character. In this decade, political mobilization among the youth acting significantly in university clubs and societies, would later be evolving into a form of violent struggle. Kurds were also among those groups that contributed to the vigorous political atmosphere of the 1960s which was characterized by different forms of political action ranging from strikes and demonstrations to faculty and land occupations; so that the Eastern Meetings were one of these occasions in which Kurds engaged in contentious politics. They were the first mass movement against the authority in Eastern and Southeastern regions since the last Kurdish revolt erupted in Tunceli (Dersim) in 1938.

What makes these meetings distinct is that they represent a different form of resistance to central authority than those of the early Republican period. Up until the late 1930s the region witnessed a series of Kurdish revolts which constituted the major form of political action of the Kurds. By the 1950s, however, the era of revolts had long been ended and the Kurdish population

seemed to be pacified by the harsh measures of the state. However, in the mid-1950s and the 1960s a new form of Kurdish political dynamism began to rise especially among the Kurdish university students in metropolises like Ankara and İstanbul. This was a time during which Turkey underwent a significant social transformation which then resulted in the emergence of a leftist movement with a voice higher than ever. A new group of Kurdish intellectuals who were educated in the universities of Ankara and İstanbul were also among the activists of the leftist movements of the time. Being inspired both from the Kurdish revolt in Iraq and leftist trends in the world, the Kurdish youth in Turkey engaged in a considerable political activism. In this sense, the case of this study, i.e. the Eastern Meetings presents us a valuable case in which this Kurdish political dynamism materialized. Especially after the silent years following the harsh military and political measures of the previous decades, such a political dynamism was new and considerable for the ruling elite.

In this context, the Eastern Meetings emerged as a novel form of protest which flourished in and were nourished from the socio-political context of 1960s which was, as stated, characterized by the widespread collective political actions of the different sectors of society. Specifically, they emerged primarily in relation to or as a by-product of the leftist movement of the time. Two groups were discernable in the organization of the meetings: the socialists and the patriots (*yurtseverler*). The socialist Kurds acting in the Turkish Labor Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi* or the TLP) and the nationalists who founded the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (*Türkiye Kürdistanı Demokrat Partisi* - DPTK) were the two groups that organized the meetings. However the socialist group led the initiative and the meetings were organized under the roof of the TLP. On the one hand, it was a moment for the Kurds to voice exclusively the problems and demands of the Kurdish regions and population instead of the class-based politics of the Turkish left which remained indifferent to ethnic dimension of the Kurdish problem. On the other hand, these meetings represented a noticeable instance in which the Kurdish political contenders acted hand in hand with their comrades from the Turkish left to voice the

sufferings and the demands of the Kurdish population. Thus, any effort to grasp the Kurdish political movement of the 1960s will remain incomplete without an eye on the Eastern Meetings.

Though one can find many studies on the political environment in the 1960s, it is hard to find studies which are devoted solely to the analysis of the Kurdish political movement in this decade. As a corollary of this relative lack of interest in the Kurdish political movement in the 1960s, the Eastern Meetings remained a barely examined issue. Most of the studies on the 1960s only broadly mentioned the issue. In the western, especially American academia, there are many studies in the handbook format which seek to keep the track of the evolution of the Kurdish question, or Kurdish nationalism in a broad time span starting usually with the late Ottoman or early Republican period to the recent Kurdish movement of the 1990s.¹ These studies generally mention these meetings without any analysis of them.

Especially after the 1990s, in the context of the rising national movement among the Kurds in Turkey, there emerged many studies on the history of the Kurds written by the Kurdish authors most of whom seek to prove the existence of a separate nation as Kurds through historical references.² They usually encompass broader time periods reaching even to pre-historic times to make their claim that Kurds are a people having their own language and homeland since the ancient times. As one might expect, these authors did not prefer to focus on such a specific moment as the Eastern Meetings of the history of the Kurds in their studies.

¹ For instance, among others see, Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question in Turkey*. (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997).; Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma*. (Colorado, Westview Press, 1990).; Edgar O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Struggle, 1920-94*. (London: St.Martin Press, 1996).

² For example see, Cemşid Bender, *Kürt Tarihi ve Uygarlığı*, (İstanbul, 1991); Faik Bulut, *Kürt Dilinin Tarihçesi*, (İstanbul: Tüzmamanlar Yayıncılık, 1993); Celîlê Celîl et.al, *Yeni ve Yakın Çağda Kürt Siyaset Tarihi*, (İstanbul:Pêrî Yayınları, 1998).

There are also studies of the Turkish left whose main focus is less the Kurdish movement than the leftist movement of the time in more general terms. For instance, the master thesis of Bağış Erten is a good example in this case.³ Erten compares the 1968 Movement of Turkey with the one in the Western countries. In Turkey, the TLP and the student movements constitute the basic focus of his analysis. However, this study does not mention the Kurds who were also one of the significant groups in the 1968 Movement in Turkey. Thus, the neglect of the political activism of the Kurds result in the neglect of the Eastern Meetings, which was a significant case of the Kurdish political activism in the 1960s. However, as this thesis will try to demonstrate, the Kurdish activists were present in all stages of the 1968 Movement with their own political identity as the Easterners (*Doğulular*). Thus, the Kurdish political movement emerged in relation to or even under the roof of the leftist movement of the time. The leading cadre of The Eastern Meetings were mainly the Kurdish members or the Easterners of the TLP. Besides, both in form and content these meetings were a product of the general political mobilization of the 1960s.

The memoirs of the organizers of these meetings, as one might expect, devote more space to the Eastern Meetings.⁴ These memoirs constitute significant first-eye sources of this study. However, since their aims are not to analyze but to narrate, they cannot fill the gap in the literature concerning these meetings.

The only exception to the general lack of the academic interest in the Eastern Meetings is İsmail Beşikçi's study *Doğu Mitingleri'nin Analizi* (The Analysis of the Eastern Meetings) which focuses on the Eastern Meetings *per se*.⁵ He participated in and observed one step of the serial meetings, the Ağrı meeting.

³ A. Bağış Erten, "A Comparative Analysis of the 1968 Movement in Turkey" (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2003).

⁴ Among others see, Kemal Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler*, (İstanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2nd ed., 2003).; Yılmaz Çamlıbel, *Kervan Yürüyor (Kuva Diçi?)-Anılar*, (İstanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2001).; Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım*, (İstanbul: Avesta, 1998).; Mehdi Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır*, (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1991).

⁵ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi (1967)*, (Ankara:Yurt-Kitap Yayın, 1992).

He also used his inferences in another book.⁶ In general, Beşikçi's studies were written in a harsher political context when the state elites did not tolerate any activity against the state's denial of Kurdish existence and problem. Therefore, his works must be appreciated, since the author bore honorably the consequences (imprisonment, removal from the university etc.) and his studies were valuable and pioneering contributions to the literature of Kurdish studies in Turkey.

In his book, Beşikçi devotes a considerable space to the examination of the topics voiced and discussed in the meetings. Here he mentions imbalance of social justice between the East and the West, feudal property relations, the institutionalization of landlordism, the relations between religion and society, and language and education as the major points of references in the meetings. Throughout this analysis Beşikçi presents an in-depth examination of each of these topics. However, Beşikçi does not take them only as the topics of the meetings. Rather, he presents them as the factors underlying the emergence of the Eastern Meetings. That is to say, he attributes his own inferences and conclusions to the members of the meeting committee to whom he confers a great role in the whole social change process. According to Beşikçi the leading cadre of these meetings made the Kurdish people gain consciousness of their conditions and hence take action. However, he does not examine the conditions within which this leadership came into existence, raised their voices and organized the masses for the meetings. Likewise, such a view ignores the local and national power relations, the role of ideology and hegemonic struggles in the emergence of this leading cadre. In Beşikçi's approach the actions of the actors are determined to a great extent by structural forces in such a way as to ignore the agency of the actors and the interaction of the conjunctural factors which render the collective political action possible at a particular historical context.

⁶ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni: Sosyo-Ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller*, (Ankara: E Yayınları, 2nd ed., 1970), pp. 438-50.

At this point one should elucidate the approach of this thesis in its examination of the Eastern Meetings. Above all, this thesis is an attempt to “remember” a moment in the history when the Kurds engaged in contentious politics through such a collective political action. Accordingly it sets out to contextualize and hence historicize these meetings. To do that, one should examine the interaction between macro socio-political processes and conjunctural forces. For instance, the social transformation Turkey underwent in the 1960s and the rise of a general environment of political mobilization that encompasses various sectors of society such as workers, peasants, or students constitute the general scene. This thesis seeks to keep the track of the relation between this general setting and the more momentary occasions such as the Barzani Revolt or the Incident of the 49s (*49’lar Olayı*) to situate the meetings in its historical context. That is, rather than explaining these meetings as a natural corollary of the general context, the thesis tries to situate them at the juncture of the macro processes and conjunctural factors.

Another aspect of the approach adopted in this thesis is its focus on the actions and agencies of social actors. In the context of the Eastern Meetings, as Beşikçi states, the significance of the organizers’ role is undeniable. However, Beşikçi attributes almost a missionary role to this leadership. They were, for Beşikçi, the persons who were aware of the underdevelopment of the East and thus through this meetings they aimed to “wake up the masses from their deep sleep.”⁷ For this study, however, the important point is to elaborate on the conditions which rendered emergence of this particular leading cadre possible at this historical moment and situate their actions, maneuvers and strategies within this context. For instance, one might observe a general pattern among the members of this leading cadre. Broadly speaking, they came from the Kurdish provinces to the big cities and had university education at this urban setting and here they participated in the leftist movement of the period. These will be detailed in the following pages of this thesis. For the moment, it is

⁷ Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi*, p.18.

sufficient to state that, although it is plausible to situate the actions of these actors in the general context of the 1960s, a time when various sectors of society engaged in collective political action, it will not be correct to argue that the mobilization of the Kurdish contenders was just a natural product of this political environment. Because, one should not evaluate their actions without stressing the fact that they brought a set of shared memories and experiences concerning the Kurdish question which prompted them to take action at this particular historical moment.

The theoretical framework adopted by this thesis, collective action and social movements theory, provides one to approach the issue from the above-mentioned aspects. Collective action and social movements theory is a huge realm which entails various different schools of thoughts. Recently there emerged some synthesizing efforts in this realm and this thesis deploys one of this synthesizing approaches, namely the framework presented by Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow.⁸ In Chapter I, I will elaborate more on the social movements theories in general and the theoretical framework of McAdam et al. The significant point to stress here is the reason for situating the thesis within this framework. The perspective of McAdam et al., proposes a relational and dynamic approach to the social movements. They do not take structural factors as stagnant elements that inherently produce any collective action. Rather, they focus on the dynamic interaction between various mechanisms and processes in the examination of the social movements. Further, the analysis of actors, their actions, their relations to mechanisms, structures and hence to other actors constitute a significant element of the framework drawn by McAdam et al. Another significant asset of this framework is that they refrain from limiting the analysis of the social movements to mobilization moment and examines the pre-mobilization process

⁸ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

as well. In this way, they present a dynamic and relational approach to the social movements literature. Deploying this theoretical approach makes it possible for this thesis to draw a dynamic picture of the Eastern Meetings with an emphasis on mechanisms, processes, actors and their actions and hence their relations with one another.

At this point one should introduce the sources of this thesis. There are a set of primary sources which constitute the major materials. The newspapers and journals form the first set of primary sources. I deployed the popular newspapers to follow not only the developments of the period but also the perspectives of the state elite concerning the Kurdish issue and the Eastern Meetings. I also use the periodicals published by the Kurdish intellectuals in order to grasp the perceptions, claims, demands, and discourses of the would-be contenders of the Eastern Meetings. The memoirs of the leading Kurdish actors most of whom were the organizer cadre of the meetings constitute another set of primary sources. Their narrations of their first-hand experiences is important not only for grasping the cognitive processes of Kurdish activists of the time but also for including their experiences and views of the meetings in this study. Also I conducted interviews with some of these persons who actively worked in the organization of the meetings. These interviews provided me detailed information about the meetings and the political environment of the date. As it is the case for the memoirs, the interviews reflected the perceptions and cognitive processes of this leading cadre of the meetings. However, here one should state a note of caution concerning the usage of memoirs and interviews as the sources. They, without doubt, in essence reflect the views of the author of the memoir or the interviewee and can hardly be considered as representative of the whole group. Besides, they narrate the period after a long time passed over the events which might lead them to perceive the period different from the time they experienced. Nevertheless, at most instances their narrations display great consistence and complete one another. Thus, they constitute a significant source as long as taking these cautions into consideration.

As a last remark I should say something on the meaning and implications of focusing on this issue. One should explain the reasons of an effort to remember and remind a collective action, the Eastern Meetings, almost forty years after its occurrence. Because “each historiography is a product of its own time: the questions we put to history are those we find in the present.”⁹ During the long years of the armed-conflict between the PKK and the Turkish military, to a great extent, armed-conflict emerged as the dominating means of the Kurdish political activism. To remember such a moment in the Kurdish political activism is significant in terms of reminding a forgotten occasion in which the Kurds made their claims through peaceful means.

Moreover, to locate these meetings with a relational approach to its context in the 1960s provides us a more nuanced picture of the 1968 Movement and the place of the Kurds within it. Because, as stated, the Kurds and the Kurdish political activism which then culminated in the Eastern Meetings were significant elements of the leftist activism of the time. Also, although these meetings were organized primarily by the Kurdish members of the TLP, they nonetheless stood as the autonomous initiative of the Kurdish group. The Eastern Meetings can be said to stand at the junction of the Kurdish contenders’ cutting their ties with the Turkish left. Among other things, these meetings were also influential on the later hegemony of the Kurdish left over the masses compared to the Kurdish right. For example, Naci Kutlay states that after the mass meetings, the Kurdish left gained advantage and the “Kurdish right was over.”¹⁰ As the following pages will show the Kurdish contenders were hand in hand with their Turkish comrades in almost every organization and contentious collective action.

⁹ Hamit Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980),” in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* ed. Abbas Vali (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), p.20.

¹⁰ Azat Zana Gündoğan, Interview with Naci Kutlay, 10 November 2004, Ankara.

In the first chapter, I will give a review of the literature on collective action and social movements including the Marxist conception of collective action, the collective behavior and rational choice perspectives, resource mobilization, political process and framing models, new social movements paradigm and the recent synthesizing efforts. Among them the relational approach of McAdam et.al. (2003) which will be adopted is justified.

In the second chapter of this study, I will give the socio-political conjunctures in which the Eastern Meetings were flourished. By so doing, I will try to reach a factual basis for the following analysis (in the third chapter) of the *causal mechanisms* and *processes* which paved the way for the meetings. Since in the 1960s, especially in the second half of it, the international political, economic and social changes combined with the domestic ones revealed a unique political mobilization in Turkey almost in every social sector of the society, it is crucial to locate the Kurdish political activity as one and the less studied of those. A wide range of social groups from university students and peasants to workers were engaged more or less in collective political action and set out to contend with the authority. In this sense, it provides a numerous variety of forms of collective political action (i.e. boycotts, land, factory and faculty occupations, protest meetings etc.). This chapter will also be helpful for us to locate other actors in relation to the Kurdish political activity under focus.

In the last chapter, the Eastern Meetings will be elaborated through such processes of political identity formation and mobilization. Within the former process, the *environmental* and *cognitive mechanisms* will be situated. For the latter, the *social attribution*, *social appropriation*, and the *social construction* will be analyzed. It is aimed at the end of the thesis, to reach a deeper insight and an inclusive profile of the Kurdish contentious episode in which the Kurds undertook a contentious political action through a political identity which took shape under specific social circumstances and interaction in a dynamic environment. The ‘why’s and ‘how’s of the Eastern Meetings will thus be given in a more dynamic framework.

CHAPTER 1

A CRITICAL ASSESMENT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THEORIES: TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

The Eastern Meetings were organized in a distinct place and time with a particular political and ideological content. These characteristics distinguish this collective action from any collectivity like a craze, mob, or street riot which are regarded as having irrational, unorganized, spontaneous characteristics. This study adopts Antonio Melucci's conceptualization of collective action. According to his definition a collective action as a set of social practices includes (i) simultaneously a number of individuals or groups, which (ii) exhibit similar morphological characteristics in contiguity of time and space, (iii) imply a social field of relationships, and (iv) the capacity of the people involved in making sense of what they are doing.¹¹ Accordingly, in the autumn of 1967, with weekly sessions, thousands of people gathered to participate in the Eastern Meetings organized in some of the towns and urban centers in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey which were inhabited by a population with a distinct ethnic character (the Kurdishness). It is the title of these series of protests, which is the best indicator of thesis' main target to be addressed. Even that the last meeting was organized in the heart of the state, Ankara, contains a message. In a spectrum ranging from the title of the meetings (the *Eastern Meetings*) and the time and space in which they were held to voice certain demands and the form of protest, what appears before us is an attempt of a population to negotiate with the authority. Therefore, it is plausible to regard these meetings as occasions creating a social field of

¹¹ Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.20.

relationships where a part of the population, the Kurds and the state bureaucracy communicated. The actors within these relationships forced each other to consider one another. Finally as it will be clarified in detail in the following chapters, it seems that the organizers of the meetings were very well aware of what they were doing in terms of articulating their demands in the placards carried and the slogans shouted. Some of the placards in these meetings were as follow: “*We do not want butt of the rifles, but hands to shake!*,” “*Respect our language,*” “*Jail, Police Station, oppression equal the East,*” “*We do not want bazooka, but factories,*” “*We have caves, they have villas,*” “*Your political and economic oppression shall not extinguish the flames inside us*”, “*Stop for Agha, Sheikh and Comprador trio.*”^{*} As the placards demonstrate the driving ideas of these meetings appeared to be the economic imbalance between the Eastern and the Western parts of Turkey which was thought to be to the disadvantage of Eastern and Southeastern regions. For the meeting organization committees the main reason for the negligence of this region by the state was the fact that it was predominantly inhabited by an ethnically different population called the Kurds. One should also state that the conjunctural factors must be analyzed together with the resources held by the organizers necessary to articulate their demands in the relational field created by the meetings. Thus, these meetings were not solely confined to a case of political collective action appeared in a significant time and space, rather they should be dealt with in relation to the conjunctural factors and to the actions of other actors in the distinct decade of the 1960s.

Since the Eastern Meetings are assumed to be a case of collective political action, such an analysis requires a review of theoretical background of the literature on collective action and social movements. However, as it is too vast to cover here in detail within the limits of this study, a general overview of the

^{*} Respectively in Turkish: “Dipçik değil, uzanan el istiyoruz”, “Dilimize hürmet ediniz”, “Bize mağara, onlara villa”, “Bazoka değil, fabrika isteriz”, “Hapishane, karakol, baskı eşittir Doğu”. “Siyasi ve iktisadi baskınız içimizdeki ateşi söndüremeyecektir”, “Ağa, şeyh, komprador üçlüsüne paydos”.

approaches and major paradigms will be presented. There are two points to underline: first one can find below a review of the dominant paradigms of collective action and social movements; but it is crucial, at that point, to state that the classification of theories, especially the ones emerged after the 1950s such as collective behavior, rational choice, resource mobilization etc. is designed for only better understanding the demarcation lines of the paradigms; rather than indicating that these theories have been following one after another in a determined time line, because they sometimes emerged and developed concomitantly. The second point to underline is more directly relevant to theory itself. As Mehmet Cem Akaş cogently argues, on the one hand the literature is almost totally western-oriented and there are relatively little studies on the cases outside Europe;¹² on the other, the recent literature focuses mainly on the organized, institutional social movements. In that sense such kind of collective action embodied in the Eastern Meetings would provide a case first to test the current theories in a non-western society where political institutionalization and democratic processes are not similar to other western societies and second to see how a collective action even in a form of loose organization could be as influential as a full-fledged social movement, though relatively in a more restricted time span.¹³ Given these, it is necessary to present a review of the literature on collective action and social movements. Marxist conception of collective action, the collective behavior and rational choice perspectives, resource mobilization, political process and framing models and new social movements paradigm as well as the recent synthesizing efforts will be presented below.

¹² Mehmet Cem Akaş, "Collective Political Action in the Turkish Press (1950-1980)" (Ph.D. diss., Boğaziçi University, the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2004), p.3.

¹³ Ibid.

1.1 The Marxist Conception of Collective Action

Marx, Lenin and Gramsci can be regarded as the first thinkers who theorized collective action. It will be meaningful to start first with Marx and then continue with Lenin and Gramsci since they regard collective action as a matter of conflict inscribed in the social structure, in contrast to the previous scholars who approached collective action as a crowd psychology and as an aberration.¹⁴ Although Marx and Engels saw collective action rooted in social structure “they seriously underrated the resources to engage in it, its cultural dimensions, and the importance of politics.”¹⁵ The foundations of Marx’s “grievance theory” of collective action lie in the fact that people get involved in collective action when the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie reaches its climax. What mainly brings the proletariat into action are the class consciousness and trade unions. However Marx seems to be more interested in why working class fails to confront and clash with its antagonist than how the working class could be engaged in collective action against the bourgeoisie. The answer Marx gives to this question lies in his concept of “false consciousness” by which he means that, “if workers failed to act as ‘History’ dictated, it was because they remained cloaked in a shroud of ignorance woven by their class enemies.”¹⁶ It was Lenin who suggested a theory concerning the question of who would create “true” consciousness.

For Lenin elite professional leaders would create a “vanguard party” in order to engage the proletariat to act collectively for its real interests. Lenin’s emphasis on organization seems to be an attempt to integrate Marx’s theory into a Tsarist context characterized by its highly repressive state and backward society both of which impeded class consciousness and in turn, a collective

¹⁴ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.10.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.11.

¹⁶ Ibid.

action, namely a revolution, to emerge.¹⁷ However his theory of the vanguard party applied to a particular context within which the working class was unsuccessful to produce a revolution on its own, but it was “applied indiscriminately to the world communist movement with little regard to social and political opportunities and constraints.”¹⁸ Although Gramsci accepted Lenin’s emphasis on revolutionary party he added two elements to that: first the fundamental task of the party should be to create a historic bloc of force around the working class, and second this could be accomplished by a cadre of “organic intellectuals” developed within from the working class itself.¹⁹ What is crucial in these two elements is the priority Gramsci gives to the creation of a working class culture. Only in this manner could a consensus be reached around the party, the working class could take initiatives on its own and then in long and slow processes it could build bridges between itself and other social formations in the way of dealing with what Gramsci calls “the common sense of capitalist society.”²⁰ But in this long term dialogue between the proletariat and the bourgeois class, Tarrow asks, “what would prevent the cultural power of the latter . . . from transforming the party, rather than vice versa?”²¹ In this sense “Gramsci’s solution to the collective action problem – like Marx and Lenin’s – was indeterminate about the influence of politics.”²²

It appears that both of these Marxist approaches with their different emphases foreshadowed the later perspectives within the literature. Marx stressed the cleavages within the capitalist society structure, the aspect which would be

¹⁷ Ibid., p.12.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.13.

²⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith. eds. (New York: International Publishers, 1971) pp 323-33.

²¹ Tarrow, p.13.

²² Ibid.

called “grievance theory” by the later students of collective action. Likewise, Lenin’s emphasis on the organizational necessity as seen in the case of vanguard party would foreshadow the later perspective of “resource mobilization.” Gramsci’s central attention to the creation of a consensus around the party’s goals would later be labeled as “framing” and “identity formation” mainly emphasized by the New Social Movements theorists. To repeat “none of them specified the *political* conditions in which resource-poor and exploited workers could be expected to mobilize on behalf of their interests.”²³ Also, as Melucci states, though Marxism’s importance is that it has provided a theoretical framework for the historical analysis of class action, “its contribution to the theory of social movements has been poor, indirect, or . . . derivative.”²⁴ One should also point out that the collective action is not a result of the historical determination of the social structure.

1.2 Collective Behavior Theory

By the 1950s collective behavior theory dominated the research on collective action. This approach sees collective action and social movements as the products of social breakdowns and crises moments. “As a form of collective behavior, social movements were considered spontaneous, unorganized and unstructured phenomena that were discontinuous with institutional and organizational behavior.”²⁵ The term “collective behavior” was used so inclusively that social movements were regarded as having no difference from riots, collective enthusiasms, fads or rumors. Thus, collective action was considered by collective behavior scholars as crisis behavior. In this sense social movements and participants of such actions were perceived as nonrational, isolated or frustrated individuals. In other words, such collective

²³ Tarrow, p.12. (emphasis original)

²⁴ Melucci, p.14.

²⁵ Aldon Morris, “Reflections on Social Movement Theory: Criticisms and Proposals,” *Contemporary Sociology* 29:3 (2000) : p.445.

behaviors were regarded as exterior to the normal processes like voting or campaigning, or with a Durkheimian concept as “anomalie”. Among some versions of theory such as William Kornhauser’s “mass society” theory, James Davies’ “relative deprivation” theory and Neil Smelser’s “structural-strain” theory, what was emphasized in general is the socio-psychological aspects of collective behavior.²⁶ William Kornhauser’s theory of “mass society” suggests that social movements arise among those people who feel isolated in mass societies. While James Davies claims that the revolution is a result of a feeling of deprivation in comparison to the earlier conditions of people, Neil Smelser’s structural strain theory has a functional view of society and implies that societal dysfunctions as by-products of rapid social changes produce social movements. In general collective behavior theorists tend to underscore the mobilization process because of their attempts to relate social movements to more spontaneous forms of expressions.²⁷

1.3 Rational Choice and Resource Mobilization

By the 1960s when student movements and labor actions erupted in the U.S.A and Europe scholars of collective action and social movements developed a new perspective focusing on the interests of the participants. The perspective which approaches social movements from a microeconomics perspective as the products of individual self-interest rather than class struggle and state rule²⁸ was represented by Mancur Olson’s ‘free-rider’ theory²⁹, in a milieu where the

²⁶ For these theories see: William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1999); James Davies, “Toward a Theory of Revolution,” *American Sociological Review*. 27:1 (1962); Neil Smelser, *The Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1962); Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective Behavior* 2nd.ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

²⁷ Tarrow, p.14.

²⁸ Ibid., p.15.

²⁹ See Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

discipline of economics dominated the western academia. According to Olson rational self-interested individuals will choose super rationally for “riding free,” rather than contributing to secure the “collective goods” of the movement.³⁰ Mobilization occurs only if “selective benefits” are offered by the would-be leaders in order to overcome the problem of “free-riding.”³¹

Olson’s theory starts and ends with individual self-interest and it has little to say about, for instance, what of the thousands of people in the 1960s who marched, rioted or demonstrated for interests with which they did not involved directly.³² Later theorists developed some answers for this question in the 1970s under the heading of “resource mobilization” which dominated the area of social movements during the 1980s.³³ To sum up, the major formulations such as ‘mass society,’ ‘relative deprivation’ and ‘collective behavior’ “pointed to sudden increases in individual grievances generated by the “structural strains” of rapid social change.”³⁴ Moreover, these traditional approaches had the common assumption that “movement participation was relatively rare, discontents were transitory, movement and institutionalized actions were sharply distinct, and movement actors were arational if not outright

³⁰ J. Craig Jenkins, “Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983) : p.536

³¹ “Only a *separate and “selective” incentive* will stimulate a rational individual in a latent group to act in a group-oriented way.” Olson, p.51 (emphasis original).

³² Tarrow, p.16.

³³ For the leading studies of resource mobilization theory, see: John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, *The Trend of Social Movements* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning,1973).; John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82:6 (1977).; Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).; William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1975).; J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, “Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972),” *American Sociological Review* 42:2 (1977): pp.249-268. For a detailed and comprehensive review of the resource mobilization theory see: J. Craig Jenkins, “Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): pp.527-553.

³⁴ Jenkins, p.530.

irrational.”³⁵ These new perspectives emphasize the rationality of actors, the strategic problems movement actors faced and the agency of movements in social change.³⁶ McCarthy and Zald see a social movement as a set of opinions and beliefs of some people who were engaged in “changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society.”³⁷ For them social movements become a force of social change through social movement organizations (SMOs) they produce.³⁸ In their view, grievances and discontents even do not play the major role in the generation of social movements because although most people experience some discontent, movements do not arise among all the categories of people who feel deprived or experience some discontent.

Specifically as Craig Jenkins generalizes³⁹, the common arguments of resource mobilization scholars can be summarized. In the following manner movement actions are adaptive responses to the costs and rewards of different actions, meaning that they are rational. Also conflicts of interests embodied in institutionalized power relations define the basic goals of movements. The grievances generated by such conflicts are sufficiently ubiquitous that the formation and mobilization of movements depend on changes in resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action. Modern social movements are typically characterized with centralized, formally structured movement organizations and regarded as being more effective at mobilizing resources and mounting sustained challenges than decentralized, informal movement structures.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82:6 (1977) : p.1218.

³⁸ Doug McAdam, et al. (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.4.

³⁹ Jenkins, p.538.

In general, resource mobilization theory has provided a field to understand that collective action is not a matter of aggregation of atomized individuals; rather “it must be seen as an outcome of complex processes of interaction mediated by certain networks of belonging.”⁴⁰ However, resource mobilization theory is not free from critiques. For instance assuming that individuals have well-defined interests and make choices according to them, it focuses on ‘deliberate’ actions of individuals acting in an organization. This theory also neglects the role of identity and culture of the subjects by presuming the interests as the given motives for mobilization. Organizational and individual interests are assumed not to be installed culturally, but to be defined objectively.

1.4 Political Process Perspective

Political process perspective focuses on the political and institutional milieu both with its opportunities available for and constraints limiting the emergence and operation of collective action and social movements. Proponents like Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam, argue that a population’s central political processes are important in the emergence of social movements.⁴¹ In his *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Charles Tilly defines several components of collective action: *interests, mobilization, opportunity* and *collective action* itself. Any collective action operates, as he constructed, in a “polity model” which is helpful for its analysis. This model consists of a *population, a government, and one or more coalitions*. He elaborates a set of conditions for mobilization. Foremost among these conditions are opportunity to threat challengers and facilitation of repression by authorities. Both of these

⁴⁰ Melucci, p.18.

⁴¹ For the studies of some political process theorists, see: Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978).; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).; Herbet P. Kitschelt, “Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies,” *British Journal of Political Science* 16:1 (1986) : pp.57-85.

dimensions link collective action to state.⁴² The ‘polity model,’ Tilly writes, “relates contenders to government and to other contenders – both members of the polity and challengers of the polity – via coalitions and struggles for power.”⁴³ Tilly accepts the importance of material resources, but at the same time he locates the mobilization activities into a broader context characterized by industrialization, emergence of nation-state, urbanization and development of national market.⁴⁴ In his study, titled *Vendée* which analyzes the peasant rebellion in Vendée region of France in 1793, Tilly also demonstrates the importance of historically specific linkages and social ties, as well as macro processes like proletarianization, urbanization and state-making in identity and interests of different groups.⁴⁵

Herbert Kitschelt’s article is an important example in terms of being an empirical application of this approach in a comparative perspective.⁴⁶ Looking at the anti-nuclear movements in France, Sweden, West Germany and the USA, he attempts to explain social movements with similar demands in different settings. The variations of such similar movements are traced according to the “political input structure” (open/closed) and “political output structure” (weak/strong) of polities. He suggests that relationships between the authority and movements, strategies (i.e. lobbying, petitioning or court litigation), dynamics, impacts (i.e. on society, policy-making, or procedures) and outcomes of social movements can be elaborated within different contexts.

⁴² Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1991), p.18.

⁴³ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978), p.98.

⁴⁴ James M. Jasper, *Ahlâki Protesto Sanatı* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2002), p.71.

⁴⁵ Michael Hanagan, et al. (eds.), *Challenging Authority: The Historical Study of Contentious Politics*. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press; 1998), p.xii.

⁴⁶ Herbet P. Kitschelt, “Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies,” *British Journal of Political Science* 16:1 (1986): pp.57-85.

Political process perspective accounts for the political weaknesses of challenging groups and assigns considerable causal weight to elite external actors.⁴⁷ Also it focuses on the relation between institutional actors and protestors. Thus, compared to resource mobilization theory it grants attention to the institutional and political environment, as seen above, and to the interaction between social movements and institutionalized actors. However, the political process model is generally assumed to be overly structural and contain rationalistic biases.⁴⁸ For one thing Tarrow states that McCarthy and Zald use the language of economics such as movement “entrepreneurs,” movement “industries”, movement “sectors,” a fact which can hide ideology, commitment or values.⁴⁹ Also, like resource mobilization theory, it neglects the role of identities, meanings, and culture in generating and sustaining movements, the fact which later theorists began to treat under the heading of “framing.”

1.5 New Social Movements Approach and Framing Paradigm

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, especially in Europe, resource mobilization paradigm was criticized for being devoid of ideological view of collective action phenomena, meaning that they were regarded simply as a matter of organizational problem without looking at ideological structure and political conjuncture.⁵⁰ Many European scholars started to share skepticism about stable identities, particularly class identities.⁵¹ These cries have found their echoes in a number of studies which shifted the paradigm to cultural factors from the structural ones in collective action. Two approaches in the

⁴⁷ Morris, p.446.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.447.

⁴⁹ Tarrow, p.16.

⁵⁰ Akaş, p.12.

⁵¹ Hanagan, et al. p.xiii.

field of social movements have benefited from this: the new social paradigm focusing in general on the structural changes influential on the emergence of the social movements, and the framing paradigm which is more constructivist and stressing on collective identity and meaning. The paradigm shift resulted from E.P. Thompson's enculturation of the concept of class which helped the students of contention form sensitivity to interclass reciprocity.⁵² Another influence came from anthropologist Clifford Geertz who brought forward "thick description" as a new approach. With his differentiation between analysis and interpretation and his emphasis on the latter, he seemed to provide a more useful way to understand the meaning of behavior.⁵³ Third influence was from social-psychology. Erving Goffman's concept of framing, Bert Klanderman's concept of "consensus mobilization" and William Gamson's concept of "ideological packages" have influenced social movements scholars in thinking how movements locate and articulate grievances into emotions or into "frames" which are capable of convincing participants through the 'right' and 'just'.⁵⁴

New social movements theory is a response to a need for a novel analysis in a new environment where gay and lesbian movements, environmental or ethnic movements have been dominant. Not only because these movements are new in their claims and emphases which are about the supra-class issues like environment, peace, gender or ethnic segregation, but also in their organization and form of protest and claim-making. For instance, usually these movements are more symbolic and they use "new political spaces".⁵⁵ In general and varying versions, new social movements scholars explain the emergence of contemporary movements in relation to the transformations of societies

⁵² Tarrow, p.17.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Akaş, p.14.

through modernization and thereby with the rise of new grievances.⁵⁶ As Melucci states “[d]evelopment of formal skills of action, decision-making, and continuous learning is encouraged. However, increasing systemic differentiation simultaneously threatens social life with fragmentation, lack of communication, atomized individualism, and calls for deeper integration of individual and collective practices.”⁵⁷ In that sense Melucci and some others’ main focus of analysis emerges as the new level of social conflicts, namely in Habermasian “life-world” which is different from the “older” one indicating a more non-private levels. Melucci’s emphasis is on “motives and the meaning of action, to those hidden codes that make individuals and groups predictable and dependable social actors”⁵⁸ rather than more manifest forms of behavior. Because, as he assumes, in contemporary systems signs became interchangeable and power operates through codes and language with the information flow.⁵⁹ According to new social movements theorists the differences between the “new” and “old” social movements lie not only in what or whom the former direct their energies against, but also in whose interests they claim to represent.⁶⁰ Furthermore “old” social movements were movements of a particular class, working class generally, and articulated the

⁵⁶ For some of these scholars’ studies, see: Claus Offe, “New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics,” *Social Research* 52:4 (1985); Jan Willem Duyvendak, *The Power of Politics: New Social Movements in France* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995).; Hanspeter Kriesi et al. *New Social Movements in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; 1995).; Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).; Jean L. Cohen, “Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements”, *Social Research*, 52 (1985), pp.663-716. Tarrow’s general review of RM and NSM is also important: Sidney Tarrow, “National Politics and Collective Action: Recent Theory and Research in Europe and the United States.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 14 (1988), pp.421-440.

⁵⁷ Melucci, p.8.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.9.

⁶⁰ Paul Danieri et al. “New Social Movements in Historical Perspective,” *Comparative Politics* 22:4 (1990): p.447.

interests of that class, whereas the “new” social movements claim for interests which enhance the quality of life in every sector of society.⁶¹

Regarding the framing paradigm, some scholars suggest new concepts emphasizing the role of collective identity or framing, in criticizing the structuralist bias of resource mobilization and political process models to bring the ideology back into the analysis of social movements. Among these concepts are ‘frame alignment’ by David Snow, ‘consensus mobilization’ by Bert Klandermans, and ‘collective identity’ by Alberto Melucci. As the leading analysts of framing, David Snow and Robert Benford define a frame as “an interpretive schemata that signifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action in one’s present, or past environment.”⁶² Through constructing a sense of injustice and collective identities (for the protagonists and their targets), frames operate to provide “a diagnosis and prognosis of a problem and call to action to resolve it.”⁶³ As Steinberg states, frame analysis help us gain a considerable insight into ideological dynamics of structuring opposition, mobilizing actors, and sustaining cohesion necessary for collective action.⁶⁴

1.6 Toward a Synthesis

Recently there have been some attempts to reach a synthesis among the versions of social movements studies. Since the collective action phenomenon

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² David Snow and Robert Benford, “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest,” in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClung Mueller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p.137.; cited from Marc W. Steinberg, “Tilting the Frame: Considerations on Collective Action Framing from a Discursive Turn,” *Theory and Society* 27:6 (1998): p.845.

⁶³ Marc W. Steinberg, p.846.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

consists of different variables ranging from its 'what', 'why' or 'how' to even its 'then, its theory and analysis have created a vast literature involving too many approaches. As reviewed above, each of the theories focus on and elaborate different aspects of social movements. In an academic effort to get institutionalized, today social movements scholars seem to deal with eliminating shortcomings and rasing inconsistencies of the dominant paradigms. Thus, a synthesis of concepts propounded by these approaches would provide us a more comprehensive model for studying social movements.

Though they adopted political process approach previously, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow modified their approaches and adopted more synthetic models. Doug McAdam suggests that political opportunities should be analyzed according to four dimensions: First, the degree of the openness or closure of the institutional political system; second the stability or instability of political alignments, third the presence or absence of elite allies; and finally the state's capacity and propensity of repression.⁶⁵ McAdam suggests that a change, or changes, in these dimensions provide social movements with new opportunities. That is, a change in one of these dimensions can turn the political system into a more receptive one with regard to the challenges of social movements.

Sidney Tarrow's *Power in Movement* is one of these synthesizing efforts. He states that "people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then, by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, create new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention. When their struggles revolve around broad cleavages in society, when they bring people together around inherited cultural symbols [i.e. consensus], and when they can build on or construct dense social networks and connective structures, then these episodes of

⁶⁵ Doug McAdam, "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems and Future Directions," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* ed. Doug McAdam, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.27.

contention result in sustained interactions with opponents – specifically, in social movements.”⁶⁶ As it seems, he claims that political opportunities and constraints, the repertoire of contention, consensus mobilization and identities, and mobilizing structures are important in grasping the emergence and development of social movements. In his formulation, a political opportunity structure refers to the “consistent –but not necessarily formal or permanent– dimensions of political environment that provides incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectation for success or failure.”⁶⁷ For Tarrow, political opportunities and constraints, the repertoire of contention, consensus mobilization and identities, and mobilizing structures are important factors in understanding the emergence and development of social movements.

As another synthesizing effort, in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald define three factors as crucial in the emergence and later development of social movements: *political opportunities*, *mobilizing structures*, and *framing processes*. While the concept of ‘political structures’ refers to the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement, ‘mobilizing structures’ points to the forms of organization, formal as well as informal, available to insurgents. Finally, ‘framing processes’ fits to the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action.⁶⁸ According to the authors the challenge is to cover the relationships between these factors, thus yielding a fuller understanding of social movements dynamics.⁶⁹ To achieve this, they attempt to link these three themes which

⁶⁶ Tarrow, p.19 (bold and emphasis added).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ McAdam et al., p.2.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.7.

emerged over the development of the social movements theory and use them comparatively.

However, as McAdam et.al. (2003) argue that such an attempt appears as “overly structural and static”⁷⁰ and their claim seem reasonable, in order to soften and file this deficiency to a relative extent, Kurdish mobilization in the 1960s would be located in a much broader context of Turkish politics with its other contentious political actions held by such actors as laborers, students or peasants.

1.7 The Framework of the Study

In their attempt to reach “a new program for research of contentious politics in all its varieties”⁷¹, in *Dynamics of Contention*, Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly emphasize the shortcomings of classical social movement theories, namely political opportunities, mobilizing structures, collective action frames, and established repertoires of contention. Figure 1 illustrates what they call classical social movement agenda.

⁷⁰ Doug McAdam et al., *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.18.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.37.

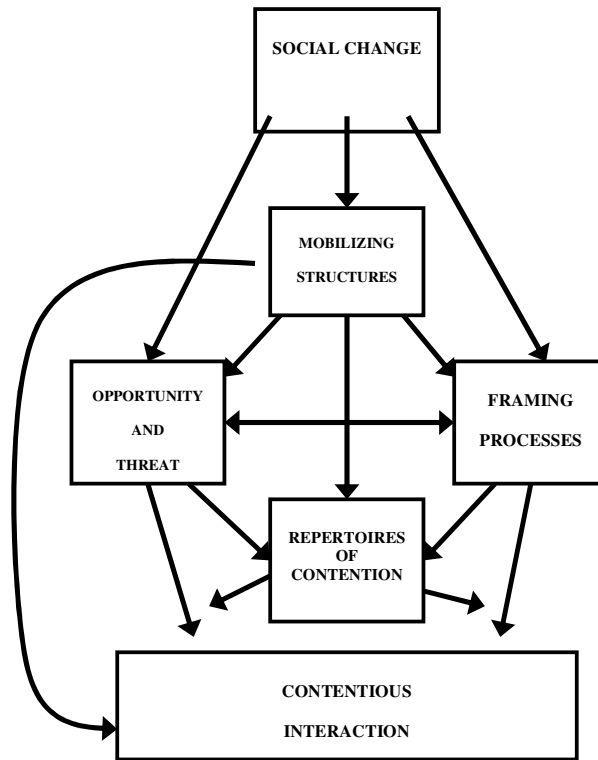


Figure 1.1.: Classical social movement agenda in the explanation of contentious politics.(Source: McAdam et.al. (2003).

The authors voice some critiques against these models. For instance, they criticize early resource mobilization models for they “exaggerate the centrality of deliberate strategic decisions to social movements,” and “downplay the contingency, emotionality, plasticity, and interactive character of movement politics.”⁷² More clearly the most important shortcomings they see in these four themes identifying the classical social movement agenda are their overly structural and static characteristics. For them, classical model suits well to the cases of single unified actors in democratic states, but fits much less into complex episodes of contention in both democratic and especially non-democratic states. Moreover, the classical agenda “provided still photographs

⁷² Ibid., p.15.

of contentious moments rather than dynamic, interactive sequences. Both because it is a static, cause-free single-actor model and because it contains built-in affinities with relatively democratic social movements politics, it serves poorly as a guide to the wide variety of forms of contentious politics outside the world of democratic western polities.”⁷³ In this sense the authors claim to focus more on the dynamic processes of, and rather than necessary and sufficient conditions for, mobilization and action. In other words they seek to explain “recurrent causal mechanisms and regularities in their concatenation.”⁷⁴ What they pay attention is the relational mechanisms, in which mechanisms, interests, identities and opportunities are forged in and through the webs of interaction. Figure 1.2. illustrates their new agenda.

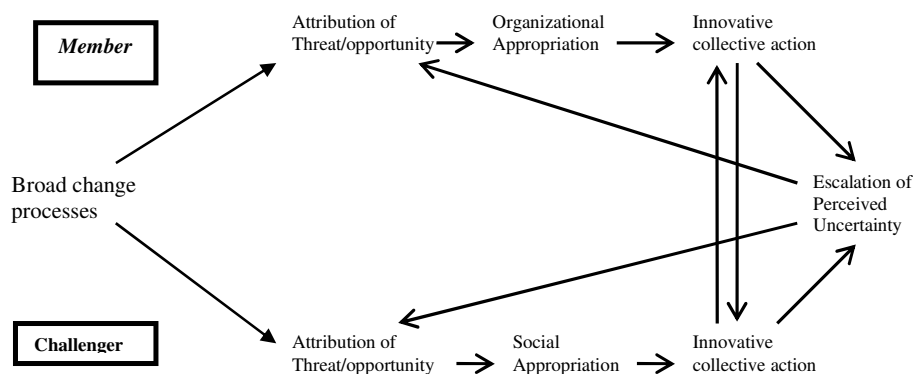


Figure 1.2.: A Dynamic, Interactive Framework for Analyzing Mobilization in Contentious Politics (McAdam et.al.2003)

In offering their new agenda, McAdam and his colleagues retain the concepts of “causal mechanisms,” “causal processes,” and “causal episodes.” In this formulation while “causal mechanisms” mean “delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways,” processes refer to “the regular sequences of such mechanisms that

⁷³ Ibid., p.18.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.13.

produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements”. Finally by episodes they mean “continuous streams of contention including collective claim making that bears on other parties’ interests.”⁷⁵

Attempting to reach a relational approach in the analysis of the Eastern Meetings which are considered as a collective action denoting a case of contentious politics, this study adopts McAdam et.al.’s *dynamic* approach. We should begin with the definition of *contentious politics*, for a clearer understanding of the tools utilized in this study. By contentious politics, the authors mean: “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.”⁷⁶ They expound this definition as referring to collective political struggle.

Moreover, while “the term ‘episodic’. . . excludes regularly scheduled events such as votes, parliamentary elections, and associational meetings – although any such event can become a springboard for contentious politics,” the term “public” excludes “claim making that occurs entirely within well-bounded organizations.”⁷⁷

What are the implications of this approach for our case? Taken as in the definition above, the Eastern Meetings can be located in a contentious episode. Because these meetings were organized with distinct motives, joined and supported in a public fashion and involved an interaction between Kurdish claim makers and the state as the target of the claims. However, this is not

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.24

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.4.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

enough. Other elements of the *Dynamics of Contention* approach must be elaborated in relation to our case.

First, in the analysis of the Eastern Meetings I will not treat “opportunities and threats” as objective structural factors open to Kurdish contenders, rather we will take them as subject to attribution. Taken as the abstractions of the researcher, these concepts call the objection that “no opportunity . . . objectively open, will invite mobilization unless it is a) visible to potential challengers, and b) perceived as an opportunity.”⁷⁸ The same argument goes for the ‘threat,’ because the participants of a social movement cannot perceive the threat of repression or refuse to see it as a risk.⁷⁹ For instance, rather than taking 27 May 1960 coup d’etat and 1961 Constitution as occasions which provided objective opportunities to the Kurds in terms of mobilizing them for the collective political action, one should elaborate on how the Kurdish contenders perceived the new conditions created by these occasions as “opportunity” and acted upon them to voice their demands. Because neither the Kurdish contenders of the 1960s were a group who simply deliberately utilized the “opportunities” after the 1960 coup d’etat, nor the thousands of participants in the Eastern Meetings had such a sense of opportunity. Instead, they all were acting through a set of memories, perceptions and a history of clash between the state and the Kurdish population. Attribution of opportunity and threat as a mobilizing *cognitive mechanism* in part of the Kurdish population which was inert until the 1960s reveals as a more insightful tool for grasping the environmental change around the population under focus.

Second, McAdam et al. criticize the resource mobilization theory in terms of their approach to the “organizational structure” of the social movements for they focus on the “expansion of organizational opportunities for collective

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.43.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

action.”⁸⁰ Claiming that “challengers mostly have organizational deficits, not resources” McAdam et.al. argue that “mobilizing structures can be preexisting or created in the course of contention but in any case need to be *appropriated* as vehicles of struggle.”⁸¹ In most cases, in order to overcome the organizational problems, they turn their faces to existing institutions or organizations and utilize them to make their claims. Therefore, the Kurdish contenders of the 1960s could benefit the preexisting organizations such as the TLP, or they utilized the local networks like friendship ties to organize the meetings. Besides, as I will display in the last chapter of this study, after the Incident of 49s (*49lar Olayı*) the split between the Kurdish contenders took shape and the nationalist wing founded their own organization in the form of a clandestine, conservative party, whereas the leftists generally preferred to enter into the TLP. They had organizational deficits in terms of experience and ideological alliance, but within the local networks in the form of friendship ties and familiarity in their localities they could collaborate in the organization of the meetings.

Third, as given above, the “framing” has been taken as a strategic tool of movement leaders in the classical social movement agenda, however, McAdam et.al. expand the view of framing as “to involve the interactive construction of disputes among challengers, their opponents, elements of the state, third parties, and the media.”⁸² In this vein, the demands (such as development of the East, end for the state repression or right to speak Kurdish) voiced in the Eastern Meetings mounted in such a political context that almost all the progressive sectors of the Turkish society (workers, students, peasants or intellectuals) stand up for their rights. Moreover, the national liberation movements in the third world countries, the Barzani Revolt for an independent Kurdistan, mounted in 1958 in Iraq can be added to the elements of this context

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.45.

⁸¹ Ibid. (Emphasis added)

⁸² McAdam et al., *Dynamics of Contention...*, p.44.

as the factors that shaped the framing of the Kurdish mobilization until the 1967. The revolt was also agitated the state elites' suspicion toward any activity by the Kurdish side. Furthermore, in spite of the state pressure and its relative capability (compared to its Turkish counterpart), The Kurdish press of the date provided a momentum for the framing of the mobilization. Thus, the political context operated not only for the Kurds but for other actors as well.

Also, the “framing” of the Eastern Meetings is not limited to the very “moment” of the collective action itself, rather the framing efforts of these meetings “depend on earlier and far more contingent interpretive “moments” in the life of a given contentious episode.”⁸³ In this sense, the framing is not regarded as “a variable in the onset of contentious politics”⁸⁴; but framing and interpretation of the Kurdish movement in the 1960s are treated as a product of a *construction* until the 1950s. “In short, like all of social life, mobilization is suffused throughout with collective efforts at interpretation and social construction.”⁸⁵ We can trace that in the evolution of the Kurdish identity among the Kurds most of whom were university students and self-employed persons and who found their “fellow townsmen” in the university halls or dormitories. As we will see, the Kurdish collective identity in the big cities changed from a sense of “fellow townsmanship” to an identity of “Easternership”. Since all the identities have a political nature – real or potential – in the last instance, the political content of these identities went through some phases of alteration in relation to other actors like the state or representatives of several political perspectives, such as fascists or the mainstream intellectuals. I will present the construction of the grievances through this identity and how it mobilized the masses and thus, how these were voiced, for instance by looking at the short-lived journals and newspapers published by the Kurdish contenders.

⁸³ Ibid., p.47.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

It is this point where we should locate the tools derived from McAdam et.al.: mechanisms, processes and episodes. In this study our general *episode of contention* in question will be the ‘Kurdish political mobilization in the 1960s.’ More concretely, the 1960s include “families of contentious episodes”: the labor movement, the student movement or the peasant movement. The Kurdish political mobilization was among these movements and had either intersections and distinctions or concomitant features in terms of both organization and ideology. In the next chapter these movements will be elaborated for identifying the actors, their organizations and their collective actions. Moreover, the state elites and the fascist and conservative sectors will be deployed as other actors located against these movements.

In order to situate the Kurdish contentious episode we have to identify the *processes* within it. Mobilization appears to be that kind of process concatenating “a number of mechanisms starting from the environmental ones that have been broadly labeled as “social change processes” passing through mechanisms such as attribution of opportunity, social appropriation, framing of the dispute, and arraying of innovative forms of collective action”.⁸⁶ This brings us the last step of our survey of the Eastern Meetings which is the *causal mechanisms*. What we can obtain by using this dynamic approach is not the origins of Eastern Meetings *per se*, but the more important aspect of this political collective action which makes it more comprehensive and meaningful: the socio-political ground on which it was flourished and several mechanisms and processes which made them possible.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.28.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION, NEW ACTORS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE 1960S' TURKEY

In this chapter socio-political conjunctures in which the Eastern Meetings were flourished will be presented. By this way, I will try to reach a factual basis for the analysis of the *causal mechanisms* and *processes* which paved the way for the meetings. In the 1960s, especially in the second half of it, the international political, economic and social changes combined with the domestic ones revealed a unique political mobilization in Turkey almost in every social sector of the society. A wide range of social groups from university students and peasants to workers and fascist organizations were engaged more or less in collective political action and set out to contend with the authority. In this sense, since it provides a numerous variety of forms of collective political action (i.e. boycotts, land, factory and faculty occupations, protest meetings etc.) the decade of the 1960s offers a fertile area for a student of social movements and collective action.⁸⁷

Concretely speaking, political mobilization among the masses became significant in this decade and the Kurds as one of the social groups in action were not an exception. In this sense, on the one hand some crucial moments and incidents, such as the 1960 military coup, the emergence and development of the Turkish Labor Party (the TLP) or the political activism among the university youth will be portrayed in order to obtain an insight about the conjunctural factors which played role in the identity formation of the Kurdish contenders under focus. First of all, the profound social changes and political conditions of the date will be presented to outline the macro conditions of the

⁸⁷ It must be stated that it is well beyond this thesis to give a complete and precise content of the whole decade of the 1960s. Rather, what I attempt is to give a more or less comprehensive framework in which the Kurdish political mobilization is located.

decade to which several sectors of the society were subjected. This is important to grasp the content and sources of the different political collective actions and the ideological environment surrounding the contenders or claim makers and the targets of the claim. Second, an overview of the 27 May coup d'état with an emphasis on the classes it represented will portray its class based characteristics which are crucial to understand the political space it defined. For other political actors like the students or workers in general, and for the Kurdish contenders I focus in the case of the Eastern Meetings in proper, the limits of the political space is critical when analyzing the threats and opportunities they perceived. Then, the left and the Turkish Labor Party will be elaborated, because they created a dynamism over the society in terms of claim making for the oppressed class. Also, in the TLP which was the prominent spokes party for this claim making activity, they articulated the reasons and solutions of the problems of the East from a socialist perspective. In this sense, the TLP and other leftist inclinations such as the Path Movement (*Yön Hareketi*) or the National Democratic Revolution (*Milli Demokratik Devrim*), and the positioning of the Kurdish socialists among them will be given. Finally, in these socio-political conjunctures some of the actors and their collective political actions will be displayed in order to obtain an insight regarding the organization and ideological stance of the actors. This is important to grasp the Kurds as one of these contender groups. What will be obtained is the motives and ideological background of the date.

2.1 Socio-Political Changes

The economic, social and political changes of the 1950s paved the way for the later acceleration of the socio-political mobilization of the Turkish society. After 1946 when the state elites chose their side with the western bloc gave way to a cease in etatism and a preference toward a liberalization backed by the private capital. The Democrat Party era of 1950-60 was the era of rapid integration to world capitalism and the further development of the bourgeois class. The consequences of this rapid integration to world economy were

twofold: First, there appeared a development in working class and in turn, a class struggle which would mark the decades of the 1960s (particularly after 1965) and the 1970s. Ađaođulları states that “helped by the 1961 Constitution, these same factors caused a growth in the size as well as the activism of the working class, and a wide-ranging transformation of the political scene, even in rural areas. The increased politicization of the oppressed classes, the spread of revolutionary ideas among the youth, and the quick passage from theory to practice, shook the foundations of bourgeois rule.”⁸⁸

Second, the incorporation of Anatolia to capitalism which accelerated during the 1960s would have intensified urbanization, geographical mobility, migration, population growth in urban areas etc. Mehmet Ali Ađaođulları suggests that “the social mutation that occurred during the following years has been qualified by one anthropologist as ‘the most irreversible transformation in Anatolia since Neolithic period.’ Indeed, the rapid economic development brought about major societal changes: the advent of industrialization reduced the share of agriculture in domestic production, driving society out of stagnation and increasing social mobility as well as urbanization.”⁸⁹ For instance between 1950 to 1965 the proportion of urban population in the total population increased from 18,5 % to 34,4 %.⁹⁰ This indicates the large emigration rate toward the urban centers. The emigrant population would be in struggle to hang on the cities where the labor supply could not be covered because of the lack of labor demand in industry.⁹¹ The emigrants had no chance but to establish *gecekondus* (shantytowns) in order to settle the cities. These

⁸⁸ Mehmet Ali Ađaođulları, “The Ultrationalist Right,” in *Turkey in Transition New Perspectives* ed. Irvin C. Schink and Ertuđrul Ahmet Tonak (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.192.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ A. Bađış Erten, “A Comparative Analysis of the 1968 Movement in Turkey” (M.A. Thesis, Bođaziçi University, the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2003)

⁹¹ Eric Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi* 9th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), p.329.

places which were called as the “freed zones” (*kurtarılmış bölgeler*) in the 1970s turned out to be the most important bases of the radical Marxist urban activism in this decade. Therefore, the 1960s would witness the appearance of social groups from different backgrounds on the political scene as protestors, demanders and activists. Students, peasants or laborers were very active politically in the forms of boycotts, meetings, protests, labor strikes or factory, faculty or land occupations. This means that the political activity was popularized and the masses were politicized, including the Kurds. Organized grass-roots political activity was prevalent in the forms of student clubs, labor unions and associations. Especially in urban areas like İstanbul and Ankara university students rose their voice.

However, one should not limit the range of political mobilization solely to the ‘progressive’ groups. The ‘ultranationalist’ and conservative groups appeared on the political scene, as they created their own organizations. The above-mentioned social changes left their impacts with different fashion on some of the groups. Ağaoğulları comments concisely that:

Urban and rural traditional petty bourgeois producers and self-employed small businessmen, who lost their livelihood as their skills and functions were rendered obsolete by the changing social structure, were becoming disgruntled. Large segments of the population were brought face to face with brand new worlds by virtue of geographic mobility and the developing mass communication media –particularly television– experiencing an incessant cultural shock and maladjustment. Moreover, they fell prey to insecurity and feelings of isolation as they witnessed the changing values of society.⁹²

Therefore, these groups appeared as the basis of the islamic and fascist ideologies which became practically influential especially after 1965 to the end of the 1970s.

⁹² Ağaoğulları, p.192.

2.2 27 May 1960: Coup D'etat

The era between 1950 and 1960 was characterized by a struggle between the bureaucratic middle class consisting of the members of civil and military bureaucracy and intellectuals identified with the Republican People's Party (the RPP) and the representatives of rural based, newly risen bourgeois class, namely the Democrat Party (DP). As the founders and the guardians of the republican regime, the traditional civil and military bureaucratic class and intellectuals had been challenged since 1946 and toppled down with the elections of 1950. The DP's crushing victory was polished during the first half of the 1950s with the help of populist policies, improvements in economic indicators, American economic aids, etc. The government applied censorship to the press and executed harsh measures ranging from arresting journalists to closing of the newspapers. The witch hunt against communists was in accordance with the Cold War atmosphere and particularly with the McCarthyism led by the USA. The pressure was present over the universities too. Also the army was undermined, the fact which was unacceptable for its place as the historical guide from the late Ottoman era. Along with other salaried sectors, army members too were one of the suffering group from economic hardships. Moreover, the social opposition against the despotic rule of the DP government was led by the professors and university students backed mainly by the press and the RPP.

The collective political action of this time was mainly in the form of student boycotts and protest demonstrations. For instance on 26 April 1960, a month before the coup, a large demonstration was held by the faculty members of the İstanbul University in order to protest the oppression of the government which had recently been embodied in the establishment of "Investigation Commission" (*Tahkikat Komisyonu*).⁹³ On 28 April 1960 a large number of

⁹³ This commission consisted of the deputies and was established to investigate the acts of opposition and the press for three months. It was authorized to ban the printing and demonstrations of newspapers, all political activities and had the right to confiscate all kinds of

students of the same university organized another meeting in the university hall, which was intervened by the security forces. Sıddık Sami Onar, the president of the İU, on his protest against the police for its uncalled enter into the university campus and ask them for leaving the campus, was arrested. The clashes between the security forces and the students spilled over the Beyazıt Square and one student, Turan Emeksiz of the Forestry Faculty was killed by a shot.⁹⁴ Followed by the declaration of the martial law in Ankara and İstanbul, the student protests did not cease. After the coup, this time the students would be marching on the streets singing the “Smoky Mountain Top” (*Dağ Başını Duman Almış*)⁹⁵ in their support of the junta, a march symbolized and reflected the dynamic Turkish youth as one of the so-called heir of the young Turkish Republic.

On 27 May 1960, the army ended the DP rule which had been running a majority tyranny in the national assembly and a despotic rule over the society especially since 1957 when the tides turned back from a popularly supported government and well-going economic conditions to an increased popular opposition backed by the RPP and universities and intellectuals, and economic crisis of balance of payments. With the coup, the army set out to regain its lost traditional ‘autonomy’⁹⁶ and naturally was welcome by the civil bureaucrats and intellectuals, the other two groups which were under the neglect and pressure of the DP rule. However, it must be stated that the support for the

documents for the sake of investigation. The ruling of the commission were final and irrevocable. It also had the authority to execute imprisonment of one to three years for anyone who would object to the measures. Mehmet Cem Akaş, “Collective Political Action in the Turkish Press (1950-1980)” (Ph.D. Diss., Boğaziçi University, the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2004), p.168.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Nurşen Mazıcı, “27 Mayıs, Kemalizmin Restorasyonu mu?,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm*, ed. Ahmet İnel (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p.558.

army can not be ascribed to the whole country, but it was exclusively limited to İstanbul and Ankara.⁹⁷

The army declared now that the power would be held by the National Unity Committee.⁹⁸ The head of the committee was full general Cemal Gürsel. The army did not contend itself with a simple government change, but designed a project of a systematic alteration.⁹⁹ Although it initially announced that the ‘revolution’ was not directed against any group, the main target of the army was the groups which gained economic and political power under democrats.¹⁰⁰ In essence, the struggle was within the bourgeois class itself, mainly between first the petit bourgeoisie, small capitalists and trade bourgeoisie, and second, the industrial bourgeoisie.¹⁰¹ The latter complained about the unplanned, populist economic policies and needed a new system of accumulation led by the state with the principles of planning.¹⁰² Therefore, it is important to fix that the basis of the 27 May Coup D’etat was the gradual strengthening of industrial bourgeoisie, and its motive to defend its own interests against the other sectors

⁹⁷ Zürcher, p.352.

⁹⁸ It must be stated that the ‘army’ did not behave as an homogeneous entity in the realization of the coup. There were internal clashes mainly between two tendencies. First were the radicals who had been in preparation of the coup for years. They were younger than 40 years-old and belonged to lower ranks in the hierarchy. They were in favor of a rule based on military regime after the coup was achieved. Second group consisted of moderate officials of the upper ranks who were about their mid-40s and advocated an immediate transition to parliamentary rule. This group discharged the radicals on 13 November 1960 and sent 14 (out of 21) of them abroad. Hikmet Özdemir, “Siyasal Tarih: 1960-1980,” in *Türkiye Tarihi: Çağdaş Türkiye 1908-1980* ed. Sina Akşin, Vol.4. (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1989), pp.196-197.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Kemal Karpat, “Ideology in Turkey after the Revolution of 1960: Nationalism and Socialism,” in *Readings in Turkish Politics*, ed. Metin Heper (np.) Vol.II., p.320.

¹⁰¹ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar*, 6th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), pp.196-7.

¹⁰² Ibid.

of the bourgeois class which became dominant during the DP rule.¹⁰³ The urban-based coalition of army-bureaucracy-industrial bourgeoisie established a new system of accumulation which was based on two premises: First, the allocation of scarce economic resources through political mechanisms and, the promise of redistribution of wealth aimed at both providing a social appeasement; second, creating and maintaining an internal market.¹⁰⁴

On the one hand, the labor class and the industrialists appeared as the main groups to benefit this 'transformation' (not a 'restoration'). Particularly labor class was given improved rights of organization and collective negotiation.¹⁰⁵ It actually could benefit this new space opened by the new regime. The following years witnessed the results of this fact, in terms of a dynamic labor movement organized in unions, after the second half of the 1960s and during the 1970s. On the other, however, for-now-excluded groups whose interests were once represented by the DP kept their silence for a short period. For instance, their opposition to the new regime would first be in the guise of a passive attitude in the referendum held on 9 July 1961. Although the new Constitution was consented with 61,7 % against 38,3 %, the high proportion of the 'no' votes was a shock for the junta for it caused to question the legitimacy of the coup, given that there was strong propaganda in favor of the Constitution and the new system brought with it. As the heir of the DP, Justice Party (JP) appeared as the spokesperson of these excluded groups in opposition to the Constitution. In the same year on 15 October, the results of the general elections seemed to verify the results of the referendum. The parties which claimed the legacy of the DP gained the majority of the votes and hence the majority of the deputy and the senator seats. Justice Party (JP), Republican Peasant-People's Party (RPPP) and New Turkey Party (NTP) gained 62,3 % of votes, 277 deputy seats

¹⁰³Sungur Savran. "1960, 1971, 1980: Toplumsal Mücadeleler, Askeri Müdahaleler," *11. Tez* 6 (1987): p.136.

¹⁰⁴ Keyder, p.202.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.204.

and 114 senatorships in total against the RPP which won the 173 deputy seats and 36 senatorships.¹⁰⁶ In the Eastern regions, the votes were shared mainly by the JP and the NTP whose leader was a Kurd, Yusuf Azizoglu.

The junta's most challenging problem was that it did not have a political programme. That is why it was in favor of an immediate transmission to the civil rule. Soon after the coup, the junta initiated a commission consisting of university professors in order to form a constitution. In general, the constitution was so designed that it brought a balance of powers with the two assemblies. Besides, like an independent constitutional court being authorized to deny the law acts which were considered as against the Constitution. Also the autonomy of some other institutions like universities, the judiciary and the Turkish Institution of Radio and Television were provided.¹⁰⁷ The main aim was to prevent any institutional tyranny both in the assembly and the state organs, as the country experienced in the recent past, namely during the DP rule.

2.3 The Left and The Turkish Labor Party

As it will be clarified below and in the next chapter, in their political struggle Kurdish socialists organized in the TLP. There must be some specific reasons of why the TLP particularly became a center of attraction for the socialist Kurds in the political spectrum. In terms of the left side of the political spectrum, there were several branches including the Path Movement (*Yön Hareketi*), National Democratic Revolution (*Milli Demokratik Devrim*) led by Mihri Belli, and in the opposition to the previous one, the advocate of the socialist revolution, namely the TLP. Although the socialist Kurds who got organized in the TLP and even formed a group called 'the Easterners' (*Doğulular*) were the focus of our attention due to the fact that they initiated the Eastern Meetings, in order to locate their direction to the TLP and enable

¹⁰⁶ Özdemir, p.207.

¹⁰⁷ Zürcher, p.357.

ourselves to understand and grasp their ideological motives in organizing these protest meetings we must, though briefly, elaborate other currents.

2.3.1 The Path Movement (*Yön Hareketi*)

The proponents of the Path Movement already took part in the Constituent Assembly which consisted of National Unity Committee of the junta and the Assembly of Representatives including civilians.¹⁰⁸ However, on 20 December 1961, just after the unexpected 15 October victory of the parties which were considered as the heirs of the DP line, the Path Manifesto (*Yön Bildirisi*) was declared via their journal *Yön*. According to the Path Movement the basic problem of Turkey was the economic development. “A new Atatürkist program” must be adopted for a rapid development.¹⁰⁹ In order for Kemalism to reach its goals, it should have entered into a socialist way.¹¹⁰ Socialism was the only way to bring underdeveloped countries like Turkey into economic development in their fight against imperialism. What should be done was to redescribe the Kemalist principles in a new socialist direction.¹¹¹ However, for the Path Movement the social base upon which a movement would be built for these goals was weak and it would take a long time to mature it; but the country could not tolerate waiting for such a long time.¹¹² Therefore, having such top-down incentives the movement obtained a strategy relying on the “energetic forces” (*zinde kuvvetler*) consisting of military and civil elite.¹¹³ As Ertuğrul Kürkçü states:

¹⁰⁸ Atılgan, “‘Yön’ünü Ararken Yolunu Yitirmek,” *Praksis* (6), p.137.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Abdurrahman Atalay, “1961-69 Türkiye İşçi Partisi,” *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p. 2142.

¹¹³ Atılgan, p.141.

[...] These “socialism” and “revolution” [*ihitalal*] which can be defined as the nationalization of means of production could gather all the productive forces in the hands without destroying the state apparatus in any way, thus they could save the country from “non-national” bourgeoisie as the obstacle beyond the “development attack” and its supports within the bureaucracy; they could prevent capitalism to develop and deepen the class antagonisms, and the state could become gradually much serving for the people with gradual reforms without any needs of a bloody class struggle.¹¹⁴

As will be seen, these ideas were totally in contradiction to the TLP’s stance which anticipated a democratic transition to socialism and a reliance on the laborer classes of the society. In any case, having reached a weekly circulation of about 20 thousand, the *Yön* journal provided a platform on which the issues about socialism, domestic and world affairs, economic and social problems were elaborated and brought young generation and intellectuals into socialist themes. It was also including intellectuals from almost all sects of the left at the date. Moreover, it caused other tendencies within the socialist movement to take stance in contradiction or parallelism with itself.¹¹⁵ As will be shown in the next chapter, the Kurdish intellectuals published their articles in this journal.

One year after the first publication of the *Yön* and with similar principles with it, in 1962 Socialist Culture Association (*Sosyalist Kültür Derneği*), some founders of which were also the writers of the *Yön*, was established. In its manifesto the founders were emphasizing on the bad living conditions of the masses and the importance of social justice; after stressing on the role of intellectuals to solve social problems, they were declaring that “the truth

¹¹⁴ Ertuğrul Kürkçü, “Kapitalizm ile Komünizm Arasında ‘Geleneksel Aydınlar’: YÖN Hareketi,” *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.6, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p.2007.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.143.

coming out from the investigation of social structure and historical development unites the persons who think within a framework aiming at happiness of the people around a socialist way out”.¹¹⁶ Therefore, the Socialist Culture Association was established “to examine Turkey’s issues from a socialist world view, to discuss them clearly and to spread the results of these studies”.¹¹⁷ Among the founders was the the TLP’s Diyarbakır deputy Tanık Ziya Ekinci who was active in the foundation of the association’s Diyarbakır branch. He was also one of the speakers in the Eastern Meetings. On Saturdays the Diyarbakır branch hold discussion sessions on several issues like “socialist way of development”, “development in socialist order”, “socialist methodology of thought”, “five-year plan”, “the Common Market and Turkey” or “the principles of Atatürk and socialism”.¹¹⁸

2.3.2 National Democratic Revolution vs. Socialist Revolution

In general, during the 1960s the discussions in the Marxist circles were revolving around the issue of which stage of the revolution was Turkey at. There were two camps which would be experiencing their own internal divisions after 1965 and during the 1970s: the *Socialist Revolutionists* and the *National Democratic Revolutionists* (NDR). The TLP was the advocate of the first current which emphasized that the stage beyond Turkey was the socialist revolution. Though it will be elaborated below, it is necessary to state briefly that the TLP’s main cadre believed that Turkey was ready for a socialist revolution. The proponent of the second camp, Mihri Belli stood against the

¹¹⁶ Çavdar, p.142. “*Toplum yapısının ve tarihi gelişiminin incelenmesinden ortaya çıkan gerçekler, halk mutluluğunu hedef tutan bir çerçevede içinde düşünenleri sosyalist bir çözüm yolu etrafında birleştirmektedir.*”

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.143. “*...Sosyalist Kültür Derneği, Türkiye’nin meselelerini sosyalist bir dünya görüşünden incelemek, bunları açıkça tartışmak ve bu çalışmaların sonuçlarını yaymak üzere kurulmuştur.*”

¹¹⁸ *Sosyal Adalet* (Social Justice), 18 June 1963.

TLP's strategy towards the socialist revolution through the parliamentary way and labeled the TLP leadership as "sectarian and opportunist".¹¹⁹ According to Belli, Turkey was a country where feudal relations of production dominated and feudal "usurpers" was imperialism's tool of hegemony. Since Belli and his followers were in the belief that the essential contradiction in Turkey was not between the proletariat and the capitalists, but between imperialism and its indigenous allies, thus, the primary mission of the revolution was to fight against feudalism and imperialism.¹²⁰ However, because the proletariat was highly weak to undertake this revolution 'for-itself', there must have been a 'national' coalition between the proletariat, small and national bourgeoisie and civil-military-intellectual groups against the bloc of imperialism, comprador bourgeoisie and feudal landowners.¹²¹ However, the main groups upon which Belli and his followers relied in this national democratic coalition appeared to be the intellectuals and progressive elements within the society whose engine was planned to be the military.¹²² Especially after 1965 the followers of the NDR movement tried to dominate the 'opportunist' TLP and became effective among the youth with its strategy of armed action in a period when the fascist attacks against the TLP and the socialists intensified. In such an environment the TLP leaders excluded 13 party members in the 2nd Party Congress in

¹¹⁹ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p. 2079.

¹²⁰ Mihri Belli, "Milli Demokratik Devrim," *Türk Solu* 53 (1966). "... Because in this era, in every backward country which is kept under imperialism's domination, if the one and the first of the classes that it takes in its alliance is the comprador capitalist, then the other is the class of feudals; and in these countries the one who raises his hand against the feudal, he also raises his hand at the same time against the imperialism just stands behind it. Therefore, revolutionary forces desiring to remove the feudal exploitation in the exploited countries must also venture the struggle against imperialism which is the ally of feudal class. In our age, every anti-feudal revolution must at the same time be a national liberation revolution, be a National Revolution aiming at causing the country to meet national liberation"

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid. "National Democratic Revolution can only be achieved through the Revolutionary Union of Forces which represents the revolutionary alliance of urban and rural proletariat, semi-proletarian elements, urban and rural bourgeoisie, military-civil intellectual class and into which all the revolutionary forces in our society can join with their self organizations."

Malatya simply for the reason of their engagement with the NDR movement which was embodied in Mihri Belli's persona.

2.3.3 The Turkish Labor Party

Any analyses of the 1960s should definitely take into consideration the TLP as the first socialist party in the Turkish history that could achieve to take part in the parliament. With the help of 'national surplus' as the electoral system, it could win 15 seats in the parliament. As I identified above, both in the social and political terms, the structural changes that the society had been living through, paved the way of the TLP. As I tried to show, different sectors of the society could develop separately¹²³ depending on the conjunctures of the time. Students, workers, villagers, artists, intellectuals, and one of the groups as our focus of interest, the socialist Kurds could find a place within the TLP organization. In the first half of the 1960s "any potentials in favor of the liberation of the labor, a determined anti-imperialist struggle, a socialist society perspective gathered within and around the TLP".¹²⁴ More specifically, this party is crucial for our subject, since the Kurds were organized within it. "Easterners" (*Doğulular*) was how they were called.

The foundation of the TLP is worth noting for it was a clear initiation from below which later shaped its embracing discourse. The TLP was already established on 13 February 1961 by 12 workers who were also unionists in Türk-İş¹²⁵; however, the party initially could not develop as the founders expected simply because they could not spend so much time for the party. The

¹²³ Atalay, p. 2142.

¹²⁴ Orhan Silier, "TİP'in 1961-1971 Dönemi Üzerine Bazı Tezler," in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p.2159.

¹²⁵ The founders were as follows: Kemal Türkler, Avni Erakalın, Şaban Yıldız, İbrahim Güzelce, Ahmet Muşlu, Rıza Kuas, Kemal Nebioğlu, Hüseyin Uslubaş, Saffet Göksüzoğlu, Salih Özkarabay and İbrahim Denizcier.

attitude of Türk-İş in one sense, did not allow them to spend their working hours for the party.¹²⁶ The real development of the party appeared after Mehmet Ali Aybar became the president at the request of former founders. He was a former member of the Faculty of Law of İstanbul University and was consulted in the beginning about the regulations and programme of the party. Along with some other intellectuals like Behice Boran and Sadun Aren, Mehmet Ali Aybar achieved that the party programme was more crystallized in its socialist theme. This is an important aspect which must not be underemphasized. Aybar and others were *invited* to the party which was established by the initiative from the bottom-up. This fact was the main reason and the achievement of the party's reliance on a variety of groups as specified above. With the election of Mehmet Ali Aybar to the presidency of the party, the TLP gained a large number of followers among university youth and intellectuals. The following years would witness the dynamism of the left led by the TLP.

TLP's 1st Grand Congress was held in İzmir on 9-10 February 1964. Its regulations were revised and thus the party shifted its analysis to a more sophisticated class analysis. The 2nd and 3rd articles of the party regulations described party's character and aims. The 2nd article was as follows:

Article 2- Party's Character: Turkish Labor Party is the political organization marching through the way of the law to the government, of the Turkish worker class and of all laborer classes and strata (of capstans and small peasants, of salaried and paid employees, of artisans, of small tradesmen and poor self-employed persons, and of progressive youth and socialist intellectuals) which gathered around the leadership of it.

The TLP evaluates the domestic and world incidents from the perspective of Turkish labor class and the laborer people masses; defends their interests; struggles for the realization of their rights and freedom.

The laborer people masses composing the great majority of the nation are the real producers of the whole affluence and

¹²⁶ Tevfik Çavdar, p.147.

the whole values, the unique driving force of social improvement. Furthermore, they carry the real burden of that. Therefore, to struggle for the rights, freedom and interests of the laborer people masses is, in fact to struggle for all rights, freedom and high interests of the Turkish nation.

TLP keeps its rows open for each citizen, who adopts party programme and regulations and sides with the labor, without differentiating race, religion, sect, skin color, male-female differences and no matter from which class s/he comes from.¹²⁷

From this article, one can infer that departing from a class analysis the TLP defined a large variety of “progressive” groups as its focus and aimed at catching them all. Its denial for any kind of discriminatory attitude must be pointed. This attitude seemed to attract Kurdish groups in favor of joining the party lines.

The TLP’s strategy needs a closer look. According to the party, the conditions were not appropriate for a socialist revolution at the date. The main issue was to bring the workers and the people in consciousness and organize them; this meant that the preparation would be a massive process whose axis was a

¹²⁷ Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı, 1961-1971* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1993), s.48. “*Madde 2 – Partinin Karakteri: Türkiye İşçi Partisi, Türk işçi sınıfının ve onun demokratik öncülüğü etrafında toplanmış bütün emekçi sınıf ve tabakaların (ırgat ve küçük köylülerin, aylıklı ve ücretlilerin, zanaatkârların, küçük esnaf ve dar gelirli serbest meslek sahipleri ile ilerici gençliğin ve toplumcu aydınların) kanun yolundan iktidara yürüyen, siyasi teşkilatıdır.*

TİP, Yurt ve Dünya olaylarını Türk işçi sınıfı ve emekçi halk yığınları açısından değerlendirir; onların menfaatlerini savunur; hak ve hürriyetlerinin gerçekleştirilmesi için mücadele eder.

Ulusun büyük çoğunluğunu meydana getiren emekçi halk yığınları, bütün zenginliklerin, bütün değerlerin gerçek yaratıcısı, sosyal gelişmenin biricik itici kuvvetidir. Üstelik bu işin ağır yükünü de onlar taşırlar. Bundan dolayı emekçi halk yığınlarının hak, hürriyet ve menfaatleri için mücadele etmek, aslında Türk ulusunun bütün hakları, hürriyetleri ve yüksek menfaatleri için mücadele etmektir.

TİP, ırk, din, mezhep, deri rengi, kadın-erkek ayrımı gözetmeden ve hangi sınıftan gelirse gelsin, parti program ve tüzüğünü benimsemiş, emekten yana olan bütün yurttaşlara saflarını açık tutar.”

democratic struggle.¹²⁸ The theme appeared as to protect and secure the democratic earnings of the 1961 Constitution. Therefore, the path the party found open before it was the democratic transition to the socialism. This seems the reason of the party's focusing on the parliamentary struggle as its priority and in this sense the 1965 elections was a sort of victory for the TLP.

In terms of its goals, the TLP specified a development perspective based on "the nationalization of grand means of production and exchange", "providing lands for peasants owning a little or no land and equipping them with the newest and the most advanced techniques. . . ." or ". . . providing everyone wage, salary and income according to his work he performs".¹²⁹ "Planned statism for the labor" the TLP programme stated "is the economic and social aspect of our democracy; with the TLP's coming to the government, statism would operate as a pushing and organizing force in favor of the people, the labor".¹³⁰ Some other important subjects in the programme should also be mentioned. For instance, the TLP's anti-imperialist stance was based on the criticism of the foreign credits and aids which in turn caused Turkey's dependence on them. Because of these credits and aids "wealth, influence and dominance of externally-rooted domestic capital circles and landlords were layered".¹³¹ As I will display in the next sub-section reserved for the Kurdish political activity in the 1960s, the Kurdish problem was also in the agenda of the TLP.

The TLP's first presence before the public was by means of local elections in 1963. Later national elections of 1965 were a success for the TLP. Mehmet Ali Aybar and others' radio speeches were attracting the audience. The warm and

¹²⁸ Atalay, p.2142.

¹²⁹ For the full text of Article 3 of the regulations of the TLP, see Tevfik Çavdar, pp.150-151.

¹³⁰ Çavdar, p.153. "*Emekten yana planlı devletçilik, demokrasimizin ekonomik ve sosyal yönüdür; TİP'nin iktidara gelmesiyle, devletçilik, halktan, emekten yana, itici ve düzenleyici bir kuvvet olarak işleyecektir.*"

¹³¹ Ibid., p.155.

lyrical style of the speeches had the main role in that. For instance Mehmet Ali Aybar spoke to the masses as such:

Workers, capstans, *azaps*, poor peasants, artisans, officials, officers, pensioners, tradesmen, socialists, [persons with] callous hands who are suppressed, disdained; suffering citizens!

Brothers,

Laborers'! Socialists' party, the Turkish Labor Party is calling out you. Our words are only for you.

For you to get rid off poverty and hunger; for you to get rid off unemployment; for you to get rid off ignorance; for you to live as your heads up, without fear and disdain; for you to have your children educated; for you to acquire land, to acquire doctor, medicine and care during your illness, you must first lead your country to independence again.¹³²

The TLP made a dynamic electoral campaign. The meetings were filled by large numbers of people. Along with supporting the TLP with their votes, many students also actively supported the campaign. For instance, before the elections, the student organization of the Middle East Technical University spent 35.000 TL in organizing for the TLP in forty-six districts.¹³³ This amount of money was considerable at that time. However, its campaign was not free from some interventions coming from the JP or the press. Moreover, Türk-İş

¹³² Mehmet Ali Aybar "Radio Speech" in *Yaşasın Emekçiler, Yaşasın Türkiye* (Ankara: Sosyal Adalet Yayınları, 1966), p.5. "*İşçiler, İrgatlar, Azaplar, Fakir Köylüler, Zanaatkârlar, Memurlar, Subaylar, Emekliler, Esnaflar, Toplumcular, Ezilen hor görülen eli nasırlılar, Çilekeş Yurttaşlar. Kardeşlerim, Emekçilerin, toplumcuların partisi, Türkiye İşçi Partisi size sesleniyor. Sözüümüz yalnız sizleredir.*

Senin, yoksulluktan, açlıktan kurtulman için; senin, işsizlikten kurtulman için; senin, cahillikten kurtulman için; senin, korkusuz, horlanmadan başı dik yaşamın için; senin, çocuğunu okutman için; Senin, toprağa kavuşman, hastalığında doktora, ilâca, bakıma kavuşman için önce Türkiye'yi yeniden bağımsızlığa kavuşturman gerekiyor."

¹³³ Özer Ozankaya, *Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Siyasi Yönelimi* (Ankara: Ankara University, 1966), p.75., quoted in A. Bağış Erten, "A Comparative Analysis of the 1968 Movement in Turkey" (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2003), p.72.

declared that it would not support the TLP in the elections.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, electoral system was changed to ‘national surplus’ onto the demand of the RPP and thanks to this electoral system little parties could send deputies to the national assembly. Under these circumstances, the TLP gained 3,3 % of the votes and won 15 seats in the parliament.¹³⁵

After the 1965 elections, parliament was composed of two major polars, namely the Justice Party (53,3 %) and the Republican People’s Party (29,7 %) and small parties, namely the Republican Peasant-People’s Party (2,4 %), the New Turkey Party (4,2 %), the Nation Party (% 6,8) and finally the Turkish Labor Party (3,3 %).¹³⁶ In such a parliament, the TLP representatives were very active in proposing law acts in accordance with its motives.

The TLP’s efforts in the parliament focused mainly on the abolition of laws which were discordant with the Constitution and promulgation of new laws appropriate to this constitutional order.¹³⁷ Operating lawsuits for the cancellation of the laws discordant with the Constitution was the only means. However, their efforts to this end began before 1965. Initially, the TLP did not have such a right to plead in the Constitutional Court which was founded in 2 April 1962, because for any political party to plead in this court was required to be represented in the parliament at least by one deputy.¹³⁸ Along with the extra-parliamentary preparations such as establishing a law commission and organizing a discussion meeting titled “White House Gathering” (*Beyaz Saray Toplantısı*), the TLP had the opportunity to determine its strategy and then

¹³⁴ Nermin Abadan, *Anayasa Hukuku ve Siyasi Bilimler Açısından 1965 Seçimlerinin Tahlili* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Yayınları, 1966), p.245.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.370.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları, Türkiye İşçi Partisi ve Kürt Aydınlanması* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 2004), p.224.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

acquire the right to plead when the former socialist, current senator for Ağrı, Niyazi Ağırnaslı joined the TLP lines.¹³⁹ Including their first legislation period in the parliament, the TLP was constantly pleading for the laws between 1963-1971. During this time the number of the TLP's pleas was 41, however these were only the ones examined, the number of laws subjected to the TLP's pleas was much more than that.¹⁴⁰

The TLP's legislation activities also included making some law proposals upon bestowing lands for the peasants having no or little land, organizing agricultural tenancy and sharecropping in favor of the poor peasants, nationalization of petroleum, abolition of saving bonds, unemployment insurance, abolition of the law on encouragement of foreign investment, shifting the tax burden from laborers to capitalist and landowners, or abolition of the right of lockout, minimizing the prohibitions and restrictions about strikes, and narrowing the governmental authority of postponing the strikes.¹⁴¹

In general, as displayed, both inside and outside of the parliament, the TLP emerged as the major spokesperson of its focused groups that it relied on. Although its activities were under strict pressure by the rightist and fascist elements, they were successful in attracting the masses and providing realist solutions for the social and economic problems. The level of pressure and intervention sometimes reached to physical assault against the TLP members even under the roof of parliament. The JP government, as the spokesperson of conservative circles proposing counter draft laws too.

However, the tides turned back in the leadership cadre of the TLP after the intervention of the USSR to the Czechoslovakia in 1968. Aybar's criticism against the intervention triggered the split between himself and Behice Boran

¹³⁹ Ibid., 226.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Also, for the detailed explanation and results of each trial in the Constitutional Court, see pp.239-262.

¹⁴¹ Çavdar, p.160.

and Sadun Aren. In his public criticism he also stated that the socialism advocated by the TLP was a “friendly socialism”. Boran and Aren opposed this statement with the thought that Aybar’s “friendly socialism” was a deviation from the scientific socialism, and thus a ‘revisionism’. In fact, the roots of the ideological tension between the sides were sown before. During the summer of 1968 Mehmet Ali Aybar’s speeches in the party committees included the terms like “friendly socialism” or “libertarian socialism” and calls for party members that they should not have contented themselves only with the works of Marx. For him, they should also have read the works of writers such as Proudhon.¹⁴² This meant a clear stance against orthodox Marxism and it revealed itself again openly during the Soviet intervention. His statement, thus, was considered as the final straw by the Boran-Aren camp, namely the “Labor Group” (*Emek Grubu*). 3rd Grand Congress which was held on 9-12 November 1968 witnessed the break off between the camps. Aybar camp won the elections. Labor Group was not powerful enough to remove Aybar from the party; nor could Aybar hinder this group to gain power in the General Execution Committee. This split within the leadership turned into a bifurcation and lasted when Aybar resigned from the presidency on 15 November 1969.¹⁴³

On the one hand, the bifurcated character of the leadership brought a fragmented form within, and on the other, the winds of the extra-parliamentary struggle within the progressive circles outside the party dominated the field, owing to the abolition of national surplus electoral system, the TLP’s rates in the 1969 elections decreased and it sent only 2 deputies (Mehmet Ali Aybar and Rıza Kuas) to the parliament.¹⁴⁴ With Boran’s election as the general

¹⁴² Aren, p.127.

¹⁴³ For a detailed discussion of the split within the TLP, see: Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı, 1961-1971* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1993), pp.238-246.

¹⁴⁴ Artun Ünsal, *Umuttan Yalnızlığa: Türkiye İşçi Partisi (1961-1971)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2002), p.15.

secretary, it appeared that the pro-Soviet camp led by Aren and Boran won against Aybar who advocated a socialism “unique to Turkey”. However, the cohesion of the party would gradually be lost. Especially after 1968, the party’s concentration on parliamentary struggle did not satisfy the youth. Inspired and encouraged by Mihri Belli’s NDR line and due to the TLP’s internal clashes and thus, its loss of influence over the revolutionary youth, the latter began to draw its own way. As to the ‘Easterners’, they first supported Aybar in the split and after 1970 they began to look for new ways, like the other groups did. It is pertinent now to have a closer look upon the Easterners Group in the TLP.

2.3.4 Kurds in the TLP: The “Easterners”

As I mentioned above, the TLP was relying on and consisting of different groups, like “intellectuals” and “unionists” and Kurdish socialists or so-called “Easterners” were one of them. They were engaged with the party during the initial efforts toward the organization of the party around the country and in time the proponents like Tarık Ziya Ekinici, Kemal Burkay, Naci Kutlay, Mehmet Ali Aslan or Mehdi Zana undertook central tasks in the central party commissions. Even Mehmet Ali Aslan became the president of the party in 1969 or Tarık Ziya Ekinici was elected as Diyarbakır representative for the Grand National Assembly. Incentives which pushed the Kurds to the TLP should be mentioned.

In a political environment where there were different tendencies in the left, the Kurds seemed to prefer to get organized in the TLP. For one thing as mentioned above, Doğan Avcıoğlu’s Path Movement (*Yön Hareketi*) was relying on military and bureaucratic elites who were supposed to have socialist tendencies. Thus, in order to find an urgent solution for the development of Turkey, the Path Movement anticipated a military coup. However, it seems that the ‘urgent’ solution of the Path Movement in the form of a revolution by the military may not have been attractive for Kurdish intellectuals simply because of the recent memories concerning harsh military measures during

and after the period of Kurdish revolts in the first decades of the Republic and due to the fear that “a military coup, though with a leftist character, may have ...much stiffened the policy of violence, pressure and assimilation against the Kurds.”¹⁴⁵ These people seemed to keep their distance between themselves and the military. As a matter of fact, one of the initial policies of 27 May military junta’s was to arrest 485 Kurdish landlords, intellectuals and local politicians on 1 June 1960, to concentrate them in a camp near Sivas city and to intern them in this camp for a six months without judging them.¹⁴⁶ Before the national elections of 1965, the TLP became organized rapidly also in the eastern and southeastern cities and their districts. The TLP branches were established in Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa (Siverek), Mardin (Derik), Van, Muş, Bingöl, Ağrı, Kars (Ardahan), Siirt, Elazığ, Tunceli and Malatya.¹⁴⁷

2.4 The Groups in Contentious Politics¹⁴⁸

2.4.1 The Youth

As mentioned above, university youth gradually became the forerunner actors in the collective action of the years especially after 1965. Some factors played role in that. As the following table shows us, the number of university students increased steadily during the 1960s. For instance, while the number of students in higher education was about 44,5 thousand in the 1960-1961 school-year, this number reached to 55,5 thousand in 1965-66 and 75,5 thousand students in 1969-70 school-year when the student protests and activism lived its heyday.

¹⁴⁵ Ekinci, p.270.

¹⁴⁶ M.S. Lazarev et al., *Kürdistan Tarihi* (İstanbul:Avesta Yayınları, 2001), p.331.

¹⁴⁷ Ekinci, p.301.

¹⁴⁸ In order avoid a simple categorization, one should state that the different social groups which will be portrayed as in political mobilization did not act as independent from one another, rather these groups were in close contact and even in collaboration; because the political context of the period sharpened the gap between the revolutionary-progressive and reactionary-conservative groups. For instance, one could witness the university students supporting the peasants in the organization of their land occupations.

Because of the rapidly increasing number of the people wanting to get higher education and the lack of state's educational service in terms of both human capital and equipment, one of the main concerns of university students in these years was mainly their material problems.

Year	Number
1960-61	44,461
1961-62	45,002
1962-63	46,561
1963-64	48,654
1964-65	52,768
1965-66	55,583
1966-67	60,023
1967-68	63,235
1968-69	67,764
1969-70	75,522
1970-71	73,228

Table 2.1.: The number of university students between 1960-1971.¹⁴⁹

The Idea Clubs (*Fikir Kulüpleri*) whose origins went back to 1956 and to Ankara University's Faculty of Political Sciences were gathered under the umbrella of Idea Clubs Federation (*Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu*) in 1965. Many of its members were also the members of the TLP, the fact indicated its close contact with the party. Until 1968 they followed and supported actively the TLP, however after that time the revolutionary youth inevitably alienated from the mainstream political activity and gradually radicalized. While the dynamism of university students gradually increased, the tone and the content of this dynamism grew from a relatively local characteristic such as university reform to more universal features so as to include to support other demanding sectors' struggle such as of workers or peasants. The 1960s and especially the legendary year of 1968 in Turkey, along with Europe, would create this

¹⁴⁹ Republic of Turkey, *Türkiye İstatistik Yıllığı* (Ankara:1968), p.23.

generation of “‘68ers”. This generation inspired from both revolutionary movements such as in Cuba and Vietnam or the student and labor movements in Europe. “The forms of revolutionism” states Ertuğrul Kürkçü, “which were new to Turkey and did not exist before 1968 came up from international area and with the opportunities of Turkey’s opening to international area: the cultural/political hegemony which the dominant class strived to establish according to an international model, around the image of “American life style” was threatened at the spiritual level with another international model from which France’s massive student and labor movement, revolutionary combatancy of Cuba, Vietnam and Palestine came to the fore.”¹⁵⁰

After 1960 the number of publications of books, newspapers and journals increased considerably. Especially, the proportion of the publications made in the area of social sciences increased too. As seen in Table 2.2, both the total number of the publications rose and the proportion of social sciences in the whole increased especially after 1962.

Years	Number of books	Number of journals and newspapers	Total (Books, periodicals and newspapers)	The number of publications in social sciences	percentage of publications in social sciences (%)
1960	4195	1658	5853	1405	24,00
1961	4357	1573	5930	1512	25,50
1962	4842	1653	6495	1568	24,14
1963	5426	1722	7148	1950	27,28
1964	5745	1739	7484	2054	27,45
1965	5442	1890	7332	2207	30,10
total	30007	10235	40242	10696	26,58

Table 2.2: The number of publications (books, newspapers and journals) and the percentage of publications in social sciences between 1960-1965.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Ertuğrul Kürkçü, “Che’ nin Çağrısını Ciddiye Almak,” *Praksis* 6 (2002): p.24.

¹⁵¹ Calculated from: Republic of Turkey, *Statistical Yearbook of Turkey* (Ankara: 1964-65), pp.214-15.

The new publications in the social sciences which were translated from western languages opened the gates of perception of this generation who were educated under Kemalist, nationalistic doctrine. They began to be much interested in the world events and identified themselves with other oppressed nations around the world. These publications caused the large numbers of people to appropriate for themselves the revolutionary ideas surrounded by a universal aurora of romantic revolutionism. The rebellions of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and fight for national independence were embodied in anti-American sentiments for the revolutionary youth in Turkey. These sentiments combined with the material problems of the university students.

Inspired by the student movements in France, university students realized a number of boycotts and occupations on June 1968. The first occupation was organized on 10 June 1968 in the Faculty of Language, History and Geography of Ankara University and spreaded to faculties of Law and Science, respectively. İstanbul University, Faculty of Law followed Ankara University on 12 June. With the Idea Clubs Federation's entrance into the protest actions, the boycotts gained a massive character among the university youth. However, the leitmotif of the solidarity among the university dorms and places was *hemşehrilik* (fellow townsmanship) which created a fragmented character in political mobilization.¹⁵² Indeed, the Kurdish students were the majority in İstanbul Branch of Idea Clubs Federation and the head of it, Kemal Bingöllü established an "occupation committee" with the slogan of "no right-left, but boycott!" (*sağ sol yok, boykot var!*).¹⁵³ However, it was only after the boycott committee could control and unite all the tendencies that the small power centers could be melted into a massive movement for demanding solutions for the problems of the university institution.¹⁵⁴ In the following days the

¹⁵² *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p.2083.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

committees elaborated and detailed their demands and emitted them. For instance, the demands of occupants in Ankara University, the Faculty of Political Sciences were voiced under such headings in general: university reform, no cultural imperialism, democratic university, national and popular education, university education for the children of workers and peasants, nationalization of private schools, students' participation in the administration.¹⁵⁵ The boycotts ended at the beginning of July. The government promised for university reform. However, students having obtained a self-confidence in their potential would be in the front lines during the following months, even years.

The US 6th Fleet's declared visit to İstanbul aroused anti-imperialist and anti-American sentiments. The events began with the fleet's anchoring on 15 July 1968. The activists harassed the American soldiers at any moment they saw them. Two days later, the base of the protest actions, the İstanbul Technical University dormitories was busted by the police; 30 students were wounded and one of the students, Vedat Demircioğlu who was dumped out from the dormitory window went into coma and died one week later.¹⁵⁶ Thousands of students marched to the shores of Dolmabahçe where the 6th Fleet anchored, roughed up the US soldiers and spilled them into the sea. This event would become the symbolic moments of the '68ers' anti-imperialist and anti-American struggle.

Another event which marked the date happened in the Middle East Technical University. Once a CIA specialist and the director of the US' 'pacification' policy in Vietnam, Robert Commer, was installed as the US ambassador in Turkey and protested by anti-imperialist circles since the very moment he arrived at Turkey. On 6 January 1969 when he visited the METU rector, Kemal

¹⁵⁵ "The Report of the Faculty of Political Sciences Boycott Committee" in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p. e486.

¹⁵⁶ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p.2085

Kurdaş, Commer's official car was reversed upside-down and then set into fire by the students.¹⁵⁷ The METU rectorship initiated a disciplinary investigation and summoned some of the agents of the incident to testify. However, the students rejected to do so and declared that "in fact, the burning of the automobile is a protest action in METU public opinion, that is, of all our students against unwanted, forced invitations."¹⁵⁸

However, the space of collective actions of university students in the forms of boycotts, occupations and marches, were not limited only to the university campuses or streets, rather it also expanded towards a variety of other spaces of contentious politics ranging from villages and fields to the factories as well. A spirit of collaboration spread all over the country. The students' organizations were present in the protest actions of peasants and strikes of workers. As we will see, for instance, the Idea Clubs Federation was declaring that they supported the Eastern Meetings.

On the other hand the assaults of the nationalists and religious sectors supported by the Justice Party government sharpened the opposition between reactionary-fascist-religious and revolutionary camps. Young people who came from a rural background were trained in the Republican Peasant-People's Party's summer camps to obtain the skills of killing and fighting as well as getting the war techniques.¹⁵⁹ These camps created the "commandos" who would be the privates against communism. Their attacks during the mass protests of students, villagers and laborers reached their peak point after 1968.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.2103-4.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.2100.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.2106.

2.4.2 The Labor Movement

The period between 1963 and 1971 witnessed a quantitative increase in the labor class. In this period, while the number of workers was 2,745 million, it increased to 4,055 million in 1971.¹⁶⁰ The number of workers who belonged to a union was 296 thousand in 1963; this number amounted 1,2 million in 1971.¹⁶¹ In addition to quantitative change in the labor class the 1961 Constitution further brought with it on the one hand, the rights for the labor unions to make collective negotiations and thus, collective agreements and on the other, the right to strike was secured under the Constitution.¹⁶² The first paragraph of the article 46 was declaring that “*employees and employers have the right to establish unions and union confederations, freely to enroll them and to drop their membership without taking prior permission in advance.*”¹⁶³ Also in the article 47 of the Constitution it was declared that “*the workers, in their relations with the employers, have the rights of collective agreement and strike with the aim of protecting or improving their economic and social conditions.*”¹⁶⁴ In addition to the ‘democratic’ space opened by the new Constitution, other kinds of regulations like cutting the union dues at its source worked as a political and organizational opportunity in favor of the organization of the workers in the unions. After the approval of this act for the direct collection of union dues, the unions acquired a monetary power too¹⁶⁵,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.2146.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Çavdar, p.132.

¹⁶³ Mümtaz Soysal, *Anayasaya Giriş*, (Ankara: AÜSBF, 1969), p.303. “*Madde 46: Çalışanlar ve işverenler, önceden izin almaksızın, sendikalar ve sendika birlikleri kurma, bunlara serbestçe üye olma ve üyelikten ayrılma hakkına sahiptirler.*”

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. “*Madde 47: İşçiler, işverenlerle olan münasebetlerinde, iktisadi ve sosyal durumlarını korumak veya düzeltmek amacıyla toplu sözleşme ve grev haklarına sahiptirler.*”

¹⁶⁵ Çavdar, p.132.

which was naturally vital for mobilizing the members of the union in their struggle for their perceived interests.

Years	Number of strikes	Number of laborers as strike participants	Number of working days spent in the strikes
1963	7	1.374	12.255
1964	81	6.608	192.842
1965	43	5.573	240.554
1966	39	10.401	409.809
1967	91	8.612	203.779
1968	59	8.098	192.196
1969	82	23.190	357.799
1970	111	25.963	260.338
1971	97	20.016	295.950
Total	610	190.835	2.165.522

Table 2.3.: The numerical aspects of strikes between 1963 and 1971¹⁶⁶

Thus, as can be inferred from Table 2.3. the labor movement gained a momentum and a massive character year by year in the 1960s. For instance, while the number of strikes was only 7 in 1963, it rose more than 11 times up to 81 in the next year. Despite several fluctuations, the years between 1963 and 1970 witnessed a great increase in the number of laborers as strike participants. As seen, the collective political actions of the workers in the form of strikes did never lose their intensity down to the level of 1963.

There were two union confederations in Turkey between 1961 and 1971. The first one was the Türk-İş (Turkish acronym of the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions) and the second one was the DİSK (Turkish acronym of the Confederation of Revolutionary Labor Unions). While the former was established in 1952 under the supervision and financial support of Agency of International Development (AID) with the main principle that the labor unions

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.135.

must have been kept up from politics. Such kind of “yellow unionism” (*sarı sendikacılık*) meant to be acting with the governments, despite in a passive way, by means of dividing the labor bloc. The latter, namely the DİSK was established in 1967, by several unions which were dismissed from the Türk-İş. When it was established, the DİSK had 40.000 members.¹⁶⁷ Actually the tendency of departing from the Türk-İş was present in 1961 when some of the initiators of the DİSK also took part in the establishment of the TLP. The DİSK was one of the most important actors in leading the social opposition and labor movement, along with the TLP.

One of the areas of the JP government’s attempts against the society’s progressive forces was about changing the Law of Unions. In practice, the JP government’s proposal presented in the national assembly meant to close the DİSK and its member unions.¹⁶⁸ The draft of the law anticipated a considerable initiative for Türk-İş and limitations and difficulties on workers’ enrollment to any unions.¹⁶⁹ After the negotiations by a delegation of the DİSK became useless and the draft passed in the assembly, the workers who affiliated with the DİSK resisted. On 15 June 1970, unions under the DİSK started demonstrations and on 16 June thousands of workers began to march from different locations around İstanbul to Taksim. Especially from Gebze and Tuzla region which have been the industrial area located in the southeast of central İstanbul, their number multiplied as they were marching to reach the heart of the city, Taksim and escorted by the military vehicles.¹⁷⁰ What followed was the declaration of martial law. Incidents of 15-16 June were one of the most important events to remind when one mentions the labor mass movements of the era.

¹⁶⁷ Yüksel Akkaya, “Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık-II,” *Praksis* 6 (2002): p.71.

¹⁶⁸ Kemal Nebioğlu, “15-16 Haziran” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p. 2154.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

2.4.3 The Peasants' Land Occupations

The peasants were one of the groups which was in a contentious political action in the 1960s. After 1968, they constructed the form of collective action, namely the occupation on their most crucial, most meaningful means of affording themselves: the land. Mostly, the poor and the landless peasants, as well as the small producers acted against the large landownership, usurers-merchants, and also the state policies embodied in the problem of agricultural credits.¹⁷¹ The landless peasants intensified their protests in the form of the occupation of the lands which were of the state treasury, or were commonly possessed in a village. These lands were seized by the landowners.¹⁷² The target of the collective actions of small producers was twofold: first demonstrations against the state's low level of minimum price of such agricultural products as tobacco, hazelnut, beetroot, poppy, potatoes or chickpea. Second, they were determined not to pay their debt back to the usurers who applied great interest rates for the money they lent. One of the first occupations began in some of the villages in the Aegean Region. Atalan was one of them. Hikmet Çetinkaya's report in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper dated 30 January 1969 demonstrated the events also from the mouth of the peasants:

Write Sir, write legibly...We, the inhabitants of Atalan village, occupied 13,500 *dönüms*¹⁷³ of lands of six landowners who shared the lands of our village..." said Grandmother Emine who came to village coffeehouse with her grandchild in the lap...There is an occupation committee of 600 hundred people in the village. During the entire three days, there have never been a cease or sleep in this committee of 600 hundred people...Everybody from 7 to 70 years-old is a committee attendant...They say 'soon, we will plough the lands we occupied. We will sow wheat; we will sow cotton; we will sow tobacco. Is a landless

¹⁷¹ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p.2136.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ A *dönüm* of land equals a land amounted to about 950 m².

peasant possible, Sir, is it possible?...’ The committee’s spokesperson, village headman [*Muhtar*] Sabri Güleç who states that the cadastral officials side with the landowners tells at length: “let our heads hear that we do not violate the law. According to register of title deeds six landowners are supposed to possess only 4745 *dönüms* of land, all the [registers of] lands are bestowed unlawfully to landowners. We object that too... Let the re-detection be done, [because] it will be seen that all the lands of landowners amounted to 1500 *dönüms*; in short 12.000 *dönüms* [of land] are not theirs, but of state treasury. Actually it is the landowners who violate the law. It is the landowners...” Atalan villagers add that they will continue the occupation. For the time being, 2000 *dönüms* of land are under occupation...They also declare that they will occupy the other lands in the following period. Atalan villagers made a demonstration in the village as they handled placards and shouted “we won’t leave the lands we occupied.”¹⁷⁴

After the land occupations grew in largeness they also spread nearby villages like Göllüce, the village where Mesude Evliyazade who was the paternal aunt of ex-prime minister Adnan Menderes owned a good deal of lands. She was called *Hanım Ağa* (Lady Agha) in the surroundings. Hikmet Çetinkaya reports:

The story began in 1946 in Göllüce...Those years Göllüce villagers were the sharecroppers of Lady Agha. Whenever

¹⁷⁴ Hikmet Çetinkaya, “İşgalci Köylüler için tahkikat açıldı”, *Cumhuriyet*, (The Republic) 30 January 1969. “*Yaz beyim, okunaklı okunaklı yaz...Biz-Atalan köyü sakinleri köyümüzün 13 bin 500 dönümlük arazisini bölüşen altı ağanın topraklarını işgal ettik...*” dedi, kucaklarında torunu ile köy kahvesine gelen Emine nine...*Köyde 600 kişilik bir işgal komitesi var. Tam üç gündür uyku durak yok bu 600 kişilik komitede...7’den 70’e değin hepsi komite görevlisi... ‘İşgal ettiğimiz toprakları sürmeye başlayacağız yakında. Buğday ekeceğiz, pamuk ekeceğiz, tütün ekeceğiz. Topraksız köylü olur mu bey, olur mu?..’ diyorlar. Kadastro memurlarının ağalardan yana çıktığını belirten komite sözcüsü Muhtar Sabri Güleç uzun uzun anlatıyor: “Biz kanunlara karşı gelmiyoruz, bunu duysun başımızdaki büyükler. Tapu kayıtlarına göre 6 ağanın sadece 4745 dönüm arazisi olacakken toprakların hepsi yolsuz olarak ağaların üzerine geçiyor. Biz buna da itiraz ediyoruz...tekrar tesbit yapılsın, görülecek ki, tüm ağaların toprakları 1500 dönüm, kısacası 12 bin dönüm onların değil hazinenindir. Asıl kanuna karşı gelen ağalardır. Ağalardır...Atalan köylüleri işgale devam edeceklerini de ekliyorlar. Şimdilik 2000 dönümlük toprak işgal altında...Önümüzdeki dönemde diğer arazileri de işgal edeceklerini bildiriyorlar. Atalan köylüleri ellerindeki pankartlarla dün de köy içinde gösteri yapmışlar ve “İşgal ettiğimiz topraklardan çıkmıyacağız” diye bağırıyorlardı.”*

My thanks to Burak Gürel for allowing me to use this article and the following ones, as well as for his helps concerning this sub-section.

the land reform was to be mentioned, those years all the Göllüce villagers became the capstans on the lands of “Lady Agha”. Now let’s hear the rest from the Göllüce villagers: “We applied to be given the lands owned by the state treasury on the July of 1960...This time, Lady Agha attempted to put us out our houses. “These [places] are all mine” she said...She keeps saying us that we are dirty, that we are lazy... She employed [us] for 5 Liras of daily wage. Now she even does not do it. What we eat is grass; what we drink is water...”¹⁷⁵

On 4 February 1969 a Kemalist journalist İlhan Selçuk wrote about the events in Göllüce:

According to the news published in yesterday’s newspapers, Torbalı’s Göllüce villagers occupied the lands of state treasury, now possessed by Adnan Menderes’ parental aunt. In the villagers’ language, the name of Menderes’ parental aunt consists of two words. There is no better expression than this to illustrate Turkey’s order. According to register of title deeds, the [amount of] treasury lands which Lady Agha seized and exploited are hundreds of thousands square meters. This method is not only applied in Torbalı. Beginning from Viranşehir,¹⁷⁶ to its east and west and to north and south, Anatolia is under the rule of landlords who seized state lands.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Hikmet Çetinkaya, “Toprak reformu dudaklarda bir türkü gibi”, *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 4 February 1969. “*Hikaye 1946 yılında başladı Göllüce’de... O yıllar, Göllüce köylüleri Hanım Ağa’nın toprak yarıcularıydı. Ne zaman toprak reformu çıkması söz edilir oldu, o yıllar tüm Göllüceliler “Hanım Ağa”nın topraklarında ırgat oluverdiler. Şimdi bundan sonraki gelişmeyi Göllüceliler’in ağzından dinleyelim: “1960 Temmuzunda müracaat ettik, hazineye ait toprakların bize verilmesi için... Ağa Hanım bu defa, bizi oturduğumuz evlerden çıkartmaya kalktı. Buralar benim topraklarım dedi... Ağa Hanım bize pis olduğumuzu, tembel olduğumuzu söyler durur... Yanında yevmiyesi beş liraya çalıştırırdı. Şimdi bunu dahi yapmaz oldu... Yediğimiz ot, içtiğimiz su...”*”

¹⁷⁶ A district of Urfa which is in the Southeast Region of Turkey.

¹⁷⁷ İlhan Selçuk, “Hanım Ağa ve Göllüce Köylüleri”, *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 4 February 1969. “*Dünkü gazetede yayınlanan haberlere göre Torbalı’nın Göllüce köylüleri, Adnan Menderes’in halasının elinde bulunan Hazine topraklarını işgal etmişlerdir. Menderes’in halasının adı köylülerin dilinde iki kelimedir. Türkiye’nin düzenini bundan daha iyi gösterecek başka deyim bulunamaz. Tapu kayıtlarına göre Hanım Ağa’nın el koyup işlettiği Hazine arazisi yüzbinlerce metrekaredir. Bu usul yalnızca Torbalı’da uygulanmıyor.. Viranşehir’den başlayarak Doğusuna Batısına ve Kuzeyine Güneyine Anadolu, devlet topraklarına el koymuş mütegalibe saltanatı altındadır.*”

When the peasants' land occupations gradually increased day by day, the incidents also occupied the parliamentary agenda during the budget discussions of 1969. Bülent Ecevit, the General Secretary of the RPP expressed his support of land occupations by saying that "the Constitution stands above all the laws. [However] beyond it exists the law of nature. Nothing, but to establish a humane social order can stop the peasants involving to occupy the lands upon which they assume the right to live".¹⁷⁸ In his speech, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel states in opposition to Ecevit's speech that "what will you say to us tomorrow morning when some of the citizens begin to occupy the lands of some other citizens? Turkish Constitution does acknowledge to no one the right to get the right by force. It does not acknowledge the right to make land reform by himself. With which authority do you broadcast this right through Turkish radios? Then everything is free, the shop is free, the house is free . . . This is where it arrives."¹⁷⁹

As these examples reveal the peasants' land occupations emerged as one of the incidents of collective political actions of the 1960s. Clearly, these actions illustrate that the peasants were among other social groups which involved in contentious politics. What is important to note is that the students did not refrain to support peasants in their protest and resistance.

2.4.4 The Kurds

This decade also witnessed the emergence of a new generation of Kurdish political activists. Politically, the Kurds had been in a taciturnity since the

¹⁷⁸ "Bütçe Mecliste", *Cumhuriyet*, 13 February 1969. "Bütün yasaların üstünde anayasa vardır. Onun da ötesinde doğa yasaları vardır. Yaşama hakkı iddia ettikleri toprakları işgale girişen köylüleri, insanca bir toplum düzeni kurmaktan başka hiçbirşey durduramaz."

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. "Yarın sabah vatandaşların bir kısmı diğer bazı vatandaşların arazisini işgale başlarsa bize gelip ne diyeceksiniz? Türk Anayasası kimseye zorla hak almayı tanımıyor. Kendi kendine toprak reformu yapmak hakkı tanımıyor. Siz hangi yetkiyle bu hakkı Türkiye radyolarıyla yayıyorsunuz? Sonra herşey serbest, dükkân serbest, ev serbest... Mesele oraya gelir."

harsh suppression of the Dersim Revolt by the state in 1938. Since that time Kurdish population had been exposed to state's hegemony embodied by its military and political measures. Besides this, the East and the Southeast regions which were mainly inhabited by the Kurds were characterized with the grave economic backwardness, the fact which became the very theme of the discussions and opinions of the time, as can be followed in the press. As we will see in the following chapter, one of the essences of contention by the Kurds in Eastern Meetings was this backwardness issue and the development of the region. The Kurds began publishing newspapers and periodicals by which they tried to reflect the backward situation of the East, Kurdish language and culture.

The dynamism was mainly stemmed from a young Kurdish intellectual generation who had the opportunity to get education in such institutions in urban areas of the region as Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*) or in big cities of the country like Ankara and İstanbul. Depending on some social factors, Kurdish movement proved to reach a momentum from the 1960s to 1970s. These factors and some others were identified rightly by Bruinessen:

At the risk of being too schematic, we can identify some factors that contributed to the growth and radicalization of the Kurdish movement through the 1970s. The most crucial factor may have been the migration from the Kurdish provinces to the cities of western Turkey. This reached enormous proportions in the 1960s and continued unabated during the 1970s. Such large numbers of migrants could no longer be gradually urbanized and assimilated as earlier generations had been. Rather, they lived together in their own closed communities, to some extent maintaining their traditional lifestyle. They were more aware than they had been before of the great gap in development and ways of life between western and eastern Turkey. Occasional discrimination strengthened their awareness of being different. The new generation, as university or secondary school students, engaged in the political discussions on

imperialism, underdevelopment, class struggle and the national problem.”¹⁸⁰

Recently having had reached the opportunity to read the translated publications about socialist doctrine, they were also inspired by the anti-imperialist movements in the third world countries as in Vietnam, Palestine, Africa or Latin America. This led them to feel that the ‘misfortune’ of the Kurds was not unique to the Kurdish people, but was a result of the same cause: imperialism. In addition, it seems that the Barzani Revolt in Iraq launched in 1959 gave a dynamism and inspiration to the Kurdish activists of the period. They were within the organizations of the generation of ‘68ers. However, not only the socialist stirrings but also the nationalist tendencies existed among the Kurds. To put it more clearly, especially after 1965 Kurdish political movement developed through two general streams: the first was the socialist Kurds who were mainly organized around the Turkish Labor Party (TLP). The second stream was the nationalist Kurds who established the clandestine and illegal Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan. What is crucial with respect to our subject is that these two branches, despite their different world views and prognosis of the situation, could nevertheless get together and organize the meetings. This is an important input in terms of analyzing the mobilization and ideological framing of the Eastern Meetings.

In 1969 when the youth movement began to be more autonomous and the discussions between National Democratic Revolutionists and Socialist Revolutionists could not provide the Kurds with solutions for the problems of the East, an organization titled the DDKO (Turkish acronym of the *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* - Cultural Hearths of Revolutionary East) was

¹⁸⁰ Martin van Bruinessen, “The Kurds in Turkey,” *MERIP Reports* 121 (1984): p.9.

established in İstanbul and Ankara.¹⁸¹ Different branches were founded also in the East. In their regulations their goals were stated as: 1) to provide the [Kurdish] students in the universities with a specific cultural study, [and] to ease material solidarity among them, 2) to break up all the racist-chauvinistic conditionings . . . stemmed from official ideology; to take its place in the spectrum of democratic and revolutionist organizations struggling for fraternal and egalitarian living of the peoples.¹⁸²

In their monthly bulletin, the DDKOs strived for attracting the attention for the economic problems of the Eastern region, the oppression of landlords and tribal leaders, as well as brutal behavior of Turkish army over Kurdish villagers. For this aim the DDKO members prepared a report to be submitted to the president. As the first legal Kurdish organizations in modern Turkey, the DDKOs possessed a special place in Kurdish movement of the decade and indicated a moment of political crystallization. In other words the Kurdish movement transformed from being organized in Turkish organizations like Idea Clubs or the TLP to an organization of their own. They obtained so much attraction and influence over the Kurds. For instance “this oppression [of the state]” says Ümit Fırat, a member of the DDKOs, “began to lose its influence over thousands of people who had been hiding their identities until those days; in the years following the foundation of the DDKOs, people began to give their children meaningful Kurdish names”.¹⁸³ On 16 October 1970 the members of the DDKOs began to be arrested and after 12 March 1971 the DDKOs were closed indefinitely by the military junta.

To sum up, in this chapter a factual base for the analysis of the Eastern Meetings was given. The social and political changes that the Turkish society

¹⁸¹ Ümit Fırat, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p. 2119.

¹⁸² *Dünyada Kürt Vardır: DDKO Savunması*, (The Kurds Exist in the World: DDKO's Defence), (N.P.: 1973) p.228.

¹⁸³ Ümit Fırat, p.2119.

went through, and the 27 May Coup D'etat as an important factor in defining the boundaries of political sphere, and the rise of the socialist ideas were explained. Within the general socio-political mobilization in Turkey during the 1960s, the Kurds, among other groups were mobilized too. Notice that the Kurds as one of the political groups were related to the above mentioned events, changes and different collective political action types which were realized by different sectors. Departing from the fact that the domestic and the conjunctural factors in Turkey did set the stage for such a collective political action as the Eastern Meetings, in this chapter I located the Kurds as one of the groups in a contentious action. In other words, it is important to see that the ideological and organizational patterns surrounding the Kurdish contenders were not given. The Eastern Meetings, I propose, should be regarded within this context. From this perspective, next chapter will focus specifically on the Kurdish contenders with a special references to their identity formation process and mobilization process with their unique mechanisms.

CHAPTER 3

THE EASTERN MEETINGS

In the previous chapter I have examined the social change that Turkish society went through during the 1950s and the 1960s. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the social, political and economic changes of these decades culminated in the emergence of a remarkable political mobilization in Turkey. Then, I have identified the major actors of this political mobilization and their collective political actions in the context of the 1960s. Kurds, as stated before, were among these groups which were mobilized and voiced their demands in various forms. Hence, the Eastern Meetings were the most striking instance of the political mobilization of the Kurds in the 1960s. In this chapter, I will elaborate more on these meetings through locating them first in the Kurdish identity formation process and then in the mobilization process with an emphasis on the significant *mechanisms*, i.e. one of the analytical tools which were defined in the Chapter 1.

Before examining the mobilization process of the Eastern Meetings one should examine the identity formation process of the Kurdish contenders that paved the way for their mobilization to voice their demands in such an organized way. What were the underlying mechanisms of the identity formation process? Here, as the elements of the political identity formation process, *environmental* and *cognitive* mechanisms will be discussed. I will first examine the environmental mechanisms of the identity formation process of the contenders under focus. As I explained in Chapter 1, environmental mechanisms “mean externally generated influences on the conditions affecting social life.”¹⁸⁴ In the case of the Eastern Meetings, one can delineate a set of events and changes which can be counted as the elements of the environmental mechanisms operational in the mobilization of the Kurds. The reflections of the social

¹⁸⁴ McAdam et al., *Dynamics of Contention*, p.25.

change of the 1960s on the Kurdish regions and its impacts on the emergence of a new group of Kurdish intellectuals who later appeared as the primary actors of these meetings constitute the first element of the environmental mechanisms to be explored. Then, I will move on to the examination of another mechanism, the Barzani Revolt in Iraq which, as the most ardent nationalistic resistance of the Kurds of the time, became an impressive source of inspiration for Kurdish contenders in Turkey in terms of political mobilization. As the domestic mechanisms, I will discuss the 1960 coup d'état and the 1961 Constitution. The coup and the new constitution drew the boundaries of the political space which on the one hand did not allow any explicit effort to voice any demands related to the Kurds and Kurdishness, but on the other hand opened a relatively expanded room for other contentious political movements such as labor or student movements from which Kurds benefited to make their claims in a covert fashion. It was within this political space that the TLP, another mechanism to be analyzed here, emerged as the political organization in which the Kurds obtained a socialist view, got organized as Easterners and found a legal platform to voice their demands. Thus, all these events and changes constituted the environmental mechanisms of the identity formation process of the Kurdish contenders.

However, in order to draw a complete picture of the identity formation process one should also examine the cognitive mechanisms which emerged and operated in relation to above-mentioned environmental mechanisms. Cognitive mechanisms, as McAdam et. al. state “operate through alterations of individual and collective perceptions; words like recognize, understand, reinterpret and classify characterize such mechanisms.”¹⁸⁵ In the identity formation process, the would-be contenders undergo some cognitive processes as a result of or in relation to the environmental mechanisms that bring social change. The would-be contenders perceive, understand, and interpret the environmental changes in such a way that eventually lead them to mobilization. Here it's important to

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.26.

note that these cognitive processes of perception, understanding and (re)interpretation are not independent of the social background of the would-be contenders. They bring a set of shared memories, experiences and worldviews with them which determine or at least influence their perception or interpretation of the new conditions created by the environmental mechanisms. In this way, they perceive the new conditions either as a threat or opportunity to get into action. Therefore, the examination of the cognitive mechanisms requires a parallel analysis of the backgrounds of the actors of the identity formation process (or the would-be contenders). In the case of the Eastern Meetings, it is important to stress that, in terms of its major actors; one can mention a general pattern such that most of the major actors of this process were university students and self-employed persons who found their “fellow townsmen” in the university halls or dormitories. Then, in the context of the social change they underwent during the 1960s, this fellow townsmanship turned into “Eastism” (*Doğuculuk*), a political identity which constituted the leading mobilizing motive of the Meetings. In the following pages, I will examine this transformation as the element of the cognitive mechanisms of the identity formation process. Here one point requires particular emphasis. In the framework drawn by McAdam et al. (2003) the authors pay particular attention to the significance of a multi-actor analysis and to the interaction of these actors during the processes. Likewise, in the examination of the identity formation process one should refrain from focusing solely on the contenders as the actors as if they did not come into interaction with the other actors such as state or the advocates of other political perspectives. Thus, since the alteration of the perceptions, understandings and the interpretations of the Kurdish contenders is a result of the interaction between different actors such as state, or conservative and fascist circles, I will take this interaction into consideration in my analysis of the cognitive mechanisms. In my examination of the cognitive mechanisms of the identity formation process, I will also focus on the role newly emerged Kurdish magazines and newspapers in the transformation of the sense of “fellow townsmanship” into “Eastism” in the 1960s. Then I will move on to the examination of the Turkish Labor Party’s influence on its

Kurdish members who adopted the socialist ideas and discourse and used them in their attempts to voice the problems of the “East” in these meetings.

The last section examines the mobilization process of the Eastern Meetings. The theoretical framework presented by McAdam et al., “instead of pointing to pre-existing mobilizing structures” the authors “call attention to the active appropriation of the sites for mobilization.”¹⁸⁶ In other words, “[w]ould be activists. . . must either create an organizational vehicle or utilize an existing one and transform it into an instrument of contention.”¹⁸⁷ In the case of Eastern Meetings, the would-be contenders were organized to a great extent under the roof of the TLP and although the initiation of the meetings came from the local members of the TLP independent from the Party center, the TLP appeared as a pre-existing organization from which they acquired organizational experience and to some degree an ideological vision. On the other hand, the nationalist-conservative Kurds created their own party, the clandestine DPTK. Accordingly, in what follows I will examine what kind of channels the Kurdish contenders used in the mobilization process of the meetings. Such an examination will illustrate that as well as creating new organizational channels, the actors of a collective political action may also deploy already existing organizations or institutions in novel and innovative ways to make their claims.

As McAdam et al states, in the classical social movement agenda framing is taken basically as the strategically formed goals of the contenders.¹⁸⁸ However, McAdam et al goes beyond this view and proposes a relational process of social construction between multiple actors instead of strategic framing. For example, in the case of the Eastern Meetings, “underdevelopment of the East” constituted a significant element of the discourse of the Kurdish contenders

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.44.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p.47.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.48.

throughout the mobilization process. However, the underdevelopment of the east was far from being an element of just the contenders' discourse, but it was also a widely referred theme of the state's discourse concerning the Kurdish question. In the following pages, I will elaborate more on the social construction throughout the mobilization process, which emerged and shaped within the interaction between multiple actors ranging from the Kurdish contenders to state and fascist circles.

3.1 Social Change, A Coup and A Revolt: The Role of Environmental Mechanisms

3.1.1 Social Change and the Kurds

The Kurdish regions and the Kurdish population have been exposed to the state's military and political pacification and assimilation policies in the 1940s, after the years of harsh military measures and massive deportations by the state during the Kurdish uprisings in the 1930s. In fact, these policies became successful to a certain degree. Up to the 1950s, the Kurdish population was too far from getting organized and voicing political matters. The Kurdish population's quiet and pacified situation evolved into a relative activity, during the DP rule in the 1950s when the military repression of the Kurdish regions softened. Seen as one source of electoral support in these years, the Kurdish feudal landlords, tribal chieftains and sheikhs with their influence over the population gained recognition by the Menderes government which integrated them into the central authority by bringing them into the national assembly or bestowing them ministerial posts. Among other things, the clientalist relations were the main reason of the relief in the regions. The repressive policies over the Kurdish population during the RPP's Single Party regime appeared as the

main force behind the popular support of the DP.¹⁸⁹ As a positive attitude in the DP period, the killing of Kurdish villagers by the soldiers during the RPP period was brought into agenda by the representatives of the governing party.¹⁹⁰ The DP deputies opened the cover of the file in the assembly and ensured the trial of the main agent, Full General Muğlalı.

With the country's integration efforts into Western capitalism in these years, the Kurdish regions (as other areas of the country) were subjected to profound social change from the 1960s onwards. Feudal landlords dominating in the rural areas began to move towards urban areas, engaged in commercial activities, besides agricultural production, and became absentee landlords.¹⁹¹ The DP government's opening to the East enabled feudal landowners to obtain benefits in the forms of credits and agricultural mechanization, the factors which deepened the land inequality between the landholders and the landless Kurdish masses and in turn, operated for the advantage of the former and to the disadvantage of the latter which had no or so little soil to cultivate.¹⁹² Moreover, while the population of the region was 1,829,095 in 1940, it increased to 3,693,246 in 1965; that is the population growth almost (increased

¹⁸⁹ An incident during an electoral meeting, told by Yılmaz Çamlıbel, a representative of the Kurdish generation under focus, illustrates the reaction against the Single Party Period and its National Chief, İsmet İnönü: "One day we went to a village with a "talkative" notable named Selahattin. This person spoke [in Kurdish] to the villagers in the headman's room as such: 'Gelli hevalan, ev İsmetê ker, idi canê me xwariye. Ger hun reyên xwe bidine Menderes, yê hurriyet were welatê me. Em idi zulmê naxwazın. Em hurriyetê dixwazın'" (Friends, the deaf İsmet already exhausted us. If you vote for Menderes, freedom will come to our country. We want not persecution, but freedom). Yılmaz Çamlıbel, *Kervan Yürüyor (Kuva Dîçi?)-Anılar*, (İstanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2001),p.154.

¹⁹⁰ In Van's Özalp district, 33 Kurdish villagers were executed by shooting upon the order of Full General Mustafa Muğlalı. The villagers were not judged. For a research on this incident see: Neşe Özgen, *Van-Özalp ve 33 Kurşun Kurşun Olayı, Toplumsal Hafızanın Unutma ve Hatırlama Biçimleri*, (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003).

¹⁹¹ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni: Sosyo-Ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller*, (Ankara: E Yayınları, 2nd ed., 1970), p.343.

¹⁹² A thorough examination of the aspects of the traditional feudal structure in the eastern and southeastern regions and of the phenomenon what İsmail Beşikçi called 'institutionalization of landlordism' extends the limits of this study. For a comprehensive analysis, see: İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni*, p.383.

by 102 %) in 25 years.¹⁹³ The deepening land inequality combined with the population growth and a great deal of agricultural peasant population was pushed outside of the agricultural sector and had to immigrate to the urban areas.¹⁹⁴ The direction of migration in the Kurdish regions generally had the following pattern: from rural areas to small towns, from these towns to the large cities within the region, from these large cities in the region to big cities of the country.¹⁹⁵ Specifically, within the eastern and southeastern regions the main provinces of migration emerged as Diyarbakır, Elazığ and Siirt where the most of the mining and manufacturing industries were located.¹⁹⁶ However, the emigrant population could not be absorbed in terms of employment, settlement or social services, because of insufficient industrialization and government investments. Therefore, in the specific case of the Kurdish regions one can conclude that the period 1960s and onwards witnessed a considerable deterioration in the traditional structures. The striking point is that the newly urbanized peasants most of whom were unemployed or could only find occasional jobs, crowded in the shantytowns of the “big villages” which were in the guise of cities. “These laborers” says Nezan, “along with the petty-bourgeoisie, were the most dynamic and responsive sectors of Kurdish society. Contact with the world of the proletarians and with progressive intellectuals politicized them very rapidly.”¹⁹⁷ It can be argued that it was this newly urbanized Kurdish population which soon would be the target of the meeting organizers and hence they constituted the potential participants to the meetings.

¹⁹³ SIS [State Institute of Statistics], 1965, 5-6. Compiled by Majeed R. Jafar, *Under-Underdevelopment: A Regional Case Study of the Kurdish Area in Turkey*, Studies of the Social Policy Association in Finland, no 24. Helsinki, 1976. p.82.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Majeed R. Jafar, p.89.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁹⁷ Kendal Nezan, “Kurdistan in Turkey” in *People Without a Country-the Kurds and Kurdistan*, Gerard Chailand ed., (London: Zed Press, 1980), p.79.

The migration of the Kurdish population to the urban areas also paved the way for the emergence of a new generation of Kurdish intellectuals in the mid-1940s and especially 1950s. These people had the opportunity to get education in Turkish free boarding schools. In addition to obtain the chance of education, the service they could not imagine to get in the rural areas, they even reached the opportunity to have professional university education. It is no coincidence to observe that most of them graduated as lawyers and medical doctors from the universities in Ankara and Istanbul; as these were the most prominent professions in terms of promising a comfortable future at that time. They could not only obtain such professional education, but also could reach a political formation through which they interpreted the world events in general and the issues regarding the East, from a socialist perspective. Some of them; later, played a significant role as the leaders in the Kurdish mobilization under the name of “Eastism (*Doğuculuk*)” and the organizers of the Eastern Meetings would then emerge out of this new generation of Kurdish intellectuals.

These Kurdish intellectuals witnessed not only the above-mentioned social transformation but also the persistent underdevelopment of the Kurdish regions. Besides, they were close observers of the situation and the activities of the other Kurds in the neighboring states. At that time, the activities of the Iraqi Kurds (namely Barzani Revolt) were one of the most important external influences on their later mobilization. That is, apart from the social change mentioned above, the Barzani Revolt was another element of the environmental mechanisms of the identity formation process of the Kurdish would-be contenders. Now I will examine the Barzani Revolt both as an important influence which led the Kurds towards mobilization and as an environmental element which triggered the Turkish state elites to take immediate measures to prevent such an uprising among the Kurds in Turkey.

3.1.2 A Spark From the South: The Barzani Revolt

On July 1958 in Iraq, kingship regime was overthrown by General Abdulkarim Kassem and the new regime permitted Communist Party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Molla Mustafa Barzani who took refuge in the USSR after the defeat of short lived Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1947, was invited back to Iraq in 1958.¹⁹⁸ Barzani was enthusiastically welcomed by the Kurds in Iraq and, the Kurds in Turkey shared this enthusiasm with a covert sympathy. The new Iraqi constitution announced that “Arabs and Kurds are considered partners in the homeland, and their national rights within Iraqi sovereignty are recognized.”¹⁹⁹ However, the promises were not kept. As their expectations for an autonomous Kurdistan under a democratic Iraq proved unfounded, the Kurdish *peşmerges* revolted under Barzani’s leadership against the Kassem government. Given that the massive Kurdish uprisings during the early Republican era shook the foundations of the young nation-state, unsurprisingly, Turkish state elite’s and opinion leaders were keeping a close eye on these developments.

Avni Doğan, an inspector of the First General Inspectorate²⁰⁰ in the 1940s, published a serial of articles in *Vatan*. Considering the last developments in Iraq and the Barzani movement as the bells tolling for signaling the dangers of

¹⁹⁸ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p. 2110.

¹⁹⁹ Edgar O’Ballance, *The Kurdish Struggle, 1920-94*, (London: StMartin Press, 1996), p.36.

²⁰⁰ The General Inspectorates (*Umûmî Mufettişlikler*) were special administrative units first established during the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century for the establishment of order in the provinces, especially the Balkans and Macedonia. Then, in the Republican period, these institutions were reactivated and established in the eastern Anatolia, Trace and north-east Anatolia. In the eastern provinces, they were established to institute order after the Kurdish revolts of the 1920s and the 1930s. Clearly, they were the mechanisms of martial conditions. From 1943 to 1947 Avni Dogan worked as the general inspector of the First General Inspectorate which was established in the east and southeast Anatolia. For a detailed account of the General Inspectorates see, Cemil Koçak, *Umûmî Mufettişlikler (1927-1952)* (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

“Kurdism,” Avni Doğan in the serial titled “Toll for the Danger”²⁰¹ attracted the attention of his readers and the state elites to the necessity of “a common national atmosphere to defend the national unity.”²⁰² In the last article of the serial in which he reviewed the historical development of “Kurdism” from the Ottoman Empire to the date, Avni Doğan gave the statistical data on the linguistic features of Turkey and the Kurdish population and determined “Kurdishness” as a crucial internal issue.²⁰³ He stated that “the appearance of Kurdishness as a crucial internal issue for the Turkish Republic is not because of their existence, but rather of the fact that their existence is concentrated in the Eastern provinces. The meaning expressed by the fact that the Kurdish density in such neighbor countries as Iran, Iraq and Syria share the same borders with the majority in our region cannot be undervalued.”²⁰⁴ As a top member of the RPP and once a holder of an important post of the administrative mechanism in the Eastern regions densely populated by the Kurds, Avni Doğan’s accounts were illustrative of the primary motives of the elites regarding the Kurdish question. Also in *Milli Yol* (The National Path), an ultra-nationalist journal, some articles regarding the Barzani Revolt, Kurdish problem and the events that took place in Kerkuk were published.²⁰⁵ For instance, İsmet Tümtürk was proposing a solution for the “Eastern border

²⁰¹ Avni Doğan, “Tehlike Çanı”, *Vatan*, 19-23 November 1958.

²⁰² Avni Doğan, “Tehlike Çanı: ‘Kürt’ Kelimesini Ağza Almamanız Dâvayı Halletmez..”, *Vatan*, 19 November 1958.

²⁰³ Avni Doğan, “Tehlike Çanı: Şark Meselesi için Alınması Lâzım Gelen Tedbirler”, *Vatan*, 23 November 1958.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. “...Kürtlüğün Türkiye Cumhuriyeti için mühim bir iç meselesi halinde görünmesi, onların miktarında değil; mevcudunun daha ziyade Şark vilayetlerinde toplanmış olmasındandır. İran, Irak ve Suriye gibi komşu memleketlerdeki Kürt keşafetinin bizim bölgemizdeki çoğunlukla hemhudut oluşun ifade ettiği mânâ ise, küçümsenecek gibi değildir.”

²⁰⁵ See *Milli Yol* (The National Path), No: 5, 13, 16, 19, 23, 26, 30, 33.

problem” implying that the state power was not present in the eastern regions. His solution was to settle the Kirghiz and Kazakh tribes in those regions.²⁰⁶

Another instance which reflects the state elites’ intransigent view of anything related to the Kurds and the Kurdish question was the *Kımlı* incident. On 31 August 1959, in the 500th issue of *İleri Yurt* (Advanced Home),²⁰⁷ Musa Anter wrote an article titled *Kımlı*²⁰⁸ which comprised a folk song about the *kımlı* pest causing very much damage to crops, from the mouth of a village girl.²⁰⁹ What triggered the reactions was that the song was written in Kurdish. After giving the song in Kurdish to illustrate the misery of the people of the East, then he added that “[d]on’t worry sister, your brothers are arriving from now on to save you from the *süne* and the misery it caused.”²¹⁰ Although he was brought to trial several times before the *Kımlı*, this article caused reactions more than ever. A journalist was asking “who [gave] the paper for this newspaper”.²¹¹ *Kımlı*’s author Musa Anter, editorial chief Canip Yıldırım and the owner A. Efhem Dolak were arrested on 22 September 1959. They were accused of “making publications which could harm the political esteem of the state and could damage the trust and confidence of the people towards the state and lead the

²⁰⁶ İsmet Tümtürk, “Doğu Sınırı Meselemiz,” *Milli Yol* (The National Path), 23 (6 July 1962).

²⁰⁷ This newspaper was published in Diyarbakır from the fall of 1958 onwards. Its language was Turkish and merely stressed the underdevelopment of the East. It rapidly gained a large audience among the Kurdish intellectuals. Nezan Kendal, p.64.

²⁰⁸ A species of insect pest of cereals.

²⁰⁹ After three years of the publication of his article, in 1962, Anter collected this article with some others published in the *İleri Yurt/Advanced Home* in a book including the articles from the Turkish press, for and against himself. See: Musa Anter, *Kımlı*, (İstanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1962).

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.6. “Üzülme bacı, seni süne ve sünenin ıstırabından kurtaracak kardeşlerin yetişiyor artık..”

²¹¹ Selâmi İzzet Sedes, “Lâf Kılığında”, *Ulus* (The Nation), 19 September 1959.

destruction of the wellbeing and tranquility of people and the public” and were judged in Diyarbakır.²¹²

Another occasion triggered the suspicion against the Kurds in Turkey on the side of the state and Turkish intellectuals. On April 1959 the Turcoman inhabiting around Kerkuk set out to revolt against the Baghdad regime under the leadership of Colonel Mustafa Dabak and this attempt was suppressed by the government with bloodshed.²¹³ Because of the supposition that the Barzani forces were involved in the massacre against the Turcoman population, there occurred strict reactions for this incident. Asım Eren, deputy of Niğde, made a proposal in the National Assembly for reciprocation and stated that “the Kurds killed our kinsmen Turcomans in Kerkuk, we shall kill that much of Kurds too.”²¹⁴ Some Kurdish university students sent a telegram protesting the deputy. As the frustration of the state elites by the Kurds elevated with such events, it eventually led the state to take action against them and resulted in the Incident of 49s (*49lar Olayı*) which was another significant event reflecting state’s treatment of the Kurds at that time.

3.1.3 49 Kurds in the Cells: The Incident of 49s (*49lar Olayı*)

In this environment came the arrest of 52 Kurds some of whom were university students and some were from different professions. They were arrested and put into the cells in the Harbiye Military Jail in İstanbul on 17 December 1959 and kept in these cells for 195 days. With varying reasons their number decreased to 49 during their trials and that is why they were called “49s” (*49’lar*) and the

²¹² Musa Anter, *Kıml*, (İstanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1962), pp.39.

²¹³ O’Ballance, p.36.

²¹⁴ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p. 2110. “Kürtler, Irak’da soydaşlarımız Türkmenleri öldürdüler, biz de öldürülen Türkmen sayısı kadar Kürt öldürelim.”

incident as the ‘Incident of 49s’ (*49lar Olayı*).²¹⁵ The arrested Kurds were kept under strict isolation in the cells which were called ‘coffins’ due to their very inhumane conditions.²¹⁶ As stated in the previous chapter, at this time the DP government underwent hard days because of the devaluation of the Turkish currency by 220% and the sharp increase in the prices and the disturbance among the society. In order to get the American aid, the Menderes government planned to reflect this arrest as one against a communist plan in which the USSR was involved.²¹⁷ In this way, the government planned to kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, they aimed to receive the American aid. On the other hand, they would eliminate the Kurdish intellectuals and political activists in İstanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakır. In fact, the arrested Kurds were nothing, but a handful of people who attracted the attention of the National Intelligence Organization and hence, of the government.²¹⁸ That is to say, they

²¹⁵ These persons were Şevket Turan, Naci Kutlay, Ali Karahan, Koço Elbistan, Yavuz Çambılıbel, Mehmet Ali Dinler, Yavuz Kaçar, Nurettin Yılmaz, Ziya Şerefhanoglu, Hasan Akkuş, Örfi Akkoyunlu, Selim Kılıçoğlu, Fevzi Avşar, Şahabettin Septioğlu, Sait Elçi, Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Yaşar Kaya, Faik Savaş, Haydar Aksu, Ziya Acar, Fadıl Budak, Halil Demirel, Esat Cemiloğlu, Ferit Bilen, Mustafa Nuri Direkciğil, Necati Siyahkan, Hasan Ulus, Nazmi Balkaş, Hüseyin Oğuz Üçok, Mehmet Nazım Çiğdem, Fevzi Kartal, Mehmet Aydemir, Abdurrahman Efem Dolak, Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım, Emin Kotan, Ökkeş Karadağ, Muhsin Şavata, Turgut Akın, Sıtkı Elbistan, Şerafettin Elçi, Mustafa Ramanlı, Mehmet Özer, Feyzullah Demirtaş, Cezmi Balkaş, Halis Yokuş, İsmet Balkaş, Sait Bingöl, Mehmet Bilgin, and Fetullah Kakioğlu. Initially the number of the arrested was 52 but two of them were judged without imprisonment, one died in the cell. See, Naci Kutlay *49’lar Dosyası* (İstanbul: Fırat Yayınları, 1994).

²¹⁶ Musa Anter in his memoirs narrates a striking case illustrating the inhuman conditions of these cells: Emin Batu, the third year student in Ankara University, Faculty of Law died in his cell because of tuberculosis and as told by Musa Anter, he wrote these lines on the cell wall with his blood: “I prefer to be a thorn in the liberty garden, rather than being a rose in the captivity garden.” Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım*, p.150. “*Esaret bahçesinde bir gül olmaktansa, hürriyet bahçesinde bir diken olmayı tercih ederim.*”

²¹⁷ See, Naci Kutlay *49’lar Dosyası*, pp.231-32. Also Tarık Ziya Ekinci told me that as a Diyarbakır deputy of the TLP he read the files of this event in the National Assembly. Azat Zana Gündoğan, Interview with Tarık Ziya Ekinci, İstanbul, 2004.

²¹⁸ The state elites were denying the existence of a Kurdish problem on the one; but on the other, because of their sensitivity and suspicion about the awakening of Kurdish awareness which was triggered by the Barzani Revolt in Iraq, state elites fastened their intelligence activities. The intelligence from the Kurdish regions was collected by the local agents most of whom were chosen among the assimilated Kurds. They participated in between the Kurds and informed the authorities. According to Naci Kutlay, one of 49s, there is no such an organized

did not form a full-fledged political organization nourishing a cause which the government could regard as “Kurdish.” After being harshly isolated in cruel conditions, the trials of ‘49s’ began after the coup d’etat of 27 May 1960.

It is worth noting here that the Kurdish contenders under focus seemed to bifurcate at that time. A sort of split as “socialists” and “nationalists” between the Kurdish prisoners of 49s began to take shape. In general, it may be argued that the Kurdish contention during the 1960s moved along this bifurcated character. Initially, the prominent figures of the nationalist wing were notables in their hometowns and obtained important places as senators and deputies. While Yusuf Azizoğlu (New Turkey Party) and Kemal Badıllı were deputies in the national assembly, Ziya Şerefhanoglu was Bitlis senator and Ali Karahan was elected to the parliament as a deputy; Faik Bucak and Said Elçi were popular figures too.²¹⁹ The Kurdish youth gathered around these figures first, but in the following years the balance altered in favor of the socialist circles within the context just described in the previous chapter. For the moment, it is enough to say that On 11 July 1965, as an extension of the nationalist wing the clandestine Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (*Partiya Demokrate Kurdistana Tirkîye*) was founded by Faik Bucak, Sait Elçi, Şakir Epözdemir, A.Ş.E., Derviş Akgül and Ömer Turhan in Diyarbakır.²²⁰ The party is important in that its leaders took part in the Eastern Meetings and made speeches, although the initiative belonged to the TLP’s Easterners. The collaboration among them is important for it displays the local ties among the Kurdish contenders under focus.

character among the 49s; maybe an earlier form for a later organization, but not a full-fledged one at the date of their imprisonment. For the court files of and some of expressions for the Incident of 49s See: Naci Kutlay, *49’lar Dosyası*, p.249.

²¹⁹ Naci Kutlay, *21. Yüzyıla Girerken Kürtler*, (İstanbul: Pêrî Yayınları, 2002), p.447.

²²⁰ Şakir Epözdemir, *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi, 1968/235 Antalya Davası Savunması*, (İstanbul:Pêrî Yayınları,2005), p.7. The author avoids giving the full name of ‘A.Ş.E.’ for the reason that he is still in active politics.

3.1.4 Tough Policies, Tough Declarations: The Coup and the New Regime

On 27 May 1960 when the military overthrew the DP government, little changed in favor of the Kurds. In *Cumhuriyet*, on 31 May 1960, the cause of the coup was related to the DP government's tolerance for efforts of separatist activities:

The concession which was given to the reaction [*irtica*] in return for vote paved the way for some attempts towards the division of the country. In this vein, it was found out that the visit of the treacherous Şeyh Said's son to the villages in the East by a Russian made jeep was tolerated. It became evident with the documents that the aim attempted to be developed was a new Kurdistan [and] on this issue, some of the DP deputies were the protectors of those working [for this aim] ... That Turkey is the only the country of the Turks will be made adopted by a few persons having different aims.²²¹

They actually did. Some measures and policies during the National Unity Committee period were practiced considering the Kurds. For instance, when the junta government proclaimed general amnesty for the political convicts in the prisons, the "49s" were excluded from it and they were kept in prison until 1961; besides, their trials lasted for years. Furthermore, just one day after the publication of the above-cited article in *Cumhuriyet*, 485 Kurds were concentrated in a camp in Sivas on 1 June 1960 and they were kept there for six months.²²² 55 of these Kurds were subjected to deportation to such western cities as Antalya, Burdur, İzmir, Muğla, Afyon, Isparta, Manisa, Çorum and

²²¹ "Bir Kürdistan Tesisi İçin DP Grubu İçinde Çalışanlar Varmış," *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 31 May 1960. *Rey karşılığı verilen irtica tâvizi Doğuda memleketi parçalayıcı istikamette bazı teşebbüzlere yol açmıştır. Bu meyanda, Rus yapılı bir jeeple vatan hayini Şeyh Said'in oğlunun Doğu'daki köylerde dolaşmasına göz yumulduğu tesbit olunmuştur. Geliştirilmesine çalışan gayenin yeni bir Kürdistan olduğu, bu konuda, bir kaç, DP milletvekilinin çalışanlara müzahir bulunduğu vesikalarıyla meydana çıkmıştır.*"

²²² İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni*, p.328.

Denizli.²²³ These Kurds were exiled simply because they were landlords and sheikhs and the real agents of the separatist activities in eastern and southeastern regions. Most of them were the members and the local prominent figures of the DP; however, the fact that the deportation was only applied to the Kurdish feudals and not to the ones in the western parts of Turkey reveals the ethnic characteristic of the policy. A primary school teacher named Mehmet N. Gültekin mentioned in his letter to Yön (The Path), a document sent from the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding “a clandestine Kurdism activity”:

A document titled Ministry of Internal Affairs in the period of National Unity administration. Signed by Muharrem İhsan Kızıloğlu, the Minsiter of Internal Affairs... The document was [addressed] to the governors of the eastern region, the directorates of national education, primary education and to the principles of village schools... The document says in essence that there is a clandestine Kurdism activity in our region. The reason is that the people of the east does not know they come from a Turkic descent. If the citizens who speak Kurdish and get carried away by the propagandas are taught that they came from Turkic descent, the citizens will not get carried away by these separatist propagandas.²²⁴

Not only that. Turkification of the names of the Kurdish villages and towns, decision to set up religious boarding schools in Kurdish regions to assimilate the Kurdish children and the establishment of Turkish radio broadcasting in eastern cities²²⁵ (like Erzurum, Elazığ, Van, Diyarbakir and Gaziantep) were

²²³ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p.2113.

²²⁴ Mehmet M. Gültekin, “Kürt Meselesi Üstüne,” in *Yön* (The Path), 24 February 1967. “*Milli Birlik idaresi devrinde İçişleri Bakanlığı başlıklı yazı. İçişleri Bakanı Muharrem İhsan Kızıloğlu imzası... Yazı, Doğu bölgesi valilerine, millî eğitim, ilköğretim müdürlüklerine ve köy okulları müdürlerine... Yazıda öz olarak diyor ki, Doğu bölgemizde gizli bir Kürtçülük faaliyeti vardır. Bunun sebebi de, Doğu halkının Türk soyundan geldiklerini bilmemeleridir. Eğer Kürtçe konuşan ve propagandalara kendini kaptıran vatandaşlara Türk soyundan geldikleri öğretilirse, vatandaş da bu bölücü propagandalara kendini kaptırmayacaktır.*”

²²⁵ Doğan Avcıoğlu, “Kürt Meselesi” in *Yön* (The Path), 16 December 1966.

some of the measures taken by the junta.²²⁶ Also, in a foreword article that he wrote for a book attempting to prove the Turkic origin of the Kurds General Gürsel's perception as the leader of the junta towards the Kurdish problem was revealed again. Gürsel was writing that "[t]his work proves one more time that our citizens who inhabit in the eastern Anatolia, regard themselves distinct from the Turk for they speak a language dissimilar to Turkish; whom we think they are so due to our ignorance, are purely Turk."²²⁷

Therefore, political and social arena was so harshly reshaped that a very limited space was left to the Kurds by the regime and any activity which the power holders could consider as "Kurdism," and hence, separatism would face the cruelest punishment. This point is important for our analysis in terms of defining the environmental mechanisms which pushed the Kurds who were more or less politically active for their later mobilization and influenced their perception in terms of both political opportunity and also the will to undertake the risk to face the authority. But it is the time to mention the 1961 Constitution as the symbol of the new regime within which the progressive forces of the country, including the Kurds could engage into contention with the power holders.

3.1.5 Closed Doors for the Kurds: the 1961 Constitution

As given in the previous chapter the 27 May Coup D'etat was a product of an urban-based coalition led by industrial bourgeoisie which desired to become dominant in the economic accumulation and distribution system of the country. In this sense, the regime designed after 1960 was marked by this desire. The 1961 Constitution formed two-chamber system, founded Constitutional Court

²²⁶ Kendal Nezan, p.65.

²²⁷ M. Şerif Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi*, (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1961), p.3. "[b]u eser, Doğu Anadolu'da oturan, Türkçe'ye benzemeyen bir dil konuştukları için kendilerini Türk'den ayrı sayan; bilgisizliğimiz yüzünden bizim de öyle sandığımız vatandaşlarımızın su katılmamış Türk olduklarını bir defa daha isbat etmektedir."

and envisioned a strong Council of State. Thus, it created a new regime which impedes a government based on rural majority to build domination over the urban minority; and it helped industrial bourgeoisie prevent commercial bourgeoisie to act against its interests, a threat it perceived and experienced during the DP rule.²²⁸ Moreover, the National Security Council and the Presidency, with their de facto functioning, appeared as the tools providing the military, as the striking force of the bourgeoisie, with a strong checking authority.²²⁹

Granting some democratic rights such as freedom of thought and of press, *the right to attend public meetings*, the right to form associations and trade unions, and freedom from violations of a citizen's home or person, the 1961 Constitution opened a space where the progressive forces could successfully benefit. As I illuminated in the previous chapter, petty-bourgeois radicalism and more importantly the massive labor movement would mark the decade especially after 1965. Different sectors of the society under specific socio-political circumstances realize this space, articulated their demands and got organized in student clubs or trade unions and mobilized the mass into strikes, faculty occupations, land occupations or mass meetings. Seen from this perspective, the new regime inscribed in the Constitution, unsurprisingly began to operate against its creator, the industrial bourgeoisie and the urban coalition it led. As the heir of the DP, and the spokes party of the conservative circles Justice Party and the governments it established tried to undermine the rights given to the people. As a matter of fact, the Constitution was not applied to the Kurdish contenders that we focus on here. As we will see, the regime never failed in any case to punish them when they were making publications. Some discussions in the Constitution Commission during the preparation of the text can reveal some concerns of the elite and the nationalistic characteristic

²²⁸ Sungur Savran, "1960, 1971, 1980: Toplumsal Mücadeleler, Askeri Müdahaleler," *11. Tez* 6 (1987): p.146.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.147.

inherent in the Constitution.²³⁰ During the discussions on whether or not the word “nationalism” should be included in the second article of the Constitution, the President of State and Government Cemal Gürsel stated the urgency of the word’s inclusion in the article simply because of the struggle against “Kurdism.”²³¹ Thought with the above mentioned policies of denial and assimilation regarding the Kurdish population, these discussions during the preparation of the Constitution reflect how the Committee of National Unity saw any potential or actual Kurdish mobilization as a menace and something to be urgently handled. Overall, the Constitution closed all the doors for any activity which could remind separatism in the guise of Kurdism. This was apparent in the closure of some of the newspapers published by the Kurds between 1961 and 1963. The publishers who were striving to attract the attention towards the problem of the East watched the power holders carefully for not being judged, imprisoned, or banned.

However, as stated, although the new constitution limited the political space for the Kurds, it nonetheless opened some for the expression of leftist ideas even through the establishment of political parties. The TLP was established in this relatively liberal political milieu drawn by the new constitution. The

²³⁰ For instance, during the discussion about the word, nationalism in the second article, member of the Constituent Assembly Necip Bilge, proposed to change the article from “the sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the *Turkish* nation” to “the sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation” simply because of a belief that the latter sounds better. On this proposal Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, later Minister of Internal Affairs, warned: “[B]ut I will insistently focus on the word Turk here. Usage of the word Turk in the article has a laconic meaning. In this vein, the word should not be touched. ...” Kazım Öztürk, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası*, Vol. II, (Ankara:....., 1966), s.1132; quoted in İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu’nun Düzeni*, p. 340. (emphasis added).

²³¹ “...We shall put the “nationalism” in the Constitution. Let’s shall activate this. We shall remove it after the consciousness of Turkishness awakes in the country. They say that different elements will consider to separate according to their interests. You know our struggle against Kurdism today. If we say we are removing nationalism, do they return to us? We will rely on this. If there is a clean government in this country there will be no such danger. In the first place, we shall turn our nation into a Turkish nation. I am never in favor of the elimination of the word from the Constitution. Turkey must be Turk. This phrase must not be removed. If we remove it today, 50 years later there will be no one in Turkey to say that I am a Turk.” Kazım Öztürk, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası*, Vol. II, (Ankara:....., 1966), s.1086; quoted in İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu’nun Düzeni*, p. 341.

important point to mention here is that Kurds also entered the TLP whereby they could get organized as a separate group to make their claims. In what follows I will mention this Kurdish group in the TLP called as the “Easterners.”

3.1.6 The TLP and the “Easterners”

As explained in Chapter II, the TLP and the Kurds who were called as “Easterners” are important for our analysis of the Eastern Meetings. Appropriated the local networks such as friendship ties, as I will display, the organizers of the meetings utilized the party as a legal platform. In time, The Kurds emerged as one of the main groups in the party organization. Besides unionists and intellectuals, they became a distinct group within the party organization. However, rather than focusing on the TLP *per se*, the motives of the organizers in joining the party should be clarified. However, this will be dealt with under the cognitive mechanisms.

The spread of socialist ideas among the Kurds in the urban areas began in the early 1960s, but especially after the TLP gained dynamism and reached the masses under Mehmet Ali Aybar’s presidency. The TLP’s efforts to establish its branches in the Kurdish regions found a voice among them. In time, the Kurds in the TLP emerged as one of the major groups within the party. The “Easterners” group had such a gravity within the party that the members of this group initiated one of the decisions to be taken in the TLP’s 4th Congress on 29-31 October 1970. It was this decision which was used as a pretext for the party's closure by the Constitutional Court during the 1971 junta period. This decision was about the Kurdish problem and taken with the initiative by the Easterners Group.²³² On the other hand, Kemal Burkay states that there

²³² Tanık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları, Türkiye İşçi Partisi ve Kürt Aydınlanması*, (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 2004), pp. 290-291.

“The 4th Grand Congress of the Turkish Labor Party accepts and declares that , the Eastern part of Turkey was inhabited by the Kurdish people,

were two drafts of the group rather than a single one reflecting the final decree of the Easterners. Some of the group members, including Tarık Ziya Ekinçi, Naci Kutlay, Mehdi Zana, Mehmet Ali Aslan and himself tried to soften the tone of the decision draft prepared by the more rigid branch within the group. The “softeners” had the idea that “it was possible and beneficial to depict the same thing with different words and in a different form for not to pull the lightings upon them, without touching on its essence . . .”²³³ However, at the end, as Burkay states, the moderate group could not achieve to hinder this decision accepted in the commission. He states that the holders of the hardliner view were prepared and organized by Sait Kırmızıtoprak (Dr. Şivan) who was the head of the clandestine Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (DPTK).

Even though it was taken as a justification by the Constitutional Court for the closure of the TLP, the content of the decision was not so far from the content of the part reserved for the “Eastern Problem” in the TLP programme.²³⁴ Indeed its emphasis on the ethnic segregation in the form of

from the beginning, the fascist governments of the ruling class have been executing suppression, terror, and assimilation policies which occasionally took the character of bloody persecution activities,

one of the fundamental reasons of the fact that the region where the Kurdish people live is underdeveloped, compared to the other regions of Turkey is the economic and social policies executed by the ruling class governments which take into consideration the fact that this region is inhabited by the Kurdish people, in addition to the capitalism’s unequal development law,

and thus, dealing with the “Eastern Problem” as a problem of regional development is nothing but an extension of the chauvinist views and attitudes of the ruling class governments,

the struggle of the Kurdish people to benefit its constitutional citizenship rights and realize all of its democratic aspirations and demands is supported by our party which is a merciless enemy of all the fascist, suppressive, chauvinist-nationalist movements is an ordinary and obligatory revolutionary mission,

Kurdish and Turkish socialists should work hand in hand within the party in order to integrate the Kurdish people’s struggle of expressing and improving its growing aspirations and demands and the struggle for the socialist revolution which is carried by the worker class and its pioneer organization, our party, in a single revolutionary wave,

it is a fundamental and continuous cause of the party to provide the destruction of the racist-nationalist chauvinist-bourgeois ideology imposed against the Kurdish people, among the party members, socialists and all worker and labor masses,

the party looks at the Kurdish problem through the perspective of the requirements for the worker class’ struggle of the socialist revolution.”

²³³ Kemal Burkay, *Anılar-Belgeler*, vol.1, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Deng, 2002), p.279.

²³⁴ Sadun Aren, p.72.

underdevelopment that the Kurdish region was exposed to was parallel to the party programme and both the party programme and this decision envisioned the collaboration of the Kurdish and Turkish socialists under the same party roof.

The TLP's organization activities were fastened in the eastern regions. The party's branches were founded in Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa (Siverek), Mardin (Derik), Van, Muş, Bingöl, Ağrı, Kars (Ardahan), Siirt, Elazığ, Tunceli and Malatya. The effect of the lyrical tone in the radio speeches made also by the deputy candidates attracted the attentions. Tarık Ziya Ekinci says that:

My Easterner brothers, the most feverish preachers of the election arenas have tried to detain you with the literature of the development of the East since 1946. Agricultural credits distributed in the East by the banks and the irrigation plants constructed by the state were presented as the services provided for your development. Actually, these services were provided for the landlords who are at the head of you and strengthened in economic and political respects. Easterner peasant brother, you were condemned to fight with poverty and starvation during your all life time. [. . .] As the attempts of Eastern development enriched your landlord, you became much more miserable and dependent.²³⁵

Statements like this created sympathy towards the TLP in the Kurdish towns and cities. The activities reflecting the same tone with the above radio speech created counter activities at the local level and there was no "success" for the party without intervention. The Eastists in the TLP had to struggle against the interventions and the manipulations of the dominant groups during their propaganda activities in their own area. For instance, Kemal Burkay was

²³⁵ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları...*p.277. "Doğulu kardeşlerim, 1946'dan bu yana miting meydanlarının en hararetili hatipleri sizleri Doğu kalkınması edebiyatıyla avutmaya çalıştılar. Doğu'da bankaların dağıttığı zirai krediler ve devlet eliyle yapılan sulama tesisleri sizin kalkınmanız için yapılmış hizmetler olarak gösterildi. Aslında bu hizmetler başınızda bulunan ağalara yapıldı ve onların ekonomik ve siyasal yönlerden güçlenmelerine yaradı. Doğulu köylü kardeş, sense hayatın boyunca yoksulluk ve açlıkla boğuşmaya mahkûm kaldın. . . Doğu kalkınması denemeleri ağaları daha çok zenginleştirirken sen daha çok sefalet ve daha çok bağımlı durumuna düştün."

exposed to an attempt of lynching of a fascist group in Erzincan where he was present to found the TLP's branch.²³⁶ An anecdote from Yılmaz Çamlıbel displays the hegemonic struggles between the socialists and the dominant groups relying on the traditional elements. After the unexpected success of the TLP in 1965 national elections, a military officer was talking to a group of people in Ağrı:

[Communists do not have] an understanding of religion, hometown and honor. God forbid, when the communism comes to our country, as one of you goes home and sees a hat hanging on the door, he can not enter his home. You have to wait the man to go out who was sleeping with your wife.²³⁷

During their counter propaganda, the local military and civil bureaucrats did not hesitate to agitate the traditional and religious values sometimes which they curse as non-civilized and reactionary. However, the response of a person sympathetic to the TLP members of Ağrı shows that the ideological struggle is not a one way road and there is always a counter hegemonic moment consisting of satiric and critique elements against the power:

My commander you are so right, communism is a very bad thing. As you know our women work like a donkey from dawn to dusk. They milk, bake bread; they, forgive me, collect the shit of the stocks and make dried dung. They only have a bath once a month. As you see, they all smell shit. But your wives have a bath every day with fragrant soaps. They use several types of lavender. So what a fool man goes to the bad with our swarthy and skinny women who smell shit, instead of white women who smell fragrant

²³⁶ Kemal Burkay, *Anılar-Belgeler*, vol.1, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Deng, 2002), p.238.

²³⁷ Yılmaz Çamlıbel, *Kervan Yürüyor (Kuva Diçi?)-Anılar*, (İstanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2001), p.213. “*Komünistlerde, din, vatan, namus anlayışı yoktur. Allah göstermesin, ülkemize komünizm geldiğinde, biriniz evinize gittiğinizde kapıda asılı bir şapka görürseniz, evinize giremezsiniz. İçeride karınızla yatan erkeğin çıkmasını beklemek zorundasınız.*”

lavender. Therefore you work and strive for not the communism to come to the country.²³⁸

This is indicative of the local struggles of hegemony over the population. However, the TLP members seemed to be successful to such an extent as to hold an attractive discourse and thus, to mobilize the masses to participate in the Eastern Meetings in their localities.

To conclude, the Kurdish ethno-political identity was constructed as mainly being exposed to different environmental factors. On the one hand, Kurdish regions and the population it included witnessed a considerable socio-economic change which triggered the social mobility and the change in the traditional structure. On the other hand, a group of new Kurdish intellectuals who had the opportunity to get higher education emerged and developed, or in a sense, reinvented Kurdishness, in the guise of “Easternership.” Furthermore, one other factor, the Barzani’s national liberation movement in Iraq inspired this group and created liveliness among the Kurds. Adding that the state’s oppressive and reactionary attitude toward this liveliness as seen in the ‘49s Incident’ and the Smilitary junta’s anti-Kurdish policies and practices, this identity evolved into a different and more articulate and more active form. Although the Kurdish contenders could not adopt the label ‘Kurd’ easily due to very limitedness of the boundaries of the political space drawn by the new regime and by its very symbol, the 1961 Constitution, they engaged in publication of several bilingual (Kurdish-Turkish) newspapers reflecting the problems of the East. As another environmental factor of the date which had an influence over the Kurds, the socialist ideas flowing to Turkish society with the classics and the struggles of some of the third world societies’ national independence, the labor and student movement in which they were a part of

²³⁸ Ibid. “Kumandanım çok haklısınız, komünistlik çok kötü bir şeydir. Bildiğiniz gibi bizim karılar sabahtan akşama kadar eşek gibi çalışıyorlar. Süt sağıyorlar, ekmek pişiriyorlar, hayvanların, af buyurun, poğlarını toplayıp kerme yapıyorlar, ayda bir kere de yıkıyorlar. Sizin anlayacağınız hepsi poğ kokuyorlar. Sizin hanımlar ise her gün kokulu sabunlarla banyo yapıyorlar. Enva-i çeşit lavanta sürüyorlar. Şimdi hangi ahmak erkek mis gibi lavanta kokan beyaz karılar varken, bizim kara kuru poğ kokan kadınların koynuna girer. Onun için siz çalışın çabalayın ki memlekete komünistlik gelmesin.”

and the growing socialist movement led by the TLP. Simply because they did not have any chance to establish their own organizations, the Kurdish contenders we focus on in relation to the Eastern Meetings took part in the organizations with their Turkish comrades. However, in order to provide a base for these arguments, the cognitive mechanism through which the Kurdish contenders perceived the environmental factors and oriented towards organizing Eastern Meetings should be clarified.

3.2 Big City, Fellows, and The State: Cognitive Mechanisms

For our analysis, it is possible to state that the identity formation process regarding the mobilization of the Eastern Meetings was related to such environmental mechanisms which were given above. What did all these mean to the Kurdish contenders? Being told the common memories about the incidents during the Kurdish uprisings and witnessed state's policies in their localities in Kurdish regions, and experienced the recent policies and practices against the Kurds, a handful of Kurdish students in Ankara and İstanbul found themselves in a milieu in which they could discuss and interpret the conditions of the East. Though they were a few persons, the earlier generation of the Kurdish intellectuals emerged in the mid-1940s. Founded in these years, Tigris Student Dormitory (*Dicle Talebe Yurdu*) in İstanbul and its residents created a covert sense of Kurdishness. In the words of Musa Anter who also stayed at this dormitory, this dormitory was founded for the “distressed students from Kurdistan in İstanbul to study.”²³⁹ The prominent students²⁴⁰ of the dormitory founded an organization called the “Society for the Salvation of the Kurds” (*Kürtleri Kurtarma Cemiyeti*) which was less than a full-fledged political organization, but founded as a clandestine committee with sentimental motives. In addition to helping the students coming from the Kurdish regions, the

²³⁹ Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım*, (İstanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 2nd ed., 1991), p.55.

²⁴⁰ Musa Anter, Mustafa Remzi Bucak, Ziya Şerfhanoglu, Faik Bucak and Yusuf Azizoğlu.

organization's mission was also "to give their [Kurdish] identity back."²⁴¹ They swore on a gun covered by a flag sown from yellow, red, green (Kurdish traditional colors) and white ribbons. Their oath was as follows: "I swear that I will stand by our patriotic oath and that in any condition, I will never be a collaborator and a *cahş* (traitor) against our compatriots."²⁴² After a while these students published a newspaper, Spring of Tigris (*Dicle Kaynağı*). They can be considered as the pioneers, or the "elder brothers" of the later Kurdish generation in the Turkish universities. As an important point to note, the founders of the society were generally the children of the deported families after Şeyh Said, Ağrı and Dersim riots.²⁴³ Therefore, the target of their criticism were mainly the state's policies embodied in Law of Forced Settlement (*Mecburi İskân Kanunu*) enacted in 1934. Mainly, however, their activities were cultural. For instance the folkloric dance group of the dormitory took the first prize in a show in the Eminönü People's House. They were holding yellow, red and green handkerchiefs, while dancing *Halay* (the folkloric dance).²⁴⁴

While only a few Kurds had the chance for higher education during the time of Tigris Student Dormitory, there occurred some rise in the number of Kurdish students in Ankara and İstanbul by the 1950s and the 1960s. Not only the children of the rich families, but also the children of lower class families began to enroll the universities. In these years, a sense of "fellow townsmanship" (*hemşehrilik*) among this university youth became the dominant form of communication and interaction among the young from the Kurdish regions. In the university halls and dormitories they got in close contact with their fellow townsmen and shared the same sense of being Easterners, if not being Kurds,

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid., p.60. "Ölüncüye kadar vatan sevgisi andımıza sadık kalacağıma, hiçbir şartta vatandaşlarımız aleyhine işbirlikçi ve cahş (hain) olmayacağıma yemin ederim."

²⁴³ Azat Zana Gündoğan, Interview with Tarık Ziya Ekinci, 30 March 2004, İstanbul.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

yet. It can be said that leaving a limited locality behind, such as a village rendering a village kid deprived of urban benefaction; a Kurdish student acquired such a consciousness as there were some others who shared the same conditions with him.²⁴⁵

Thus, “the main factors of our search for one another and gathering were” says Naci Kutlay who enrolled in Ankara University’s Faculty of Medicine in 1950, “‘*the backwardness of the East,*’ ‘*unequal treatment towards it*’ and ‘*incessant suspicious attitude against the Kurds*’. We were much more sensitive because of these injustices.”²⁴⁶ Being told the same stories about the incidents happened during the Kurdish uprisings, the Easterners developed a soul of solidarity and organized folkloric associations carrying the name of their hometown. Under these associations they organized “East Nights” (*Doğu Geceleri*), the folkloric gatherings during which traditional dishes were served, folkloric dances were performed, local songs were sung. Once begun as cultural efforts, in time these activities gained a political character. For instance, Naci Kutlay narrates this period in the following manner:

Therefore, you see that this fellow townsmanship is concomitant, together with being Kurd. So, fellow townsmen’s gathering nights mirror the Kurdish nights. In that city, in Ankara, your Kurdish fellow townsmen come from [the districts of] Yenimahalle or Altındağ, Yenidoğan

²⁴⁵ For instance Kemal Burkey states his experiences of being aware of the Kurdish reality: “I graduated from teacher’s training school in 1955. And for example we did not have any knowledge about such issues as where the Kurds lived, what their geography was, how much their population was . . . When one said the Kurd, I imagined our village and its surroundings. I went to Akçadağ, Malatya, I saw that surrounding was Kurdish too. As a senior, I went to Ergani Teacher’s Training School in Diyarbakır. I saw there was Kurdish too! My appointment was for Van; I thought there lived the Turcomans. I saw that there lived the Kurds too. Later, I was appointed to a village of Ankara, a village of Koçhisar; I saw that there were plenty of Kurdish villages in that surrounding. So, what I mean is that I encountered the Kurds wherever I went, not . . . the Turks. That is, think for a while how our people were bombarded with lies. I mean people were educated with the lies. They did not know the country’s reality. *We were like the fish living in the sea, maybe; we did not know the sea.*”

²⁴⁶ Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım*, (İstanbul: Avesta, 1998), p.38. “‘*Doğu’nun geri kalmışlığı,*’ ‘*eşit muamele görmemesi*’ ve ‘*Kürtlere sürekli olarak şüphe ile bakılması*’ biz Kürt öğrencilerin birbirimizi aramızda ve yan yana gelmemizde büyük etkendi. Bu haksızlıklardan ötürü daha da duyarlıydık.”

and you dance together. Thus, a new search [emerged]. And as everybody founded his/her association, we had seventeen. . . Look there's no limit; this is the creativity of dash. While we are together, let's found a federation; or while we are together, let's found a union. Let's act together. [These were] such a quest.²⁴⁷

Moreover, the only Kurdish students in the Turkish universities were not just those from eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. There were Kurdish students coming from Iraq or Syria to get higher education in Turkey. Having interaction with these Iraqi and Syrian Kurds, the Kurdish students in Turkey obtained a different kind of awareness. For instance, they met some of the elements of the Kurdish culture such as *Newroz* in those years which did not have a national connotation among the Kurdish population yet, or obtained some of the Kurdish books published in Syria, Egypt and Iraq. Nuri Dersimi's *Kürdistan Tarihi'nde Dersim* (Dersim in the History of Kurdistan), the Kurdish myths of *Memê Alan*, *Mem û Zin* or *Şerefnâme* of 16th century Kurdish *Emir* of Bitlis Emirate, Şerefhan Bitlisî. With the inspiration provided by the Barzani movement and the interaction with their fellows, the Kurdish youth in İstanbul and Ankara began to follow the current developments concerning the Kurdish issue.

On the other hand, in terms of political identity formation two main currents took shape among the Kurdish contenders in general. As I presented above, while the nationalist Kurds gathered around the notables like Ziya Şerefhanoglu, some of the Kurds began to join the TLP. Although these two groups had different inclinations, they could collaborate during the Eastern Meetings. Although the local initiation for the meetings came from the local

²⁴⁷ Azat Zana Gündoğan, Interview with Naci Kutlay, 10 November 2004, Ankara. "Böylece bir bakıyorsun ki bir hemşehrilik, bu hemşehrilik geliyor, Kürt olmayla iç içedir, beraberdır. Böylece hemşehri geceleri Kürt gecelerine yansıyor. Siz o kentte işte Ankara'da Yenimahalle'de, yahut Altındağ'da Yenidoğan'daki Kürt hemşehrileriniz geliyor, beraber oynuyorsunuz. Böylece bir yeni bir arayışın şey yaptı. Ve herkes de aynen bölgelerdeki gibi kendi derneğini kurunca sana bu on yedi tane dernek de hadi... bakın sınır yoktur, atılım yaratıcılığı budur. Hadi yan yana gelmişken federasyon kuralım, ya da hadi yan yana gelmişken bir birlik kuralım. Birlikte hareket edelim. Böyle arayışlar."

TLP members, they did not hesitate to collaborate with those Kurdish contenders in the DPTK who had more traditionalist and nationalist aspirations. This illustrates that local networks in the form of friendship ties were shared by all the Kurdish contenders, be they socialist, or nationalist. I will deal with the 'Easterners' in the TLP below, but a few words should be said about the DPTK which was founded in 1965.

Şakir Epözdemir states that during the time of the party's foundation, the subject of the talks in Diyarbakır coffee-houses was the events and the heroic figures in Sheikh Said Revolt.²⁴⁸ He also states that the events given above like the Incident of 49s, 27 May Coup D'etat, Incident of 23s, the Sivas camp, the deportation of 55 landlords and finally and most importantly the Barzani Revolt were influential moments for the foundation of the party. Besides the personal social backgrounds of the founders, the traditionalism was one of the key attributes of the party.²⁴⁹

In the party programme, party's political, cultural and economic claims were given in the first seven articles. Regarding the political demands the party claimed the expression of the national existence of the Kurds in the Turkish constitution, the right of representation of the Kurds in the parliament and the cabinet in proportional rate to their population, the appointment of Kurdish civil servants in Kurdistan, and the official language as Kurdish in Kurdistan.²⁵⁰ In terms of cultural demands, the party founders claimed that the language of education in Kurdistan should be Kurdish; Turkification of Kurdish names should be stopped; radio and television broadcasting in Kurdish should be established; Kurdish books, magazines, or newspapers should be

²⁴⁸ Şakir Epözdemir, *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi...*, p.8.

²⁴⁹ Cemil Gündoğan, "From Traditionalism..." p.17.

²⁵⁰ Şakir Epözdemir, *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi...*, pp. 44-48.

published.²⁵¹ Among other usual economic demands, while article six claims that the minerals extracted in Kurdistan should be refined where they were extracted, namely in the Kurdistan, the article seven claimed that 75 % of the profit which is gained from the petroleum and minerals extracted in Kurdistan should be spent in Kurdistan.²⁵² Cemil Gündoğan rightly points that some demands and principles which were excluded from the programme are also significant regarding the character of the party. For instance, “the land question of the landless peasants” is one of them. As one of the most acute social problems at the time, the founders excluded it from the programme. The demands of poor peasantry seemed to be outside the priorities of the founders who generally belonged to high social statuses.²⁵³ Gündoğan also states that in the programme there is no mentioning of such words as “imperialism,” or “social struggle” which were abundantly seen in the programmes of those parties that led the national liberation movement at that time all over the world. “In this respect too” he states “the programme was conservative.”²⁵⁴

The party’s prominent figures played active roles in the Eastern Meetings. After the meetings Said Elçi was arrested and deported to Kütahya, an Eastern Aegean city. The last of the serial meeting was held in Ankara on 19 November 1968; however, the initiation of this meeting was not of the TLP’s Easterners, but of the DPTK’s. Just 60 days after the last meeting in Ankara, 16 members and the central committee of the party were arrested on 19 January 1968. The trial was made in Antalya and its significance lied in that the accused people “politically defended their party in court” and this defense was the first of its kind.²⁵⁵ However, the state’s practices did cease, in turn, neither

²⁵¹ Ibid., pp.48-50.

²⁵² Ibid., pp.62-3.

²⁵³ Cemil Gündoğan, “From Traditionalism...” p.23.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p.25.

the reactions nor responds of the Kurds; and Kurds began to involve dynamically in publication activities, which constitutes the subject of the following section.

3.2.1 The Kurdish Press

Although the imprisonment of 49s created passivity among the Eastists for a while in those days, liberal winds blowing in the society in the 1960s, affected the publication activities on the Kurdish problem. The stage was set by a liberal journal, *Barış Dünyası*²⁵⁶ (World of Peace) which reserved its columns for Musa Anter's articles regarding the Kurdish culture, folklore and language. The journal was defending that the solution of the "Eastern Problem" was the development of the East by which the development of Turkey could only be possible.²⁵⁷ In the article, the development of the East was defended for it possessed very precious economic resources which could be utilized in the development of the whole country.²⁵⁸ The issue was set into the agenda by *Barış Dünyası* and thus, with the participation of several journals of different positions like *Yön* (The Path) or ultra nationalist *Milli Yol* (National Way) a public environment emerged in which the Kurdish issue was discussed from

²⁵⁶ Ahmet Hamdi Başar, the editor of the journal was the founder and the former president of the Union of Turkish Chambers of Industry and Commerce. The journal was financed by these business circles meaning that it was the spokesperson of the bourgeoisie. In this sense its approach to the Kurdish problem was in accordance to the economic interests of these circles.

²⁵⁷ "Doğu Davamız. Doğunun Kalkınması Türkiye'nin Kalkınması Demektir...", *Barış Dünyası*, (The World of Peace), May 1962.

²⁵⁸ The article states: "the development of the east and the southeast can become a sun from all aspects for our nation. This region covers the most exceptional parts of our country which are the northern part with mining and husbandry, the middle and the south parts with agriculture. It is the most potent and even the only treasure of our country in terms of hydraulic forces as the biggest source of energy. A development in the east may be the development in the whole country. Even an eastless Turkey is unimaginable. Ibid.

several perspectives during 1962.²⁵⁹ Avni Doğan joined the polemics from *Dünya* (World) by tolling the bells again.²⁶⁰

As already argued, having no room for political organization for their own account, the Eastists created their own tools for contending with the authority such as publishing several newspapers. A review of some of these newspapers, their contents and their ends – which was near – will illuminate the mindset of their publishers, and how they perceived the threat of the authority in case of passing the line and positioned themselves while voicing the problems of the East and the solutions.

The publishers of *Dicle-Fırat*²⁶¹ (Tigris-Euphrates) justified the reason of the publication of the journal as the fact that “the East has been neglected for centuries; it became a land of deprivation as a result of this neglect. The neglect continued in the Republican Era. No matter which party they belong to, all ever politicians introduced the East as a place of bigotry, ignorance and anti-civilization to the Turkish and the world public.”²⁶² In the journal, there can be seen reactions about the recent policies and practices of the state. For instance, the editors said that “the Sivas camp consisted of the Easterners, minefields catching the heads, arms and legs of the easterners and southeasterners, and the issue of 55s (Aghas) were left as a souvenir by the

²⁵⁹ For a detailed review of the polemics on this matter, see: *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (ed). vol.7 (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları, 1988), pp.2122-2126.

²⁶⁰ Avni Doğan, “Barzanlı Olayının Altında Yatan Büyük Tehlike”, *Dünya* (The World), 3-10 September 1962.

²⁶¹ As a monthly journal in a newspaper format, *Dicle-Fırat* (Tigris-Euphrates) began to be published in 1962.

²⁶² “Niçin Çıkıyoruz?,” *Dicle-Fırat*, (Tigris-Euphrates) 1: (1 October 1962), p.1. “Doğu yüzyıllardanberi ihmal edilmiş, bu ihmal neticesinde bir mahrumiyet bölgesi haline gelmiştir. Bu ihmal, Cumhuriyet devrinde de devam etmiştir. Hangi partiye mensup olursa olsun gelmiş geçmiş bütün politikacılar, Doğu halkını ve aydınlarını sindirmek için Doğu’yu, sistemli ve maksatlı olarak Türk ve Dünya efkarına taassup, cehalet ve medeniyet düşmanı bir yer gibi göstermişlerdir.”

National Unity government which the East supported wholeheartedly.”²⁶³ Stressing on the unfairness that the Easterners were only remembered during tax collection and military service, the journal’s writers were criticizing the state’s silencing those who voiced all these practices with the accusations of “regionalism” and “separatism.”²⁶⁴ Moreover, there were some articles which had a reactionary content against the Turkish racism, Turanism and fascism. For example, Sait Kırmızıtoprak was writing against fascist-racist declarations of Nihal Atsız²⁶⁵ or Ragıp Gümüşpala and mentioning the need of a joint stance against fascist anti-democratic laws.²⁶⁶

Another journal which voiced the problems of the East was the monthly Kurdish-Turkish journal, *Deng* (The Voice) which was published by the Kurds in İstanbul who came mainly from Kurdish middle-class families.²⁶⁷ Some of the publishers were the imprisoned Kurds among the 49s in 1959.²⁶⁸ The publishers seem to perceive and acknowledge the environment of post 27 May period. The editors were declaring that “many of [their] problems became discussible under the day-light in the *environment* of opinion that the 27 May

²⁶³ Ibid., p.4. “Doğu’nun can ü gönülden desteklediği ve ümit bağıladığı Milli Birlik idaresinden de bize, Doğu’lulardan meydana getirilen Sivas kampı, Güney-Doğu’daki fakir fukaranın kafalarını, kol ve bacalarını kapayan mayın tarlalarıyla, 55’ler meselesi hatıra kaldı.”

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ In *Milli Yol* (National Path), Sayı 13, 20 April 1962, Nihal Atsız wrote those lines: “...Those lands (that is the Eastern Region) belong to us on the map; not in reality. Not only the state orders, but also the Turkishness is artificial there; more truly it seems nonexisted. Those barren, steep and mountainous places were so empty and useless places that they just cost money to the state. Neither love nor support or force comes for the state from there. However, there is a remedy for this situation. A remedy [which is] effectual like a sharp sword and as clear and easy as the Chiristopher Columbus’egg. To settle Cossack-Kirghiz immigrants with all their arms and tribal organizations, as it is.”

²⁶⁶ Sait Kırmızıtoprak, “Doğu’nun Baş Düşmanı Faşizm,” *Dicle-Fırat* 3: 1 December 1962.

²⁶⁷ Naci Kutlay, “‘Deng’ Dergisi,” *Deng* (Stockholm: Apec, 1998), p.76.

²⁶⁸ Musa Anter, Ziya Şerefhanoglu, Said Elçi, Medet Serhat, Celal Ergün, Yaşar Kaya, Kemal Bingöllü, Ergun Koyuncu etc.

[coup d'etat] brought.”²⁶⁹ The publishers’ main emphasis, as was of the *Dicle-Fırat*, was on representing the aspects of the negligence of the East for years and also on the right to speak their own language, Kurdish which “became an undeniable element of pressure through inhumane ways and coercion.”²⁷⁰ As Naci Kutlay rightly points, the publishers’ preference to use the term “the people of Turkey,” rather than “the Turkish people” was to offer an alternative to the Kemalist view of Kurdish problem which was stubbornly dominant and hegemonic in those days.²⁷¹

By June 1963, a new wave of imprisonment resulted in the arrest of 23 Kurds among which were the publishers of *Dicle-Fırat* and *Deng*, as well as of some other Kurdish newspapers titled *Roja Newê* and *Reya Rast*. While *Dicle-Fırat* continued eight issues, *Deng*’s life was even shorter by only two. In the indictment they were accused of “committ[ing] acts inclined to ruin the independence of the state, to disrupt its unity [and] to separate a part of the territories under its rule.”²⁷² What we observe is that although the publishers of these journals and newspapers positioned as to not endanger themselves due to the perceived threat of being arrested and banned, they nevertheless did not fail to raise their voice.

All these developments could be traced through some leaders of the meetings. As illustrative figures of our case like Kemal Burkay (the leader of the Tunceli meeting), Naci Kutlay (Ağrı meeting) and Mehdi Zana (Diyarbakır and Silvan meetings), giving some biographical notes about them which corresponded these incidents can illuminate their identity formation in relation to the

²⁶⁹ “Çıkarken,” *Deng* (The Voice), 1: 15 April 1963 (emphasis added). “27 Mayıs’ın getirdiği fikir ortamında birçok meselelerimiz günışığında tartışılma niteliğine kavuşmuştur.”

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Naci Kutlay, “‘Deng’ Dergisi,” p. 76.

²⁷² Müslüm Yücel (ed.), *Bir Kürt Devrimcisi Edip Karahan Anısına*, (İstanbul: Elma Yayınları), p.78. “Devletin istiklalini tenkise, birliğini bozacak, hakimiyeti altında bulunan topraklardan bir kısmını devlet idaresinden ayırmağa matuf fiili işlemek.”

environmentally significant incidents and their participation in the TLP. Therefore, this will also be highlighting the mobilization process.

Kemal Burkay²⁷³ was a student in Ankara when Avni Doğan's serial, titled "Toll for the Danger" was published in *Vatan*, Burkay tells in his memoirs that just after the "Incident of 49s," he duplicated and delivered to his Kurdish fellows the copies of a translated part of the *Mem û Zin*, the traditional Kurdish myth as quoted in Avni Doğan's article. Ironically enough, Avni Doğan was quoting this part as a warning against the bad intentions of the Kurds. He was saying that "it would be naïveté to think that this work written in verse which addresses to sentiments and emotions would not leave a mark the bold and mountainous hearts by repeatedly singing for years and years."²⁷⁴ Kemal Burkay was in Ankara when the imprisonment of the 49s happened and he expresses that it was an important and influential event for the Kurds who were aware of what was happening.²⁷⁵ Naci Kutlay²⁷⁶ was imprisoned as one of the 49s in 1959. Two agents searched his house and found the Kurdish myth *Meme Alan* which he took from one of his Iraqi Kurd fellow and translated it into Turkish. The agents also found the final decisions of Kurdish Student Congress (*Kürt Talebe Kongresi*) which was organized in Germany.

²⁷³ Born in Tunceli (Dersim), an Alevite-Kurdish region, in 1938, Kemal Burkay graduated from Akçadağ Village Institute as a primary school teacher. In 1960, he graduated from Ankara University as a lawyer. He participated in the TLP in 1965, and established its branches in Tunceli and in nearby cities. In the 1970s he led the Kurdish leftist movement commonly known as *Özgürlük Yolu* (Liberation Path).

²⁷⁴ Avni Doğan, "Kürtçülük cereyanı ve bu cereyana ait ilk esaslı hareket," *Vatan* (The Home), 20 November 1958. "His ve heyecanlara hitap eden bu manzum eserin, yıllarca terennüm edile edile dağlı ve cesur yüreklerde bir iz bırakmıyacağı düşünmek bir safdillik olur."

²⁷⁵ Cemil Gündoğan, Interview with Kemal Burkay, Stockholm, 2001.

²⁷⁶ Born in the early 1930s in Ağrı, Naci Kutlay graduated from Erzurum High School as a free-boarding student. Then he attended and graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of Ankara University as a medical doctor. During his university life he was active in the student societies and clubs. Kutlay participated in the TLP in 1965. He published several researches regarding the Kurdish history and problem. He is still in active politics under DEHAP, the contemporary pro-Kurdish party.

Kutlay carbon copied these documents.²⁷⁷ In the following years both Kutlay and Burkay took part in the TLP. Stating that he was in a dilemma between being a Kurdish patriot and a socialist, in time Burkay understood that these two should not necessarily have excluded each other.²⁷⁸ The polemics and debates in the Turkish press between in 1961-1963 seemed to influence him. By 1966, with Mehmet Ali Aslan, the founder of the journal and one of the organizers of the Ağrı Meeting, Burkay was writing in *Yeni Akış* (New Current) which brought a new opening for the Kurdish problem by analyzing the issue from a socialist perspective. For the first time, the term “Kurdish people” which was pronounced only in intimate circles was used in a publication. For instance, not so long before Mehmet Ali Aslan wrote an article titled Letters to Silo (*Silo’ya Mektuplar*) in *Deng*, with an alias, Aslanoğlu²⁷⁹ and there is no mention of a Kurdish people; but this time in *Yeni Akış* he, for instance was saying in response to İlhan Selçuk who regarded the Kurdish problem in relation to the feudal order. He was saying that:

The problems should be handled without being carried away by the prejudices and with calmness and courage. There exist a Kurdish people who inhabit in the east of Turkey, has its own unique language, culture, customs and usage. This people were left alone to ignorance and misery. Pressure and unequal treatment will improve the discriminative currents as a requirement of social laws. What an intellectual would think should not be to melt this people with fascist or more pleasant methods, but should be to investigate how s/he can live together fraternally, side by side with the Turkish people and to provide the peoples to embrace one another with love... If you tell a person who is under pressure simply because s/he is Kurd that “your problem is just a problem concerning the landowner and sheikh”, s/he regards you as a fascist agent in the guise of a socialist. For anyone who ignores the ethnic aspect of the

²⁷⁷ Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım*, pp.79-80.

²⁷⁸ Kemal Burkay, p.133.

²⁷⁹ Azat Zana Gündoğan, Interview with Mehmet Ali Aslan, 27 May 2005, İstanbul.

problem, it is impossible to be seen otherwise in spite of his whole good will.²⁸⁰

The *Yeni Akış*, was banned after its fourth issue. The publishers were arrested and put into the jail. This journal is important in that it shows how the Kurdish contenders perceived and tried to enlarge the political space at that time. The motives and the content of the journal seemed to signal the later Eastern Meetings which were initiated locally by the Kurds in the TLP who were called the Easterners. This is the very place to locate this group and to identify the reasons why they entered the party, and how they were labeled as Easterners. This will help better understand the organization of the meetings.

3.2.2 Under a Roof: Kurds in the TLP

As examined above in detail, in the identity formation process of the Kurdish contenders, a set of environmental events and changes had significant role, such as the inspiration stemmed from the Barzani Revolt, the influence of the “Incident of 49s” the articles and statements regarding the so-called Kurdism danger, and the increasing socialization among the Kurdish students. In this context, the perception of the “Eastists” of the Kurdish issue was formed mainly in relation to government’s practices. However, the socialist ideas

²⁸⁰ Mehmet Ali Aslan, “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler,” *Yeni Akış* (The New Current) no.3, October 1966. (available at: www.mehmetaliaslan.com). “*Meseleler, peşin yargılara kapılmadan soğukkanlılık ve cesaretle ele alınmalıdır. Türkiye’nin doğusunda yaşayan, kendisine has dili,kültürü, örfü, adeti olan bir Kürt Halkı vardır. Bu halk, cehaletin ve sefaletin kucağına terkedilmiştir. Baskı ve ayrı muamele, sosyal kanunların gereği olarak ayrımcı akımları geliştirecektir. Bir aydının düşüneceği, faşist veya daha tatlı metotlarla bu halkı eritmek değil, fakat Türk halkıyla kardeşçe, yan yana, nasıl beraber yaşayabileceğini araştırmak, halkların sevgiyle kucaklaşmasını sağlamak olmalıdır. [...] Siz sırf Kürt olduğu için baskı gören bir insana, “senin meselen sadece bir ağa ve şeyh meselesidir” dersiniz, sizi sosyalist kılığa bir faşist ajan olarak görür. Meselenin etnik yönünü görmezlikten gelen bir kimsenin, bütün iyi niyetine rağmen başka türlü görünmesi mümkün değildir.*”

provided the identity of the Kurds with a class-based element in an environment in which the anti-imperialist national struggles all over the world inspired the youth, and the opportunities to reach the socialist classics became available. The Kurdish contenders who get acquainted with the socialist ideas day by day began to get organized and worked under the TLP.

To illustrate the TLP's positive attitude towards the so-called "Eastern Problem" we should mention Mehmet Ali Aybar's Gaziantep speech which was held on 12 May 1963. This speech was crucial in its determination and proposals for resolving the "Eastern Problem." The part of the speech that was mentioning the Eastern Problem would later be revised, broadened and kept in the Party Programme, under the sub-title "Development of the East."²⁸¹ In this speech, Aybar touched on the "millions of citizens who speak Kurdish and Arabic and belonged to the Alevite sect in the East and Southeast regions" and pointed to the "hard issues stemmed from this fact."²⁸² Elaborating the problem within the "constitutional rights and freedoms" provided for the citizens and to point to the "ethnologic" [ethnic] aspect he stated that:

". . . these citizens [the Kurds] have generally paid their taxes to the state, shed their blood in defense of the country and sacrificed their labor. They have worked in any job with joy. However, they did not adequately make use of the benefactions of the citizenship they deserved."²⁸³

Then he proposed to solve the problem of these regions in a "realist" way on the basis of the Constitution. For him, in order to handle the problem, "these citizens must be treated as equal citizens. The rights and freedoms provided by the Constitution must perfectly be given to these citizens. More truly, it must

²⁸¹ Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı, 1961-1971*, (İstanbul: Cem, 1993), p.70.

²⁸² Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Bağımsızlık, Demokrasi, Sosyalizm Seçmeler* (1945-1967), (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1974) p.281.

²⁸³ Ibid. p.282. ". . . Bu yurttaşlarımız bugüne kadar genel olarak Devlete vergisini ödemiş, yurt savunmasında kanını akıtmış ve emeğini esirgememiştir. Her işte zevkle çalışmıştır. Ama buna karşılık hak ettikleri yurttaşlık nimetlerinden gerektiği kadar yararlandırılmamışlardır."

be made possible to make them enjoy the rights and freedoms which were already given. It is stated, in the 12th article of our Constitution that no religion, sect, language, race, class and party discrimination are protected. This order of the Constitution must be carried out word for word.”²⁸⁴

In the speech, Aybar much concretized his proposition for the solution of the problem:

Secondly, the East and the Southeast provinces must be saved from being a *land of deprivation*. Given that they have been neglected so far, many of the schools, factories, hospitals, libraries must be opened in these provinces. The best, the most humane, the most patriotic of the officials must be sent to these provinces; so that these citizens of ours would see that they are treated as full citizens, that they keep in their hearts that they are the genuine children of the Mother Land, [and so that they are not seized up by the internal and external provocations. There is no solution of the problem but that.”²⁸⁵

Even though Aybar’s analysis began with the elements of the dominant discourse consisting of the “land of deprivation” (*mahrumiyet bölgesi*), and the general tendency to see any complaints as internal (communists and the “separatists”) and external (in fact, the USSR) provocations, his callings for much more and qualified government services and investments in the region inhabited by an ethnically distinct population, namely the Kurds (along with the Alevites and the Arabic speakers) seemed to be influential on the Kurds to

²⁸⁴ Ibid. “*Meseleyi gerçekçi bir gözle ele almak gerekmektedir: Bir kerre bu yurtdaşlarımıza eşit yurtdaş muamelesi yapılmalıdır. Anayasa’da herkese tanınan hak ve hürriyetler tastamam bu yurtdaşlarımıza tanınmalıdır. Daha doğrusu tanınmış olan bu hak ve hürriyetlerden yararlanmaları sağlanmalıdır. Anayasa’mızın 12’nci maddesinde, yurtdaşlar arasında din, mezhep, dil, ırk, sınıf ve zümre ayırımı gözetilmeyeceğini yazar. Anayasa’nın bu emri harfi harfine yerine getirilmelidir.*”

²⁸⁵ Ibid. (emphasis added). “*İkincisi, Doğu ve Güney Doğu illeri bir mahrumiyet bölgesi olmaktan kurtarılmalıdır. Şimdiye kadar ihmal edildikleri de göz önünde bulundurarak okulun, fabrikanın, hastanenin, kütüphanenin, tiyatronun, yolun en çoğu bu illerde açılmalıdır. Memurun en iyisi, en insanlı ve yurtseveri bu illere gönderilmelidir. Tâ ki, bu vatandaşlarımız kendilerine tam yurtdaş muamelesi yapıldığını görsünler, Ana Yurdun öz evlâtları olduklarını kalplerinde tutsunlar, iç ve dış düşmanların kışkırtmasına kapılmasınlar. Bu meselenin başka bir çözüm yolu yoktur.*”

join the party. Again if interpreted within a political context in which any complainants, let alone for the Kurdish issue, could readily be labeled as communists or “separatists,” the boldness of this statement can reveal itself. Therefore, the content of Aybar’s suggestions for the problem was within the limits of “assuring the well-being of the country;” nevertheless, his statement does enable one to point the importance of the TLP in its emphasis on the ethnic essence of the Kurdish problem and the development of the region through the line of citizenship rights of the Kurds, the population even which mentioning its name was a taboo, let alone its existence. Because, as Sadun Aren displays there were judicial restrictions embodied by the article 89 of the “Parties Law” which prohibited political parties to argue that there were minorities in Turkey based on the differences of religion, language and ethnic origin.²⁸⁶ In general, the organization of the Eastern Meetings can be considered within this frame: the opening for the Kurds provided by the TLP and the Kurdish socialists’ efforts under the TLP in the Kurdish cities overlapped and set the stage for the Meetings.

Getting acquainted with the socialist ideas, the direction of the Kurds to the TLP seemed to be influenced by the Kurdish patriotism. From this perspective, after a while the Easterners under focus who initially entered the party seemed to reinvent their fellow townsmanship which was blended with socialist ideas. When talking about the Easterners Group in the TLP and the predominating influence of Kurdish patriotism on them, Kemal Burkay stresses the natural familiarity of the Kurdish members of the party stemming from their experiences, knowledge, sensitivity and the sympathy of the Kurdish problem. He says:

[Initially] there was no organic tie among us. We were the members of the TLP too. But we were Kurds; we were from the same region and our thoughts on this subject were clearer, let’s say, compared to Turkish fellows. Or a part of the Turkish socialists was not sufficiently well-informed,

²⁸⁶ Sadun Aren, p.70.

even some [of them] thought different. However, there was a trust between us. I mean there was a certain trust between Turkish socialists and us. Because we were in the same fight. We knew each other; we were struggling side by side; nevertheless, there was a difference too. What was this difference? I mean, among them there were, surely, [persons] thinking on the national question as a very socialist. But mostly, Turkish socialists were not conscious enough about the national question yet. I mean they were not rescued from the past conditionings. The bourgeois conditionings. I mean they had the covert thought as seeing the Kurdish problem as a secessionism. Perhaps they saw us a little bit different, I mean [like] “they were the leftist Kurds.” But they could not be rescued from it. As for us, we behaved as a group during the problems, discussions and etc. within the party. I mean, because of the effects such as both our being the Kurds, [and] (Kurdish) patriotism, and our being from different region we were like a group.”²⁸⁷

This long quotation reveals two aspects: First, the involvement of the group called as “the Easterners” (*Doğulular*) was mainly due to the party’s attitude toward the Kurdish problem which was pronounced as the “Eastern Problem” (*Doğu Sorunu*). In other words, the incentive of the Kurds to participate in the struggle within the lines of the TLP stemmed from the party’s awareness of the urgent and material problems of the region. However, this does not mean that they came to the party as a group on its own account. Second and related with the first, there was an “ethnic” boundary (stemming from the still-existing and influential ideological hegemony of Kemalist “conditionings”

²⁸⁷ Cemil Gündoğan, “Interview with Kemal Burkay”, Stockholm, 2001. “*Yani şunu demek istiyorum. Başlangıçta pek öyle şekillenmiş filan değildi. Yani aramızda ayrıca organik bir bağ yoktu. Biz de TİP’in üyeleriydik. Ama Kürtük, aynı bölgedendik ve bu konudaki düşüncelerimiz çok daha netti, diyelim ki Türk arkadaşlara göre. Yahut da Türk sosyalistlerinin bir bölümü Kürt meselesinde yeterince bilgili değillerdi, ya da bazıları farklı düşünüyorlardı hatta. Ama bir güven vardı aramızda. Yani Türk sosyalistleriyle bizim aramızda belli bir güven vardı. Çünkü aynı kavgaın içindeydik. Birbirimizi tanıyorduk, omuz omuza bir mücadele yürütüyorduk. Buna rağmen bir fark da vardı. Neydi o fark? Yani onların içerisinde elbet, ulusal meselede tam bir sosyalist gibi düşünenler vardı. Ama çoğunlukla, henüz ulusal meselede Türk sosyalistleri yeterince bilinçli değillerdi. Yani geçmişten kalan koşullardan kurtulmuş değillerdi. Burjuva koşullardan. Yani Kürt meselesini bir ayrılıkçılık gibi görmek düşüncesi alttan alta onlarda vardı. Belki bizi biraz farklı görüyorlardı, yani “bunlar solcu Kürtler”. Ama ondan tümüyle de kurtulamadılar. Bize gelince biz, parti içerisinde ortaya çıkan sorunlarda, tartışmalarda filan bir grup gibi davrandık. Yani, çünkü bizim, işte, hem Kürt olmamız, (Kürt) yurtseverliği, ayrı bölgeden olmamız, filan bunun da etkileriyle bir grup gibiydik.”*

over the Turkish comrades) between the Kurdish and Turkish members of the TLP, though they came together under the same party roof. In other words what made the Kurds form and act as a group was that ethnic difference derivative of both the ethnic awareness of the Kurds in the form of “Kurdish patriotism” and also Turkish socialists’ stance for the Kurdish issue (as what Kemal Burkay labels “bourgeois conditionings”) and their skeptic attitude toward their Kurdish fellows as “secessionists.” The same point is stressed by Tarık Ziya Ekinci:

Since Turkish intellectuals who knew foreign languages and learnt Marxism by studying it from its original texts had long struggled under pressure and in a narrow field, they had totally no information about Turkey’s Kurdish problem and they did not know how important and urgent the solution of this problem was, in terms of democracy. When the subject was set into the agenda they saw it secondary to the socialist revolution. Therefore, Turkish intellectuals who belonged to the revolution perspective did not give the importance for the Kurdish problem whereas they did so for the issues of independence and socialism’s problems. . . . The intellectuals in this group tied the Kurdish problem up to the perspective of the socialist revolution. After the revolution was achieved, like all other problems of Turkey, Kurdish problem too would be solved.²⁸⁸

As seen, the Kurdish political identity formation process was subjected to such mechanisms as environmental and cognitive. I identified those environmental mechanisms like the social change and the mobilization in the Kurdish regions, the Barzani Revolt in Iraq and the 27 May Coup D’etat which can be grasped as the internal and external mechanisms which triggered the interaction between

²⁸⁸ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, pp.288-289. “*Dil bilen, Marksizm’i orijinal kaynaklarından inceleyerek öğrenen Türk aydınları, uzun yıllar baskı altında ve dar bir alanda mücadele ettikleri için, Türkiye’nin Kürt sorunundan ya tamamen habersizdiler ya da çözümün demokrasi açısından, önemli ve acil olduğunu bilmiyorlardı. Konu gündeme geldiğinde, bunu sosyalist devrim açısından ikincil bir sorun olarak görüyorlardı. Bu nedenle, devrim perspektifine bağlı Türk aydınları, bağımsızlık ve sosyalizm sorunlarına verdikleri önemi, Kürt sorunu için göstermediler...Bu gruptaki aydınlar, Kürt sorununun çözümünü sosyalist devrim perspektifine endekslemişlerdi. Devrim olduktan sonra Türkiye’nin tüm sorunları gibi, Kürt sorunu da çözülecekti.*”

the state and the Kurdish contenders. Under the term cognitive mechanism I examined some of the sites that the Kurdish contenders passed through. From a sense of fellow townsmanship in the big cities like Ankara and İstanbul, we see that they added to this a patriotic element which stemmed from mobility from a rural locality to an urban context. Some of the state elites practices in the last days of the Menderes government (the Incident of 49s) and the repressive declarations and practices and assimilative policies in the new junta regime seemed to strengthen the identity of the Kurdish contenders who were now called the Eastists. Therefore, taken as being subjected to the contextual elements and having perceived them, the Kurdish identity was constructed in relation to the other actors' practices. Moreover, under the influence of the TLP and the socialist ideas it bore and made popular, the identity of the Eastists gained a revolutionary and progressive character. On the other hand, as I displayed above, another branch of the Kurds were organizing a clandestine party, the DPTK. Though the weight of the socialist Kurds in the organization of the meetings was relatively higher, the nationalists under the DPTK were not excluded. In the next subchapter considering the mobilization process, the effect and the relation of this identity formation on the organization of the Eastern Meetings will be given.

3.3 The Kurds in Mobilization

In this section, the mobilization process of the meetings will be analyzed through the mechanisms of *social appropriation*, *social attribution* and *social construction* which resulted in an *innovative repertoire of action*. Thus, the Eastern Meetings will be grasped in such a way that relates the *political identity formation process* with which I dealt above according to its environmental and cognitive mechanisms to the *mobilization process* to be discussed below. More clearly what we obtain will be an insight of a contentious moment which appeared in the form of a meeting. Eventually, this moment will be situated into a context.

In the 40th issue of ultra nationalist journal *Ötüken*, Nihal Atsız was aggressively writing that “let them [the Kurds] go away before they get the Turkish nation into trouble and before get themselves annihilated. Where? Let them go to where their eyes see and where they long for. To Iran, Pakistan, India, or to Barzani’s. Let them apply to the United Nations for a country estate.”²⁸⁹ Atsız may have guessed that there would be some reactions against this article,²⁹⁰ but probably not that it was used in an announcement paper written as a call for a meeting which will be organized by Mehdi Zana²⁹¹ and some of his fellows in Silvan. As *Ulus* (the Nation) reported, the announcement was addressing its target population that “as this Turkey develops in a planned fashion, you are caused to be backward in a planned fashion. The second five year development plan much more widens the gap of West-East.”²⁹² With its

²⁸⁹ Nihal Atsız, “Konuşmalar,” *Ötüken* 40 (April 1967).

“If they want to insist on remaining Kurd, to speak and broadcast in their primitive language of four or five thousand words, and to build a state, They can go...If the Armenians who totally betrayed us did not exhaust the settled Turkish people with a violent massacre in the World War I and the Kurds who inhabited in the villages on the steep mountains did not survive from this massacre, they would be remaining to be a minority in the provinces where they [were] majority today. However, even if they [were] one hundred percent majority, their dreams aimed at building a state in any region of Turkey would continue to be a dream, like the Greek dreams of Byzantium or of the Armenians for the Grand Armenia. For that reason, let them go away before they get the Turkish nation into trouble and before they themselves to get annihilated. Where? Let them go to where their eyes see and they long for. To Iran, Pakistan, India, or to Barzani’s. Let them apply to the United Nations for a country estate. Let them ask to the Armenians with whom they are of the same race and learn that the Turkish race is overly patient, but when it goes off the deep end, like Kağan Arslan it is impossible to stand in front of it. Then, let them come to their senses.”

²⁹⁰ Actually there were reactions. In the declaration of 19 Societies of Easterners Higher Education (*19 Doğulu Yüksek Tahsil Derneği*) it was stated: “Let us see who can annihilate, get into the trouble and expell? There have never been and never will be a force to expel those who have been living on these lands since the ancient ages of the history. Those who will be really expelled are the dreamers aiming at playing off against the peoples.” *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p.2129.

²⁹¹ It is important to note that Mehdi Zana’s surname was Bilici (the wiseman), but he used its Kurdish counterpart (*Zana*) for the first time as he signed the announcement. Then, Mehdi changed his surname officially and through him and her wife Leyla Zana this surname became the symbol of the Kurdish movement inside and outside of Turkey.

²⁹² “Diyarbakır’da iktidarı protesto mtingi yapılacak,” *Ulus* (The Nation), 31 August 1967. “*Bu Türkiye plânlı bir şekilde kalkınırken, sen yine plânlı bir şekilde geri bırakılmaktasın. İkinci beş yıllık kalkınma plâni, Batı-Doğu uçurumunu daha da derinleştirmektedir.*”

massive character the meeting triggered a serial of meetings soon. Held in Silvan (August 1967), Diyarbakır (3 September)²⁹³, Siverek (24 September)²⁹⁴, Batman (8 October)²⁹⁵, Tunceli (15 October), Ağrı (22 October)²⁹⁶ and Ankara (5 November), these meetings, under the heading of “protest meetings against the backwardness of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia,”²⁹⁷ signify a collective political action with a contentious character. Moreover the meetings proved to be the first massive collective action in which the Kurdish population was involved after the revolts of the early Republican period, which has long been exposed to the state’s military and political pacification and assimilation policies. In fact, these policies became successful to a certain degree. Up to the late 1950s, the Kurdish population was too far from getting organized and voicing the political matters. In the 1960s, these regions were exhibiting an appearance of a “backward” region. Among others, it was this situation against which the organizers and participants of these meetings were protesting.

3.3.1 The Means of Mobilization: Social Appropriation

Given that it was impossible for the Kurdish contenders to create their own organizations in such an environment that the central authority’s shadow was always over them as seen in the imprisonments with different occasions, the TLP’s branches in the localities where the meetings were held appeared as an appropriate means for the organizers of the meetings. However, looking more closely to the relations of the organizers with the people in this locality will

²⁹³ *Ulus* (The Nation), 31 August 1967.

²⁹⁴ *Ulus* (The Nation), 25 September 1967.

²⁹⁵ *Ulus* (The Nation), 9 October 1967 and *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 9 October 1967.

²⁹⁶ *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 24 October 1967

²⁹⁷ Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları, Türkiye İşçi Partisi ve Kürt Aydınlanması*, p. 306. İsmail Beşikçi gives different dates in his *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi*, but according to the memoirs of Mehdi Zana and Naci Kutlay and also for Tarık Ziya Ekinci the dates were in accordance with the ones given above. Cf. İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi (1967)*, (Ankara:Yurt-Kitap Yayın, 1992), p.15.

shed light on the fact that not a top-to-down rhetoric mobilized thousands of people to participate in the meetings, but one which blended with cultural motifs with historical incidents and common memories regarding the Kurdish revolts. As was given above, the main motive of the Easterners in the TLP was the Kurdish problem; the primary aim of their efforts was mainly to voice the problems of the Kurds and the Eastern and Southeastern regions. Eventually, the *appropriation* of the existing cultural codes and institutions paved the way for the framing of the contentious action.

In the organization of the meetings the role of the local leaders was crucial. For instance, the tailor shop of Mehdi Zana and his master Niyazi Tatlıcı, (commonly called Master Niyazi) turned into a hut where the patriotic and socialist students visited and the discussions were made concerning socialism and the region.²⁹⁸ Moreover, Zana undertook the role as the pursuer and the facilitator of the villagers' works in the town center and seemed to appear as a respected figure. In their tailor's shop, Niyazi Tatlıcı and Mehdi Zana were dealing with the problems of the peasants coming from the nearby villages to the center of Silvan for solving their issues in the government offices. In this sense they created intimate relations with the locals and it is understood that their concerned intimacy created a trust in their locality which can be taken as an appropriation of the cultural codes. Mehdi Zana tells this fact as such:

You see that two or three people came, I was going to the hospital, to the police, to the patrol, to the recruiting office to handle the issues of the peasants. I bought a Turkish typing machine and wrote petitions for free. I didn't want to say that I have work to do; I was so busy but the people liked it. A villager handled his work and was sitting with us. . . A man called Hanefi, owner of a bus, entered and asked the villager "what the hell are you doing here buddy?, he responded why? Hanefi said "these are communists, they do not distinguish their mothers, sisters; whoever they catch.." The villager replied him "honestly, brother Hanefi, I don't know what communism is, but these men do great works.

²⁹⁸ Ruşen Arslan, *Niyazi Usta*, (İstanbul:Doz Yayınları, 2004), p.42.

They are good men, so communism is a good thing. I am a communist too.”²⁹⁹

As a founding member of the TLP in Silvan, Mehdi Zana was traveling the nearby towns and villages for party propaganda in which he could talk about the problems of the region. Mehdi Zana’s first appearance as a leader was in Silvan (the district of Diyarbakır province) during an event which could initially be seen as an ordinary one but then turned into the occupation of the government office.³⁰⁰ The action succeeded as some of the local bureaucrats who were known with their maladministration and partisanship were appointed somewhere else. Another protest meeting that he acted as a leader was pioneering the serial Eastern Meetings. He and his fellows organized a “petroleum” meeting. In *Şelmo* region the petroleum was found, produced and transported outside of Diyarbakır. The aim of the meeting which was to protest the “pillaging of *their* petroleum”³⁰¹ reveals the recognition of the economic value of the regions’ resources and the attribution that the Kurds as the region’s inhabitants were subjected to an exploitation, no mention the political and cultural repression over them. Having mainly mobilized by this motive in mind, the crowd filled the arena with the slogans of “*Petroleum is our blood,*”

²⁹⁹ Delal Aydın, Interview with Mehdi Zana, Ankara, February 2005. “...*hastaneye bakıyorsun iki-üç kişi gelmiş, hastaneye gidiyorum, emniyete gidiyorum, karakola gidiyorum, askerlik şubesine, köylülerin işini görüyorum. Türkçe daktilo almışım bedava dilekçe yazıyorum. İstemiyorum halka diyeyim işim var, artık boğulmuşum ama halkın hoşuna gidiyor. Bir köylü yanımızda oturuyordu iş bitmiş...Hanefi var otobüs sahibi girdi içeri dedi “ulan sen burda ne yapıyorsun”, dedi niye? Dedi “bunlar komünisttir dedi bunlarda ana yok, bacı yok, kim kimi yakaladıysa ulan dedi.” Dedi “valla Hanefi kardeş ben komünizm nedir bilmiyorum ama bu adamlar güzel şeyler yapıyor, güzel insanlardır demek ki komünizm de güzeldir. Ben de komünistim.”*”

³⁰⁰ A jeweler’s shop was robbed two times in a week. The general idea was that the robbers and the police were cooperating. Mingling into the crowd in the crime scene Mehdi Zana shouted at the police and talked to the crowd as such: “how long will we remain in silence in the face of these filths. Are not all the things these tyrants have done enough; otherwise do you want to be oppressed, despised or ill-treated, as you remain silent? What happened when you have remained silent and subsided for years? From now on wake up and claim your rights and personality! It’s enough, you performed as slaves for God’s creatures.” He was then arrested. Mehdi Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır*, (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1991), p.45.

³⁰¹ Mehdi Zana, p.62.

“*Work and factory for the East,*” “*From the mine field to the factory.*”³⁰²

Therefore, it is important to see that the local networks were utilized as a means of the mobilization of the mass and thus, to contend with the authority. The TLP and the dynamism it exhibited over the country were also used as a platform. For instance, Tarık Ziya Ekinçi was elected to the parliament in 1965 and brought the issues concerning the development of the East into the agenda.

We learn from the memoirs of Mehdi Zana that in a print house he duplicated the announcement paper to which he attached Nihal Atsız’s article in *Ötüken* and collected money granted by the people. They established a committee consisting of eight university students who were responsible for signing the petition indicating the request for the organization of the meeting. Mehdi Zana undertook to hand out the announcements which he attached Nihal Atsız’s article in *Ötüken*, and traveled all around the nearby cities of the Eastern region. One of his friends, a postman, helped him to deliver the announcements instead of him. He went to Urfa, Erciş, Patnos, Ağrı, Van, Tatvan, Muş, Bingöl, Genç by bus and turned back to Silvan.³⁰³ Before the meeting was held, some houses were searched by the police and some of the responsible persons were arrested and sued. Because of the pressures of the local bureaucrats, first meeting organization committee was suspended. The second committee was formed and when a new petition was signed they faced the request of mayor and the covert threat of head official of the district. Mehdi Zana’s response to them is significant for it unfolds the fact that they perceive what they do as the opportunity to hold a meeting in the form of a constitutional right. Onto the statement of the mayor that the state disliked such activities and the government was against these too; and that the activities they wanted to do would hinder some investments; he said:

³⁰² Ibid., p.77.

³⁰³ Mehdi Zana, pp.88-90.

Since what we do is no crime, there is no reason for any institution to oppose it. We enjoy our constitutional right. As enlightened persons, you are supposed to be pleased and support us. We want to voice our problems. Moreover, this is not only a problem of Silvan, but also of all the people who lives in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia.³⁰⁴

What one can understand here is that the contenders in the organization committee were very well-informed about the outcomes yielded from the Constitution and as the statement above indicates, it worked well because the head officer had to give the document of authorization. The attribution of opportunity and threat is visible here. On the one hand, the idea of the constitutional right which was acquired from the TLP of which extra/intra parliamentary activities focused on the protection of the Constitutional rights seemed to empower the hand of Mehdi Zana and his fellows; on the other hand, using the term “Kurd” or any sentence including it was perceived as a threat. The organizers well knew that they could enlarge the limited space as long as they did not pass the red line of the power holders. These were the activities which could remind and activate the state’s suspicion in the guise of Kurdism. Moreover, Nihal Atsız and İsmet Tümtürk’s articles seemed to agitate the Kurdish contenders and in response to their claims they set out to prove the “existence of the Kurds,” writing some articles concerning the Kurdish language, culture and history in a few journals and newspapers I have dealt with above.

The contenders in this case could easily undertake the risks, although they perceived the threats coming from the state. The cognitive process in which their identity as socialist-Kurdish patriots was developed had taught them well how far they can go. In order to remain in the legitimate boundaries the meeting organizers sent invitations to the central offices of all the political parties in the parliament, to all deputies of eastern and southeastern provinces

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.92.

and to all the branches of political parties in the eastern districts and provinces.³⁰⁵ In addition, one should note that there was a covert dispute between the Kurdish contenders in the TLP and those of nationalist wing. However, the need to collaborate against the power holders seemed to cause the collaboration of these two wings. As my interviewees emphasized, although they had different tendencies and world views regarding the Kurdish question, there were close ties between these branches due to the fact that they shared the same locality which enabled face to face relations.³⁰⁶ In other words, because of the local networks involving the forms of friendship ties they did not alienate each other and could cooperate. Furthermore, it will not be unreasonable to argue that at the last instance, according to recent experiences, the source of the perceived threat was the same: the aggression of the state. Therefore, though the initiative was of the TLP members, it can be said that the Eastern Meetings were the product of these two wings.

It seemed that the announcement and the hard effort of Mehdi Zana and his fellows worked. A lot of people were coming to the meeting area by buses and filled the meeting area. According to contemporary journal *Ant* (The Oath) there were about twenty thousand people in the meeting.³⁰⁷ The slogans shouted in Silvan were like that: “*No for the exploitation and tyranny,*” “*from the mine fields to the factories,*” “*end for the step-child treatment,*” “*wake up the children of Mezrabotan.*”³⁰⁸ Clearly, the slogans reveal against what the

³⁰⁵ Ibid.,p.93

³⁰⁶ Naci Kutlay, the prominent figure of the Eastern Meeting in Ağrı told these intimate relations as such: “*Just before [the meetings] the ‘Incident of 49s’ happened. . . .They stayed in prison all together. Moreover, for instance how much is the Lice or Karakoçan population? Everybody knew each other, knew each other’s tendency. From this respect coming together with them in coffee houses, at home etc. was such a thing that [we] both disputed and moved together.*” Azat Zana Gündoğan, Interview with Naci Kutlay, 10 November 2004, Ankara.

³⁰⁷ “Doğu Mitingi,” *Ant* (The Oath) 36 (5 September 1967).

³⁰⁸ Respectively in Turkish: “*Sömürü ve Zulme Hayır,*” “*mayın tarlalarından fabrikalara,*” “*üvey evlat muamelesine son,*” “*Mezrabotan çocukları uyanın.*” The *Mezrabotan* in the last slogan refers to the traditional name of the region and it is Kurdish. Mehdi Zana, p.93.

contenders direct their action of protest: the underdevelopment of the Eastern regions combined with the state's harsh and repressive policies. In Diyarbakır meeting during which again several thousands of people came together, among the speakers were the members of the two wings and also the TLP's prominent figures such as Mehmet Ali Aybar, Behice Boran and Tarık Ziya Ekinci, the TLP's Diyarbakır deputy. This reveals the fact that although the initiative for the meetings did not come from the TLP's central office, the top cadre of the party supported this local initiation in the form of traveling the eastern provinces and making speeches in the meetings. In turn, in an environment where the activities and statements of the TLP were under scrutiny of the different sectors of the state elites, such as the JP government to the fascist parties and groups, the TLP's claim on these local initiations attracted the attention to these regions. Also Mehmet Ali Aslan, Nihat Sargın, Sait Elçi, Osman Aydın and Mustafa Döşünekli made speeches. Edip Karahan's speech was so influential on the mass. He was arrested just after the meeting for the reason that he insulted Cevdet Sunay, the president. Said Elçi was arrested too with the accusation of propagating Kurdism.³⁰⁹

In Siverek meeting the buses were searched by the police and a drummer and a *zurnacı* (shrill piper) were arrested and then upon the reaction of the participants they were released. They were brought back to the meeting area with chained hands. That the chains were untied as if they were broken created an enthusiasm among the participants.³¹⁰ According to republican newspaper *Ulus* (The Nation) several thousands of people participated in the Siverek meeting.³¹¹ The same newspaper informed its readers that about fifteen

³⁰⁹ *Ulus* (The Nation), 25 September 1967.

³¹⁰ Mehdi Zana, p.94.

³¹¹ "İstanbul'a köprü, ama Hakkâri'ye de bir fabrika!..", *Ulus* (The Nation), 25 September 1967.

thousand³¹² people from nearby cities, towns and villages came to the city center of Batman from Siirt, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Bingöl, Mardin, Siverek, Silvan, Midyat, Gercüş, Beşiri, Kurtalan, Şırnak, and Kozluk.³¹³ Mehmet Mercan reported from Batman that more than two-hundred official and civil police, gendarmeries and thirty five society police (*toplum polisi*) from Ankara and a commando team for the first time in a meeting were located in the garden of the municipality building.³¹⁴ Behice Boran and Tarık Ziya Ekinci were present as the leading cadres of the TLP and made speeches to the crowd.

In Tunceli, the meeting's prominent figure was Kemal Burkay who emerged as a local political leader in Tunceli and made speeches in all meetings except those in Batman and Silvan. As a lawyer who undertook the judicial affairs of poor peasants of Tunceli for free and as the founder of the TLP's Tunceli branch, during his propaganda efforts in the nearby villages and districts, Burkay seemed to gain a considerable trust and respect from the locals and among the Tunceli youth. During such efforts, his office became a place like the tailor shop of Mehdi Zana and his master Niyazi, where the Tunceli youth came round. After dealing with several problems in duplicating the announcement papers of the meeting,³¹⁵ he began to hand out them in front of the government building during the end of the work-day. Among the people who were given the announcements were also the vice-governor, gendarmerie commander and the chief of the police. Since there was not any attempt to hand out announcements for any political reason, his aim was to cease the worries and concerns by displaying this act was no crime.³¹⁶ This is important to grasp the suppressed nature of population in Tunceli where the stage of harsh

³¹² "Doğu'da kalkınma mitingi yapıldı," *Ulus* (The Nation), 9 October 1967.

³¹³ "Doğu kalkınma mitingi," *Yön* (The Path),

³¹⁴ "Beş Yıllık Plân, hepsi de yalan, doğulu uyan," *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 9 Ekim 1967.

³¹⁵ The print houses in Tunceli and Elazığ did not accept to print the announcements because of its political content. Kemal Burkay, p.203.

³¹⁶ Kemal Burkay, p.203.

repression of Dersim Revolt in 1937 and the bloody events against the inhabitants by the state forces had taken place. This also explains why the locals in Tunceli center presented a perceivable discontent and distance, when a bus full of participants from Diyarbakır came to the city center and entered a coffee house to have breakfast.³¹⁷ The local struggle between the meeting organizers and city bureaucrats was apparent in Tunceli too. As Kemal Burkay tells us, the police spread such rumors that the meeting would not be allowed, the participants from outside of Tunceli would not be allowed to enter the city, or those who participated the meeting would be shot.³¹⁸ Moreover, two days before the meeting, the government sent one of his ministers, Mehmet Soylu the Minister of Public Works and Settlement to Tunceli and the officials were obliged to be ready during his speech. The minister called out the listeners not to attend the meeting.³¹⁹ It seems that the government took the meetings seriously. However, the meeting committee was successful to mobilize the locals of Tunceli; besides, as given just above, the protestors of the nearby cities were present in the meetings, although the gendarmerie forces impeded their entrance to the city. But they used the mountainous pathways.³²⁰ According to Burkay, a considerable number of people filled the city center and it seemed that the initial distance of the locals was displaced by an enthusiasm. On the other hand, the local partisans of the Justice Party organized a counter meeting following the one of the Eastists. Burkay and his fellows were present in this meeting and sabotaged it. When a speaker who was a landlord said the crowd that the organizers of the Eastern Meetings were “red communists”, Burkay shouted at the speaker that he himself was a communist. Given that an accusation of being a communist was an influential one among the people at that time, Burkay seemed to use willy-nilly the same accusation

³¹⁷ Mehdi Zana, p.95.

³¹⁸ Kemal Burkay, p.204.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

to the speaker. After some quarrels, the crowd lost its attention and dispersed.³²¹ Then Burkay and his fellows arranged the procession for Ağrı meeting. They hanged in front of the bus a placard saying “the Easterner, work and strive for your rights; to claim right does not disrupt the unity.”³²²

In Ağrı meeting the TLP members were ready again. Naci Kutlay mentions the problems they faced during the organization of the TLP in Ağrı’s rural areas. In order to found a district branch of a political party they had to find at least five people and convince them. In a “backward” province where it was too hard “to find people adopting the socialist ideology,” they utilized their local networks consisting of their familial and friendship ties.³²³ According to Kutlay, most of the help came from those who were “sensitive on the Kurdish identity.”³²⁴ It seems that these networks were utilized in the organization of the meetings, too. Seemingly, according to both Kutlay’s memoires and the interviews I made with him and with Mehmet Ali Aslan,³²⁵ the meeting emerged as the stage of a “strategic war” between the actors. For instance, in order to distract the attention of the mass the Directorate of Physical Education of Ağrı organized races even though the weather was not appropriate. Moreover, from the minarets of the mosques it was announced that the famous preachers would come to Ağrı from Ankara. Besides, the horse races were organized. Also according to Mehmet Ali Aslan one hundred and twenty landlords and sheikhs in Ağrı took an oath on Koran to raid the meeting by their followers.³²⁶ But

³²¹ Ibid., pp.205-6.

³²² Ibid., p.205. “*Doğulu, hakların için çalış, diren; hak istemekle birlik bozulmaz*”

³²³ Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım*, p.117.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ See Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım*, pp.178-179.

³²⁶ Azat Zana Gündoğan and Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, Interview with Mehmet Ali Aslan, 27 May 2005, İstanbul.

none of these counter organizations worked.³²⁷ Besides, there were strict security measures at the meeting. For example, at the date of the meeting there were plenty of police forces in Ağrı.

Those days, *Ulus* reported that Bülent Ecevit, the leader of the center-of-left movement in the RPP, began his travel of the Eastern provinces, including Erzurum, Kars, Ağrı, Van and Hakkâri.³²⁸ Naci Kutlay, Mehmet Ali Aslan and their fellows heard from their friend in the post office that the RPP's local members of Ağrı branch convinced Ecevit to organize a meeting on the same day with Eastern Meeting in Ağrı. Upon this information, they took a strategic decision. They formed several meeting committees and applied to local authorities to get several documents of authorization for several meetings such as “the meeting of explaining the democracy,” “the meeting for the improvement of stockbreeding” or “the meeting for the protection of human health.” Therefore, they could reserve all the available areas for themselves and occupied them in order to prevent their mobilized mass from being distracted by the RPP's meeting. The only meeting of the city, that of the Eastists' could succeed to keep its own mass and voice their demands and make their protests. In addition to the speeches of the TLP's chairman Mehmet Ali Aybar, Behice Boran, Naci Kutlay, Tank Ziya Ekinçi, Kemal Burkay and Mehmet Ali Aslan, some of the young and commoner participants gave speeches too.

In general, all the things referred above indicate that the mobilization of the mass into this collective political action in the form of mass meetings was the product of local networks which were mainly used by a political leadership. By concentrating on (without overly attributing the whole agency to) some of the figures such as Mehdi Zana, Kemal Burkay, Mehmet Ali Aslan or Naci Kutlay who succeeded to build a sort of trust in their localities, I displayed how a formal organization like the TLP made such a collective action possible. From

³²⁷ “Doğu mitinginin altıncısı yapıldı”, *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 23 October 1967.

³²⁸ “Ecevit Doğu'ya otobüsle hareket etti”, *Ulus* (The Nation), 11 October 1967.

this perspective, it appears that the Eastern Meetings were the product of a purely local initiation which then could go beyond with the support of the TLP's central top cadre. Indeed, this cadre did not contend themselves only to give passive support, but they were present at the meetings to make speeches. In an electoral system by which every one vote could be precious, their preference may have stemmed from a pragmatic point. Whatever the reason, the formula of local initiation backed by a formal and legal organization moving along local dynamics seemed to work. Another aspect of the meetings is that the triggering effect of the first meeting was twofold: first, it triggered the following meetings; second, as the meeting chain grew, the local and central elite began to strengthen their tactical measures as seen in Tunceli and Ağrı meetings. However, the meeting organizers seemed to manage these tactics and produced their counter tactics. In the next section, I will deal with how the Kurdish contenders constructed their grievances, demands and judgments in the case of the Eastern Meetings. The content and style of the discourse they adopted will show us how far they could go beyond the political limits.

3.3.2 Social Construction

The Kurdish contenders under specific mechanisms – that I dealt above as environmental and cognitive – constructed a specific identity which had a covert and unexpressed content of Kurdishness signified as Eastism. Through this identity these people interpreted the conditions of their regions which were “kept backward,” the threat against their culture and language and thus, they involved in a communication with the state, with the government, and with the society. As they opposed and voiced their grievances, they saw the hands of the power above themselves. In this respect, as an example of a collective political action which had a contentious character mainly between two actors, one being the Kurds and the other being the Turkish government, the Eastern Meetings indicate a communicative political field. As I displayed, the actors in this field were not given, but subjected to an interaction with one another. The

grievances were voiced on the Kurdish side with a socialist tone through an identity embodied on an implicit “Kurdishness.” It was implicit, because the mobilizers paid careful attention for not being labeled as Kurdistans and hence, imprisoned. For this, they seldom used the term “Kurd” directly either in their publishing activities or during the course of the Eastern Meetings. Instead, “Easterners” spoke of the problems of “the East:” they tried to display the economic disparities between the “eastern” and western parts of Turkey. But this does not mean that they did not claim the right to speak Kurdish or did not make speeches in Kurdish. As McAdam et.al. states “seen as social relations and their representations, all identities have a political side, actual and potential...Much identity-based deliberation and struggle raise questions that, when generalized, become problems of the common good: questions of inequality, of equity, of right, of obligation;” therefore, identities are “explicitly *political*...when people make public claims on the basis of these identities, claims to which governments are either objects or third parties.”³²⁹ In that sense, Kurdish identity in the 1960s was very political. In order to elaborate more on the Eastern Meetings as an example of collective political action having a contentious character, one should analyze not only the mobilization, but also the social construction of the content of these meetings. In this vein, the demands (such as development of the East, end for the state repression or right to speak Kurdish) voiced in the Eastern Meetings should be mounted in such a political context as I situated in Chapter 2 in which almost all the progressive sectors of the Turkish society (workers, students, peasants or intellectuals) stood up for their rights and negotiated or contended mainly with the state. Moreover, the national liberation movements in the third world countries, the Barzani Revolt for an independent Kurdistan which was started in 1958 in Iraq were added to the elements of this context as the factors that shaped the identity process which was influential on the Kurdish mobilization until 1967, the year of the meetings. The revolt also agitated the state elites’

³²⁹ McAdam et al., *Dynamics of Contention*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.134.

suspicion toward any activity by the Kurdish side. Not only that. In spite of the state pressure and its relative capability (compared to its Turkish counterpart), The Kurdish press of the date provided a momentum for the framing of the mobilization. Thus, the political context operated not only for the Kurds but for other actors as well.

It will be plausible to begin with the reasons of the meeting organization committees as articulated in the announcements and also with the slogans and placards in order to understand the demands voiced and the grievances made. In Siverek meeting, the meeting organization committee published a brochure and delivered it all around the region. Addressing to the Easterners it stated that “besides being deceived, you are kept backward in a planned fashion,” the committee pointed that the fellows should have given up “the party problems, tribal fights, sect disputes and individual conflicts” and “unite for their real cause that is the development of the East.”³³⁰ In *Ulus*, the aim of the meeting was reported from the mouth of Mustafa Döşünekli, the head of the meeting organization committee as such:

Our aim is to make heard the sound of the East where, as admitted by Demirel and other staff of government, is kept backward in the economic social and cultural realms and to protest those who deprived the Eastern region of investment benefaction in the Second Five Year Development Plan. We do not ask why investments are made to the west. But we want a factory to be built in Hakkâri when a suspension bridge is built in İstanbul.³³¹

For Silvan meeting, the committee was declaring that “none of the rights granted by the laws have been realized during the 44 years old Republican era.

³³⁰ “Siverek’te Güneydoğulular 25 Eylül’de miting yapacaklar,” *Ulus*, 21 September 1967.

³³¹ “İstanbul’a köprü, ama Hakkâri’ye de bir fabrika!..”, *Ulus*, 25 September 1967. “Gayemiz Demirel ve diğer iktidar erkânının da itiraf ettiği gibi ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel alanda geri bırakılmış bulunan Doğu bölgesinin sesini duyurmak, İkinci Beş Yıllık Kalkınma Planında yatırım nimetlerinden Doğuyu mahrum bırakanları protesto etmektir. Biz Batıya neden yapılıyor demiyoruz. Fakat İstanbul’a bir asma köprü yapıldığı zaman, Hakkâri’ye de bir fabrika yapılınsın istiyoruz.”

While a new plant is inaugurated in the East every day, the East does not see even a chimney of a factory. The Easterners are people who were born to world to undergo a suffering in the twentieth century.”³³² In the announcement of the Tunceli meeting it was said that “you are a mere spectator of the petroleum, copper and the iron which are extracted in the region. [But] you will suffer the famine. You have the trachoma, tuberculosis, malaria, measles and alum.”³³³

Announcements reveal that the main grievance was set as the backwardness of the Eastern regions and the unequal treatment towards the East. However, in the analysis of the Eastern Meetings the framing of the meetings is not taken as related to the mobilization moment, but as a factor of the general discourse. The Kurdish contenders so articulated their grievances that their discourse in the case of the Eastern Meetings combined a protest against the backward conditions of the East (resulted from the state’s exploitive collaboration with the landlords and sheikhs) and a belief that these conditions were stemmed from the distinct ethnic identity of the population, namely from being Kurd. This ethnic awareness was triggered and reproduced either by the statements and some practices of state elites or the articles and some books written by fascist and Turkist authors – as I displayed the triggering moment of the first meeting in Silvan was the reaction against the articles of racists Nihal Atsız and İsmet Tümtürk in *Ötüken* and *Milli Yol*, respectively. ***Against all these the Kurdish contenders constructed a class based, but nevertheless a sort of “integrationist” discourse by which they claimed their constitutional rights as citizens. Besides the speeches made, the slogans shouted and the placards carried illustrate the elements of this discourse. For instance, the slogans and placards given below illustrate that the main target of the protest was the backward situation of the East, the social and economic gap between the

³³² “Silvan’da Doğu Mitingi Düzenlendi,” *Milliyet* (The Nationality), 8 August 1967.

³³³ “Doğu mitinginin beşincisi, bugün Tunceli’de yapılıyor,” *Milliyet* (The Nationality), 15 October 1967.

Eastern and Western regions of Turkey and the state repression on the inhabitants:

Civilization for the West, ignorance for the East, why?
The Easterner, work and slog for your rights; to claim the right does not disrupt the unity.
Our aim is to realize fraternity, equality and happiness.
The destiny of the east is hunger, unemployment and disdain.
The west is the hometown, what about the east?
Factory and roads for the west, police station for the east.
Public works for the west, abuse for the east.
National income: Manisa 2350, Ağrı 500; Aydın 2500, Hakkâri 250.
We do not want butt of the rifles, but hands to shake!
Five Year Plan, all are lies, wake up Easterner.
Bread for my stomach, shirt for my back.
We don't want, but equality.
The East is not the place of exiles.
We do not want bazooka, but factories.
We do not want gendarmerie, but teacher.
We do not want police station, but school.
We have caves, they have villas.
We are together with all the peoples and courageous warriors fighting against fascism and imperialism.
We were deceived that there is no east-west.
Respect to our language.
Stop for Agha, Sheikh and Comprador trio.³³⁴

Also, Naci Kutlay gives some other placards in his book with a reference to the court files of the DDKO trials in 1972.³³⁵ According to him, there were also such placards:

³³⁴ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi*, (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1992), p.24

Respectively in Turkish: “Batıya medeniyet, Doğu'ya cehalet, neden?”, “Doğulu kanuni hakların için çalış, didin. Hak istemekle birlik bozulmaz”, “Amacımız, kardeşlik, eşitlik ve mutluluğu gerçekleştirmektir”, “Doğunun kaderi açlık, işsizlik ve hor görülme. Batı vatan, ya doğu ne?”, “Batıya fabrika yol, Doğuya karakol”, “Milli gelir: Manisa 2350, Ağrı 500; Aydın 2500, Hakkâri 250”, “Dipçik değil, uzanan el isteriz”, “Beş Yıllık Plan hepsi de yalan, Doğulu uyan”, “Miğdeme ekmek, sırtıma gömlek”, “Bölücü değil, eşitlik istiyoruz”, “Doğu sürgünlerin yatağı değildir”, “Bazoka değil, fabrika isteriz”, “Jandarma değil öğretmen istiyoruz”, “Karakol değil okul istiyoruz”, “Bize mağara, onlara villa”, “Faşizm ve emperyalizme karşı savaşan bütün halklar ve yiğit savaşçılarla beraberiz”, “Doğu-Batı yoktur diye uyutulduk”, “Dilimize hümet ediniz”, “Ağa, şeyh, komprador üçlüsüne paydos.”

Where is democracy?
The ribbons are cut in the west, the roads are waylaid in
the east.
Everybody [goes] to the moon, the easterners are on foot.
We have petroleum, copper and chrome; you have the life.
The east is the shame of the 20th century's Turkey.
The easterner shots in the war; he is shot in the peace.
One day we will smile.
The ceremony of laying the foundation in the west; the order
of deceiving in the east.
End the mangle of pressure.
Here come the ones living in the tombs.
I listen, I resist, I hold on the right and regained it.
To despise the easterner means to dynamite the foundations
of Turkey.
Look at me buddy, the unity is possible with equality.³³⁶

To put it briefly, the slogans and placards do not contain a “separatist” tone and style; actually it was hard to be so. Naci Kutlay, one of the organizers of Ağrı meeting states that there was no political presentation of ‘Kurdishness’ in the slogans; rather the Kurdish contenders adopted a stance stressing on the social inequalities. According to him, the demands for equality were not so advanced, but a kind of voicing the unfairness attitudes.³³⁷ He gives a saying of those days which illustrated the unfairness based on Kurdish ethnic identity: “Mumbo jumbo, Memet the Kurd goes to duty of guard”³³⁸ Tarık Ziya Ekinci one of the speakers of Diyarbakır, Silvan, Siverek and Tunceli meetings, states in parallel to Kutlay that even though the Kurdish contenders talked about the national democratic rights of the Kurds in their friendship circles, they only

³³⁵ See, Naci Kutlay, *21. Yüzyıla Girerken Kürtler*, pp. 574-75.

³³⁶ In turkish, respectively: “Demokrasi Nerede?”, “Batıda kurdela, Doğuda yol kesilir”, “Millet aya, Doğulular yaya”, “Petrol, Bakır, Krom bizde, yaşamak sizde”, “Doğu 20. Asır Türkiye’sinin yüzkarasıdır”, “Savaşta Doğulu vurur, barışta vurulur”, “Bir Gün Güleceğiz”, “Batıda Temel Atma Töreni, Doğuda Aldatma Dümeni”, “Baskı cenderesi son bulsun”, “Mezarda yaşayanlar geliyor”, “Dinlerim, direnirim, hakkı tutar kurtarırım”, “Doğuyu hor görmek Türkiye’nin temeline dinamit koymak demektir”, “Bana bak arkadaş, birlik eşitlikle olur”

³³⁷ Azat Zana Gündoğan, Interview with Naci Kutlay, 10 November 2004, Ankara.

³³⁸ *Alavere dalavere, Kürt Memet nöbete.*

voiced their grievances about state's repression, violence and secessionist treatment and the economic problems in the announcements, placards and slogans. These indicate that the organizers of the meetings very well perceived the threat of the state and positioned themselves and even did not refrain to express covertly the Kurdish identity. Almost all the speeches were made in Turkish. Almost, because such speakers like Mehmet Ali Aslan read a Kurdish poem in order to arouse the interest and enthusiasm of the crowd. Mehdi Zana points that during the speech of Mehmet Ali Aslan who was the TLP's chairman in Ağrı, the participants did not seem affected and even began to lose their concentration when he was talking about the scientific socialism, class and labor; however when he altered the direction of his speech towards a more nationalistic tone and read a poem titled *Rev* (The Escape), there emerged a considerable vividness and enthusiasm among the crowd. The poem was about two brothers who had to escape to the mountains upon the unlawful and harsh repression of the gendarmeries. Aslan read it in an pure Kurdish. Two couplets of the poem say:

*Ser meda girtin
Berbangeke kûr
Em du bira bûn
Eme deste vala*

*Isdêrk huldîşîyan
Dîkê subê hé xewdabûn
Em du bira bûn
Ketibûn pey belengazîya xwe
Derketibûn serê çîya*

*Çîya ne bé bext bûn
Mîna cendirma³³⁹*

³³⁹ They went up to us/ In a deep dawn/ We were two brothers/ Our hands [are] empty/ The stars were shining/ Yet, morning cock did not crow/ We were two brothers/ Following our quietness/ We climbed the mountains/ The mountains were not unfaithful/ Like the gendarmaries. [My deepest thanks to Ahmed Önal for his careful and skilful translation of this poem from Kurdish to Turkish].

In Ağrı meeting, the president of the Society of the Eastern and Southeastern Higher Education Students (*Doğu ve Güneydoğu Yüksek Tahsil Talebe Cemiyeti*) stated that “development is not to build a jail in the East and a factory in the West. The East was suppressed and deceived. The government is building a jail in Hakkâri of 7,5 million liras. This may be the biggest and the most expensive investment that has ever been made. What a reason is to make a 7,5 million liras of investment for a jail, while the villages are without schools, the villages having schools are without teachers, village clinics created by the socialization are without doctors?”³⁴⁰

As I stated above, one of the TLP’s leading figure, Urfa deputy Behice Boran made speeches in Siverek and Batman meetings. She said in Siverek that “the unity and the fraternity are possible not with talking, but with the elimination of the inequalities and injustices. As long as the Eastern region is remained as a land of deprivation, we can not expect balanced development of the country. Trying to eliminate the inequality between the East and the West is a way of behavior not towards the weakening of national unity, but towards strengthening of it.”³⁴¹

Here one last remark deserves emphasis. Underdevelopment of the east, as stated above, was a significant theme in the mobilization process. This, however; was not just a strategically deployed rhetoric limited at the mobilization moment but a by-product of the general discourse which covered all the actors. At the very same period, state also adopted the discourse of development and engaged in the planned development projects. As Mesut Yeğen states, in the 1960s, the state to a great extent perceived the Kurdish question as a matter of regional backwardness and regional development constituted a important element of the state discourse. The party programme of the JP of 1965 explicitly refers to the underdevelopment of the east:

³⁴⁰ *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic), 19 November 1967 in İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi* (1967), p.67.

³⁴¹ “3’üncü Doğu Mitingi Siverek’te Yapıldı,” *Milliyet* (The Nationality), 25 September 1967.

To decrease the regional development disparities is a natural requirement of the realization of our development in the most balanced manner within social justice. In most regions of the country, especially in the East and Southeast Anatolia there are great disparities in terms life and living conditions.³⁴²

As the statement reveals, this was a widely referred theme of the state's discourse concerning the Kurdish question at that time. Here it is significant to emphasize the difference between the state's recourse to the discourse of underdevelopment and the one deployed by the Kurdish contenders. While the former meant the integration of the region into the national market by "development,"³⁴³ the latter targeted the deliberate policies of the state which kept these regions backward because they were inhabited by the Kurds. Nonetheless, what we see here is less the strategic deployment of the underdevelopment discourse by the Kurdish contenders during Eastern Meetings than a relational process of social construction in which multiple actors were involved.

As to the results of the meetings, it is hard to identify the direct outcomes of the meetings in the short-run. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe that they attracted a considerable attention of different actors in the same communicative field with the Kurdish contenders. The newspapers reserved their columns for the statements reflecting several reactions of the meetings. The state elites took an eye on the meetings. For example, a journalist asked prime minister Süleyman Demirel's about the rumors concerning some reports transmitted to the National Security Council that some movements were expected in the region after these meetings. Demirel replied this question as such:

Lie, a big lie, all are lies! Neither such a report came, nor it was discussed in the National Security Council. Are there those who desire this? Get together, there is meeting! The

³⁴² Cited in Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2nd ed. 2003), p. 163.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.164.

order of rules and law will operate. Meeting is made. If a crime is committed, there are sanctions for it. These meetings show that there is freedom in Turkey. A meeting made by 3-5 thousand people does not convince millions of people living in that region; there is no reason to worry and be anxious.

The journalist's mentioning on the rumors concerning the intelligence activities about the meetings and Demirel's emphasis on the crime and sanction aspect of the meetings display the state's suspicious attitude towards the meetings. The caption of *Milliyet* (The Nationality) was reserved for the Eastern Meetings.³⁴⁴ The news says that the National Security Council discussed the Eastern Meetings and two officials stated during the session that "there was a provocation in the Eastern Meetings."³⁴⁵ Talât Asal, the deputy chairman of the JP stated that "to provoke a people of a region against a people of another region would lead the country to a disaster" and declared that the "adventurers would hit their heads to the wall of law."³⁴⁶ Moreover, during and after the meetings some opinion leaders wrote articles concerning the Kurdish issue. For instance Vural Savaş stated that "the recent events, overt and covert developments in the eastern Anatolia became a nightmare which would distort the sleeps and poison the bite in the mouth of every sane Turk."³⁴⁷ He warned that the signs of development and change could easily turn into a dangerous

³⁴⁴ "Doğu Mitinglerini Güvenlik Kurulu ele aldı," *Milliyet* (The Nationality), 17 October 1967.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ "Asal: 'Vatanın kaderi üzerinde kumar oynatmayız'," *Milliyet* (The Nationality), 23 October 1967. "Bir bölge halkını diğer bir bölge halkına karşı kıskırtmak memleketi felakete sürükleyecektir...Böyle bir hale vatansever hiç kimsenin müsaade ve müsamahası olamaz. Maceracılar başlarını kanun duvarına çarpacaklardır."

³⁴⁷ Vural Savaş, "Doğu Kâbusu...," *Milliyet* (The Nationality), 19 October 1967. "Son günlerde Doğu Anadolu'da meydana gelen olaylar, açık ve gizli gelişmeler, aklı başında her Türk'ün uykularını kaçırarak, yediği lokmayı zehirleyecek bir kâbus halini almıştır."

current.³⁴⁸ In his column Abdi İpekçi stated his impressions upon the recent developments in the eastern regions:

The issue is about the cause of Kurdism. There are signs indicating that the political activity in these a regions where our citizens coming from Kurdish origin densely present, occasionally come to a state of provocations aiming at separating the nation. The speeches made in Kurdish during the recent meetings exposed that it it is not deemed necessary to operate it covertly. It is hard not to suspect upon these developments. It should not be forgotten that if the government attempted to take some measures tomorrow by this means, it would not be regarded unfair.³⁴⁹

Similar security concerns were voiced by the RPP. Just during the meetings, the RPP published an announcement stating that “every source must be transferred to the East.”³⁵⁰ Party council held under the chairmanship of İsmet İnönü in İstanbul proposed some solutions for the socio-economic problems of the East and also warned political public about the danger:

If the government and all parties did not bend rapidly and with a constructive understanding to the economic and social sufferings of the people of the region which were uncovered in these meetings too, the unrest environment stemmed from indifference and negligence could be available for any kind of abuse.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Abdi İpekçi, “Doğu’ya İlgi İyi Ama...,” Milliyet (The Nationality), 17 October 1967. “Mesele Kürtçülük davası ile ilgilidir. Kürt aslından gelen vatandaşlarımızın yoğun olduğu bu bölgede siyasi faaliyetin zaman zaman milleti bölücü kışkırtmalar halini aldığını gösteren belirtiler vardır. Son mitinglerde Kürtçe yapılan konuşmalar bu işin artık örtülü bir biçimde yürütülmesine lüzum duyulmadığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu gelişmeler karşısında kuşkuya kapılmamak zordur. Unutmamak gerekir ki yarın öbür gün hükümet bu vesile ile bir takım tedbirler almaya kalkıştırsa haksız görülmeyecektir.”

³⁵⁰ “Her Kaynak Doğu’ya Aktarılmalıdır,” *Ulus* (The Nation), 23 September 1967.

³⁵¹ Ibid. “Eğer iktidar ve bütün partiler, bölge halkının bu mitinglerde de açığa vurulan ekonomik ve sosyal ıstırapları üzerine süratle ve yapıcı bir anlayışla eğilmezlerse, ilgisizliğin ve ihmalciliğin sebep olduğu huzursuzluk ortamı her türlü istismara elverişli hale gelebilir.”

Also on 8 October 1967, in *Ulus* (The Nation) Yaşar Akal was announcing that the train carrying RPP senators and deputies' and researchers would begin its travel to the eastern regions on the 10th of the month. The reason of the travel was reported to be "to make wide and intense examinations."³⁵²

The meetings and the demands voiced regarding the economic development of the eastern and southeastern regions seemed to find their repercussions from different sectors. For instance, we read that Turkish Union of Chambers (*Türkiye Odalar Birliği*) organized the "The Seminar of the Problems of Developing the East" (*Doğuyu Kalkındırma Sorunları Semineri*) in Erzurum. It is also reported that a memorandum concerning the problems of the East would be given to the government.³⁵³ Also some other social problems concerning the social problems of the East began to find space between the columns. For instance, a medical doctor, İsmet Eryetişir was dealing with the malnutrition in the southeastern Anatolia.³⁵⁴

Moreover, RPP's Diyarbakır deputy Fevzi Kalfagil wrote an article concerning the causes of the famine in the southeastern Anatolia. Besides elaborating on the agricultural problems of the region, he mentioned the damages of the *kıml*, the pest cereal which was the subject of Musa Anter's article that caused his arrest in 1959. Furthermore, RPP's prominent figure Kemal Satır was proposing in his speech he made in Mardin that there could be a reduction to one year in the duration of the military obligation of male university graduates who were charged in the eastern regions.³⁵⁵

³⁵² Yaşar Akal, "Doğu Seferi," *Ulus* (The Nation), 8 October 1967.

³⁵³ "Doğuyu Kalkındırma Semineri Dün Başladı," *Milliyet* (The Nationality), 14 November 1967.

³⁵⁴ İsmet Eryetişir, "Güney Doğu Anadolu'da Beslenme Bozuklukları," *Ulus* (The Nation), 30 September 1967.

³⁵⁵ "Üniversite mezunları Doğu ve Güney Doğu illerinde çalışmalı," *Ulus* (The Nation), 11 October 1967.

As the above data reveal, the meetings could attract the interest in the short run. The reason of this effect seems to stem from the fact that the Kurdish population was setting out such a collectivity for the first time since the last Kurdish uprisings which shook the foundations of the newly founded republican state. This reveals a point regarding the form of the collective action. In the early Republican era, the Kurdish population was mobilized in the form of revolt as the dominant element of their collective action repertoire. However, as the Turkish state consolidated its power by securing the territorial integrity of the Kurdish regions, the Kurdish population was subjected to pacification through the decades to come after late 1930s. Naturally, under these pacifying conditions not only in terms of the threat of naked force, but also of assimilation through social policies the state's power seemed to penetrate into the region and become dominant over the Kurdish population. However, the extent and the success of the pacification of and the state penetration into the region become debatable when one regards the fact that a new generation of Kurdish contenders emerged with new articulation of claims concerning the socio-economic problems of the Kurdish regions. In this sense, since both the actors and the context have changed, there occurred new elements available for the Kurdish contenders of the 1960s to acquire and add to their repertoires of action. The form of 'mass meeting' seemed to be the most feasible and most effective form in their mobilization. As I presented in the previous chapter, the Kurds have been one of the groups in the leftist movement and thus, it is plausible to suggest that their political socialisation within the general rise of the socialist movement of Turkey led them to acquire widespread forms of collective action and organization. Therefore, on one hand, the Eastern Meetings, as a form of protest, were new in the general process of Kurdish resistance which were characterized by a series of revolts; on the other, they represented a common form of collective action in the context of the 1960s. The suspicion nurtured by the bureaucrats and mainstream intellectuals concerning the mobility in the region mainly stemmed from the security concerns. Thus, the massive character of the meetings was the main source of their effectiveness.

To sum, in this chapter, I displayed the political identity formation process and the mobilization process which are important in grasping the Eastern Meetings. In order to define the identity process of the Kurdish contenders of the date, I dealt with environmental and cognitive mechanisms. Under the concept of environmental mechanisms around which the Kurdish contenders constructed their identities and got mobilized, I described the social change that the Kurdish population has passed through. The striking aspect of this social change is that urbanization, secularization and immigration from the Kurdish regions enabled a new group of Kurdish elite to arise and begin to construct a new political identity which passed through some sites from Kurdish townsmanship to Eastism (*Doğuculuk*) as what can be considered as a political current. In addition to such social change, one and maybe the most important environmental factor appeared to be the Barzani Revolt, which inspired the newly constructed Kurdish political elite. The state and the opinion leaders attached (remember Avni Doğan's tolls) to it attributed the Barzani Revolt a threat to its unity, appropriated different tricks and practiced its power with different measures. 27 May Coup D'etat, the junta regime built under the 1961 Constitution and the assimilationist and aggressive policies of the junta period, and finally the JP government's (un)development programme accorded to the necessities of the industrial bourgeoisie which offered nothing for the Eastern regions were other environmental mechanisms. Moreover, the foundation of the TLP was also significant in terms of providing the Kurds not only with an appropriate milieu to get acquainted with a socialist agenda but also an opportunity to come together as a separate group as Easterners who later constituted the backbone of the organization of the meetings.

Besides under such environmental mechanisms, the Kurdish contenders' cognitive mechanisms were dealt with in order to clarify the content of the Kurdish identity. As a handful of Kurdish students who shared the same memoirs concerning the Single Party period's harsh repressive policies, local leaders of the Eastern Meetings emerged as Eastists with critical attitude against the state's eastern policies. The Eastism and the problems of the East

constituted significant themes of the meetings. While examining the cognitive mechanisms, I also focused on the publication activities of the Kurds which were important in the transformation of the sense of “fellow townsmanship” into “Eastism” in the 1960s. Then I examined another significant element in the development of the perception of the Kurds, the Turkish Labor Party. The TLP had a great influence on its Kurdish members who adopted the socialist ideas and discourse and used them in their attempts to voice the problems of the “East” in these meetings. It can be said that the perception of these people points to a core of an ethnic identity; however, it is hard to say that during the whole period to uncover and openly articulate the implications of such an identity could be possible. The ‘perception’ toward still-possible harsh state repression over such an articulation seems to be the very reason of ‘soft’ and sometimes blurred tone of the demands of the time.

In the last part, I examined the mobilization process and I tried to give a vivid picture of a case of collective political action in the 1960s. While mentioning on *social appropriation*, I aimed to present what means and channels the Kurdish contenders used in order to mobilize the masses. Here, we saw that they used the local networks and relations as well as the TLP organization to facilitate the mobilization in the region. Besides, in terms of *social construction*, I discussed the language, the themes and the discourse deployed throughout the mobilization process. Here, I aimed to present a multi-actor and relational analysis as the Kurdish contenders framing was a product of their interaction with other actors such as state or the fascist circles. As the underdevelopment discourse indicates, they sometimes deployed the same discourse with quite different ends.

Overall, this chapter tried to present a dynamic picture of a striking moment of the mobilization of the Kurds in the 1960s, the Eastern Meetings. Rather than focusing merely on the mobilization process, this chapter aimed to examine its background with an emphasis on the environmental and cognitive mechanisms of the identity building process. Besides, rather than focusing solely on the

Kurdish contenders, the chapter examined them in relation to other actors with whom they had constant interaction, which could present a relational and dynamic analysis of the meetings.

CONCLUSION

In January 1989, at a time when the armed-conflict between the PKK and the Turkish military were escalating day by day, an article appeared in the pages of *Hürriyet*, a popular newspaper. According to the article, The Regional Governor of the Extraordinary Situation (*Olağaniüstü Hal Bölge Valisi*), Hayri Kozakçıoğlu stated that “the greatest problem in the southeast is unemployment [and] this problem cannot be solved through taking the gun and going to the mountains.”³⁵⁶ The governor was voicing a widespread view concerning the Kurdish question among the ruling circles at that time. That is, the region was suffering from economic problems but the politics of violence was not the appropriate means of solving the problem. Since that time, the memories of the armed conflict hegemonized the collective memory and any attempts of the Kurds to make their claims were identified with violence or “terror.” A similar view was also relevant for the early republican period which was remembered to a great extent as a period of the “unrest” created by the consecutive Kurdish revolts. Thus, the period between the revolts and the Kurdish violent politics launched by the PKK in the 1990s was pushed towards the distant realms of the memory. It was as if Kurds did not engage in any attempt to voice their claims throughout this period. However, it was a period that witnessed a striking example of the Kurdish collective political action, which was quite dissimilar to the both the revolts of the early Republican period and the resistance of the 1990s. It was the Eastern Meetings which was a significant instant of the Kurdish political mobilization in the 1960s. Thus, to remember, and hence to remind these meetings is an effort to shed light on a forgotten moment of the Kurdish political activism, which adopted peaceful means such as these meetings as the vehicle of making their demands of development, end of the state’s oppressive and regional segregationist policies.

³⁵⁶ *Hürriyet* (The Liberty), 18 January 1989.

Apart from referring to such a moment in the Kurdish politics these meetings are also important in terms of being a product of the years of company between the Turkish left and the Kurdish members who were also a part of the Turkish left at that time. As indicated in this thesis, the leading cadre of the Eastern Meetings was coming from the TLP tradition and hence they had acquired their first political socialization in the TLP and other leftist organizations such as Idea Clubs or Socialist Culture Association. Thus, as the TLP experience reveals, a general discourse providing an opening for the Kurdish problem could find a voice from the Kurdish part today. The TLP's positive attitude for the Kurdish problem which at that time was called Eastern problem caused a handful of Kurdish contenders to participate in the party. In the case of the Eastern Meetings both in the content and the ideological framing of the meetings the TLP's political stance is discernable. The TLP case is important to see how a general framing covering and voicing all the oppressed classes' demands can obtain a considerable support. There are a lot of lessons that the Turkish left can take from the TLP case. Today, in my opinion no political programme can be successful without touching on the Kurdish problem in Turkey. It is a hard task to undertake, but necessary.

Another significant point concerning these meetings is that after the meetings, the state fastened its repressive policies towards the region which implies that notwithstanding its peaceful and moderate tone, it stood sensitive about any claims concerning these region and hence the Kurdish population.

In this thesis, I aimed to examine these meetings through the framework of the social movements and collective action theory. This theoretical framework enables one to draw a dynamic and relational picture of the social movements instead of presenting a static one which conceals the relations between the structures, and actors. To do that, I looked at the *identity formation* and *mobilization processes* of the Eastern Meetings through an elaboration of various mechanisms whose interaction brought about these processes. Apart from examining the social change mechanisms, such as migration or 1960

Coup, which brought changes in the conditions of the Kurds, I also kept the track of the cognitive mechanisms, which prompted the Kurds to take action in the context of these environmental changes. Besides, I examined the mobilization process of the meetings. In this way, in accordance with theoretical framework deployed in this thesis, I aimed to pay attention to the pre-mobilization process, too. Because focusing solely on the mobilization process would give only a partial view of the meetings and cause the neglect of the actions of other actors. Throughout the thesis, I aimed to present a multi-actor analysis of the meetings. I examined the actions of the leading cadre of the meetings in relation to the other actors such as the state, the leftists or the ultra-nationalists. After all, the actions and maneuvers of all these actors emerge in the context of their relations to each other.

Nevertheless, the leading cadre of the meetings constitutes the basic actors of this study. Within the limits of this study, the participants to these meetings remained an unfocused issue. The future researches on these meetings can shed more light on this aspect of these meetings, which I believe can present a complete picture. Because, focusing solely on the leading cadre might create such an illusion as if the demands, claims and expectations of these persons reflect those of the participants, too. However, despite this shortcoming, if this study manages to remind such a significant but forgotten moment in the history of Kurdish political activism, then it realized its aim.

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